



WORLD 5
ISRAELI AIRSTRIKE
HITS SCHOOL IN GAZA

MONEY 6
INDIA STEEL PRODUCTION
TO CROSS 300MT BY 2030

SPORT 8
DRAVID'S MESSAGE
TO GAMBHIR

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HOW MANY MORE?

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A Border Action Team (BAT), comprising battle-hardened terrorists and elite special forces personnel of the Pakistan Army, on Saturday violated the February 2021 ceasefire agreement by launching a deadly strike on one of the forward Indian posts. The attack resulted in the martyrdom of an Indian Army soldier and left four others injured along the Line of Control in the Kamakari sector of Macchal, located in North Kashmir's Kupwara district.



File Photo

The BAT strike came mere hours after Prime Minister Narendra Modi issued a stern warning, asserting that the Indian Army would crush all terror attempts with full force.

During the firefight, one of the foreign terrorists was also neutralised. Preliminary reports indicate that a two to three-member BAT team lobbed grenades and unleashed a barrage of indiscriminate gunfire on the Indian troops.

At least five soldiers were injured in the BAT action, with one soldier later succumbing to his injuries at the base hospital. The soldier who laid down his life in the line of duty has been identified as Rifleman Mohit Rathour.

Since June 9, the day Modi took the oath of office for the third time, foreign terrorists have carried out at least 10 terror attacks in the region.

These attacks have resulted in the sacrifice of over a dozen soldiers and nine civilians in Jammu and Kashmir. In the past week alone, three soldiers have lost their lives along the Line of Control in the Kupwara and Poonch districts.

In a statement, a Srinagar-based Defence Spokesman said, "Taking advantage of bad weather and poor visibility along Line of Control in Macchal Sector, a group of two to three armed personnel crossed the LoC and fired on a forward Army post from a close range. Alert troops responded vigorously and in the ensuing exchange of fire,

one Pakistani intruder was killed along with the recovery of weapons, ammunition, and war-like stores. Identification and affiliation of this Pakistani national is being ascertained."

In the past, similar attempts by infiltrators, actively aided and abetted by the Pakistani Army, have sought to exploit the dense foliage and poor visibility conditions. However, these efforts have consistently, as they were today, been successfully thwarted and disrupted by the vigilant Indian forces. The Indian Army is firm in its resolve and commitment to maintain the sanctity of the Line of Control and defeat the nefarious and inimical designs of the Pakistan Army, the spokesman added.

Setback for Vijay Mallaya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The Securities and Exchange Board of India has barred former liquor baron Vijay Mallaya from accessing the securities market for three years for routing funds to the Indian capital markets using his overseas bank accounts with UBS.

The regulator has also restrained Mallaya from associating with any listed company, directly or indirectly, for three years. Sebi's investigation is based on the findings of Financial Conduct Authority, its counterpart in UK, for the period from January 1, 2006 to March 31, 2008. It had suo-moto taken up the instant matter for further investigation based on the findings in the communication from the Financial Services Authority (now known as Financial Conduct Authority and hereinafter referred to as 'FSA/FCA') to ascertain whether there was any routing of funds to the Indian Securities Market by Mallaya, Chairman of the UB Group and individual controlling shareholder of United Spirits Limited ('USL') during the relevant period, through his bank accounts

indirectly, or being associated with the securities market in any manner, for a period of three (3) years from the date of this order. "The noticee is further restrained from associating himself with any listed company or proposed to be listed company, in any capacity, directly or indirectly, for a period of three (3) year from the date of this order. Further, during the period of restraint, the existing holding of securities including the holding of units of mutual funds of the Noticee shall remain frozen," it said. The investigation, prima facie, revealed that that the noticee had used a sub-account i.e. Matterhorn Ventures, a Foreign Institutional Investor (FII), as an investment vehicle to indirectly trade in scrips of his own group entities in India i.e. Herbertsons Limited ('Herbertsons') and USL. Thus, the investigation revealed that the amounts paid to Matterhorn Ventures were routed by the Noticee by opening various beneficiary accounts with UBS and routing these funds through these accounts, indirectly, to the Indian Securities Market.



