



# Biju Patnaik Sports Award renamed

Now to be known as 'Odisha Raja Krida Samman' BJD decries decision

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
In a major decision, the Odisha BJP government on Saturday renamed the Biju Patnaik Sports Award as 'Odisha Raja Krida Samman'. An official notification in this regard was issued by the Sports and Youth Services Department. However, the BJD came down heavily on the government for renaming the Biju Patnaik Sports Award. Nayagarh MLA Arun Sahoo

said, "Biju Patnaik was not an individual but an institution. Leaders across party lines respect Biju Babu." Sahu urged the State Government not to take steps which would hurt the sentiments of the people of the State. "Biju Babu was a national asset who was honoured by three different countries. He participated in the freedom struggle of the country. By removing his name from a sports award, what does the government want to prove," Sahu questioned. The award is given to the sports persons of Odisha who have achieved outstanding performances in any of the recognised sports during the year mak-

ing the State and India proud. The award is also given to eminent coaches, sports journalists and sports organisations for their excellence in the field. The award is conferred in as many as eight categories every year since 2001 on the occasion of the birth anniversary of legendary hockey player Major Dhyana Chand celebrated across the country as the National Sports Day on August 29. As per sources, though the award has been renamed, the amount of cash prizes will remain the same. Notably, the newly formed BJP government is renaming some schemes of the previous government.

# Depression to weaken in 24 hours

Heavy rains trigger floods in Malkangiri

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The depression over the northwest and adjoining west-central Bay of Bengal off the Odisha and adjoining north Andhra Pradesh coasts moved nearly west-northwestwards with a speed of 3 kmph during the past six hours, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday. As per the IMD, the system lay centered over the Odisha coast near Chilika Lake, about 40 km south-southwest of Puri and 70 km east-northeast of

Gopalpur. It is likely to move further west-northwestwards across Odisha and Chhattisgarh and weaken gradually during the next 24 hours. On Sunday, heavy to very heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Kandhamal, Boudh, Kalahandi, Balangir and Nuapada, said the IMD issuing an Orange alert. Heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Bargarh, Subarnapur, Sambalpur, Angul, Jharsuguda, Gajapati, Ganjam, Rayagada, Koraput, Malkangiri, Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Nabarangpur and Baleswar, said



the weather office issuing a Yellow warning. On Monday, heavy rainfall (7 to 11cm) is very likely to occur at one or two places in the districts of Mayurbhanj, Keonjhar, Sundargarh, Jharsuguda, Sambalpur,

Deogarh and Bargarh, said the IMD issuing a Yellow warning. Earlier on the day, several parts of the State including the twin cities of Cuttack and Bhubaneswar experienced several spells of rainfall. Heavy rainfall disrupted normal life in Malkangiri district. Two to three feet of water was flowing over the Kanguru bridge, following which the communication between Malkangiri and Kalimela was affected on Saturday. Several vehicles are now stranded on both sides of the road. Similarly, the road communication from Kalimela to Motu was also snapped as floodwater flowed over MV 90 and MV 96 bridges.

# Kamala Pujari passes away in hospital



Last rites held with full State honours

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Padma Shri Kamala Pujari passed away due to cardiac arrest while undergoing treatment at the SCB Medical College Hospital in Cuttack on Saturday. She was 76. Kamala Pujari, acclaimed for her contributions to organic farming and conservation of native paddy varieties, had been admitted to the hospital two days back again due to health-related issues. The tribal lady from Koraput is known for her pioneering work in organic agriculture. For this reason, she was awarded Padma Shri. Pujari brought laurels for the State by winning the 'Equator Initiative Award' in

Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002. A four-member hospital team had been engaged for the treatment of Pujari. She had undergone dialysis recently. She was not taking food. Condolences poured in following her demise. Chief Minister Mohan Majhi expressed his grief over Pujari's passing away. "Padma Shri Kamala Pujari played a champion role in preserving indigenous paddy varieties and other seeds. She also promoted organic farming. Her contribution towards environment protection was immense which Odisha and the nation can never forget," the CM said. He ordered for performance of Pujari's last rites with full State honours. Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan also condoled Pujari's death.

# BJD headquarters Sankha Bhawan under scanner

Illegal construction alleged

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The BJD's headquarters, Sankha Bhawan, has come under scanner as it has been alleged that the grand building has been constructed illegally by changing the category of land meant for the use of common public. It is learnt that the Sankha Bhawan is built on four plots and the category of one of the plots is 'Sadaka/Road', which is meant for the use of common people. However, the building has allegedly been built illegally by converting the 'Sadaka' plot into a 'gharabari/residential' plot. The Sankha Bhawan stands



on 1.183 acres of land comprising four plots located in the Unit-6 area of the capital city. The category of one of the four plots is 'Sadaka' and the General Administration Department of the State Government has provided the land to the BJD on a lease deed. It has been clearly mentioned in the lease deed that the category of the plot cannot be changed. However, the

Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari said action would be taken against the persons who have committed mistakes intentionally. "Officer Raj was going on during the tenure of the previous government. They were doing whatever they wished. Those who have committed mistakes intentionally and harmed the interest of Odisha, actions will be taken against them in the coming days," said Pujari. On the other hand, the BJD has claimed that the Sankha Bhawan has been built legally. "I don't know much about the matter. It has been built legally. Nothing has been done illegally," said BJD leader Munna Khan.

# In Kalahandi Sarpanch held after Rs 5.40L cash seized

**PNS ■ CUTTACK**  
The Vigilance police on Friday intercepted Dinesh Kumar Rout, Sarpanch of Brundabahal gram panchayat under Golamunda block in Kalahandi district, and seized Rs 5.40 lakh from his possession. The Vigilance, which had kept a close watch on the Sarpanch, intercepted him near Khaliakani while he was proceeding to Brundabahal from Golamunda in his Bo-

lero vehicle. During the interception, Rs 5.40 lakh was recovered from Rout which he could not account for satisfactorily. The entire cash was seized along with his Bolero vehicle. Soon after the interception, simultaneous searches were conducted at the residential house and hardware shop of Rout at village Brundabahal from the disproportionate assets (DA) angle. Later, Rout was arrested and forwarded to court.

# BJP destroying Constitution: Cong

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The statement of BJP national president JP Nadda on Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi at the saffron party's executive committee meeting in Puri shows how panic has gripped the party, said the Congress on Saturday. Nadda's statement on the Constitution is hilarious as well as humiliating. In his speech, there was no mention about Naveen Patnaik, who ruled Odisha for 24 years. This shows

the secret pact between the BJP and the BJD, said Congress spokesperson Sonali Sahu. The BJP government brought laws like the UPA and PMLA to put behind bars political opponents, social activists, journalists, writers for long time without trial and bail. In which Constitution is this written, Sahu questioned. In the BJP government, the powers of the Governor are misused in different States, she said.

# In Cuttack Govt Press staff molests apprentice

**PNS ■ CUTTACK**  
The authorities of the Government Press at Cuttack have filed a case at the Madhupatna police station against one of its staffs over allegations of molestation of a girl on July 16. According to reports, the accused, a Junior Reader in the Binding Section, allegedly molested an apprentice on the pretext of dropping her home.

The girl lodged a complaint with the Vice-Principal of the School of Printing and Allied Teachers (SPAT) on July 18. The SPAT constituted an internal committee, which inquired into the matter and ascertained that the Junior Reader was guilty. He was involved in similar acts earlier, the committee ascertained. Following this, a complaint was filed with the Madhupatna police who launched an investigation into the matter.

# BJP declares to uphold 'Odia Asmita,'

To fulfill all poll promises BJD looted Rs 50k crore annually

**NALINI SAHU ■ PURI**  
The second day of the two-day Odisha BJP executive meeting here marked the party adopting a political resolution declaring to uphold "Odia Asmita" (Odia pride) as its cardinal principle while serving the State. The political resolution, among others, also declared to fulfill all the electoral promises the BJP made in its poll manifesto under the leadership of Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi. The resolution came down heavily upon the previous BJD



government led by Naveen Patnaik. It said though the regional party ruled for nearly 25 years, it could not address the pressing issues of development, unemployment, distress migration, problems facing the agriculture sector and meet other key requirements for benefits of the common people. "Twenty-five years is a big period which is quite enough for a party to bring all-round

development of the State. However, the BJD government wasted this opportunity. Its rule was marked by corruption, nepotism and blatant loot of mineral resources," read the resolution. The party promised to provide a clean, transparent, performing and popular government so as to take the State to new heights by 2036 when Odisha will observe its centenary year.

Revenue Minister Suresh Pujari told reporters, "Our party adopted a crucial political resolution in which we declared to uphold Odia Asmita as our cardinal principle. Besides, we declared to provide people a corruption-free, clean and transparent governance system." Pujari alleged that the previous government looted at least Rs 50,000 crore every year in the name of 5T (Teamwork, Transparency, Technology, Time and Transformation). "Today, our party leaders and workers were advised to work hard to ensure that the party gets a chance to serve the State for the next 25 years and beyond, a target set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," said BJP State president Manmohan Samal.

# Talk held to mark Meher death anniv in CUO

**PNS ■ KORAPUT**  
The Central University of Odisha and the Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur jointly observed the death centenary of Swabhabkabi Gangadhar Meher, Odisha's iconic literary personality. A three-day national seminar (18-20 July 2024) was organized on the occasion which was inaugurated on Thursday at the campus of the Central University of Odisha, Koraput. The event was coordinated by the Department of Odia Language and Literature, CUO under the convenership of Dr Rudrani Mohanty, Associate Professor and HOD, DOLL. Dr Mohanty started the proceedings by delivering the welcome address. Prof Tripathi, in his speech, emphasized on the alluring power of literature to unify the society into a common thread and lead to creation of a prosperous nation. He lauded the life and work of Gangadhar



Besra, Prof Pradip Kumar Panda, Coordinator, Bhima Bhoi Research Centre, GM University and Dr Rudrani Mohanty, Associate Professor and HOD, DOLL. The keynote speech was delivered by Prof Besra, a recipient of Kendriya Sahitya Academi Award in Santhali Language and Literature. A book titled, 'Gangadhar Meher: Alochana Sangraha' was released.

Meher. Prof N Nagaraju, chief guest, in his speech pointed out that the poet's works transgressed Odisha's boundary and touched the nation and the world. It is vital to organize such joint efforts, he stressed. The keynote speech was delivered by Prof Besra, a recipient of Kendriya Sahitya Academi Award in Santhali Language and Literature. A book titled, 'Gangadhar Meher: Alochana Sangraha' was released.

# FPI-AMOFI talk 'Let's free society from caste prejudices, blind beliefs'

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
The AMOFOI along with FPI (Freethought Party of India) organised a seminar under the chairmanship of Prof Swapna Bijayini, co-founder of AMOFOI recently. The theme of the seminar was, "For Good Life and Clean Politics, India should be Freed of all Blind Beliefs and all Godmen Enjoying Political Patronage from Sub-standard and Cunning Politicians". The Seminar was graced by Odia writer Dr Bidhuprava Rath from Brahmapur. Among others, Madam Basanti Acharya, secretary of HRO, Bhubaneswar, Madhusudan Yadav from BSP and atheist activist Prof Amir Prasad joined.



While welcoming the guests and throwing light on the theme of the seminar, FPI general secretary B Ramchandra CST Voltaire gave a vivid picture of India of 1962-64 that led writer VS Naipaul to describe India as "An Area of Darkness". Indeed he published a book in the said name. Because, he then saw the sway of blind beliefs and caste practices keeping the Indian people extremely backward. He found

"women in veils" listening to Prabachans given to them by Godmen. The situation, over the years, has worsened further and the July 2 stampede at Hathras, UP could take the lives of 123 devotees of Bhole Baba, the Godman of the State. Political Parties are trying to "exploit" the vote banks created by Godmen. So for that reason no FIR has been filed against Bhole Baba by the UP Government, pointed out

CST Voltaire. "For removal of blind beliefs and Godmen we need to have more of study and analysis of the ideas of Copernicus, the discoverer of the Solar System, Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, the contractualists who demolished the divine right of Kingship and the ideas of Charles Bradlaugh who firmly advocated the concept of atheism and freethought throughout his political career," said

Voltaire. Dr Bidhuprava Rath, the chief guest, held the view that blind beliefs would be removed in the quickest if Government of the day- both Central and State- came forward to stand in favour of scientific outlook. AMOFOI-FPI Book No-11 on "Humanism and Freethought" that highlighted the view point of Nobel Laureate VS Naipaul (1932-2018) was released by the guests on the occasion.

**Corrigendum**  
It was reported on Friday that the Orissa High Court has granted anticipatory bail to ex-Minister Raghunandan Das. In fact, the HC rejected Das' bail plea. The error is regretted.

# Pioneer impact in Subarnapur Farmers who sold paddy to govt finally get money

DEO who committed irregularities taken to task

**PNS ■ SONEPUR**  
The farmers of Kamsara PACS in Subarnapur district got their money for the Kharif paddy from Data Entry Op-

erator (DEO) Manoranjan Mishra after a joint inquiry was done by the Civil Supplies Department with the direction of Collector Ananya Das. Sources said the farmers from various regions, including Kumbharmunda, Lembupali, Mahulpali, Badjor, Jamkani and Kamsara had registered their names with the Kamsara PACS. DEO Mishra

had allegedly manipulated records to favour certain people. During the Kharif season, paddy had been procured from 349 farmers by giving 403 vendor receipts to them. However, only 330 farmers got their payment. All the amount of the farmers had also been cleared by the Odisha State Civil Supplies Corporation Limited. How-

ever, 19 farmers had complained about not getting their payment. After the news was published in The Pioneer, the district administration swung into action and directed the concerned department to inquire into the matter. During the inquiry, DEO Mishra was found to have been involved in the irregularities.

# Meet held to tackle possible flooding in Ganjam

**PNS ■ BRAHMAMPUR**  
A district-level meeting to address the potential flood situation was held on Friday via virtual mode under the chairmanship of Ganjam district Collector Divya Jyoti Parida at Chhatrapur. According to the Indian Meteorological Department's forecast, Ganjam district will experience continuous rainfall from Friday until July 22. There is a high probability of heavy to very heavy rainfall

for the next 2 days. All concerned officials remain vigilant to minimize damage caused by the rainfall, Collector Divya Jyoti Parida said. He instructed that multi-purpose shelters and cyclone shelters be prepared on war footing. In case of flooding, residents of low-lying areas will be immediately relocated to these shelters. The Collector advised keeping a close watch on the hilly areas of Patrapur, Sorada, Sanakhemundi, Jagannathprasad

and Digapahandi blocks. The Water Resources Department was directed to identify and repair weak points in the district's river embankments and water reservoirs promptly. District Collector Parida emphasized thorough preparations to handle potential natural disasters like floods and cyclones. He stressed ensuring floodwaters do not accumulate in drains, maintaining river and canal repairs, and cleaning drainage systems. Officials were instructed to

stock essential supplies like dry food and tarpaulins, ensure health and sanitation measures, protect livestock, and provide safe drinking water. He also directed that 24-hour control rooms be opened at all block and sub-divisional levels. The meeting was attended by Additional District Collector Sudhanshu Kumar Bhoi, Deputy Collector Devdutta Mahanta, all line department officers, and district-level officials.

# In Nuapada 8 cops hurt in attack by mob during raid

**PNS ■ NUAPADA**  
As many as eight police personnel, including a Sub-Inspector (SI), an Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASI) and six Constables, sustained injuries after they were attacked during their attempt to execute an arrest warrant at Barkote village in Nuapada district on Friday. As per reports, a team of the Komna police had gone to the village to nab one Ashok Sahu, against whom the warrant was pending. It was alleged that the police team was attacked by 20 to 25 persons, includ-

ing women of Sahu's family. SI Vishnu Prasad Pradhan, ASI Tarun Kumar Sahu and six Constables from the Komna police station got injured in the attack. The assailants not only resisted the arrest but also allegedly vandalised the police van. Following the assault, the injured police personnel were shifted to the Komna Community Health Centre (CHC) for treatment. On Saturday, a large number of police personnel raided the village and conducted searches to nab the accused. They detained some persons for questioning.

# Min Swain, MP Tarai visit Indian Oil Refinery

**PNS ■ PARADIP**  
Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Industries, Skill Development and Technical Education, Sampad Chandra Swain and Jagatsinghpur MP Bibhu Prasad Tarai visited the Indian Oil Paradip Refinery recently. The dignitaries were warmly welcomed by Executive Director and Refinery Head, Paradip Refinery, Kausik Basu with traditional Uttariya and potted plants. As part of the 'Maa Pain Gachha Tie' initiative, the Minister and MP planted saplings on the refinery premises. During his address, Swain highlighted the ongoing developmental work in the industrial region of Paradip and assured that the local community



would benefit from these initiatives. Dr Tarai expressed his commitment to the progress of Paradip and its residents. Basu emphasized that Paradip refinery, the largest refinery on India's eastern coast, is poised to drive progress in collaboration with

the Government of Odisha. The visit included a review of the refinery's operations, where a comprehensive presentation was made to the dignitaries, detailing the refinery's operations, safety initiatives, and ongoing and future projects. The visit underscored the refinery's commitment to fostering strong relationships and promoting collaborative growth. The dignitaries praised the refinery's significant role in the region and its contributions to driving progress.

# 70 needles removed from sorcery victim's skull



**PNS ■ SAMBALPUR**  
Doctors have successfully removed a staggering 70 needles from the head of a 19-year-old girl from Balangir which were pierced by a 'tantrik' (sorcerer) to cure her frequent illness. The surgery was carried out by doctors of VIMSAR, Burla. The victim Reshma Behera from Inch village under the Sindhikela police limits in Balangir district had been admitted to the Bhima Bhoi Medical College Hospital after she complained of severe headache. Later, a CT scan revealed presence of multiple needles in her skull. Subsequently, she was referred to the VIMSAR.

Following a number of scans and tests, the surgery was conducted and 70 needles were extracted from her skull. The matter came to light after the girl's family removed eight needles from her head. It was some four years back when the girl's health condition deteriorated and her family took the help of the sorcerer Santosh Rana of Jamutjhula village. The accused allegedly pierced syringe needles into the head of Reshma, who then had fallen unconscious. She could not realise anything at that time. It was recently that Reshma's family spotted the needles and gradually removed eight from her head. Later, they brought her to the hospital for further examination. Based on a complaint filed by the girl's family, the Balangir police arrested the sorcerer.