Prime Minister Modi to visit Ukraine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Ukraine next month, marking his first trip to the war-torn country since the conflict with Russia began two years ago. Following his Ukraine visit, Modi is also slated to travel to Poland, making it the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to the country in over 40 years. India and Ukraine are exploring the possibility of Prime Minister Modi's visit on August 23-24, sources said on Saturday. The proposed visit comes amid renewed global efforts to bring peace to the eastern European nation, they added. Modi might visit Kyiv around Ukraine's National Day on August 24 and is expected to travel to Poland after concluding his trip to Ukraine, the sources said. Last month, the Prime

Minister held talks with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the sidelines of the G7 Summit in Italy's Apulia. India and Ukraine are considering Modi's visit to Kyiv in the latter half of August, the sources said, noting that there is no final confirmation yet, as massive preparations in terms of logistics and related issues would be required. During the meeting with Zelenskyy on June 14, Modi conveyed that India would continue to do everything within its means to support a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Ukraine conflict and emphasised that the path to peace is through "dialogue and diplomacy." Modi also told Zelenskyy that India believes in a "human-centric" approach to finding a solution to the conflict in Ukraine. At the meeting, the Ukrainian president invited the Prime Minister to visit Kyiv.

Mamata walks out, Nitish skips NITI Aayog meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee interacts with the media after walking out of a Niti Aayog meeting chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in New Delhi, on Saturday

The NITI Aayog meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday, was marked by political fireworks rather than fostering the progression of the States. The meeting faced a boycott from States governed by INDIA Bloc parties, with the notable exception of West Bengal. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee made headlines by walking out of the NITI Aayog meeting. Adding to the political drama was the conspicuous absence of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, whose party JD(U) is the second largest in Modi's NDA coalition at the Centre. Intriguingly, Kumar opted to stay in Patna, where he convened a meeting to discuss JD(U)'s prospects for the upcoming Assembly elections in neighbouring Jharkhand, in alliance with the BJP. To begin with, Mamata claimed that she was unfairly stopped midway through her speech, despite being the sole representative of the Opposition. She said her microphone was switched off after five minutes, while other Chief Ministers were allowed to speak for longer duration.

"This is insulting. I will not attend any further meeting. I have come out boycotting the meeting. (Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister) Chandrababu Naidu was given 20 minutes to speak. The Chief Ministers of Assam, Goa, Chhattisgarh spoke for 10-12 minutes. I was stopped from speaking after just five minutes," Mamata told reporters after coming out of the meeting. "This is unfair. I am the only one from the Opposition side. I attended this meeting because of the greater interest that cooperative federalism should be strengthened," she added. However, PIB Factcheck, in a post on X, said it is "misleading" to say Mamata's microphone was switched off. "The clock only showed

that her speaking time was over," it said. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman rejected her claim that she was unfairly stopped midway in her speech. "CM Mamata attended the NITI Aayog meeting. We all heard her. Every CM was given the allotted time and that was displayed on the screen which was present before every table...She said in the media that her mic was put off. That is completely false. Every CM was given their due time to speak...It's unfortunate that the Mamata has claimed that her mic was switched off which is not true...She should speak the truth behind this rather than again build a narrative based on falsehood," the Finance Minister said.

Address at NITI Aayog meeting

Majhi pleads with Centre for disaster-resilient infra

NALINI SAHU ■ NEW DELHI

Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday urged the Government of India to provide financial support to the State Government for creation of disaster-resilient infrastructure in the power and telecom sectors. Majhi raised the demand at the Governing Council meetings of the NITI Aayog held here under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Addressing the meeting, Majhi said Odisha, though prone to natural disasters, has emerged as a pioneer in disaster management, demonstrating remarkable resilience. "Financial support of the Central Government for creation of disaster-resilient infrastructures in power, telecom sectors and coastal saline embankments will help the State in minimising the adverse consequences of cyclones and floods," he said. Odisha has a long coastline

of 480 km. So, the State Government would adopt the model of port-led development, positioning the State as the gateway to Eastern and South Eastern Asia and a port of call for neighbouring landlocked States, Majhi said. Support is, therefore, required for establishment of large-scale port-based industrial zones in the areas surrounding the existing ports of Dhamra and Gopalpur while further developing greenfield ports at Astaranga, Palur,



Bahuda and Subarnarekha, he said. In this regard, the CM demanded the Centre to transfer salt pan land of around 4,300 acres owned by the Central Government in Ganjam district at the earliest. "As we work towards building our infrastructure such as Industrial Parks and Corridors, electricity grids, railway infrastructure and enhanced air connectivity, dedicated budget al-

locations and quick clearances from the Union Government for various infrastructure projects would be very helpful," he suggested. As a potential green economy, he sought support for pumped hydro storage plants (PSPs) projects, floating solar projects and intra-State green energy transmission corridor projects. Majhi further urged the Centre to expedite opening of more brick-&-mortar bank branches and ATMs in the unbanked/

under-banked gram panchayats of the State. He also sought the Centre's support for value chain and to produce special metals and alloys for aerospace and defence by utilising the State's mineral resources. As Odisha has a lower railway density compared to the national average, the CM urged the Government of India to consider increasing it in the State. With over 33% forest cover, Odisha plays a crucial role in

environment protection. However, the State's high forest cover limits its ability to utilise land for development projects, affecting its economic growth. Therefore, the CM urged the Centre to consider incentivising the State for reducing its carbon footprint and rendering ecological services. Further, he also sought support of the Centre for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) and state-of-the-art technology for design and manufacturing semiconductors.

Potato supply from WB resumes

After Majhi reaches out to Mamata

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With Odisha facing a potato crisis due to halt of transportation of the kitchen's essential vegetable from West Bengal, Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Saturday reached out to his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee to end the problem. Majhi met Banerjee in New Delhi as both Chief Ministers

were in the national capital to attend the Governing Council meeting of NITI Aayog on the day.

Majhi urged Banerjee to streamline the potato supply chain from West Bengal. He urged her to resolve the issue earlier since people in Odisha are facing problems with restriction on the supply from Bengal leading to an artificial price rise here.

Meanwhile, Food & Civil Supplies Minister Krushna Chandra Patra claimed that potato procurement from

West Bengal has resumed following a discussion with the neighbouring State's government.

Speaking to mediapersons, the Minister said potato price soared in the State as it could not be imported from West Bengal. But following a discussion with the West Bengal government, the trucks carrying potatoes have now been allowed to enter Odisha, he informed.

Patra said that potato is now being sold in the State at Rs 32 to Rs 34 per kg.

KIMS docs save baby with congenital heart disease

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Department of Neonatology, Cardiology, and Cardiac Anaesthesia at KIMS has saved the life of a 10-day-old baby with a critical congenital heart disease.

The baby weighed 2.2 kg and was referred to the KIMS with a suspected congenital heart disease. The newborn had required oxygen since birth and had persistently low oxygen levels. Upon arrival, the baby's oxygen saturation was below 70 per cent, even with oxygen support and medication.



The second heart sound was singular and a continuous murmur was detected. Further investigations using chest X-rays and echocardiography revealed a condition known as pulmonary atresia, where blood flow to both lungs is severely restricted. Babies with this con-

dition can survive if they have an additional blood supply to the lungs, such as a patent ductus arteriosus (PDA), but this naturally occurring connection often closes soon after birth.

Surgical options such as a Blalock-Taussig (BT) shunt are available but carry significant

risks, especially for infants weighing less than 2.5 kg.

A paediatric cardiology team, led by Dr Asish Ranjan Mohakud, along with the neonatology unit and cardiac anaesthesiologist Dr Ashok Badamali, thoroughly evaluated the case. They decided on a less-invasive

yet highly-effective approach: dilating and stenting the ductus arteriosus, a natural connection that was beginning to close.

Following the procedure, the infant's oxygen levels improved dramatically, rising above 90 per cent. The immediate life-threatening condition was resolved and the baby was able to maintain oxygen levels on room air and take feeds. This successful intervention also reduced the need for more invasive surgeries, minimising the risks associated with prolonged anaesthesia and recovery in such a young patient.

Woman's scribe's death Arrested hubby' phone sent for tests

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A couple of days after woman journalist Madhumita Parida was found dead on railway tracks at Bapuji Nagar of the capital city, an Indian Air Force (IAF) official on Saturday collected information about the deceased's husband Sridhar Jena from police.

Jena, who has been engaged with the IAF, has been arrested by the Dhauli police under the new sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita in connection with the case.

Madhumita's family members have alleged that she had attempted suicide some days back. There was some dispute between Madhumita and her husband, but the matter was resolved by the Dhauli police and she went to her husband's house a day before her body was found on Wednesday.

A video recorded by the victim before her death has gone viral on social media platforms.

help in the further investigation of the case.

"Based on the evidence, we will take forward the investigation. We have questioned some persons in connection with the case. If required, some other persons will be questioned as part of the investigation process," said city DCP Prateek Singh.

Notably, the family members of Madhumita, who worked for a web channel, have further alleged that she had attempted suicide some days back. There was some dispute between Madhumita and her husband, but the matter was resolved by the Dhauli police and she went to her husband's house a day before her body was found on Wednesday.

A video recorded by the victim before her death has gone viral on social media platforms.