# Free cancer screening camp at PPA Hosp



**PNS ■ PARADIP**  
The Paradip Port Authority Hospital in association with the Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute, Bhubaneswar organised a cancer screening camp for head and neck, breast and cervix for PPA employees as well as for general public below poverty line as part of community outreach. PPA Secretary UR Mohan Raju inaugurated the camp in the presence of PPA CMO Dr BB Das and HoDs of PPA and members of the Paradip Ladies' Club. Local women were

sensitized about the causes of breast as well as cervical cancer, the social stigma, importance of self-examination and the need for early detection and treatment and its symptoms. As many as 67 people were examined on the occasion and 14 PAP smears were collected for microscopic examination. Total 36 in cervix and 17 for oral were evaluated. The PPA has declared assistance to the women to get evaluated at higher centres. The PPA CMO assured help to the marginalised sections of women in the society with more such camps in future.

# Paribesh Ratna Award received by Akshyat

**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
A national-level conclave on climate change challenges and opportunities was organised by the Suryakhetra Foundation Trust at the Jayadev Bhawan here. State Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy and Urban Development, Housing and Public Enterprises Minister Dr Krushna Chandra Mahapatra joined as chief speaker and chief guest, respectively. Suryakhetra Foundation Trust president Dr Bipin Mishra chaired the meeting. Speaker Padhy wanted to tackle the climate change threat by spreading awareness



among school students and young masses. Minister Mahapatra stated that public awareness is necessary for environment protection. At the conclave, Bhubaneswar Sai International School student Akshyat

Nakshyatra bagged the Paribesh Ratna Chhatra Award. Akshyat said how and why the urban plantation programme has not been very successful. Urban plantation is mostly based on firewood-

type trees, which often pose a threat to the public lives and properties. It does not provide long-term, adequate environment protection. Trees like neem, baula, peepal and kadamba need to be planted as they are more hygienic and healthy for the people. Especially, more neem trees should be planted for protection against urban air pollution and contagious diseases. Akshyat requested Speaker Padhy to initiate a medicinal tree plantation programme in the Assembly and Secretariat campuses. Akshyat's interaction was highly appreciated by both the Speaker and the Minister.

# Student swept away in Chitrotpala river

**PNS ■ KENDRAPADA**  
An 18-year-old student was swept away in the Chitrotpala river in Kendrapada district on Saturday while he was taking a bath with two friends. This unfortunate incident happened at around 10 in morning. The victim identi-

fied as Kaushik Samantray was from Patakura in Jagannathpur village of Kendrapada district. According to reports, the teen, while bathing went a little deeper into the river where he accidentally stepped on a quicksand. Though his friends tried to pull him out,

he was swept away in the strong currents of the river. His friends alerted local villagers, but the victim could not be traced. The Garadpur Fire Department swiftly launched a search operation to find the boy. The search operation was underway till the time of filing of

this report. The incident highlights the dangers in rivers during the monsoon season and emphasises the need for better awareness and precaution among the people who live in flood-prone areas as well as those who go to rivers for their daily chores.

# 'Protect migrant workers by amending laws'



**PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR**  
Heat stress and climate change have a serious impact on employment, health and safety of the workers. The Union Government should promptly address the issue of heat and climate change, said general secretary, BWI Ambedkar Yuson while addressing about 100 national trade union leaders representing 45 trade unions.

Speaking on the occasion, INTUC national VP Dr RC Khuntia demanded that the Government should take all possible steps to protect migrant labourers. He said the BWI has filed a complaint with the ILO against South Arabia for harassment of construction workers in South Asia where the victims are mostly Indian workers. Khuntia, who also is a member of BWI

World Board, vice chairman of Asia Pacific, presided over the meeting. He said India need to immediately sign UNO Global Compact of Migration and amend the Interstate Migration Workmen Act, 1979 to protect the migrant workers. The meeting unanimously passed a resolution demanding immediate review of Construction Workers Welfare Board, coverage

of all construction and forest workers by EPF and ESI and special social security scheme for all forest workers. The committee also expressed strong objection to the implementation of 4 Labour Codes without consulting workers. It was resolved to submit a memorandum to the Central Government during the Parliament session in this regard.

# Polluted water in Sambalpur Women approach DM straightaway with samples

**NIMAIN CHARAN SAHU ■ SAMBALPUR**  
Women residents of Bhatra and Shankar Math chowk under the Sambalpur Municipal Corporation approached the district Collector's office, demanding clean drinking water. They carried bottles containing water samples from their taps, portraying the density of polluted water. In response, the district administration dispatched a team to assess the water quality and repair the water pipes in the area. The letter submitted by the women detailed their struggles with the current water supply. Due to numerous pipeline leakages, the water is unsuit-



able even for cleaning purposes, besides drinking. They urged the administration to address the water and drainage issues promptly and requested that water be supplied from the nearby available Hirakud reservoir water, which is just 100 meters away. Padmini Pati from Bhatra, Ward No. 36, expressed her frustration, saying, "The water problem in our area has been continuing for long. For the past three months, we have been getting polluted water.

Recently, the JE Sir had sent people to repair the pipes, but the same problem reoccurred after two days. Yesterday, a team visited and they found the water pipes lying in the drain. Since no officer visited the area, we felt compelled to come to the Collector's office to seek immediate action. Drain water is entering the pipelines. Many people in our area, including my own granddaughter, got stomach infections, leading to vomiting and fever."

General Manager of Sambalpur WATCO, Bramheswar Das stated, "We have received the information. Our team found a leakage in the water pipe in the area. The repair of that leakage is in process. Currently, it is not possible to supply water from the nearby Hirakud reservoir water supply centre, although the connection to that area from the centre already exists. We will strengthen the infrastructure to supply water through that connection."

# 778 Indian students return from violence-hit Bangladesh: MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A total of 778 Indian students have returned to India from Bangladesh through various land transit points, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Saturday as the neighbouring country continued to reel under deadly clashes over a controversial job-quota system. More than 50 people have, so far, died. Indian missions in Bangladesh are in regular touch with the authorities concerned to ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals and students, the MEA said. "Thus far, 778 Indian students have returned to India through various land ports. In addition, around 200 students have returned home by regular flight services through Dhaka and Chittagong airports," the ministry said. Bangladesh is reeling under deadly clashes, with protesting students demanding that the Sheikh Hasina-led government scrap the controversial job-quota system. More than 50 people have been killed in the clashes that broke out weeks ago.



MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal on Friday said the total number of Indian nationals in Bangladesh is estimated to be around 15,000. The MEA said the Indian High Commission in Dhaka and the assistant high commissions in Chittagong, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Khulna have been assisting the return of Indian nationals home. "In coordination with the local authorities, measures are being taken by the High Commission and the Assistant High Commissions to facilitate safe travel to the border crossing points along the India-

Bangladesh international border," it said in a statement. "The MEA is also coordinating with civil aviation, immigration, land ports and BSF authorities to ensure a smooth passage for our citizens," it added. The MEA said the Indian High Commission and assistant high commissions are in regular touch with more than 4,000 students remaining in various universities in Bangladesh and are providing necessary assistance. Students from Nepal and Bhutan have also been assisted with their crossing into India on request, it said.

# India, New Zealand to boost trade, economic ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a congratulatory call from his New Zealand counterpart Christopher Luxon on his reelection as the two leaders agreed to advance their bilateral ties in sectors such as trade and economic cooperation, animal husbandry, pharmaceuticals, education and space among others. Modi's office said in a statement on Saturday both leaders noted that India-New Zealand relationship is anchored in shared democratic values and close people-to-people ties, reiterating their firm commitment to take bilateral cooperation to new heights in the years to come. It said, "Highlighting the momentum generated by the recent high-level contacts between the two sides, they agreed to advance the mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in various areas, including trade and economic cooperation, animal husbandry, pharmaceuticals, education, space among others." Modi thanked Luxon for looking after the interests of



the Indian diaspora in New Zealand and was assured of his continued efforts towards their security and well-being. He later said in a social media post, "I thank Prime Minister Christopher Luxon for his call and warm felicitations. Reiterated our firm commitment to take forward India-

New Zealand ties, which are rooted in shared democratic values and people-to-people ties. Appreciate his efforts towards the security and well-being of the Indian diaspora in New Zealand." Modi returned to power for a third straight term in the recent Lok Sabha polls.

# Indian Armed Forces personnel to vie for top honours at Olympics

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Twenty four (24) Armed Forces personnel are among the 117 Indian athletes who are all set to make the nation proud at the Paris Olympics beginning July 26. Among these 24 athletes, 22 are men, including star Javelin Thrower Subedar Neeraj Chopra, and two are women, which marks the maiden participation of female Service athletes at the Olympics, defence ministry said here on Saturday. Chopra, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics Gold medalist, will again vie for top honours as his participation in the Paris Olympics comes on the back of exceptional performances which earned him a Gold medal each at the 2023 Asian Games, 2023 World Athletics Championship, 2024 Diamond League, and 2024 Paavo Nurmi Games. 2022 Commonwealth Games Bronze medalist Havildar Jaisime Lamboria and 2023 Asian Wrestling Championships Bronze medalist Reetika Hooda are the two women Service personnel who are taking part in

the Games for the first time, and would aim to create history. They will feature in Boxing and Wrestling respectively. Amit Panghal (Boxing); Tajinderpal Singh Toor (Shot-Put); Avinash Mukund Sable (3000m Steeplechase); Muhammed Anas Yahya, Muhammed Ajmal, Santhosh Kumar Tamilarasan Mijo Chacko Kurian (4X400M Men's Relay); Abdulla Aboobacker (Triple Jump); Tarundeep Rai and Dhiraj Bommadevara (Archery) and Sandeep Singh (Shooting) are also among the Service personnel who would aim to bring laurels to the country. The participation of the Service personnel at the Paris Olympics underscores the Armed Forces' commitment to promoting sporting excellence and fostering a culture of athleticism, while enhancing the sports consciousness across the nation. As the country gears up to witness the performances of these athletes, it stands united in extending best wishes and unwavering support to each participant.

# SC stays death penalty awarded to convict in rape and murder case

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has stayed the execution of the death sentence awarded to a man convicted for raping and murdering a 30-year-old law student in Kerala in 2016. A bench headed by Justice B R Gavai passed the order while hearing the convict's plea challenging the Kerala High Court's May 20 verdict that upheld his conviction and confirmed the death sentence handed to him by a trial court. "The execution of the death sentence shall remain stayed pending the hearing and final disposal of the present appeal," the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Karol and K V Viswanathan, said in its order passed on July 16. The high court had confirmed the death sentence awarded to Muhammad Ameer-Ul-Islam, a migrant



labourer who was 22 years of age at the time of the incident in April 2016. It had noted in its verdict that the facts were deeply disturbing and "represent an egregious violation of human dignity and sanctity of life, for after committing rape in an inhumane manner, the victim has also been murdered horrendously". According to the prosecu-

tion, the convict had barged into the victim's house on April 28, 2016 with an intention to rape her and when she resisted, he attacked her with a knife and inflicted injuries upon her. The prosecution further said the convict had escaped to his home state Assam the following day and was arrested in June 2016. In its order, the apex court

said the original case record be summoned from the trial court and the high court. The bench directed that the State shall place before it the reports of all the probation officers relating to the appellant within eight weeks. Besides passing other directions, it said the superintendent of prison, Central Prison and Correctional Home, Viyyur, shall submit within eight weeks a report regarding the nature of work performed by the appellant while in jail and a report with regard to his conduct and behaviour while in prison. "The Government Medical College, Thrissur shall constitute a suitable team for the purpose of carrying out a psychological evaluation of the appellant," it said, adding that the report of the evaluation be submitted before it within eight weeks. The top court has posted the

matter for further hearing after 12 weeks. In its judgment, the high court had said, "Before parting with the case, it is necessary to observe that it is with a heavy heart that we uphold the ultimate penalty of death sentence to the accused in the case." "We hope and fervently believe that this judgment would serve as a resolute deterrent to those who would consider perpetrating such abhorrent acts in future, so that persons similarly placed like the victim, who are innumerable in our society, would live with a sense of security and without fear," it had observed. The trial court had convicted the man for offences punishable under various sections of the Indian Penal Code, including that of rape and murder, and sentenced him to death.

# Plea in apex court for steps to eradicate superstition, sorcery

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre and states for taking appropriate steps to eradicate the menace of superstition, sorcery and other similar practices. The plea says a strict anti-superstition and sorcery law is urgently needed to do away with the unscientific acts prevalent in the society that adversely impact the community and also to prevent fake seers from exploiting innocent people. The petition, filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay, has also sought directions to the Centre and states for taking steps to develop a scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform among the citizens in the spir-

it of Article 51A of the Constitution, which deals with fundamental duties. "Petitioner is filing this writ petition as PIL under Article 32 seeking appropriate writ, order or direction to Centre and states to take appropriate steps to control superstition and sorcery in order to secure the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 21, 25 of the Constitution," the plea, filed through advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, says. It has alternatively sought a direction to the Centre to constitute an expert committee for ascertaining the feasibility of criminalising superstition, sorcery and other similar practices by adding a chapter in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS).

"A stringent anti-superstition and sorcery law is urgently needed to deal with the problem of irrational views prevalent in society. However, all of them cannot be eradicated by the force of law only. For this, a mental change is necessary," the plea says. It says bringing a legislation to deal with this social issue shall only mean half the battle won. "A meaningful reform will need to increase awareness among the masses through information campaigns and by roping in community/religious leaders to debunk the myths surrounding such practices," the plea says. It says some superstitious practices, which are brutal, dehumanising and exploitative, need to be dealt with by a law specifically addressing those.

# It is disconcerting how UPSC chief has resigned prematurely: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday said "multiple scandals" that have plagued the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) is a cause of national concern and claimed that its chairman Manoj Soni, who resigned citing personal reasons, has apparently been "nudged out" given the current controversy in which the Commission is involved. Soni has resigned citing personal reasons before the expiry of his tenure in May 2029, official sources said on Saturday. His resignation is "not in any way connected to controversies and allegations surrounding the UPSC after probational IAS officer Pujja Khedkar issue came to the

fore," they said. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge alleged the BJP-RSS is systematically indulging in an institutional takeover of India's constitutional bodies, thereby damaging their reputation, integrity and autonomy. "The multiple scandals that have plagued the UPSC is a cause of national concern. PM Modi and his Minister of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions must come clean. Numerous cases of unqualified individuals faking caste and medical certificates seemed to have duped a 'fool-proof' system," Kharge said in a social media post. This is a direct affront to the genuine aspirations of lakhs of aspirants, including SC, ST, OBC, EWS candidates who work hard, burning midnight

oil in preparing for the Civil Services Examinations, he said. "It is disconcerting how the UPSC Chairperson has resigned prematurely, five years before his term ends. Why was his resignation kept secret for a month? Is there any connection between the numerous scandals and the resignation?" Kharge said. "This 'blue-eyed-gem' of Modi ji was brought in from Gujarat and promoted to being the Chairperson of UPSC," he said. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel had referred to the civil servants as the 'Steel frame of India', but the Modi government's desperate attempt to control every aspect of governance has punched holes in the same, Kharge alleged. "This needs to be thoroughly investigated at the highest



level so that such cases of fraudulent malpractices in UPSC admissions don't happen in the future," he said. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra said the UPSC is the most reputed examination in the country and the people who come out of it are the most important pillars of the governance system.

"The trust of crores of people of the country and the functioning of our day-to-day governance is linked to the professional system of this institution," she said. "I have personally seen how hard the youth prepare for this exam, with lots of dreams in their eyes and passion in their hearts," Priyanka Gandhi said in a social media post in

Hindi. The news of irregularities in the processes of the UPSC is very surprising, she said. Even a single irregularity in this important selection process raises big questions and hurts the dreams and faith of lakhs of youth, Priyanka Gandhi said. "It is important that the public and the youth preparing for the UPSC get answers to these questions. Are the people who have come to the higher posts of the UPSC through political appointments responsible for this? If yes, then when will action be taken against them?" she said. In a system in which there is high level competition for every single mark, is it right to wash one's hands off by just conducting a superficial investigation, Priyanka Gandhi

asked. The system of fake certificates hurts the opportunities available to the candidates of SC, ST, OBC, handicapped and EWS category, she said. Can't a solid institutional mechanism for checking certificates be developed? she asked. There is a dire need for changes to make the UPSC system more transparent and authentic, Priyanka Gandhi said and asked whether this should be considered. "Questions related to the UPSC are questions related to trust in the government and administration of this country and the dreams of crores of our youth. It is important to get an answer from the government on this," she asserted. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh also slammed

the government, saying the sanctity and autonomy of all constitutional bodies have been badly damaged since 2014 -- the year Narendra Modi became the prime minister. Reacting to the development, Ramesh said, "The sanctity, character, autonomy, and professionalism of all constitutional bodies have been badly damaged since 2014. But at times even the self-anointed non-biological PM is forced to say enough in enough." He said, "Mr Modi brought in one of his favourite 'academics' from Gujarat as a UPSC member in 2017 and made him chairman in 2023 with a six year term. But this so-called distinguished gentleman has now resigned five years before the expiry of his term.

# Include Moidams of Ahom dynasty in world heritage list, UNESCO told

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Paris-based International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), one of the key advisory bodies to the UNESCO has recommended 'favourably' for inscription of Moidams -- a mound-burial system of the Ahom dynasty in Assam -- be included in the World Heritage List, an official from the Archeological Survey of India (ASI) has said. "This means it fulfils all those parameters. The ICOMOS experts had visited the nominated sites," Janhvi Sharma, Additional Director General, ASI, said, explaining that a site has to fulfil certain conditions in order to get the "world heritage" tag from the UNESCO. His statement at a press conference came a day before the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC), being held in the national capital from July 21 to July 31. It



will examine 27 nominations from across the world, including 19 cultural sites, four natural sites and two mixed sites, according to information shared by the culture ministry. Of these, India's nomination -- "Moidams" -- for the year

2023-24 is set to be examined under the category of cultural property, at a press conference here on Friday, Sharma, Additional Director General, ASI, said a site has to fulfil certain conditions in order to get the "world heritage" tag from the UNESCO.