DAV CSspur felicitation fest 'Utilise your success for others' benefits'



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

Successful students should devote themselves for the overall development of the society. Success must not be confined to personal celebrations, opined Commissioner, Bhubaneswar Municipal Corporation Rajesh Prabhakar Patil, while joining as the chief guest at the felicitation ceremony of the achievers at DAV Public School, Chandrasekharapur, here.

Patil shared his personal experience to motivate the young minds to bring laurels combating all odds. The 95% and above mark holders, toppers of different streams, endowment prize winners, UPSC qualified alumni and teachers were honoured during the occasion.

Regional Director of DAV Institutions, Odisha Dr K C Satapathy joined as the guest of honour and emphasised upon the inculcation of values and societal concern. School chairman Santosh Kumar Satapathy presided over the function and Principal Dr Sujata Sahu highlighted the phenomenal achievements of the students.

Among others, Chairman of DAV Kalinga Nagar Madan Mohan Panda, Chairman of DAV Pokhaript Dr Arun Kumar Rath, Principal of DSBM and Manager of the school Dr DN Mishra, Principals of DAV schools of the twin cities joined as the guests and encouraged the meritorious students. Senior academic supervisor Pramod Kumar Patra offered a vote of thanks.

Transport Dept deprives hit-and-run victims of aid

Violating Supreme Court guidelines

SAROJ MISHRA ■ BHUBANESWAR

The victims in hit-and-run cases in Odisha are being deprived of getting compensation given by the Odisha Transport Department after the department issued a notification withdrawing powers from the RTOs.

Earlier, the RTOs used to submit reports in hit-and-run road accidents to the State Transport Authority (STA), following which the victims got compensation. But nearly a year back, the RTOs' powers were withdrawn by the Transport Department Principal Secretary and Sub-Collectors were given power to decide the cases. But as the Sub-Collectors have a lot of other duties to perform, compensation is not being disbursed. This has multiplied the hardships of the



victims and their families as they are not getting compensation, Orissa High Court senior advocate and road safety expert Subrat Kumar Nanda said.

It might be mentioned here that the Supreme Court, after hearing a hit-and-run case, has directed the States' Chief Secretaries and Directors General of Police (DGPs) to constitute

a committee to ensure expediting of payment of compensation to the victims. Besides, the apex court asked the Solicitor General to ensure that the compensation amount of Rs 50,000 for injuries and Rs 2 lakh in case of the victim's death should be doubled, said Nanda.

Notably, Odisha stands 20th in the country in terms of pay-

ment of compensation to hit-and-run victims. In the last one year, not a single hit-and-run victim has got compensation in Khordha district. And only three districts have formed committees for expediting compensation payment to victims, he said.

Many victims or their families have been deprived of compensation as the time limit has expired.

To make matters worse, there is no awareness among the people on how to avail compensation in case of an accident. Most of the Sub-Collectors are also having no knowledge regarding the matter, Nanda said.

Due to lack of coordination between the departments, the funds meant for payment of compensation are not being utilised and returning back. So, the departments should ensure that the victims are compensated and the sufferings of their families are lessened, said Nanda.

'Industries need to spend for environment'

Odisha CSR and Sustainability Excellence Awards held

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

The Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) proudly hosted the Odisha CSR and Sustainability Excellence Awards on Friday here.

The prestigious event marked a significant milestone in recognizing champions of corporate social responsibility (CSR), inspiring a transformative ripple effect that promises to reshape Odisha's business landscape.

This year's theme, "Celebrating Shared Prosperity for a Sustainable Future," underscored the critical interconnectedness of economic progress, social wellbeing and environmental stewardship. It highlighted the collective responsibility of businesses in shaping a sustain-



able future for Odisha. The gala event served as a beacon of recognition, honouring the exemplary contributions of businesses towards corporate responsibility and sustainability.

Industry Minister Sampad Charan Swain attending the event stated, "Our Government is committed to the industrial development of the State. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is vital for the betterment of society."

Deputy Director General of Forests (C), Ministry of Envi-

ronment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, AT Mishra remarked, "To mitigate the impact of industry on the planet, we need more plantation and sustainable initiatives."

ASSOCHAM Odisha Chairman Pankaj Lochan Mohanty delivered the welcome address.

Chairman of the ASSOCHAM Odisha State CSR and Sustainability Council, Prashanta Hota said social responsibility without sustainability is merely donation. He advised the industries

focusing on profit and dividends to prioritize on sustainability and the planet. Senior Director, ASSOCHAM East and North East Perminder Jeet Kaur, gave the vote of thanks.

Among others, the event was graced by dignitaries, including Chief General Manager, SBI, Bhubaneswar Dinesh Pruthi, Chairman, ASSOCHAM Odisha State Mining and Steel Council Prabhodi Mohanty and CSR Advisor and Consultant HCL Tech Dr Surabhi Yadav.

ICC Job Mela inaugurated by Guv



PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A two-day Job Mela 2024 organised by the Indian Chamber of Commerce's (ICC) began at the Grand Lumbini Convention here on Saturday under the supervision of ICC Skill and Education Committee member Sikata Das.

Governor Raghubar Das inaugurated the mela and said this fair would empower young women as catalyst for jobseekers. Job Melas have become a powerful means of realising the dreams of youths.

Skill development is increasing in Odisha. Young women have become skilled.

"Odisha has the country's largest port in Paradip. I will appeal to the State Government to improve it further," he said.

Over 1,000 applicants participated in the fair. The programme consisted of three key technical sessions aimed at enhancing the employability skills of the candidates. The sessions were conducted by eminent faculty from University of Utah, XIM University and Infosys.

Majhi govt's maiden Budget overarching, inclusive

Persistent with the ethos of the Viksit Bharat and Sabka Saath - Sabka Vikas slogan, the first-time elected BJP Government led by CM Mohan Charan Majhi presented a growth-oriented and inclusive budget for 2024-2025.

The four prominent quarters were for the benefit of the poor and the needy, farmers, women, and youth. The eye-catching fact is the hike of 26 per cent in comparison to last year's budget in the agriculture (Krushi) and ancillary sectors to the tune of Rs 33,000 crore. With the declaration of the



SWAYAM PRAVA MISHRA

new scheme of CM Kisan Yojana, an increase of Rs 800 over the current MSP per

quintal of paddy, and the budget of Rs 5,000 crore for the Samrudhha Krushka Yojana, Majhi made a clear point that the State is aware of the importance of farmers in the economy and to support them is the need of the hour. His thrust was the 3S - Subsistence, Self-reliance, and Sustainability.

Fisheries is one of the State's major exporting departments, and the State budget has allocated Rs 344 crore and Rs 220 crore respectively for the Odisha Matsya Mission and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana. Subhadra Yojana has been

allotted Rs 10,000 crore for the development of women. The Mission Shakti, a successful scheme for women empowerment, has been given Rs 2,761 crore. The Rajya Samabaya Niti for the smooth conduct of Samabaya Banks which cater to the financial inclusion and needs of the grassroots is highlighted.

For the health sector, the allotment of Rs 500 crore for Ayushman Bharat, the grants to all the medical colleges for infrastructure building and special care for cancer treatment centers are affirmative news. So far as education is con-

cerned, the State Government is committed to steer the committee for implementing the NEP 2020. To stop the school dropout rate among tribals, the new scheme named Madho Singh Hata Kharcha Yojana is floated for the first time. Similarly, Godabarisha Mishra Adarsha Prathamika Vidyalaya is a positive move.

For higher education, PM USAY (Pradhan Mantri Uchatar Shiksha Abhiyan Yojana) wherein the funding pattern between the Centre and the State will be 60:40 is also floated.

One of the prominent items of the election manifesto was

to preserve and sustain the pride of Odisha. To make the State's art forms, ancient glorious history, and cultural heritage known to the world, the budget has allocated a corpus fund of Rs 200 crore for Odia Asmita and a corpus of Rs 500 crore for the Shree Jagannath Temple administration.

Overall, the Government has presented an inclusive budget and is committed to work for the betterment of the State and its people.

(Dr Mishra is Assistant Professor, Department of A&A Economics, Utkal University)

In Ganjam Taunted over cricket, minor boy kills self

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
A Class-X student committed suicide after he was taunted over playing cricket at M Nuagada village in Ganjam district on Friday. The deceased was identified as Chandan Parida. He was a student of the Odisha Adarsha Vidyalaya in Kshatriyabarapur. As per reports, the minor boy allegedly ended his life by consuming pesticide after an FIR was lodged against him and his father by a woman in the village who was hit by the cricket ball.

Chandan was playing with his friends on the village road on June 17. One of his shots allegedly hit the woman in the village while she was passing nearby. Subsequently, the

woman lodged the FIR against Chandan and his father Narayan Parida with the Gangpur police.

Following the development, Chandan was allegedly under huge mental stress after hearing sarcastic statements from some of the villagers. As a result, he lost his mental balance and consumed pesticide. He was admitted to the Bhanjanagar hospital in a critical condition. However, doctors declared him brought dead.