"The ICOMOS has recommended favourably for inscription of Moidams, which means it fulfils all those parameters," he said. Vishal V Sharma, chairperson of the WHC and ambassador and permanent representative of India to the UNESCO, told

the reporters that if the nomination is accepted, it will be the first cultural property from the northeast to get a UNESCO tag, adding that the Kaziranga National Park and the Manas National Park fall in the natural and mixed heritage categories respectively. The mound-burial system of the Ahom dynasty has been submitted as India's nomination for inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List for the year 2023-24, the Centre informed Parliament in December. The unique burial mounds, represented by pyramid-like structures known as "moidams", were used by the Tai-Ahom dynasty that ruled Assam for around 600 years. More than 2,000 international and national delegates from over 150 countries are expected to participate in the mega event in Delhi. A number of side events are also being hosted by India as well as some other countries.

# Health Ministry criticises paper on life expectancy in India during Covid

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry has strongly criticised a recent paper published in the academic journal Science Advances, which claimed to analyse life expectancy and mortality trends during the Covid-19 pandemic in India in 2020. The Ministry pointed out critical flaws in the methodology used by the authors of the paper. It took note of the authors' analysis for analysing a subset of households from the NFHS-5 conducted between January and April 2021 and extrapolating these findings to the entire country. The Ministry argued that this subset, covering only 23% of households from 14 states, cannot be considered representative of the entire nation. The ministry defended the



accuracy of India's Civil Registration System (CRS), claiming it captures over 99% of deaths. They cited data showing an increase in death registrations from 2019 to 2020, similar to previous years, attributing excess deaths not solely to Covid-19 but also to increased reporting and a growing population. The Ministry also disputed the paper's claim of 11.9 lakh excess deaths in 2020 compared to the previous year, calling it a "gross and misleading overestimate." They

emphasised that excess mortality due to the pandemic does not equate to deaths directly caused by Covid-19. Pointing out inconsistencies in the paper's findings, particularly regarding the demographic distribution of excess mortality, the Ministry noted that other data sources consistently show higher mortality rates in males and older age groups due to Covid-19, whereas the paper suggested higher mortality among females and younger age groups, which they found "unexplainable." The ministry concluded that the paper is methodologically flawed and its results are deemed untenable and unacceptable. They expressed strong disagreement with the paper's conclusions and emphasised the robustness of India's data systems for mortality reporting.

# CrowdStrike failure highlights fragility of globally connected technology

**AP ■ WASHINGTON**

Airlines, banks, hospitals and other risk-averse organizations around the world chose cybersecurity company CrowdStrike to protect their computer systems from hackers and data breaches.

But all it took was one faulty CrowdStrike software update to cause global disruptions Friday that grounded flights, knocked banks and media outlets offline, and disrupted hospitals, retailers and other services.

"This is a function of the very homogenous technology that goes into the backbone of all of our IT infrastructure," said Gregory Falco, an assistant professor of engineering at Cornell University. "What really causes this mess is that we rely on very few companies, and everybody uses the same folks, so everyone goes down at the same time."

The trouble with the update issued by CrowdStrike and affecting computers running Microsoft's Windows operating system was not a hacking incident or cyberattack, according to CrowdStrike, which apologized and said a fix was on the way.

But it wasn't an easy fix. It required

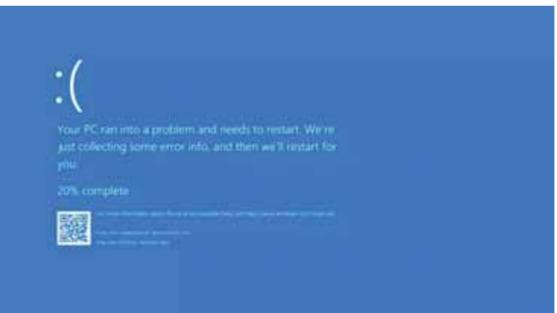
"boots on the ground" to remediate, said Gartner analyst Eric Grenier.

"The fix is working, it's just a very manual process and there's no magic key to unlock it," Grenier said. "I think that is probably what companies are struggling with the most here."

While not everyone is a client of CrowdStrike and its platform known as Falcon, it is one of the leading cybersecurity providers, particularly in transportation, healthcare, banking and other sectors that have a lot at stake in keeping their computer systems working.

"They're usually risk-averse organizations that don't want something that's crazy innovative, but that can work and also cover their butts when something goes wrong. That's what CrowdStrike is," Falco said. "And they're looking around at their colleagues in other sectors and saying, 'Oh, you know, this company also uses that, so I'm gonna need them, too.'" Worrying about the fragility of a globally connected technology ecosystem is nothing new. It's what drove fears in the 1990s of a technical glitch that could cause chaos at the turn of the millennium.

"This is basically what we were all



worried about with Y2K, except it's actually happened this time," wrote Australian cybersecurity consultant Troy Hunt on the social platform X. Across the world Friday, affected computers were showing the "blue screen of death" — a sign that something went wrong with Microsoft's Windows operating system.

But what's different now is "that these companies are even more entrenched," Falco said. "We like to think that we have a lot of players available. But at the end of the day, the biggest companies use all the same stuff."

Founded in 2011 and publicly traded since 2019, CrowdStrike describes itself in its annual report to financial regulators as having "reinvented cybersecurity for the cloud era and transformed the way cybersecurity is delivered and experienced by customers." It emphasizes its use of artificial intelligence in helping to keep pace with adversaries. It reported having 29,000 subscribing customers at the start of the year.

The Austin, Texas-based firm is one of the more visible cybersecurity companies in the world and spends heavily on marketing, including

Super Bowl ads. At cybersecurity conferences, it's known for large booths displaying massive action-figure statues representing different state-sponsored hacking groups that CrowdStrike technology promises to defend against.

CrowdStrike CEO George Kurtz is among the most highly compensated in the world, recording more than USD 230 million in total compensation in the last three years. Kurtz is also a driver for a CrowdStrike-sponsored car racing team.

After his initial statement about the problem was criticized for lack of contrition, Kurtz apologized in a later social media post Friday and on NBC's "Today Show."

"We understand the gravity of the situation and are deeply sorry for the inconvenience and disruption," he said on X.

Richard Stiennon, a cybersecurity industry analyst, said this was a historic mistake by CrowdStrike.

"This is easily the worst faux pas, technical faux pas or glitch of any security software provider ever," said Stiennon, who has tracked the cybersecurity industry for 24 years.

While the problem is an easy technical fix, he said, its impact could be

long-lasting for some organizations because of the hands-on work needed to fix each affected computer. "It's really, really difficult to touch millions of machines. And people are on vacation right now, so, you know, the CEO will be coming back from his trip to the Bahamas in a couple of weeks and he won't be able to use his computers," Stiennon said he did not think the outage revealed a bigger problem with the cybersecurity industry or CrowdStrike as a company. "The markets are going to forgive them, the customers are going to forgive them, and this will blow over," he said.

Forrester analyst Allie Mellen credited CrowdStrike for clearly telling its customers what they need to do to fix the problem. But to restore trust, she said there will need to be a deeper look at what occurred and what changes can be made to prevent it from happening again.

"A lot of this is likely to come down to the testing and software development process and the work that they've put into testing these kinds of updates before deployment," Mellen said. "But until we see the complete retrospective, we won't know for sure what the failure was."

# Houthi strike another ship in Gulf of Aden

**PTI ■ SINGAPORE**

A Singapore-flagged vessel was damaged in an attack allegedly by Houthi militants south-east of Yemen on Friday, the Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore (MPA) said in a statement.

The MPA said it was informed that container vessel the LOBIVIA was hit by "unidentified projectiles" while transiting the Gulf of Aden, resulting in a fire onboard that was subsequently extinguished by the crew.

There are no Singaporeans among the crew, Channel News Asia reported, citing the authority and adding that all crew are accounted for and safe. Despite being hit, the vessel was able to set sail and arrived at Somalia's Berbera Port. Damage assessment and repairs, if needed, will be carried out, it said.

MPA said it is in contact with the vessel manager to provide any assistance that might be needed. The Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) has also alerted its security partners in the Gulf of Aden region to provide help, it added.

In a televised speech, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said the group had launched ballistic missiles and drones towards the LOBIVIA. According to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, the LOBIVIA was hit about 83 nautical miles southeast of the port city of Aden, Yemen, on two separate occasions by two missiles.

"The ship was transiting northeast along the Gulf of Aden when a merchant vessel in the vicinity observed 'light and blast' where the ship was located," Channel News Asia had British security firm Ambrey as saying.

Ambrey said the ship appeared to perform evasive manoeuvres immediately and switched off its automatic identification system approximately an hour later.

Since November, Houthi militants in Yemen have launched drone and missile strikes in shipping lanes in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden. The group has said its actions are in solidarity with Palestinians affected by Israel's war in Gaza.

# Despite curfew, deaths mount in Bangladesh student protests

**AP ■ DHAKA**

Police imposed a strict curfew across Bangladesh and military forces patrolled parts of the capital Saturday to quell further violence after days of clashes over the allocation of government jobs left several people dead and hundreds injured.

The curfew follows what was likely the deadliest day yet in the weeks of protests despite a ban on public gatherings. Reports vary on the number of people killed Friday, with Somoy TV reporting 43. An Associated Press reporter saw 23 bodies at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital, but it was not immediately clear whether they all died on Friday.

Another 22 people died Thursday as protesting students attempted to impose a "complete shutdown" of the country. Several people were also killed Tuesday and Wednesday.

The protests, which began weeks ago but escalated sharply when violence erupted Tuesday, repre-

sent the biggest challenge to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina since she won a fourth consecutive term in office after elections in January that were boycotted by the main opposition groups. Police and protesters clashed in the streets and at university campuses in Dhaka and other cities across the south Asian country. Authorities moved to block online communications by banning mobile and internet services. Some television news channels also went off the air, and the websites of most Bangladesh newspapers were not loading or were being updated. Authorities could not be reached immediately to confirm figures for the overall deaths, but the Daily Prothom Alo newspaper reported 103 people were killed since Tuesday. The United States Embassy in Dhaka said Friday that reports indicated "hundreds to possibly thousands" were injured across Bangladesh. It said the situation was "extremely volatile."

Local media also reported that

some 800 inmates fled from a prison in Narsingdi, a district north of capital Dhaka, after protesters stormed the jail facility and set it on fire Friday. Meanwhile, one key government website, including that of Bangladesh's central bank and the prime minister's office, appeared to have been defaced by hackers.

The curfew began at midnight and is set to relax from noon to 2 pm to allow people to buy essentials before being put back in place until 10 a.m. Sunday. A "shoot-at-sight" order was also in place, giving security forces the authority to fire on mobs in extreme cases, said lawmaker Obaidul Quader, the general secretary of the ruling Awami League party.

The chaos highlights cracks in Bangladesh's governance and economy and the frustration of youths who lack good jobs upon graduation.

The protesters are demanding an end to a quota system that reserves up to 30% of govern-

ment jobs for relatives of veterans who fought in Bangladesh's war of independence in 1971 against Pakistan. They argue the system is discriminatory and benefits supporters of Hasina, whose Awami League party led the independence movement, and they want it replaced with a merit-based system. Hasina has defended the quota system, saying that veterans deserve the highest respect for their contributions to the war, regardless of their political affiliation.

Representatives from the both sides met late Friday to find a resolution. At least three student leaders were part of the meeting in which they demanded a reform in the quota system, an opening of student dormitories across the country and the stepping down of university officials for failing to prevent violence on the campuses.

Law Minister Anisul Huq said the government was open to discussing the student leaders' demands.



A Turkish parachuter prepares for a landing as fly over the military parade with a Turkish flag and portrait of the Kemal Ataturk, the founder of modern Turkey, during a military parade, in the Turkish occupied area of the divided capital Nicosia (Cyprus) on Saturday. The tinny howl of air raid sirens echoed across ethnically divided Cyprus at the crack of dawn on Saturday, marking 50 years from the day that changed the island nation's history. It's heard every year as the Greek Cypriot controlled south laments the date Turkish troops invaded in the wake of a coup by supporters of union with Greece. AP/PTI

# Biden vows to fight on; to get back on campaign trail next week

**PTI ■ WASHINGTON**

US President Joe Biden has said that he would continue his campaign for reelection and take on rival Donald Trump, as he deals with the fallout from his COVID-19 diagnosis and growing calls from Democrats for him to quit the race. Biden, who tested COVID-19 positive a few days ago, is in isolation at his Delaware residence, where he is expected to spend the rest of the week.

"Donald Trump's dark vision for the future is not who we are as Americans. Together, as a party and as a country, we can and will defeat him at the ballot box," Biden, 81, said in a statement issued by his campaign on Friday, a day after Trump, 78, formally accepted his party's presidential nomination at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee.

"I look forward to getting back on the campaign trail next week to continue exposing the threat of Donald Trump's Project 2025 agenda while making the case

for my own record and the vision that I have for America: one where we save our democracy, protect our rights and freedoms and create opportunity for everyone," he said.

The president also criticised Trump's Thursday night keynote speech at the Republican National Convention. "For over 90 minutes, he focused on his own grievances, with no plan to unite us and no plan to make life better for working people," said the president referring to Trump's speech.

"He avoided mentioning his Project 2025 agenda, but still proudly flaunted the worst of MAGA (Make America Great Again) extremism," Biden said. Americans know exactly where

he wants to take this country, Biden said.

The Biden-Harris campaign alleged that despite promising a call for unity and toned-down rhetoric, Trump's speech was a 90-minute reel of his greatest hits: focused entirely on himself, lashing out at his enemies, and laying out his grievances, and railing up his base with inflammatory extremism.

"Trump is still the same twice-impeached, 34-time convicted felon consumed by revenge and hellbent on seeking retribution in a second term. He did not turn a new leaf; he did not usher in a new era of civility; and he certainly did not change course," the campaign said.

Biden has been sidelined since Wednesday when he was diagnosed with COVID-19 moments before delivering remarks in Las Vegas. He abruptly cut his trip short and flew to his beach home.

Democrats remain split on whether Biden can beat Trump in November and on Friday at least 10 Democrats joined the chorus calling on Biden to resign.

# Trump pledges to end war during call with Zelenskyy

**PTI ■ WASHINGTON**

Donald Trump has pledged to end Ukraine's war with Russia after its President Volodymyr Zelenskyy reached out to the former US president to congratulate him on his Republican presidential nomination.

The two leaders spoke on Friday over the phone.

"President Zelenskyy of Ukraine and I had a very good and phone call earlier today. He congratulated me on a very successful Republican National Convention and becoming the Republican nominee for President of the United States," Trump said in a post on Truth Social, a social media post.

The call gains significance as this is his first conversation with a foreign leader after officially becoming the Republican Party's presidential nominee. It also reflects the growing realisation among the international community of his electoral

# Nepal PM Oli likely to win vote of confidence today

**PTI ■ KATHMANDU**

Nepal's newly appointed Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli is expected to win a vote of confidence in Parliament on Sunday, nearly a week after he was sworn in to lead another coalition government in the Himalayan nation facing frequent power struggles.

The 72-year-old veteran Communist leader was sworn in on Monday as the Himalayan nation's prime minister for the fourth time. He was administered the oath of office and secrecy along with 21 other members of the Cabinet.

According to Nepal's Constitution, Oli needs to secure a vote of confidence from Parliament within 30 days of appointment, which he is likely to secure easily.

The minimum number to form a government in the 275-strong House of Representatives is just 138. The Chairman of the CPN-

UML, Nepal's largest communist party was appointed as prime minister on Sunday by President Ram Chandra Paudel to lead the coalition government with the Nepali Congress (NC), the largest party in Parliament, apart from other smaller parties.

Nepali Congress and Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) have a combined strength of 167, and two other ruling parties, Janata Samajwadi Party and Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party, have seven and four seats, respectively.

With this, the ruling alliance has a strength of 178 in the 275-member HoR. Apart from the ruling alliance, Oli is also likely to get votes from the Rastriya Prajatantra Party (RPP), Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal (JSP), Nagarik Unmukti Party (NUP) and Janamat Party.

The RPP has 14 seats, JSP Nepal has five, NUP has four, and Janamat has six seats. Therefore, the alliance is like-

ly to secure more than 200 votes in the floor test, according to sources close to CPN-UML.

Oli succeeds Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who lost the vote of confidence in the HoR last week, leading to the formation of the new government.

The three Opposition parties — Prachanda's Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre (CPN-MC), Rastriya Swatantra Party (RSP), and Communist Party of Nepal-United Socialist (CPN-US) — held a joint meeting on Friday and decided not to support Oli in the vote of confidence.

The CPN-UML Chairman now leads the new coalition government that faces the daunting challenge of providing political stability in the Himalayan nation.

Nepal has faced frequent political turmoil as the country has seen 14 governments in the past 16 years after the introduction of the Republican system.

# Iran closer to developing a nuclear bomb: US

**AP ■ ASPEN**

Iran is talking more about getting a nuclear bomb and has made strides in developing a key aspect of a weapon since about April, when Israel and its allies overpowered a barrage of Iranian airstrikes targeting Israel, two top Biden administration officials said Friday.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken and national security adviser Jake Sullivan, speaking at separate panels during a security forum in Colorado, said the United States was watching closely for any signs that Iran had made a decision to pursue actual weaponization of its nuclear program.

However, Sullivan said, "I have

not seen a decision by Iran to move" in a way that signals it has decided to actually develop a nuclear bomb right now.

"If they start moving down that road, they'll find a real problem with the United States," Sullivan said at the Aspen Security Forum, which draws US policymakers, journalists and others. Iran resumed progress on its nuclear program after the Trump administration ended US cooperation with a 2015 deal that gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for allowing tougher oversight of the program.

Iran says its nuclear program is for civilian purposes. The US and others in the international community believe Iranian

Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei long has held off from giving any final go-ahead for Iranian scientists to develop a nuclear weapon.

But Iran's poor performance with conventional weapons on April 13, when it launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel as part of a dayslong exchange of strikes, has had observers watching for any increased Iranian interest in pushing forward with a nuclear weapon.

At the time, Israel said it, the United States and other allies shot down 99% of about 300 missiles and drones launched by Iran following an alleged Israeli strike that killed two Iranian generals.

"What we've seen in the past

weeks and months is Iran is actually moving forward" on developing fissile material, Blinken said Friday. Fissile material could be used to fuel a bomb.

He blamed the decision by the Trump administration to pull out of the nuclear agreement. "Trump called the deal 'defective at its core' when he ended US participation in 2019."

"Instead of being at least a year away from having breakout capacity to produce fissile material for a nuclear weapon, they're probably one or two weeks away from doing that," Blinken said, adding that "where we are now is not a good place."