After the death of the boy, his father lodged an FIR against three persons of the village. The Gangpur police have registered cases in connection with both the complaints and started investigations into the cases.

In Baleswar Man gets 20-yr RI for raping minor girl

PNS ■ BALESWAR
Special Judge, POCSO, Ranjan Kumar Sutar on Saturday convicted a 50-year-old man in a rape case in Baleswar district and awarded him 20 years' rigorous imprisonment (RI).

The court also asked the convict to pay a fine of Rs 5,000 and in default to undergo another two years' RI. The convict Gangadhar Jena of village Goudasahi under the Simulia police station had raped the 15-year-old girl on December 1, 2023.

The mother of the victim alleged in her FIR that the girl was threatened by the accused of dire consequences if she revealed the matter to anyone. The cops began an investigation and arrested the accused.

"The court after examining 14 witnesses and 23 exhibits pronounced the verdict today," said Special Public Prosecutor Pranab Kumar Panda.

Rains trigger massive landslide in M'giri



18 villages cut off
PNS ■ MALKANGIRI
As many as 18 villages of Nakamamudi panchayat under Korukunda block in Malkangiri district remained cut off from the rest of the world on Saturday following a massive landslide at the Bayapada ghati triggered by incessant rainfall.

While the landslide has disrupted vehicular movement, locals have constructed a temporary wooden bridge risking their lives for transportation.

Though the district administration is aware of the development, the rainfall has slowed

down the restoration and clearance work, sources said.

This is not the first time when a landslide has hit the Bayapada ghati. Last year also, a major landslide had affected normal life in the region.

Notably, heavy rainfall continues to batter Malkangiri over the last week throwing normal life out of gear. The torrential rains have also left several rivers in spate in the district threatening to cut off many areas, including Motu.

Though the Rural Development Department had carried out the road construction five years ago, it is yet to be completed, alleged locals, demanding a permanent solution to their problem.

In Keonjhar Drones used to nab 6 of timer mafia gang

Timber worth Rs 50L seized
PNS ■ KEONJHAR
A joint team of police and forest officials arrested six of a timber mafia gang by monitoring their movement by drones at Santarapur village under Ghatagaon block in Keonjhar district on Saturday.

The team also seized valuable wooden logs comprising Sal, Saguan and Gambhari worth over Rs 50 lakh from their possession.

According to sources, the team deployed a couple of drones to monitor the mafia on Friday night. After keeping a close vigil on them, the team subsequently launched a raid at the village and nabbed the criminals.

"Every time we tried to intercept them, they used to retaliate by pelting stones and attacking us with iron rods. Though we were successful on several occasions, many times they managed to escape from our clutches," said Keonjhar DFO HD Dhanraj.

Dhanraj said, "It was challenging but not impossible. We had deployed a couple of drones to monitor their activity and they were all aware of it," Dhanraj added.

The village was once used to be a safe hub for the timber mafia as it was inaccessible for police and forest officials. However, the officials have changed their strategies and taking action against the smugglers, sources said.

No allocation in Budget Brahmapur-Sambalpur rly project hangs in balance

RAJEEV RATHAN ■ BRAHMAPUR
The much-anticipated Brahmapur-Sambalpur railway project, aimed at directly connecting south Odisha with west Odisha, has been going through uncertainty.

Despite the completion of the final survey and land identification, the project awaits budget approval and land acquisition. Consequently, future of the crucial infrastructure project remains unclear.

BJP MP candidates have been elected in the parliamentary constituencies of Brahmapur, Aska, Kandhamal, and Sambalpur, through which the railway will pass. As a result, there are demands from various quarters for these representatives to raise their

voices on the issue in the Parliament.

The railway project is part of the Prime Minister's Mobility Plan, designed to enhance connectivity between south and west Odisha. Initially planned to connect Brahmapur to Sambalpur, the project was later expanded to include Gopalpur.

The Central Government authorised the East Coast Railway Department to conduct a survey for the Brahmapur-Sambalpur route in 2010-11. However, after the initial survey, the project was shelved for a long time, prompting demands from various stakeholders for its immediate implementation. Intellectuals from Ganjam, Kandhamal, Boudh, and Sambalpur districts formed a Central Joint Action

Committee and initiated a vigorous movement to revive the project.