"Now, they haven't produced a weapon itself, but ... you put

those things together, fissile material, an explosive device, and you have a nuclear weapon," he said.

The United States was watching "very, very carefully" for any sign that Iran was working on the weapon side of producing a bomb, he said. The US is also working on the diplomatic side to contain any further effort, Blinken said.

Meanwhile, Sullivan said, the US has noted "an uptick of public commentary from Iranian officials musing about that possibility" since the April attacks and counterattacks between Iran and Israel and its allies. "That was new. That was something that got our attention," he said.

a rare moment of hope in war ravaged Gaza, after a medical teams recovered a live baby from a heavily pregnant Palestinian mother killed in an airstrike that hit her home in Nuseirat late Thursday evening.

Heavily pregnant Ola al-Kurd, 25, was killed along with six others in the blast, but was quickly rushed by emergency workers to Al-Awda Hospital in northern Gaza in the hope of saving the unborn child. Hours later, doctors told The Associated Press that a baby boy had been delivered. The still-unnamed newborn is stable but has suffered from a shortage of oxygen and

has been placed in an incubator, said Dr. Khalil Dajran.

**PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY MARINE DEPARTMENT**  
 No. MD/ACT/SW/R-08/2024/797 Date: 12.07.2024  
**E-TENDER CALL NOTICE (E-TCN)**  
 Name of the Work: Hiring of 01 no. Mooring Launch along with operational crew for daily one shift operation for a period of 07 (Seven) years. Total Estimated cost (including Hire Charges and Fuel Cost): Rs.12,11,88,139/- excluding GST. Estimated cost put to tender for hire charges only : Rs.5,16,20,976/- Excluding GST. Last date & time of Submission of tender through on-line bidding is 17:00 Hours on 05.08.2024. Date & time for opening of Technical Bid is 15:30 hours on 06.08/2024. For further details, please log on to the website: <https://procure.gov.in/eprouter/app/>.  
 Sd/- Deputy Commissioner, Paradip Port Authority  
 PPA/PN/23/2024-2025 dtd.17.07.2024

# India preferred destination for investors, says Goyal

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal on Saturday appealed to the Indian diaspora of the US to help promote the country as a preferred investment destination, highlighting the vast opportunities available in various sectors. He said that the government has taken a series of measures to attract investments and those steps include promoting ease of doing business, reducing compliance burden, opening sectors like space and efface for foreign direct investments.

Goyal also asked the diaspora to participate in making India a developed nation by 2047. "Help promote brand India as a premium investment destination. Investing in India has tremendous growth potential and we saw NRI deposits (increasing to) USD 3 billion between April and May, and that is four times what it was last year. I am sure many of you would be looking at investments in the Indian stock market, bond



market, banking systems, fixed deposits, depending on your appetite for risks," he said while virtually interacting with the Indian diaspora of the US. He added that though at present the US is attractive for investors because of high interest rates, going forward India provides huge opportunities for businesses. "I would invite all of you to invest in India. India's growth story will continue unfettered at a scorching pace. India would continue to lead the world economy and will continue to be the most favoured destination for investment, and

evolving dynamics, what changed, what we need to focus on. After an election, there is always a period of time when anybody who has performed better than expected does have a little more arrogance and somebody who has performed less than expected does take time to introspect and course correction. "So I think it's too early to provide the solution and talk of the solutions, but I can assure you that nobody here is resting one minute of the day, we are all focused," he added. Replying to a question on judicial reforms, the minister said that it is a delicate subject. "Everybody who becomes a judge talks of judicial reforms but resists any reforms, so it's a conundrum that we have to break. I am fairly confident that it's an idea whose time has come and we will see this sector also undergoing reform particularly to reduce the pendency of cases and the long duration to get justice," he said.

# Credai wants tax sops for homebuyers to construct affordable houses

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realtors' body Credai on Saturday urged the government to provide more tax benefits to homebuyers, offer incentives to builders to develop low-cost homes and streamline the approval process to undertake real estate projects in the upcoming Budget. Credai, in a statement, said it has given various recommendations to the government for further growth of the real estate sector. These recommendations emphasise the importance of measures like streamlined approval processes and subsidies for developers investing in affordable housing projects, the association said. "With its significant contribution to the GDP, employment generation and infrastructure development, the Indian Real Estate sector looks forward to a supportive budget that addresses certain long-standing challenges and sets the platform for sustainable and sustained



growth. Our recommendations are aimed at sustaining demand through a slew of measures, including increasing in interest exemption for home buyers, reintroduction of CLSS (credit linked subsidy scheme), and steps required to boost Affordable housing," Credai President Boman Irani said. To stimulate homebuying, Credai said the finance ministry should consider allowing unlimited interest deductions for the first self-occupied property or increasing the deduction limit to Rs 5 lakh from Rs 2 lakh currently. Dominic Romell, President of CREDAI-MCHI, said the real

estate sector is hopeful for measures to boost the sentiment. He demanded that the government should finally grant industry status to the sector and take effective steps to rejuvenate the affordable housing segment, which has been struggling since the pandemic. "Many incentives for buyers and developers of affordable housing have lapsed in the last two years, exacerbating the issue," he pointed out. High-impact measures like tax breaks are needed to revitalise this crucial segment, Romell said. PropEquity founder and CEO Samir Jasuja stressed the need for a single-window clearance system to ensure timely approvals for real estate projects. Ramesh Menon, founder and Director of Delhi Consortium, said it is crucial for the real estate sector to be granted 'industry status' in the budget 2024. The government should take proactive measures to boost demand, rationalise costs, and minimise regulatory bottlenecks, he added. Gaur's Group CMD Manoj Gaur, "The real estate has pinned high hopes on the forthcoming budget. First of all, the sector is looking for the reintroduction of the interest subvention scheme to revive mass housing." Secondly, we are also seeking a redefinition of affordable housing. The present limit should be increased from 90 square metres and Rs 45 lakhs in terms of space and pricing, respectively. Sandeep Chhillar founder and Chairman of Landmark Group said, "The real estate sector expects the government to look into its long pending demands of industry status and single window clearance". Vivek Singhal, CEO of Smartworld Developers, emphasised having single-window clearance for real estate projects.

# EPFO officers raise concern over inadequate IT infrastructure

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Employees' Provident Fund Officers' Association has sought the Union Labour Minister's intervention to improve the information technology infrastructure of the retirement fund body. In a letter to the minister earlier this week, the EPFO Officers' Association (EPFOA) said it has been regularly submitting requests for urgent interventions to upgrade the EPF IT systems - software, hardware, IT manpower - which are causing acute strain on EPF manpower and adversely affecting EPFO services. The situation has now turned

serious with officers and offices reporting significant system deficiencies on a daily basis, the association said. Severely inadequate EPFO IT systems and resultant service bottlenecks are adversely affecting EPF services, it added. The EPFO application software serves as the foundational component of its service delivery infrastructure. The body said it is the primary platform through which our regional offices process and adjudicate member claims. In recent times, the software has exhibited significant instability, characterised by frequent outages, it stated.

Over the past several weeks, the application's performance has deteriorated, manifesting in frequent system slowdowns, involuntary user logout and complete system failures, it pointed out. Previously, the EPFO management attributed the software performance issues to concurrent user logins. However, it said, the situation has escalated to a critical juncture where system crashes and slowdowns occur even in the absence of heavy user traffic. It has been observed that field offices have reported system failures during off-peak hours as



well, it stated. The exigency of a comprehensive overhaul of the EPFO application

software has been apparent for quite some time now, it noted. Despite this critical need, the implementation of such an overhaul has been repeatedly postponed for reasons that remain obscure, the body added. While the EPFO is a financially robust organisation independent of the government administrative funding, the delay in launching the 2.0 version of the application software stands in stark contrast to rapid technological

advancements achieved by other departments, such as the Income Tax department, it stated. This discrepancy suggests a systemic failure to acknowledge the gravity of the situation, EPFOA pointed out. Any technological challenges have been vehemently denied, and emphasis placed on purported progress, it added. It is reasonable to speculate that the claim settlement process would be exponentially accelerated with a fully functional software system. "We respectfully urge your immediate attention to the escalating frustration experienced by EPFO officers and staff due to

the persistent deficiencies of the application software and perceived unresponsiveness of upper management," EPFOA said in the letter. A comprehensive evaluation of the software by leading industry experts is imperative to diagnose the root causes of the issues and develop a contemporary software solution commensurate with the EPFO's status as the world's largest social security organisation, it suggested. "Over the past thirty months, we have consistently brought to the attention of the CPFC the ongoing critical issues affecting the EPFO's IT infrastructure," the body said.

# Pearl Global Industries raises ₹149.5 cr through QIP issue

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Apparel manufacturer and exporter Pearl Global Industries has raised Rs 149.50 crore from qualified institutional investors for repayment of certain debt and inorganic growth, among others. The qualified institutional placement (QIP) attracted notable investors such as HDFC Mutual Fund, ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund and Goldman Sachs Fund," it said in a statement on Saturday. The company has "successfully completed the QIP by raising Rs 149.50 crore," it said. Pearl Global said it issued 20,45,143 equity shares of the face value of Rs 5 each at a price of Rs 731.00 per equity share. "Total shares outstanding post allotment are 45,642,367," the company said. PGIL plans to use these funds for funding working capital requirements, repayment of certain outstanding borrowings, inorganic growth initiatives and general corporate purposes. "By strategically allocating these funds, we aim to strengthen our market presence, innovate our product offerings, streamline our ESG initiatives, and invest more in sustainable products and business operations," Pearl Global Industries Ltd (PGIL) Managing Director Pallab Banerjee said. PGIL is primarily engaged in designing, manufacturing, sourcing, distribution and export of ready to wear apparel for men, women and kids through its domestic and global manufacturing facilities and supply chains. The company has manufacturing facilities in India and four other countries. PGIL shares closed at Rs 819.50 on BSE on Friday.

# Union Bank net profit rises 13.7% to 3,679 cr; flags challenges on margins

PTI ■ MUMBAI

State-owned Union Bank of India on Saturday reported a 13.7 per cent growth in net profit to Rs 3,679 crore for the June 2024 quarter and flagged challenges on the net interest margin front. The bank's core net interest income grew 6.5 per cent to Rs 9,412 crore on the back of an 11.5 per cent growth in advances. Its net interest margin narrowed by over 0.13 per cent to 3.05 per cent. The other income increased 15.53 per cent to Rs 4,509 crore on healthy growth in the core fee income. The net interest income and other income were down when compared to the March quarter, and the bank's managing director and chief executive A Manimekhalai attributed the same to a general tendency for a softer first quarter in the industry.



Additionally, the reporting quarter also witnessed the general elections, which led to some slack, she added. On the NIMs front, the CEO said that while the number is higher than the guidance of 2.8-3 per cent, it is a challenge to maintain the number above 3 per cent. There are pressures from the higher cost funds, she said, pointing to the continuing wedge between deposit and credit growth in the industry, which is keeping the deposit

rates elevated. The bank is comfortable on the liquidity front and has an excess statutory liquidity ratio of Rs 65,000 crore, she said, affirming the earlier guidance of getting credit growth between 11-13 per cent and deposits to increase by 8-10 per cent. She, however, made it clear that the bank will not compromise on the margins to grow the book and added that during the June quarter alone, it had to fund Rs 15,000 crore of advances because it did not meet its NIMs expectations. It has a pipeline of Rs 54,000 crore of large corporate advances, she said, adding that much of the demand continues to be from state-owned companies and private capex is yet to be witnessed. The large corporate book grew at over 7 per cent during the quarter, while the growth in

education and gold loans was the highest at over 40 per cent each, she said, adding that retail now constitutes 56 per cent of the book while the rest is wholesale. On the asset quality front, the fresh slippages came at Rs 2,318 crore, and the gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 4.54 per cent. The overall provisions increased to Rs 4,106 crore from the year-ago period's Rs 3,943 crore and were attributed to general slippages and higher money set aside in a couple of accounts, which are witnessing some stress. Its overall capital adequacy stood at 17.92 per cent, with the core tier-1 at 13.81 per cent. The bank's head said it has an enabling provision to raise up to Rs 6,000 crore in core equity from the board and may look at it depending on the growth in advances.

# Oberoi Realty net profit jumps 82% to ₹584.51 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Oberoi Realty Ltd has reported an 82 per cent increase in its consolidated net profit to Rs 584.51 crore for the first quarter of the current fiscal on higher income. Its net profit stood at Rs 321.64 crore in the year-ago period. The total income also rose to Rs 1,441.95 crore in the April-June quarter of 2024-25 from Rs 933.56 crore in the corresponding period of the previous year, according to a regulatory filing on Friday. Vikas Oberoi, Chairman and Managing Director, Oberoi Realty, said, "India continues to be the fastest growing major economy, effectively managing global challenges by leveraging its solid



economic foundations and proactive policymaking for growth". The Indian real estate market has witnessed strong demand across various segments, solidifying its position as the preferred investment avenue, he added. "We are pleased to announce another successful quarter,

driven by healthy demand in the luxury real estate market with homeowners constantly looking to elevate their lifestyles," Oberoi said. Oberoi Realty is gearing up for new project and tower launches, scaling up its annuity assets and strategic land acquisitions, he noted. "We are committed to achieving sustainable growth with a focus on creating lasting value for all our stakeholders," Oberoi said. Mumbai-based Oberoi Realty, one of the leading real estate developers in the country, is into the development of residential, office, retail and hospitality projects. During the last 2023-24 fiscal, the company posted a net profit of Rs 1,926.60 crore over a total income of Rs 4,818.77 crore.

# RBL Bank Q1 net profit grows 29% to ₹372 cr

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Private sector lender RBL Bank on Saturday reported a 29 per cent jump in net profit to Rs 372 crore for the June quarter. The bank's core net interest income grew 20 per cent to 1,700 crore on the back of a 19 per cent rise in advances. Its net interest margin was 5.67 per cent. The other income grew 18 per cent to Rs 805 crore. The bank's deposit growth came at 18 per cent during the quarter and was attributed to the differentiated offerings by its managing director and chief executive R Subramaniakumar. The incremental deposit growth will be able to meet the incremental advance growth for the bank going forward, he said. On the advances front, the bank will focus on secured retail products like business loans and housing loans going



forward, he said, adding that the two cumulatively grew by 19 per cent, while housing rose 52 per cent and rural vehicle surged 74 per cent. From an asset quality perspective, it witnessed higher stress with the net slippages in the credit card portfolio coming at Rs 400 crore. The MD said over Rs 60 crore of it came from a transition in the management of the portfolio to within the bank from a co-brand partner, and added that the bank expects a part of it to reverse to become well-performing in a couple of quarters.

The overall gross non-performing assets ratio improved to 2.69 per cent from 3.22 per cent in the year-ago period. It had to halt microfinance disbursements during the first two months of the quarter due to the elections, but the same is now getting normalised. Its collection efficiencies have also slipped in some pockets, and it expects to come back on the same going ahead. A senior bank official said that the NIMs will be flat for the first two quarters, and it expects an increase in the number in the second half of the fiscal. The overall capital adequacy stood at 15.56 per cent, of which the core buffer was 13.85 per cent. The MD said that while it is approaching the shareholders with an enabling provision to raise money, there are no immediate plans to raise capital in the current fiscal.

# Tea industry seeks higher RoDTEP rates to make exports competitive

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The tea industry has sought higher rates under the RoDTEP scheme to make exports more competitive in the overseas markets. Leading industry body Indian Tea Association (ITA), in its pre-budget memorandum, said that the present RoDTEP rate for bulk tea is 1.7 per cent (free on board) subject to a cap of Rs 6.70 per kilogram. The association urged the government to increase the reward base rate under the Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) for black tea in bulk to remain competitive in the international markets. The RoDTEP scheme ensures that exporters receive refunds on embedded taxes and duties that were previously non-recoverable. Another industry body Tea Association of India (TAI), in its pre-budget proposal submitted to the government,



said the RoDTEP rate for tea should be higher than the earlier MEIS (merchandise exports incentive scheme) of five per cent to enable Indian tea to retain its competitiveness in the global market. Since its inception in January 2021, the RoDTEP scheme has already provided support amounting to Rs 42,000 crores to more than 10,500 export items, an official statement said in March. The association has also sought for imposition of an anti-dumping duty on imports of Nepal tea. The TAI said that this measure would prevent the

dumping of cheap and duty-free tea from Nepal and boost exports of genuine Darjeeling tea. Such a measure would also thwart the passing off of Nepalese tea as a geographical indication (GI) tag product. The ITA said that the government should exempt tea from levy on TDS on cash withdrawals due to a lack of banking infrastructure in the tea-growing areas in the country. The association has sought concessional customs duty on imports of specified machinery required for tea production. In its pre-budget memorandum, ITA said that the modernisation of the plantation sector is dependent on the upgradation of machinery which is not available within the country. The government should grant a concessional import tariff on specified tea machinery items, the industry body said.

The association also said in the memorandum that the government should increase fund allocation for tea development and promotion scheme for the period 2021-26. According to ITA, the Tea Board's new promotion and development scheme for the 2021-26 period has discontinued plantation development and factory upgradation incentives for big growers. The "lack of financial support" from the government has incapacitated the tea producers' ability to bring about improvement in quality and productivity leading to long-term impact on "viability", the association said. The ITA also sought that the fund allocation for the period 2021-26 be enhanced to enable restoration and implementation of the erstwhile incentive schemes for big growers.

# STORY OF INDIA'S FIRST OLYMPIC QUALIFIER IN HEAVY WEIGHT CLASS OF 76KG

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Going through the painful and energy-sucking process of weight-cutting is a nightmare for wrestlers but Reetika Hooda did not have to worry about it. Wrestlers usually have to go without food, sometimes even without water, to ensure that the weight scale does not tilt against them. But Reetika's team ensures that she takes additional small meals to gain strength, and chicken was added to the meal plan, defying the family tradition. She goes through all these because the 22-year-old wrestler from Rohtak used to compete in 72kg but last year she jumped weight class to see if she can succeed in the Olympic weight-class of 76kg. She not only succeeded, but pushed out established wrestlers like Kiran Bishnoi, whom she idolises, to qualify for the Paris Olympics after crowning herself as the U23 World Champion. Her natural body weight is around 74-75 kg. So, it was never a great struggle to bring it to 72, not even now. Her

body type is such that weight drops quickly. But the real struggle is to take the weight to 78kg. "I just munch, train, munch, train and repeat. Of course, it's healthy protein intake. I have a different struggle," she said with a hearty laugh just before a training session. "I have 3 meals in my schedule and I have to eat in between as well. Before sleeping also, I take something. My nutritionist Mitali decides what I need to eat and mother ensures that I have that. "I had to start eating chicken for protein intake. It was difficult to develop a taste for that. My mother tried a lot of combinations and now I have settled for a semi-gravy type chicken. No one eats chicken in my family," she added. Her mother Neelam is aware of the requirement and learnt a few chicken recipes from YouTube. "We don't eat chicken at home. So, I had no clue how to prepare it. I was told that she had to be given home-made food. So, I took help from YouTube to learn. I don't like washing it (chicken), I get a strange feeling. But I do it for my daughter," said Neelam, a



REETIKA'S FITNESS REGIME

school level basketball player. As she prepares for the Paris Olympics, Reetika reveals that qualifying for 2024 Games was not even the target, and

actually, they have exceeded their own expectations. "I was considered a probable for 2028 Games. Last year's U23 world title motivated me

to do well at senior level." **THE JOURNEY: SWITCH FROM HANDALL:** Reetika is a strong believer in destiny. She says she can do what is in her

hands -- working hard -- rest everything will fall in place if it had to. Her career underlines that belief. She did not even pick wrestling

as her preferred sport. She used to play handball and even made it to the state team for the junior Nationals but as fate would have it, her father suggested that she pick an individual sport instead of a team game. The journey began in 2015. "My father took me to Chhotu Ram Akhada. I was asked to perform a certain attack by my coach Mandeep and he was happy the way I did it, so they took me in. Now wrestling is everything. I eat, sleep, dream about wrestling. I can't think of anything else," said Reetika. Neelam said it was Reetika's father Jagbir who wanted her daughter to pick an individual game. "She was picked to play Nationals as goalie of the state handball team. She came home and broke the story about her selection. Her father asked if she really wants to pursue sport seriously and when Reetika nodded, he said you should play an individual game. He asked Reetika her preferred sport and she mentioned Judo and kabaddi but her father suggested to take up wrestling and she agreed. On 15 August 2015, she was

enrolled in Akhada," recalled Neelam. Talk about the Paris Olympics, Reetika gets philosophical. "I can only put in hard yards, which I am doing. If you are meant to achieve something it will fall in your lap. I did not even think of winning the Under 23 world championship. "I didn't even know that I was up against a world champion (Kennedy Blades from USA) in the final. But it was meant for me so I got it. "I have idolised Kiran di (Bishnoi) since taking up this sport and see now I beat her in the Olympic trials. "I also beat Divya Kakran in the National Games. These wins boosted my confidence and I began to believe that destiny is pushing me in a certain direction and I will play along." Reetika says a tough draw and big names do not demotivate or scare her. "I actually enjoy competing against the big wrestlers. There will be 16 wrestlers in every weight class and I have studied each and every wrestler's game style through UWW videos and YouTube. "When the draw is made, I will know who are the four in my group but I am ready for anyone," she signed off.

## We will pick a coach who can bring results, won't go by big names: AIFF president Chaubey



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey said the new head coach of the national team will be picked based on the ability to bring in right results, and a high-profile candidate will not be selected blindly. The AIFF Executive Committee is due to meet soon to decide the successor of Igor Stimac, who resigned as head coach after India lost nine matches and drew two in his last 12 games in charge. "I believe the result matters a lot. We will be looking at someone who can develop Indian football. And whoever gets appointed as chief coach, we want him to add a lot of potential to the national team's performance," Chaubey told PTI in an interview. The incoming head coach will have some important assignments such as a tri-nation tournament in October that also involves hosts Vietnam and Lebanon. Chaubey hoped the new coach can bring in some desired results from these events. "We are looking to utilise all the FIFA windows which we have in the month of September, October, November and March next year," he said.

These tournaments, Chaubey said, will give Indian players more international exposure. "No matter whether we play against a lower-ranked team or higher-ranked team, the aim is to win. It will also create more match time for players. Yes, these matches will also give more international exposure to the players," he added. Chaubey said there was an overwhelming response to the advertised position of the head coach of the Indian men's football team. "We have received a total of 291 applications and we have shortlisted 17 names from them. There are Indian and foreign names. We will have a detailed discussion about them in the Executive Committee meeting," he noted. Chaubey said former Indian captain IM Vijayan, who is now the head of the technical committee, will also be consulted. "We are in touch with the technical committee. As Vijayan is overseas now, he will be consulted through a virtual meeting," he said. Chaubey said players like Lallianzuala Chhangte have the potential to step in for former skipper Sunil Chhetri, who recently retired from international football. Chhangte was adjudged the Best Men's Player during the AIFF awards on Friday. "Who is after Sunil Chhetri? This question comes to everybody's mind. I think Chhangte, who has won the player of the year award this year, has a lot of potential. He can definitely make a long career. Such awards will inspire a player to put in an even bigger effort," he said.

## I will miss my daughter, but it's also about achieving Olympic medal: Archer Deepika

PTI ■ JAUX (FRANCE)

Deepika Kumari is torn between two worlds. One where the doting mother longs to be with her 19-month-old daughter Vedika, and another where the ace Indian archer craves for an elusive Olympic medal. But the resilience she showed in fusing those two different spaces in her life has taken Deepika to the Paris Games, the fourth showpiece in her career. Deepika's determination to achieve glory in the ultimate sporting event in the world was evident when she stayed away from her daughter for two months to finetune her preparation. "It's difficult to explain the pain of being away from my daughter. But it's also about achieving what we have worked for over so many years," Deepika told PTI in an exclusive interaction. Finally, Atanu Das, her husband and himself an international archer, took Vedika to Army Sports Institute in Pune just before Deepika departed to Paris. It was an achingly emotional moment for Deepika. "I miss her a lot, but that's how it is. Thankfully, she has been really supportive and has adapted well with my in-laws and Atanu," added Deepika. But Deepika's turmoil had started immediately after giving birth to her daughter in December 2022. She developed muscle stiffness and lifting the 19-kg bow was next to impossible. "We had planned for the delivery in such a way that we would be able to compete in Paris. But it was like starting from zero after the delivery. "Forget about shooting or lifting the bow, she was not able to do even simple daily chores," Atanu recalled. "Gradually, she started jogging and put in a lot of hard work at the gym to get going again." Deepika even thought that her career has come to a close. "Career lagta hai khatam ho gaya, kya main aur shooting nahin kar paongi? (It seems my career is over... Won't I be able to shoot again?)" she would ask Das.



But then came the flicker of hope. Deepika dominated the National Games in Goa last year, returning with two gold and one silver. It led her to the big decision of training under the legendary Korean coach Kim Hyung-Tak, the first full time coach under whom the archery heavyweights made their debut at Los Angeles in 1984. "It was not just about the skill aspect but his guidance also plays a part in bringing clarity to shooting. It really set me off," said Deepika, who won a silver at the Shanghai World Cup, her first podium finish in two years. "Subsequently, the 30-year-old excelled in the three-month long selection trials, even though her husband-cum-mentor Atanu failed to make the cut. **LIM FACTOR:** Despite her phenomenal feats in other world meets, Deepika is yet to bag that coveted medal with five rings on it. She came close to it in Tokyo but lost to eventual gold winner An San in the quarterfinals.

But this time the Indian will have a 21-year-old South Korean Lim Si-hyeon to tame in Paris. Lim has defeated Deepika twice this year - at Shanghai and then at the Yecheon World Cup. Deepika is not worried. "I cannot change the past. I'm fully prepared and happy with the way I'm shooting. We will see what happens on the match day if at all we have a match-up," she added. **HAPPY PARIS MEMORIES, BUT NO PRESSURE:** Paris has been a happy-hunting ground for Deepika where she won a hattrick of gold medals in the 2021 World Cup - individual, team and mixed team along with Atanu. She had also clinched a World Cup Final silver in 2013 and a World Cup silver last year in the French capital. But she wanted to treat the Olympics as any other top-level competition. "I don't understand why there is so much hype surrounding the Olympics in our country. Everyone looks up to archery once the Olympics nears and it creates unnecessary pressure.

"We have to take it like any other competition. The pressure (on the Indians) is more mental," she said. Deepika wanted to remain under the radar. "I don't want any attention. We have done well consistently to be able to make it here. We just have to get a good rank in the qualification to get a favourable draw." **DEEPIKA - DHIRAJ COMBINATION:** The individual rankings determine the mixed team and on current form, Deepika and Dhiraj Bommadevara could be shooting together. Dhiraj has been in phenomenal form winning 10 international medals in the last 12 months including a team gold beating Korea. He also won an individual bronze at Antalya World Cup stunning Tokyo silver medalist Mauro Nespoli. "He is young and uber cool and an individual medal prospect. He doesn't falter in big moments," said India's high-performance director Sanjeeva Singh. So, will Dhiraj take some pressure off Deepika? "If they top the qualifiers, they will be India's best recurve mixed team combination," he said. Deepika remembers the controversy in Tokyo when she had to unwillingly partner Pravin Jadhav in the mixed team event as the latter had qualified ahead of Atanu. The national federation could have changed the combination but they went by the rule and the team exited in the last eight. "I don't want to talk about what happened. Dhiraj has been shooting well and we hope for the best," Deepika added. Will she miss the presence of Atanu in Paris? "He has a greater responsibility -- to take care of Vedika," she smiled clutching an empty bag, a gift from her husband. "I've told her she must win the medal and bring it back in this bag," Das said. Perhaps, she can cram in an Olympic medal and some baby clothes and toys.

## Wrestlers will continue medal-winning trend in Paris: Yogeshwar

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

London Olympics bronze winner Yogeshwar Dutt is confident that wrestling will yet again fetch India a medal at the Olympic Games and the number could be more than one if the grapplers get a favourable draw. India will have a six-member wrestling contingent in Paris where the mat competition will begin on August 5. Only Aman Sehrawat (57kg) could qualify in the men's section but the women put up a strong show by qualifying in five of six Olympic weight divisions. Only 62kg is missing from the list. India have not missed a wrestling medal since 2008 Beijing Games where the legendary Sushil Kumar won a bronze. "A lot will depend on the draw. If India get a favourable draw, then I am expecting three medals," Yogeshwar Dutt told PTI Videos on the sidelines of an AIFF event. "In the last four consecutive Olympics, we got medals from Wrestling. So I hope, wish & pray the fifth time in a row, wrestling will bring medal for the nation. I wish all the wrestlers all the very best. I think they are well-prepared," said Yogeshwar. "After hockey, wrestling has given India the most number of medals. It has given seven medals ahead of all other Olympic sports. Wrestling is without doubt the number one individual Olympic sport for India." The former India wrestler, who is also a BJP leader now, feels that India will return with its best ever show in Olympics. "I am expecting Indian contingent to win more than 10 medals," he said.

AP ■ PARIS

Marta can't help but be nostalgic heading into her last big tournament with the Brazilian national team. But, for the 38-year-old six-time world player of the year, the time has come to step away finally. "I contributed what I (was) supposed to give to the national team, you know? I'm feeling so comfortable to leave because when I look around me, I see really, really good players, young players, who can keep doing the work and keep representing Brazil so well," Marta said. Marta will play in her sixth Olympics in France before handing the team she captains to the next generation. "It's been so much of my life since I was 14, I left home and then I just live soccer every single day," she added. "I just feel like maybe it's time to just take a little bit away from that and let the young players shine." A tournament championship would be the perfect way to cap an international career that has spanned over 20 years, and her teammates know it. "I feel like every time you step on the field, playing with Marta by your side, it's such a great responsibility. She's a great player and we have to play for her now,"

## Marta pursues soccer gold at Olympics while preparing to pass torch to Brazil's youngsters

said defender Rafaella. "She was like my biggest idol since I was growing up. So, playing with her now is such a dream for me." Better known just by her first name, Marta Vieira da Silva has scored a record 118 goals in 183 international appearances with Brazil. In addition to her six Olympics, she has also played in six women's World Cups. She has the record for most World Cup goals with 17, and she has 13 Olympic goals, one away from matching fellow Brazilian Cristiane's record. Marta grew up playing street soccer with the boys in Dois Riachos, a town in eastern Brazil some 1,250 miles (2,011 kilometres) north of Rio de Janeiro. She was just 17 when she appeared at the 2003 World Cup, held in the United States. Over time, her role has changed in Brazil. In recent years she's been more of a player coach, guiding the team's up-and-coming stars. "Of course, I bring all of the experience that I achieved in my career, like playing in big



tournaments like the Olympics and the World Cup, playing against good teams, against good players," she said. "So, I try to share the best of me and

the best of what I live in soccer with the players to make them feel comfortable, or make them feel proud to be there. Like, we expect the best of you. That's why you are

here, so this is the goal and then do your best." Marta is still a valuable asset on the field, and she's proven it this season with the Orlando Pride, her club

team in the National Women's Soccer League. She's got five goals in 12 games this year with the Pride, who are undefeated and sit atop the league standings. Marta has played with Orlando since 2017. "I still can read the game, like, really well," she said. "And, I try to put myself in a good situation to give my best to the team. "So, I'm not going to compete all the time with a player that's 10, 11 years younger than me. But, I may be able to put my brain to work a little faster and then read the situation and try to do my best." With the many accolades Marta has earned throughout her career, one thing has eluded her: A championship trophy in a major international tournament. Brazil's best finish at the World Cup was runner-up in 2007. Brazil won silver medals at the 2004 and 2008 Olympics, but a gold medal has remained out of reach. "With her saying it's her last Olympics, it just brings more responsibility to her and to us to end this tournament on a good

note with this title that the national team doesn't have and she doesn't have either," Brazilian teammate Adriana said. "So, it's more motivation for us to help her with this and to hopefully win." While the Women's World Cup will be hosted by Brazil in 2027, Marta is not thinking about sticking around for another three years. But, she's told the federation she'll help in any way possible. She's wistful as she thinks about her favourite moment with the national team. The two that stick out to her are the 2004 Olympics, her first when Brazil advanced to the final but fell 2-1 to the United States. And, the 2007 World Cup, when the Brazilians got revenge by beating the Americans 4-1 in the semi-finals. Marta scored twice in that match and won the tournament Golden Boot with seven goals despite Brazil dropping the title match against Germany. "It's the passion," she said about her love for the game. "The passion that we show when we play, the passion that we see from when the people celebrate a goal. We make people happy. "You make all the people happy and you make people dream - and it's not only about soccer - it's about what it's like to believe. Believe in yourself. Believe in your potential. So, soccer gives you a lot of things like that.

# INDIA EYE UAE SCALP, WOMEN'S ASIA CUP SEMIFINAL BERTH

PTI ■ DAMBULLA (SRI LANKA)

Dominant India will be eager to perfect their tactics further while warding off United Arab Emirates which also can push them firmly towards the semifinals of the women's Asia Cup here on Sunday.

Defending champions India's supremacy was evident in their facile seven-wicket victory over arch-rivals Pakistan on Saturday, and the UAE will require a giant-sized miracle to stop Harmanpreet Kaur's side. India currently have two points and a Net Run Rate of +2.29, and a win over the Emirates will take them to four points, which will also have a positive reflection on their NRR.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that India will look more inwards in their match against the UAE, than fretting over the rivals.

There were excellent spells from Deepti Sharma, Renuka Singh and Pooja Vastrakar, who though was slightly on the expensive side, against Pakistan, and their effort would have pleased the management to no limit.

They will hope that left-arm spinner Radha Yadav, who returned to the India fold during the home series against South Africa recently, too can join the wicket-takers' list on Sunday.

"It was a good spell and there was some assistance from the weather as well. Of course, I could execute all the plans that I have been working on at



nets," said Renuka in the post-match press meet.

To top it, the Indian batters were ruthless in hunting down a non-challenging target with 35 balls to spare.

Openers Shafali Verma and Smriti Mandhana gave the team a flying start adding 85 runs in just 9.3 overs and the loss of three wickets from that position was a minor aberration.

Hence, India would hope that there would be a matching effort from the middle-order batters in the upcoming matches, starting with the

UAE. The Asia Cup also presents India with a wonderful opportunity to prepare for the T20 World Cup to be held in Bangladesh later this year.

Renuka said India are treating this event as a preparatory ground for the ICC showpiece.

"The Asia Cup is important for us because after this we don't have many matches (ahead of T20 WC) and we will have to rely on practice.

"So, this is a learning experience for us, and the conditions (in Bangladesh) could be similar. So, this is a

good chance for us to get ready for the World Cup," she said. That said, India would do well not to lose focus on the present assignment and the UAE have the ability to give some tight moments as they showed against Nepal on Friday despite a six-wicket defeat.

In the day's second match, Pakistan will look to bounce back with a win when they face a tricky Nepal.

**TEAMS (FROM):**  
**INDIA:** Harmanpreet Kaur (C), Smriti Mandhana, Shafali Verma, Jemimah Rodrigues,

Richa Ghosh (wk), Uma Chetry (wk), Pooja Vastrakar, Deepti Sharma, Arundhati Reddy, Renuka Singh, D Hemalatha, Asha Sobhana, Radha Yadav, Shreyanka Patil, Sajana Sajeevan.

**UAE:** Esha Rohit Oza (C), Kavisha Kumari Egodage, Rithika Rajith, Samaira Dharmidharka, Lavanya Keny, Emily Thomas, Heena Harish Hotchandani, Mehak Thakur, Indhuja Nandakumar, Rinitha Rajith, Khushi Mohan Sharma, Rishitha Rajith, Suraksha Kotte, Theertha Satish, Vaishnav Mahesh.



## Abhishek Nayar, Doeschate likely to join India in SL as assistant coaches

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Abhishek Nayar and Ryan Doeschate are set to join the support staff of newly-appointed head coach Gautam Gambhir during India's white ball tour to Sri Lanka, starting from July 27. Nayar, who has played three ODIs for India, and Doeschate, who was a hard-hitting all-rounder for Netherlands, have worked closely with Gambhir at the Kolkata Knight Riders and are likely to come in as assistant coaches, the PTI has learned. Nayar comes with a high reputation as a sharp cricket mind and a lifestyle/motivational coach who have worked with the likes of Dinesh Karthik and

Rinku Singh. Doeschate is currently working with LA Knight Riders in the ongoing Major League Cricket (MLC) and Gambhir has openly expressed his admiration for the team's first attitude of the Dutchman. While there was no clear view on the appointment of the bowling coach, it seems that T Dilip, who was part of Rahul Dravid's regime, will continue in the role of the fielding coach.