The final location survey conducted by the Odisha Railway Infrastructure Development Limited (ORIDL) has been completed, mapping approximately 241 km of new railway line. The project will connect the districts of Ganjam, Kandhamal, Boudh, and Redakhol in Sambalpur. 16 ministries are involved in the 'Mobility' aspect of the project, highlighting its significance among major national infrastructure undertakings, RTI Activist B Sankar Patro said.

The project work officially commenced on April 1, 2023, with a target completion date of March 31, 2028. The Central Government is expected

In Brahmapur WB trader's valuables worth lakhs looted in bus

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
A Kolkata-based trader was allegedly looted of 17 kg silver and Rs 5 lakh in cash while travelling to his hometown in a private bus near Bhejiput Chhak at Khallikote in Brahmapur on Friday night.

The victim was identified as Mithun Mandal.

According to sources, Mandal was returning to Kolkata with the valuables and cash in a private bus 'Khambeswari' after carrying out his regular business activity in the city. Mandal along with fellow passengers got down from the bus to have food when the vehicle halted near the Bhejiput police outpost on National Highway-12.

Mandal had left his two bags containing cash and silver on his sleeper seat. Taking advantage of the situation, four car-borne miscreants looted the bags and fled the spot, sources said.

Meanwhile, police have launched an investigation into the matter after Mandal filed a complaint in this connection.

K'pada BEO clerk axed for unruly conduct

PNS ■ KENDRAPADA
Disrespecting his higher authority cost a junior clerk of Kendrapada Block Education Office (BEO) dear.

Abinash Bal, Junior clerk of Kendrapada BEO, was placed under suspension by the District Education Officer, informed BEO Kailash Dalai.

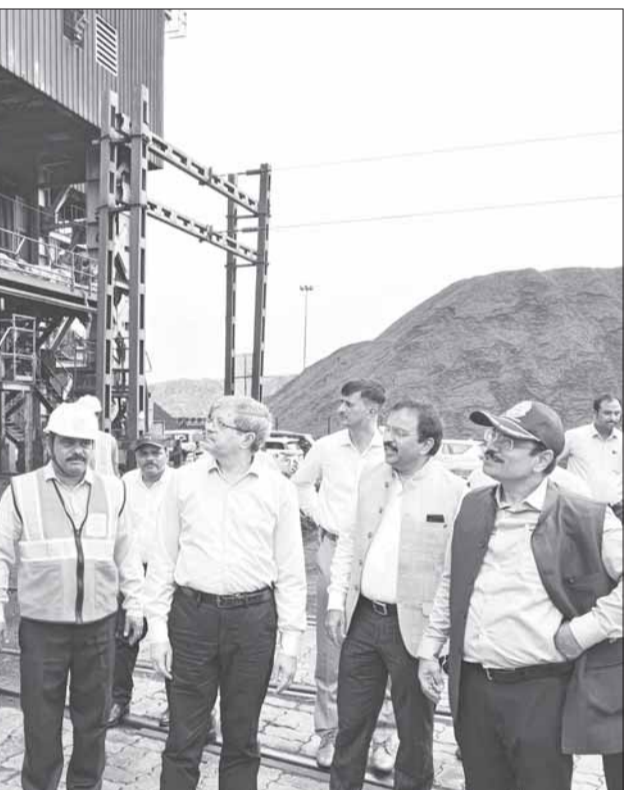
A video recently went viral in which Bal allegedly showed his misconduct against the BEO and challenged DEO Pradip Nag to suspend him if he could. DEO Nag councted

Ports Secy visits Paradip, reviews works

PNS ■ PARADIP
On his maiden visit to the Paradip Port, Ports, Shipping and Waterways Secretary TK Ramachandran on Saturday reviewed the functioning of the Paradip Port Authority (PPA). Appreciating the ease-of-doing-business measures undertaken by the PPA, he hoped that the PPA would achieve new landmarks in coming years.

During his visit, under the CSR programmes of the PPA, financial assistance was provided to CIPET for skill development of educated youths of Odisha.

Several inauguration/ laying of foundation stones of different projects were taken up. He laid foundation stone of the proposed Marine Museum. He inaugurated the proposed Trauma and Burn Care (TBC) Centre in the newly-constructed annex building of Paradip Port Hospital. The TBC Centre has been constructed at a cost of Rs.2.90 crore and it will be a dedicated centre to provide curative and rehabilitative



service for trauma and burn victims in and around Paradip.

Ramachandran he laid foundation stone of a Water Treatment Plant of PPA being constructed at a cost of

Unnatural sex with minor boy 55-yr-old man gets 20-yr RI in K'pada

RAJESH BEHERA ■ KENDRAPADA
The Adhoc Additional Sessions Judge (Fast Track special court) of Kendrapada on July 25 convicted a 55 years old man and sentenced him to undergo 20 years of RI and imposed a fine of Rs 60,200 on the convict for having unnatural sex with a 12 years old minor boy.