Gambhir had suggested to the BCCI the names of former India seamers R Vinay Kumar and L Balaji and former South African pacer Morne Morkel for the role of bowling coach. The PTI had reported on July 10 that Morkel could get the role ahead of Vinay and Balaji.

While Vinay and Balaji have associated with Gambhir at the KKR, Morkel worked alongside him at the Lucknow Super Giants.

If indeed Morkel gets the nod, he could be the first foreign bowling coach after Australian Joe Dawes, who did the duty under Duncan Fletcher until the tour of England in 2014. Morkel was also the bowling coach of Pakistan until the 50-over World Cup in India.

The Indian team is scheduled to travel to Colombo from Mumbai in a chartered flight on July 22.

Nayar and Dilip could also be travelling with the team while it's not yet clear when Doeschate would link up with the side.



## ICC keep watch on security situation in Bangladesh, venue of women's T20 WC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) said it has been keeping a watch on the security situation in Bangladesh, the venue of the women's T20 World Cup later this October.

The Bangladesh Police imposed curfew and military forces patrolled Dhaka on Saturday after violence escalated in the capital and elsewhere over protests by students, demanding reforms of the quota system for government jobs.

"We have independent security monitoring across the world. So, yes, we are keeping a watch on it (the situation in Bangladesh)," an ICC Board member told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Australia are the most successful team in the women's T20 World Cup winning the tourna-

ment a record six times in 2010, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020 and 2023.

England and the West Indies won the event once each, while India under Harmanpreet Kaur will look to grab their maiden title.

India are currently playing in the Women's Asia Cup in Dambulla, Sri Lanka, and pacer Renuka Singh had said the team was using the tournament as a preparation for the ICC showpiece. "The Asia Cup is important for us because after this we don't have many matches (ahead of T20 WC) and we will have to rely on practice.

"So, this is a learning experience for us, and the conditions (in Bangladesh) could be similar. So, this is a good chance for us to get ready for the World Cup," she said.

## Indian archery, rowing teams first to check in at Paris Games Village

PTI ■ PARIS

India's chef-de-mission for Paris Olympics, Gagan Narang on Saturday informed that archery and rowing contingents are first from the country to check in at the Games village and said the athletes are eager to begin their campaign at the sporting extravaganza.

While archery and rowing contingents checked in at Paris Games village on Friday, the Indian men's hockey team will arrive on Saturday from the Netherlands, where it was undergoing its final preparation.

"I arrived in Paris on Thursday night and have taken stock of the arrangements inside the Games Village for the Indian contingent. Archery and rowing were the first Indian teams to arrive on Friday and have comfortably checked-in. The athletes are slowly settling in and are exploring the Village," said Narang, the 2012 London Olympics bronze medalist shooter.

He further stated the mood among the athletes is that of excitement and anticipation. "The mood is certainly upbeat. We have the Indian men's hockey team arriving on Saturday. Surely, I am



reminded of my hey days at the Olympics as an athlete.

"While there is a lot of excitement, athletes will also want to get some game time in the competition arenas. We want to make sure the athletes' have everything they need ahead of the start of their respective events," added Narang, a four-time Olympian.

The decorated Indian shooter, who is also the recipient of the prestigious Khel Ratna and the Padma Shri awards, expressed his gratitude to the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) for appointing him as the chef-de-mission for the Paris Games. "It is a matter of great honour for me to travel with the Indian contingent as the Chef-de-Mission for Paris Olympics. I express my heartfelt gratitude

for considering me for the role, and giving me a chance to once again serve my country on the sports' biggest stage," Narang said.

"As an athlete myself, I fully understand the requirements of elite athletes at the world's greatest sporting extravaganza. I will work strenuously to motivate and inspire the Indian contingent, while also safeguarding their priorities to perform their optimum.

"I am delighted to have the opportunity to play the role of the primary liaison between our athletes, the organising committee, and other relevant stakeholders during the Games and will ensure a smooth and efficient process," he said.

India will be represented by

117 athletes across 20 disciplines at the Paris Olympics.

"It is a matter of great pride for me to see the growing number of medal contenders in the Indian contingent. Each and every athlete in our contingent is capable of not only being on-par against the best athletes of the world but can also surpass them and bring laurels to the nation," Narang said. "Having a strong contingent puts India on the hot seat as we gear up for Paris."

The Paris Games will be held from July 26 to August 11.



## Mayank, Devdutt, Vyshak among retained players ahead of KSCA T20 auction

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Some of the top state cricketers such as Mayank Agarwal, Devdutt Padikkal and Vyshak Vijaykumar have been retained by the teams ahead of the Maharaja Trophy KSCA T20 auction later this month.

The third edition of the tournament will be held from August 15 to September 1 at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium here. Defending champions Hubli Tigers, runners-up Mysore Warriors, Gulbarga Mystics, Bengaluru Blasters, Mangaluru Dragons and Shivamogga Lions retained four players each from their previous season's squad. The Hubli outfit retained the services of skipper Manish Pandey, wicketkeeper Shrijith KL and

young all-rounder Manvath Kumar and ace medium pacer Vidwath Kaverappa.

Mysore Warriors, the last year's runners up, chose to stay with captain Karun Nair, CA Karthik, SU Karthik and the hard-hitting all-rounder Manoj Bhandage. The Mystics have retained Devdutt Padikkal even though he missed the previous season's campaign due to an injury. Vyshak Vijaykumar has also been retained by the Gulbarga side along with Smaran Ravi and Aneesh KV.

The Shivamogga Lions retained Abhinav Manohar, the most expensive player in last year's auction with a price tag of Rs 15 lakh. Nihal Ullal, Shivraj and pacer Vasuki Koushik have also been retained by the Lions.

## Katie excited about swimming after all these years

AP ■ INDIANAPOLIS

For Katie Ledecky, there is seemingly no such thing as burnout.

Sure, there are times when it all gets a bit monotonous, staring at that black line at the bottom of the pool, turning lap after interminable lap with nothing on the line.

Yet, a dozen years after she burst on the scene with a surprising gold medal at the London Olympics, Ledecky keeps finding ways to enjoy swimming as much as ever. The times may not be quite as fast. But the ultimate payoff is staying on top year after year, Olympics after Olympics, even as other swimmers struggle to deal with the mental and physical demands of a grueling sport that only provides once-every-four-years gratification.

Ledecky is one of the most consistent swimmers in history. "I pride myself on that consistency," the 27-year-old Ledecky said. "I challenge myself to stay consistent. Yeah, I mean sometimes it can be tough feeling like you're not having a breakthrough. But to be really

consistent is something I'm really happy with. I've learned to just really enjoy each day of training and take in every moment and just appreciate the fact that I've been able to have this long of a career, stay injury free, stay pretty healthy, be able to do this for this many years."

Perhaps the greatest freestyle swimmer history, Ledecky heads to her fourth Olympics in a familiar role. A gold-medal favourite. The focus of so much attention. The template for sustained excellence.

"Such a big influence," said fellow American swimmer Erin Gemmill, who has looked up to Ledecky much of her life and will be joining her as an Olympic teammate. "I don't think I would really be here if it weren't for her."

Gemmill's father used to coach Ledecky. Young Erin once dressed up as Ledecky for Halloween. They've spent so much time together at the pool, Gemmill has had a unique perspective on Ledecky's tedious brilliance. "It's really special to be able to be that close to someone who is so inspirational, getting to



see the day-to-day work that they put in," Gemmill said. "It makes it seem more achievable, in a way, being so close. It makes them seem a lot more human."

Ledecky isn't as dominant as she once was, but she'll definitely be the swimmer to beat in the two longest freestyle events, covering 800 and 1,500 metres. She already has six individual gold medals, the most of any female swimmer in Olympic history. "Every athlete, as they get older, has to learn new ways to set goals, learn new ways to evaluate the results," Ledecky said.

In many ways, she's still driven by her very first Summer Games, where she burst on the

scene at 15 with a gold medal in the 800 freestyle. She provides further perspective on that experience in her new book, "Just Add Water, My Swimming Life."

"I wanted to get back to that level, prove that I wasn't just a one-hit wonder," Ledecky said. "At the same time, I reminded myself that anything more than that is just like icing on the cake, the cherry on top, because, I just never thought I'd make it to that one Olympics."

All these years later, after all those trips to the top of the medal podium, she feels much the same way. "That's the perspective that I've been able to maintain and that keeps me focused and keeps

me enjoying the sport so much, enjoying the teammates and the people that are around me," Ledecky said. She's an old soul, for sure. Even in her teens, Ledecky had young swimmers looking up to her.

"I was definitely an annoying child," Gemmill said, grinning. "But I think she was just so welcoming to a little 7-year-old fan. When I think about it, she was only a sophomore in high school at the time. I think if someone had acted like that towards me when I was a sophomore in high school, I would have been really weirded out. But she was kind and welcoming with all of it." Eight years ago in Rio de Janeiro, Ledecky turned in one of the greatest performances in swimming history. She took gold in the 200, 400 and 800 freestyle with a pair of world records (the 1,500 was not yet an Olympic event for women, or she undoubtedly would've won that, too). For good measure, she anchored the US to a gold in the 4x200 free relay with a time that was more than a second faster than anyone else in the final.

**OFFICE OF THE PANCHAYAT SAMITI, GHATGAON**  
At/Po-Ghatgaon, Dist-Keonjhar, Pin-758027(ODISHA)

**BID ID NO.-TCN NO.01-GHATGAON/2024-25**  
**TENDER CALL NOTICE**

The Block Development Officer, Ghatgaon, Keonjhar on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites online percentage rate bid through e-procurement from the registered and eligible "D", "C" & "B" class civil contractors in single cover (Technical Bid) and double cover (Price Bid) system for the projects as detailed in the Annexure-I to the this Bid Notice. The eligible criteria and the details of the tender documents which can be downloaded from the website [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in) and only viewed from the website [www.kenduuhar.nic.in](http://www.kenduuhar.nic.in). Interested bidders fulfilling the eligibility criteria may submit their proposals in the above mentioned portal. The bid documents will be available in the above website from 11.00 AM of 29.07.2024 to 5.00 PM of 08.08.2024. The bidders should submit their proposals complete in all respect through Online before 5.00PM of 08.08.2024. The single cover will be opened on 09.08.2024 at 11.00 AM. The undersigned reserves the right to reject the bidder(s) if any document(s) found incorrect/false at any stage of bidding.

**Block Development Officer**  
**Ghatgaon**

OIPR-19026/11/0001/2425

**GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDING ENGINEER,**  
**P.H. DIVISION, BALANGIR,**  
Email: ID - [sephbgr@yahoo.co.in](mailto:sephbgr@yahoo.co.in), Ph. No - (06652 - 234647)

**NATIONAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING THROUGH e-Procurement**  
Invitation for Bid (IFB) 03-Dtd.19.07.2024

Sl. No	Name of Work	Bid Identification No.	Estimated Cost(Rs.in Lakh)	Class of Contractor	Period of Completion	Availability of Bid Document for Online Bidding
1.	Construction of ESRS in connection with the work "Augmentation of water supply system along with ancillary work for Binika town".	SE PH BGR 03/2024-25 Dt. 19.07.2024	462.79	'A' Class	11 Month	29.07.2024 14.08.2024

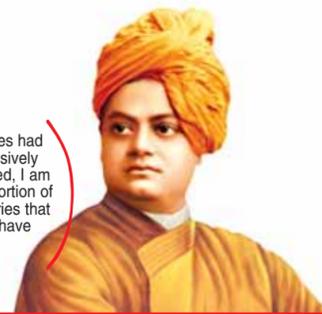
Name & Address of Officer Inviting Bid: **The Superintending Engineer Office of the Superintending Engineer Public Health Division, Balangir At-Tulasinagar, Po/Dist-Balangir Pin-767001, Odisha,Phone-06652-234647 E-mail-[sephbgr@yahoo.co.in](mailto:sephbgr@yahoo.co.in)**

◆ Further details can be seen from the e-Procurement portal " <https://www.tenderodisha.gov.in>."  
◆ All amendments, time extension, clarifications etc. will be uploaded in the website only. Bidders should regularly visit the above website to keep themselves updates.

**Superintending Engineer**  
**P.H.Division, Balangir**

OIPR-13005/11/0009/2425

"If faith in ourselves had been more extensively taught and practiced, I am sure a very large portion of the evils and miseries that we have would have vanished"  
— Buddha



# A MODEL FOR INDIA'S SMART CITY ASPIRATIONS

From integrating advanced technologies to fostering community engagement, New Taipei City offers a wealth of lessons that can guide Indian cities towards a smarter and more sustainable future, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

**N**ew Taipei City, Taiwan's most populous city, has emerged as a leading example of smart city development, integrating advanced technology, sustainable practices, and citizen-centric services. As India embarks on its ambitious Smart Cities Mission, there are valuable lessons to be learned from New Taipei City's approach to urban planning and management.

One of the biggest achievements of New Taipei City is its involvement of citizens in various facets of planning and execution and participation. New Taipei City actively involves its citizens in the planning and decision-making process. "Through public consultations, digital platforms, and community programs, residents are encouraged to participate in shaping the city's future. This collaborative approach has fostered a sense of ownership and responsibility among citizens," says Dr Tih-Ju Chu, deputy mayor of New Taipei City, Government of Taiwan.

As far as the Indian smart city concept is concerned, it has been a bureaucratic exercise where citizens have had hardly any role to play. Engaging citizens in the smart city development process is crucial for ensuring that the initiatives meet the needs and aspirations of the people. Indian cities should leverage digital tools and community engagement strategies to involve residents in planning, implementation, and monitoring of projects. We embarked upon making Varanasi into Kyoto but have reached nowhere. Perhaps the biggest reason for this has been the government's top-down approach where people come last. Local people know their city better than any bureaucrat or politician and their input can go a long way in preserving the cultural heritage of the city and modernising it at the same time.

New Taipei City fosters a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship, providing support for startups and encouraging technological advancements. The city has established innovation hubs, incubators, and co-working spaces

“ONE OF THE BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS OF NEW TAIPEI CITY IS ITS INVOLVEMENT OF CITIZENS IN VARIOUS FACETS OF PLANNING AND EXECUTION AND PARTICIPATION. NEW TAIPEI CITY ACTIVELY INVOLVES ITS CITIZENS IN THE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. “THROUGH PUBLIC CONSULTATIONS, DIGITAL PLATFORMS, AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS, RESIDENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO PARTICIPATE IN SHAPING THE CITY'S FUTURE”



that nurture talent and drive economic growth. Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship should be a priority for Indian smart cities too. By creating supportive ecosystems for startups, providing access to funding, and facilitating collaboration between academia, industry, and government, Indian cities can become hubs of innovation and economic development. After all, no city can thrive without a robust locally sustained economy. People must find jobs and reasons to settle in a smart city, else it may end up like several ghost cities of China. Yet another initiative that makes New Taipei City a model is sustainability. "The city mayor places a strong emphasis on sustainability, incorporating green building practices, renewable energy, and

efficient waste management systems. The city has extensive green spaces, promotes the use of public transportation, and encourages eco-friendly practices among residents," says Dr Tih-Ju Chu. Indeed, sustainable urban development should be at the core of India's smart cities initiative. By prioritising green infrastructure, renewable energy projects, and comprehensive waste management systems, Indian cities can reduce their environmental footprint and enhance the quality of life for their residents. New Taipei City has implemented intelligent transportation systems (ITS) to enhance mobility and reduce traffic congestion. These systems include smart traffic signals, real-time traffic monitoring, and integrated public transportation

networks. The city's focus on multimodal transportation options has made commuting more efficient and accessible. Unfortunately, traffic and commuting are one of the biggest challenges. In a city like Bengaluru, India's IT hub, commuting is a nightmare. To address urban mobility challenges, Indian smart cities should invest in ITS, including smart traffic management, real-time public transport information, and infrastructure for non-motorized transport. Developing a comprehensive and efficient transportation network can alleviate congestion and improve the overall commuting experience. One of the cornerstones of New Taipei City's success is its adoption of cutting-edge technology to

streamline governance. The city has implemented an integrated digital platform that connects various departments, enabling real-time data sharing and decision-making. This has resulted in efficient public service delivery, reduced administrative costs, and improved transparency. Indian smart cities can benefit from creating unified digital platforms that foster inter-departmental collaboration, enhance service delivery, and promote transparency. Investing in robust ICT infrastructure and data analytics can drive more informed policy decisions and optimize resource allocation. Situated in a region prone to natural disasters, New Taipei City has prioritised building resilient infrastructure and robust disaster management systems. The city employs advanced monitoring and early warning systems, conducts regular drills, and has developed comprehensive emergency response plans. Implementing early warning systems, conducting regular drills, and involving communities in disaster management plans can significantly reduce the impact of disasters.

Let us face it, India's smart city project faces several significant challenges that hinder its progress. Foremost among these is the bureaucratic approach that often sidelines citizen participation and local insights, resulting in top-down planning that lacks community buy-in. Additionally, there is a persistent lack of robust infrastructure and technological integration, impeding the development of effective digital platforms and smart solutions. Moreover, coordination between various government departments and private stakeholders is often fragmented, leading to inefficiencies and delays. Without addressing these fundamental issues, the ambitious vision of India's smart cities may remain unfulfilled. We must be open to such initiatives outside of India and there would be no harm in trying the best practices from around the world. The lessons from New Taipei City serve as a blueprint for India's smart cities to follow, ensuring that they meet the needs of their residents while addressing the challenges of the 21st century.

# A TALE OF TWO COUNTRIES INDIA AND CHINA BEYOND BINARIES

There is more to India and China relations that meets the eye and a lot goes behind the curtain in the people's republic of China writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

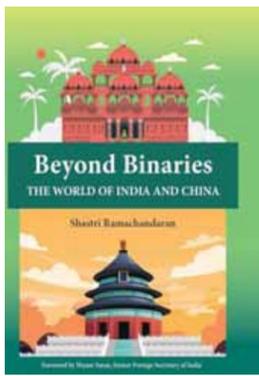
The book "Two Binaries: The World of India and China" by Shastri Ramachandran has generated significant interest. It explores several issues confronting the two countries and their bilateral relations. The author has ostensibly analysed why they behave as they do and what prevents the two countries from coming closer. Shastri Ramachandran is a journalist and well-versed in Chinese culture, having spent considerable time there, which makes him an authority on the subject. Indeed, he knows more about China than many so-called experts here. Although I haven't read the book, I recently participated in a discussion organised by the publishers to promote the book and initiate an informed debate. The discussion was chaired by Professor Madhu Bhalla, with veteran journalist Paranjay Guha Thakurta and Professor Arvind Yelery as other panelists.

The discussion certainly achieved its purpose and initiated a debate on Indo-China relations and our skewed understanding of China as a country beyond TV news and newspaper articles, often superficial in nature. China is always on the minds of most Indians. We have a love-hate relationship with it: we love it when we use its cheap products and buy them to profit in the domestic market. As Paranjay Guha Thakurta pointed out, most businesses would struggle without Chinese imports. Most pharmaceutical companies use raw materials from China, as do many car companies which import Chinese spares.



Indeed, India and China represent 40 percent of humanity and wield enormous power by sheer population size. However, coming together requires overcoming many obstacles. Shastri has the benign notion of making this the Asian century, which is not possible without India and China burying their hatchet. But that is easier said than done. They have historical and geographical factors that keep them apart. Shastri sees Western influence, amplified by our media, as a root cause of strained relations. He praises the Chinese people and believes it is possible to bridge the divide between the two peoples, as we are more than two countries – two

civilizations. However, there is a problem with perception. He sees China as a country painted by the West as evil, and we are expected to accept that view. We do so happily, gulping down Western propaganda as the gospel truth. There is some truth in that. The West has a powerful media with unparalleled reach, capable of making or breaking anyone's image. But that is only part of the truth. Giving China a clean chit is definitely oversimplifying the situation. Let's put it this way: China and the Chinese government are two separate entities often at cross purposes. When you interact with Chinese



people, you encounter individuals who are nice, like people anywhere else. However, when you deal with China as a nation, you deal with its government, which is reactionary and dictatorial. Shastri makes a distinction between Chinese and Arab dictatorships in their construct, but the end result is the same: an oppressive, intolerant, and regressive structure focused on self-preservation. Simply assuming a communist facade does not make one truly communist. Let's face it: Stalin was a dictator, Nicolae Ceaușescu was a dictator, Kim Jong Un is a dictator, and so is Xi Jinping. Having a party like Hitler's doesn't

qualify one to be called a Communist (a much-abused term, but I would think of Lenin as one). A fun fact here: Hitler's party was officially called the National Socialist German Workers' Party! On October 22, 2022, Hu Jintao, former General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, was escorted out of the hall at the closing ceremony of the 20th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party. He was pulled from his seat by two men while Xi maintained a stoic face. Was it a Western construct? When Shastri says, and I quote, "Nancy Pelosi leads a delegation to Dharamshala with business stakes in Taiwan, and the Dalai Lama

receives treatment in the US, making clear what is happening," he trivializes the Tibetan struggle and casts aspersions on the Dalai Lama's credentials. The human rights violations and systemic cleansing in Tibet are beyond the scope of this piece. It is not just about Tibet; the Uyghur province, dominated by Muslims, has seen enough misery. The Uyghur province of China has witnessed a series of human rights violations. It includes mass arbitrary detention, torture, enforced disappearances, mass surveillance, cultural and religious persecution, separation of families, forced labour, sexual violence, and violations of reproductive rights. Many of the cases are well documented. And by the way, there is nothing capitalist about the students' protest in Hong Kong. I wish someone on the panel had spoken about these issues too. Most of them were fixated on Doklam and Galwan and relished Chinese cuisine and the great economic strides China made and how everyone wants to have a piece of the Chinese pie. Interestingly, after taking advantage of Chinese largesse, many African and Asian countries are now waiting their turn to go bankrupt. China's Belt and Road Initiative is turning out to be a noose around hapless economies. China is doing in the 21st century what the West did in the 19th. Do we have a locus standi in criticising China's human rights violations when we have skeletons in our cupboard? Sure, we do. Martin Luther King Jr. said, and I quote, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere!"

# INSPIRATIONS BEHIND ZAIRA AND AUTHORSHIP JOURNEY

Professor **VINITA DHONDIYAL BHATNAGAR** shares the personal inspirations behind her novel *ZAIRA* and reflects on her journey from literature scholar to published author

**What inspired you to write *Zaira*? Were there any personal experiences or specific events that sparked the idea for this novel?**

*Zaira* was inspired by many events and incidents. I saw a terrible accident on a flyover near my office. The young man was hurled across the parapet and crashed onto the road below. The blood was trickling from his head like a rivulet. This scene has stayed with me and informs one of the most pivotal moments in the plot.

The awareness as a mother and as a college teacher about the vulnerability of our young population also played a part. This is the age of experimentation and exploration, which is fantastic. But they should not fall prey to addictions or to habits that endanger their lives and their futures. This inspired me to write about the cynical, profiteering men who might make a fortune by luring people into consuming drugs.

**Can you share your journey as a writer? What were some of the key moments or turning points that led you to become a published author?**

I have been studying literature since 1985 and have a PhD in literary studies. So I have a long history of reading. It took guts to jump into writing especially because in my mind I kept comparing myself to the literary greats I had studied. I kept writing and kept getting rejected. Part of the problem was that my characters were not gripping enough. My father passed away in 2010 and his last words to me were not to give up. I am going to keep to that. The publishing industry has changed drastically in the last few years. Maybe my time was now. My editor friend, Kaneez, told me of Book Bakers, my literary agent and they helped place my book.

**How do you balance your roles as a professor and a writer? Do you find that your**



**academic work and storytelling complement each other?**

In my fantasies I would have been a full time writer, locked up in a room with my thoughts for company. In reality I am juggling a home, and a job in which I have seventy young people in a classroom and they come from far off places and with distinctive personalities and life stories of their own. I now recognise this as strength. It may give me less time to write but it gives me deeper compassion and understanding. I teach communication skills and my purpose in writing is primarily to communicate rather than impress. My book has been written primarily for the type of people I teach.

**The characters in *Zaira* are richly detailed and complex. Can you share your process for developing characters like *Zaira*, *Rajyawardhan* and *Jai*? Did any of them change significantly from your initial concept?**

Thank you! As you know characterization is what I struggled with the most. So your words are a healing balm to my soul. Frankly, *Zaira* is based on a friend of mine who is like a daughter to me. The story is not hers. The

character is. I asked her at points "What would you wear to this?" or "What would you eat?" "Since I understood her well I could imagine what her responses might be in certain circumstances. Rajyawardhan is based partially on my favorite film star. I saw him on VIP road in Bhopal and I said to myself, "This man will be a legend." I think he is on his way to becoming one. I won't say more or I might be sued! With Jai I was thinking of the migration of the Sindhis to Bairagarh near Bhopal after partition. A character carries the history of his people and I hope some of that is reflected in Jai's story. What changed significantly throughout the course of the writing was the relationship outcome of Jai and *Zaira*'s story. I was so keen to write a romance. Alas!

***Zaira* is filled with unexpected twists and suspenseful moments. How do you approach plotting a story to maintain tension and keep readers engaged?**

My professor Malashri Lal suggested I start storytelling to live audiences. It's a very difficult art. Listeners get restless and children are bound to say "I am bored" when they are bored. That gives my writing urgency. I don't want to bore you. I don't want to waste your precious

time and attention.

**The book touches on serious issues like drug trafficking and personal trauma. What kind of research did you conduct to ensure these aspects were portrayed accurately and sensitively?**

I didn't do specific research on these topics but I have always stayed aware of these issues in society. I listened to ex-drug addicts speak about the fear of slipping back into the habit and of the humiliating lives they had led when they were in the grip of addiction. I knew a fantastic young man who just slipped away. It makes me sad. It makes me angry. We are letting our younger generations down if we don't do enough to protect and inform them. I was in the process of losing my mother as I wrote the book. I didn't know it then at a conscious level. But at a subconscious level, something inside me was preparing to let go. That rawness, that vulnerability and ache found itself on to the pages.

**Fyodor Dostoevsky works often explore deep psychological and moral issues. How has Dostoevsky influenced your writing, particularly in *Zaira*? Are there specific aspects of his work that resonate with you?**

During my MPhil days at Delhi University, I attended a seminar course of Russian Literature. (I must tell you the first four years of my life were spent in Russia. They believed then that the only privileged class should be children and I was treated accordingly.) I think I am obsessed with him because my uncle once dismissed somebody else's writing as "He is no Dostoevsky" Since then he has become my standard of good writing!

**As a storyteller, are there any elements of Fyodor Dostoevsky's work that have influenced your writing, particularly in *Zaira*?**

Ha Ha! I am arrogant enough

to really crave that comparison. Dostoevsky doesn't bother with facts as much as with states of mind. I find it difficult to add irrelevant details just to enhance the literariness of the language or story. He explores the two radically opposing sides of a character or situation. When I read his morally ambiguous characters I feel "This could be me, I could respond like this in this situation." I am hoping readers will feel the same way about my work.

**You've mentioned that no change is possible unless the story touches the hearts of its readers. How do you ensure your stories have this emotional impact?**

Even as a teacher I am aware miracles can happen and mountains can move if you can touch the hearts of your students. I do have a worldview, an urgent sense of how I think things should be. If I wrote them in a pamphlet it would be thrown away. So I weave a story. One of my favourite writers just revealed that he cried through the writing of his book. He knew the reader could feel the emotion because he felt it first. That is my greatest challenge. Years of struggling with literacy issues of theme, character, plot and conflict means I have a head first approach. I have to get in touch with my own heart to write. When we communicate heart to heart, we understand each other better. That's all I am going for.

**What do you hope readers will feel or think about after finishing *Zaira*? Is there a particular message or feeling you want to leave them with?**

I am hoping they will feel energised and empowered. Mistakes happen. So what? Why be afraid of heartbreak and betrayal to an extent where we forget to live? There are possibilities and opportunities all around us. We have a story to live. Let's make it grand!

## BOOK REVIEW

### A GRIPPING TALE OF AMBITION, THRILLER AND SELF-DISCOVERY

*Zaira* is a gripping thriller that blends suspense with societal critique, following a young woman's perilous journey through Bollywood and drug trafficking to uncover the truth behind her idol's death, says **SAKSHI PRIYA**

*ZAIRA* by Prof. Vinita Dhondiyal Bhatnagar is a compelling young adult thriller that masterfully blends suspense with social commentary. Set against the glamorous backdrop of Bollywood and the dangerous world of drug trafficking, the novel follows the journey of *Zaira*, an ambitious college student from Bhopal, as she navigates the complex intersection between her dreams of fame and the traditional expectations of her family.

The book introduces key characters like Jai, who provides stability and support to *Zaira* and Rajyawardhan Singh, Layla's charismatic lover whom *Zaira* admires. Rajyawardhan's presence adds complexity to the story, intertwining with *Zaira*'s ambitions and the dangers she faces. Bhatnagar skillfully portrays *Zaira*'s internal conflict as she navigates her relationship with Jai, initially a source of joy and comfort, which becomes a lens for her own desires and aspirations. Jai plays pivotal roles in shaping *Zaira*'s journey, enriching her character development. Rajyawardhan also influences *Zaira*'s decisions, adding depth to the narrative dynamics.

One of the most striking aspects of the book is its exploration of societal pressures and their impact on individuals, especially women. *Zaira*, initially portrayed as a somewhat naive and idealistic young woman, faces judgment and ridicule from her peers for her choices. The dialogue between Shikma and Deepa, who mock *Zaira* for her slipping grades and newfound relationship, highlights the harsh scrutiny that women often face. This criticism is not merely about academic performance or personal relationships but is deeply rooted in societal expectations and the pressure to conform to traditional roles.

The book grips you from the first page to the last, urging you to finish it in one sitting as you delve into every character and their stories. Author beautifully portrays *Zaira*'s journey, creating a remarkable reading experience. The subplot involving

Rajyawardhan Singh adds suspense and danger, *Zaira*'s involvement in a dangerous drug trafficking investigation and the subsequent threats to her life bring a sense of urgency and tension. Her time in isolation, grappling with fear and turmoil, showcases her inner strength, particularly in her struggle to maintain sanity and self-awareness.

Bhatnagar's writing is engaging and evocative, drawing readers into *Zaira*'s world from the first page. The pacing is well-managed, balancing the thriller elements of the drug trafficking investigation with moments of introspection and character development. The author's ability to weave together personal growth, suspenseful plot

twists and broader societal issues is commendable. The novel's exploration of the complexities of human relationships and emotions adds depth to the narrative. *Zaira*'s evolving relationships with her family members, her romantic entanglements and her changing perception of Layla (whom she initially idolizes) all contribute to a human connection and growth.

*ZAIRA* is more than just a thrilling page-turner; it's a profound exploration of personal growth, societal pressure and the quest for justice. Bhatnagar's nuanced

characters, engaging plot and evocative writing create a story that resonates long after the final page is turned. Once you start reading, you'll be eager to finish it in one go, drawn to explore every character and their stories. The book is highly recommended for readers who enjoy emotionally rich narratives combined with cultural authenticity and suspenseful elements. *ZAIRA* stands out as a remarkable contribution to contemporary Indian literature. It offers a thought-provoking experience that prompts readers to reflect on their own life choices and the societal forces that shape them. Vinita Dhondiyal Bhatnagar has crafted a novel that is both a gripping thriller and a sensitive portrayal of a young woman's journey to self-discovery, making it a must-read for fans of the genre and beyond.



# LOBSTER LOVE

PAWAN SONI discovers how Delhi is experiencing a culinary renaissance with new venues offering world class ingredients



**PAWAN SONI**  
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards



Getting high-quality lobster in Delhi can be quite a challenge. This is why I make it a point to attend most crab and lobster festivals in the city, where the freshness and quality of these exquisite sea creatures are guaranteed.

I have enjoyed several memorable meals at Shang Palace, Shangri-La Eros Delhi, and the ongoing 'Clawsome Chobster' meal was no exception. This special menu features dishes made with both chicken and lobster, likely to appeal even to those who don't typically enjoy shellfish.

We began with a lobster and mango salad, a perfect summer dish. The sweetness of the lobster meat and fresh mangoes, combined with the coconut sauce, was perfectly complemented by the texture of lettuce and the acidity of lemon. For those who enjoy Chongqing chicken with its bullet chili heat, the lobster version is a must-try. The lobster, with its meat still clinging to the shell, is truly a palate pleaser. After tasting this, I wonder if I'll ever enjoy the chicken version as much. The only chicken dish we tried in starters was the bang bang chicken. Coated with panko/breadcrumbs for the extra crunch for this juicy chicken breast filling, it surely had the bang. Though for the sauce, I missed the mayonnaise in the dip which is normally

mixed with sweet chilly sauce. In the dim sum selection, we tried the kaffir lime lobster dumplings served with oscietra caviar. Though the kaffir lime flavor was somewhat subdued, these beautifully crafted dumplings were delightful. The lobster and chicken siu mai were expertly made with thin skins and juicy fillings. Feeling quite full after the starters, we decided to skip the carbohydrate dishes, which

included fried rice with lobster, chicken, and egg. Another intriguing option was the Chobster, a whole grilled chicken served with lobster rice. This dish, as our server mentioned, requires about 45 minutes to prepare, so we opted for the chili pepper lobster tail instead. During our meal, Mr. Abhishek Sadhoo, General Manager of the hotel, stopped by, and we exchanged pleasantries. When

asked about the sourcing of their lobsters, he proudly shared that they are flown in from Canada. I am eagerly anticipating their new festival offerings, which will feature an abundance of lobster, reflecting their commitment to bringing top-quality seafood to India. Shhh... keep this secret between us. Delhi is experiencing a culinary renaissance, with new venues offering world-class

ingredients. If you love seafood as much as I do, don't miss this special menu, available only until July 21, 2024.

(Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at [Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com](mailto:Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com))

**Address:** Shang Palace, Shangri-La Eros, 19 Ashoka Rd, Janpath, Connaught Place, New Delhi, Delhi  
**Phone:** 011-41191919



## A CULINARY COACH

Introducing Capital Diner, a unique restaurant located in a refurbished railway coach, providing travelers and locals with a nostalgic and immersive dining experience at the New Delhi Railway Station

Nestled within the bustling confines of New Delhi Railway Station lies Capital Diner, an enchanting escape that seamlessly blends the nostalgia of old-world train journeys with the flair of contemporary dining. This innovative restaurant, housed within a meticulously refurbished railway coach, promises an unforgettable culinary experience for travelers and locals alike. Stepping into Capital Diner is equivalent to embarking on a journey through time.

Capital Diner offers a unique blend of history, ambiance and exquisite cuisine, making it an ideal spot for travelers and locals alike. Upon entering Capital Diner, guests are transported back in time, as the restaurant's design combines the charm of American diners with the luxury of old-world train journeys. The interior, fashioned from a retired Indian Railways coach, exudes an air of elegance and charm reminiscent of the bygone era of train travel. Rich brown vertical stripe wallpaper, evoking memories of the legendary Orient Express, complements plush mallard shade suede booth seating and tasteful mosaic tiling. Soft beige LED lighting strips cast a gentle, starlit glow, enhancing the ambiance with a touch of luxurious warmth. Beyond its captivating aesthetics, Capital Diner delights diners with a diverse menu that celebrates both traditional Indian flavors and international cuisines. From hearty kadhai paneer paired with freshly baked naan to creamy penne tomato pasta with succulent chicken, every dish is crafted with meticulous attention to detail and premium ingredients. Each bite is a witnessed to the culinary expertise of the restaurant's dedicated chefs, ensuring a gastronomic journey that satisfies even the most discerning palate.

"We are delighted to introduce Capital Diner, where the romance of



railway travel meets the sophistication of modern dining," shares Mr. Harish Kumar Arora, Founder of Capital Diner. "Our aim is to create a dining experience that not only tantalises the taste buds but also evokes cherished memories of train journeys past."

Capital Diner stands as a testament to innovation in the culinary landscape of New Delhi, offering more than just a meal but an immersive experience that celebrates the cultural heritage of India's railway history. Whether seeking a quick bite before catching a train or a leisurely dining experience amidst the station's vibrant atmosphere, Capital Diner promises an unparalleled fusion of nostalgia and culinary excellence.

So, next time you find yourself at New Delhi Railway Station, don't just pass through - immerse yourself in the allure of Capital Diner. Indulge in the ambiance, savor the flavours and rediscover the magic of train travel through a dining experience like no other.

### FAST FACTS

Circulating Area, New Delhi Railway Station, Near Ajmeri Gate, Connaught Place, New Delhi. Hours: 11 AM to 11 PM  
Price for Two: INR 600 Instagram: @capital.diner

## EMBRACING VEGANISM IN ZURICH

When considering a trip to Switzerland, famous for its chocolate and cheese, you may question if it suits vegans. Yet, surprisingly, Switzerland is an exciting destination for vegans, offering unexpected delights. In Zurich, there are chances to explore innovative sustainable dining options

BY AKANKSHA DEAN

### REDEFINING GASTRONOMY

Zizi Hatab, a Moroccan immigrant raised in a multicultural setting near the Mediterranean coast of Spain, is redefining gastronomy with plants. Despite starting with a background in Spanish fishing gastronomy, Zizi's journey led her to Barcelona for engineering studies, where she balanced hosting dinners in her student dorm with exploring tapas venues. Transitioning to a corporate engineering role in Switzerland, Zizi's passion for cooking persisted. Without professional culinary experience, she boldly approached top Swiss chef Andreas Caminada, securing an internship at his renowned restaurant, Schloss Schauenstein. Returning to Zurich in 2019 to prepare for the launch of her debut restaurant, KLE, Zizi made a bold decision to offer an exclusively plant-based menu and lifestyle. Despite scepticism from various quarters, Zizi remained steadfast in aligning her values with her culinary vision, believing in the transformative power of a plant-based diet and food's ability to connect people. Through KLE, Zizi aims to inspire a change in consumer habits by offering a culinary experience based on love, innovation in plant-based cuisine, and sustainability. Emphasizing locally sourced ingredients and sustainability, Zizi creates a welcoming atmosphere for both her teams and guests, fostering memorable dining encounters. Her pioneering work in plant-based



fine dining at KLE has garnered recognition both locally and internationally, solidifying her influence in the gastronomic realm. Her second establishment, DAR, swiftly became recognized and was highlighted as a top spot by The 50 Best. Particularly noteworthy is DAR being awarded a distinguished Green Michelin Star in 2022. This accolade marks Zizi as the first Swiss vegan chef to attain such an honour, affirming her status among the global culinary leaders. In the same year, Zizi was honoured as one of the 10 emerging chefs influencing the evolution of gastronomy in the 50 Next prestigious list.



### ELEGANT YET APPROACHABLE FINE DINING AT KLE

Located in the vibrant District 3 of Zurich, KLE's diverse team brings a multicultural flair to Zurich's dining landscape, creating an intimate and welcoming ambiance. An inviting outdoor terrace provides a charming setting for open-air dining when the weather is pleasant. Recently awarded both a green and red Michelin star, KLE stands out as Switzerland's first plant-based restaurant to receive such recognition, a testament to the chef's dedication to culinary excellence. Each dish emphasizes quality ingredients, such as the 'black pearl mushroom' with a

sauce crafted from 25 locally sourced elements like Weggis lemongrass. The house bread, reminiscent of Moroccan buns, served with egg-free aioli made from 'aqua-faba' and Moroccan hummus, along with unique pickled vegetables, showcases the chef's inventive twists on traditional flavours. Sauerklee, a cherished ingredient in various cuisines, highlights KLE's blend of local and global culinary influences, inviting diners to savour a sensory exploration of the chef's culinary heritage.

### DAR & ITS COCKTAIL BAR

My visit was truly eye-opening. DAR, meaning 'to give' in Spanish, fuses Moroccan and Spanish influences to create a remarkable plant-based dining experience. The menu showcases fresh seasonal vegetables, artisanal bread, and delectable desserts, inviting diners to explore global flavours like salted lemon mustard buns and turmeric-infused roasted beets. Opting for the chef's selection treats guests to a well-curated array of snacks, entrees, and sweets that leave a lasting impression. Reserving ahead is essential for a table at DAR, especially for the popular weekend vegan brunch featuring delightful honeycomb-shaped pancakes. Adjacent, the Cocktail Bar offers sustainably crafted vegan drinks that embody the vibrant tastes of Spain and Morocco. This 'slow fast food' concept extends to enjoying homemade vegan burgers while respecting the environment.

DAR's atmosphere celebrates guilt-free pleasures that blend taste, tradition, and ethical dining, offering a truly gratifying experience.

### PINXTOS AND WINE AT COR

Cor on Weststrasse is a hidden treasure in the heart of Zurich, offering a cosy atmosphere where wine and tapas are the stars. Zineb and Bernd Vogel's love for Catalan cuisine is evident in the carefully crafted plant-based tapas and pinxtos. The wine selection, featuring mainly Spanish and French wines, adds elegance to the experience, promising a diverse culinary journey with each bottle. Savouring delights like stuffed peppers and 'pa amb tomaquet' reveals Cor's dedication to organic, local ingredients. What distinguishes Cor is its innovative wine menu, constantly evolving to complement the diverse menu offerings. Whether for an impromptu aperitif or a relaxed dinner, Cor's charming ambiance and delicious offerings make it a top choice in Zurich's dining scene. A visit to Cor promises a delightful blend of flavours, setting, and warmth that truly elevates the dining experience in Zurich.

AKANKSHA DEAN is an independent food & travel writer, a chef and a catalyst and is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana, in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, in 2016 and 2018 and currently in the Best of The Best Category.



**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

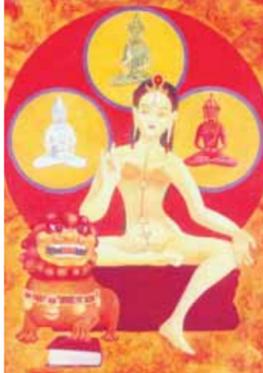
MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week, you possess significant physical and mental strength. Utilize your willpower to overcome challenges. Here are some tips: focus entirely on your goals, seize opportunities, and actively participate to succeed. A journey or trip may be on the horizon. Pay attention to all details before making decisions. Your actions are usually quick, but this week calls for patience and strength. Firm decisions will lead to a more meaningful and stable life. Midweek, domestic issues may require your attention, with discussions around travel, marriage, or property matters. Towards the end of the week, you may receive marriage proposals. Those already in relationships will find their bonds strengthening, with increased intensity bringing you closer. Emotional moments may arise; keep them in check.

**Lucky number** 3 | **Lucky colour** Coral  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

Now is the time to engage in discussions and seek equilibrium. Refreshing your energies is essential for achieving mental clarity and tranquility. Challenges may surface, such as relationship strains, financial worries, or minor health concerns. You may experience confusion and uncertainty, leading to a feeling of bewilderment. It's important to address emotional, domestic, and health issues with renewed focus, especially in matters such as reconciling estranged relationships or navigating separations. Liberating your mind from entrenched beliefs and barriers is crucial for embracing new opportunities. During unfavorable periods, it's wise to allow time to unfold naturally while preparing for future opportunities to maximize benefits. This approach will help you navigate through difficult phases with resilience and lay a solid foundation for success in more promising times.

**Lucky number** 14 | **Lucky colour** Peach  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week presents a notable period of achievement both at home and in your professional life, as favorable circumstances align to support your endeavors. Any project you undertake is likely to succeed effortlessly. Consider making significant decisions related to family or real estate during this time. You'll find yourself in a position of influence and leadership, recognized for your ability to manage and inspire. Your natural charisma ensures that others are receptive to your ideas. Engagements in meetings, networking, and partnerships are particularly advantageous, leading to positive outcomes. Your ability to leverage the strengths of those around you shines, driven by your insight and magnanimity. As the week concludes, you'll experience a sense of substantial personal and business growth. A thoughtful discussion with elders could be beneficial, enhancing family dynamics.

**Lucky number** 1 | **Lucky colour** Grey  
**Lucky day** Monday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week begins on a high note with a clear understanding of both personal and professional landscapes, allowing for efficient and effective action. You exhibit strong leadership and a robust self-confidence, positioning yourself as a source of inspiration and a driving force for many. As the week progresses, you'll find yourself at the heart of familial warmth and affection, playing a pivotal role in deepening bonds among loved ones. A long-held wish may see fruition during this time, bringing your efforts into the spotlight and garnering appreciation. However, as the week closes, be prepared for some internal conflicts as cherished beliefs and established methods may need reevaluation. This could pertain to personal habits or professional approaches. Embrace flexibility and consider thoughtful changes to ensure continued progress.

**Lucky number** 7 | **Lucky colour** Pink  
**Lucky day** Sunday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week promises a rich sense of emotional fulfillment. You may find yourself reconnecting with loved ones from your past, nurturing bonds that have stood the test of time. Expect a dynamic period ahead, with the possibility of embarking on an international journey related to a fresh professional role. Harness your creative energies this week, as they are peaking and could lead to significant achievements. Midweek brings recognition for your recent efforts, enhancing your sense of accomplishment. You'll notice an expansive outlook positively impacting your decisions. As the week closes, a new employment opportunity may arise, alongside a burst of inspiration to launch a new project. This could set the stage for future success. Overall, the week holds promise for professional growth, fulfilling travel, and joyful connections.

**Lucky number** 11 | **Lucky colour** Blue  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week promises a significant shift in your daily routine, possibly affecting either your professional environment or personal life. You may find yourself moving to a favored location or adapting to a new role. As you anticipate these changes, you'll find your thoughts deeply engaged in planning for what lies ahead. By midweek, take a moment to appreciate the abundance life offers, as your well-being and satisfaction contribute to your allure and positive demeanor. Achieving a balance between a joyful home and fulfilling work life reflects your resilience and determination. Your steadfastness in facing challenges has set the stage for you to enjoy the rewards of your efforts. Embrace this period as an opportunity for growth and self-reflection, leading to deeper insights and personal development.

**Lucky number** 4 | **Lucky colour** Brown  
**Lucky day** Saturday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

Your persistent efforts are about to pay off, manifesting as tangible successes. You have a profound sense of stability and security, which reflects in your demeanor, professional endeavors, and interpersonal relationships. Your innovative spirit and enthusiasm for your work empower you to master your environment. Those around you, including peers and team members, appreciate your sincerity and commitment to collective well-being. You radiate positivity and skillfully navigate challenges through informed decisions, leaning on historical precedents and strategic negotiation. Professionals in advisory roles excel during this time, harnessing their strength, discipline, and accumulated wisdom. With your dedication, self-assurance, and solid foundation, you are well-positioned to succeed. This is an excellent time to maximize your capabilities and achieve.

**Lucky number** 10 | **Lucky colour** Lemon  
**Lucky day** Monday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

Currently, you're encountering a challenging phase where vital aspects of your existence demand urgent attention and a balanced approach. As the week progresses, you might find yourself feeling disengaged and desiring a break from the hustle, prioritizing personal needs over others. It's important to value your current blessings and concentrate on savoring the here and now. Your progress in various areas might seem stalled, potentially leading to a sense of confusion. Beware of negative influences from those around you, and be proactive to counteract their effects. Be cautious with new romantic or professional offers this week as they could lead to complications. Though times seem tough, it's not the end. Strive for equilibrium and unity in your actions and relationships.

**Lucky number** 6 | **Lucky colour** Orange  
**Lucky day** Tuesday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week heralds a burst of inspiration and the potential for a spiritual renaissance. Harnessing this dynamic surge creatively could yield significant achievements. However, prudence is advised as your actions will come under scrutiny, potentially leading to complications. It's wise to monitor your actions closely. The outcomes of your recent and past efforts are shaping your future prospects, aligning with the principles of karma. A significant triumph may be on the horizon, rewarding your justified endeavors. Should you encounter any legal challenges, they are likely to resolve favorably. A deep sense of thankfulness for the blessings in your life will pervade, culminating in celebratory gatherings with loved ones towards the week's end. You'll find yourself invigorated and exuberantly connected with those around you.

**Lucky number** 12 | **Lucky colour** Magenta  
**Lucky day** Wednesday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week, there is a notable surge in impulsive behavior and a tendency to rush decisions, which could lead to chaos and loss of control. It's essential to manage your emotions and reflect deeply on your challenges. You might feel compelled to distance yourself from your current environment, possibly through a quickly organized trip. Be prepared for unexpected disagreements that could arise. Now is not the optimum period to initiate new ventures. You will overcome various challenges, whether they are mental, physical, emotional, or spiritual. As the week closes, you'll likely turn towards spiritual growth, finding answers and peace through reflective practices. Engaging in spiritual rituals and acts of kindness will provide you with great comfort and grounding.

**Lucky number** 20 | **Lucky colour** Lavender  
**Lucky day** Thursday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

This week heralds a period of fruitful outcomes and vibrant energy. You may find yourself yearning for advanced learning opportunities, with prospects from abroad presenting themselves enticingly. Despite the fierce competition, your perseverance and tenacity will see you through successfully. Your professional life might require relocation or travel, but this shift promises to align with your broader ambitions and prove beneficial. Exercise caution in interactions with colleagues to avoid unnecessary disputes. Overall, this week is exceptionally favorable for both your career and personal relationships. Your innate potential and creativity are at a peak—harness these qualities to maximize every opportunity. Additionally, your personal life could see significant growth or a joyful addition. A sense of renewed purpose may invigorate your pursuits, leading you toward exciting and innovative ventures.

**Lucky number** 2 | **Lucky colour** Mint  
**Lucky day** Friday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week promises to be enjoyable with a positive start and finish. Expect harmony and joy within the family sphere. Relationships, both romantic and platonic, are likely to thrive alongside comfortable living conditions. Children will experience success, and longstanding matters, particularly those related to family assets, are poised to reach favorable resolutions. However, potential disagreements with colleagues might arise. Facing these challenges with constructive strategies will be key. Your patience and wise handling of differing viewpoints will help navigate any tensions smoothly. As the week concludes, you'll discover effective solutions to your concerns, paving the way for new opportunities. With confidence in your capabilities and a persistent positive outlook, you're set to triumph over the week's challenges. Enjoy the week!

**Lucky number** 9 | **Lucky colour** Teal  
**Lucky day** Sunday

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**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Om – The Shabda Brahman

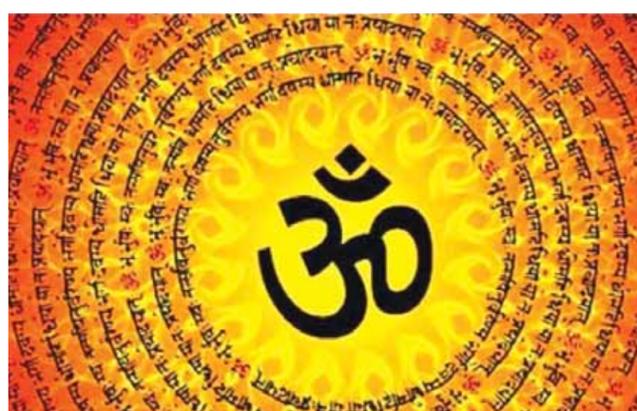
Today is Guru Purnima, dedicated to the torch bearer in one's life - the Guru - in the annular Hindu calendar. Heartfelt salutation to my revered Guru on this solemn occasion. For, he in his own ingenious ways helped me rise over the limitations of mind and emotion, expand my vision, making me worth serving as guiding spirit to many. Also, I greet other Gurus who have been enlightening their disciples. The importance of the word: 'Guru' is hidden in its very construct. Guru is made of two syllables - 'Gu' meaning darkness/ignorance and 'Ru' implies light. Guru, thus, is the one who enlightens to remove darkness/ignorance. Here, it is important to understand the difference between a teacher and a Guru. Teacher is academically aware of a particular subject or discipline, which he carries forward to the students. Guru, on the other hand, who through his intense sadhana, gets over the limitations of mind and emotions, whence he has access to the whole landscape of mind, which knows no limits. He then explores and realises the truths of life - both eternal, which includes even subtle

realities operative at unseen level, and living realities of life. Only such realised masters could intuitively comprehend the soundless sound Om.

Now coming back to the subject matter under discussion since the previous issue, we have seen why the sound note Om is also termed as Shabda-Brahman. Shabda in Sanskrit means word - both written and as heard. The word Brahman here means the primal-source and effective cause of all creations.

The Shabda-Brahman concept is laid down in the Vedas as:  
**Prajapatirvai idam-asit**  
**Tasya Vagdwitiya asit**  
**Vagvai paramam Brahman**

In the beginning was Prajapati which is another name assigned to the source and effective cause of all creations. The word Prajapati is made of two words: Praja and Pati, respectively meaning the subjects and their lord, the two when combined means lord of all creations. The word came second - spoken of as second because it was first potentially in and then emerged as the evident power from Him. The word is that ultimate Brahman.



This finds resonance even in the Biblical scripture, the fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word; and the Word was with God; and the Word was God". The 'Om?' symbol, as we see, is written as the Hindi letter 'ॐ' (Om) towards its main body. On top of it is placed a crescent having a dot within, which is spoken of as Hindi letter 'm?'. The

crescent sign with the dot within symbolises particular action or the stirring at the primal source. The main body - 'ॐ' (Om) reflects what followed thereafter, which eventually culminated in the manifest plural world of name and form. Supposedly following Pranava (causal stress) at the primal source, arose Nada

(sound). The crescent here symbolises the arousal of causal stress. When the causal-stress gathered up and gravitated further, energy streams got released with a bang. Here, the dot within the crescent has two-fold implications. First, it symbolises the dense singular source where from the world process took off. Second, it symbolises centralisation of causal stress and issuance of energy streams there from. The second part, 'A' (U) symbolises the manifest energy as the world experience. A question will naturally arise in curious human mind: "Why and how the scope for causal-stress at the primal-source, believed to be originally in equilibrated state?" The dictionary meaning describes 'stress', as a system of forces applied to a body. Evidently, when two things attract or distract each other, will lead to stress (the resulting force arising thereof). It is therefore possible that mutual attraction/distraction amongst energy particles constituting the primal source, hitherto in equilibrated state, would be subject to stress. This phenomenon being the self-activated cause of all

further actions in the world process is termed as causal stress. This, when gathered momentum, and got centralised, found issuance of forces with a roaring 'Hum' sound. Here, a mention about the state of atom, seemingly inactive, becomes imperative to make things clear. At the centre of an atom lies the positively charged nucleus, which apparently remains in an inactive state. Negatively charged electrons circle around the nucleus. The bonding energy between the two provides stability to the atom. If the bonding energy gets any way disturbed, the atom releases enormous energy. Similarly, it is very well possible that stress arising out of mutual attraction amongst the energy particles constituting the primal source would have disturbed the bonding energy, which had earlier held these particles in equilibrated state.

*The issue continues.....*

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