The convict, Soudagar Sahoo, a resident of Guhalakani (Petta) under Rajnagar police station, on July 16, 2021 at about 2.30 pm came to the house of the victim boy's house and invited him to come to a cowshed for playing ludu with him. When the victim boy went to the cowshed, Soudagar forcibly did unnatural sex with the boy. The victim disclosed the matter to his mother that the ac-

cused had been doing the act with him for quite some time.

The mother of the victim boy later lodged an FIR against the convict at Rajnagar police station. Acting on the FIR, the Rajnagar police registered a case under various sections of IPC and Section 4 of POCSO Act and arrested him on July 17, 2021.

While the adjudging the case, Judge Tribikram Keshari Chinhara, on Thursday, by verifying the evidence and cross-examining 10 witnesses, pronounced the verdict. The court also directed to the Secretary of District Legal Service Authority (DSLAA) of Kendrapada to place the matter in the DLSA meeting for sanction of Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the victim, informed Manoj Kumar Sahoo, Special Public Prosecutor of Adhoc Additional Sessions Judge (Fast Track special court).

Baleswar RTO inspects passenger vehicles

PNS ■ BALESWAR
The RTO staffs began inspection of all passenger vehicles plying in the district after getting complaints from passengers that they were being overcharged.

The action was initiated by the Transport Department after they received a complaint from a passenger that he was overcharged by the conductor of a private bus which runs between Baleswar and Bhograi. Besides, he alleged

In coastal, hinterland areas Hybrid paddy choice a challenge to traditional varieties

PNS ■ BRAHMAPUR
Amid growing interest in maximising profits with minimal effort, farmers across the coastal and hinterland areas have increasingly abandoned traditional local paddy varieties in favour of high-yield hybrid paddy. The trend has caused a significant decline in the cultivation of local paddy varieties that once dominated the region.

In the past, farmers in the coastal areas and hinterlands of Ganjam district cultivated various indigenous paddy varieties, such as Basmati, Gungabali, Padmakasari, Kalajira, Masihaphula, Ratan Chudi, Kunda Dhana, Kaich Malya, Kasichampaka, Ruhundara, Khadasuli, Ali,

Patna, Hira Khani, and Kakuda. These varieties were known for their health benefits and were grown using natural methods, relying on cow dung and organic compost instead of pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

However, the hope for higher yields has driven farmers to switch to high-yield hybrid paddy cultivation. As a

result, traditional local paddy varieties are now rarely seen, with some farmers cultivating them only for their own families on small plots of land.

Natural disasters such as floods and cyclones, occurring mainly between October and November, have frequently devastated harvested paddy, significantly impacting the livelihoods of farmers. These

challenges have further encouraged the shift towards hybrid paddy varieties, which promise better yields and greater resilience.

With the increased demand for high-yield hybrid paddy varieties like Sasyakumudini, Pooja, Masoori, Ajay, Hazari-1, Hazari-9, Satika, Lalata, Khagir, Sarala, 1062, 1075, 1061, and 1064, farmers now

rely on seeds supplied by the State Seed Corporation or purchase from the open market.

Changes in rainfall patterns and irregular monsoon rains have also contributed to the shift. Hybrid paddy varieties are more suitable for less fertile and fallow lands, but their cultivation has led to a significant increase in the use of chemical fertilisers and pesti-

cides, raising concerns about sustainability and health impacts.

Local paddy varieties are believed to have higher resistance to pests and diseases, and their grains are considered more nutritious and flavourful. Despite these benefits, the Government has faced criticism for not taking sufficient steps to preserve and promote the cultivation of local paddy varieties on a larger scale.

As farmers continue to embrace high-yield hybrid paddy, the traditional practices and benefits associated with local paddy varieties are at risk of being lost. The shift towards hybrid varieties poses a challenge to sustainable agriculture and the preservation of local agricultural heritage.

Workshop CUO VC speaks on research paper writing

PNS ■ KORAPUT
Vice-Chancellor of the Central University of Odisha, Koraput, Prof Chakradhar Tripathi delivered a talk as the chief speaker at the "Shodh Anandshala" workshop on Tuesday.

The event, organized by Bharatiya Sikshan Mandal, Yuva Ayam, Paschim Maharashtra, was conducted virtually and attended by over 100 scholars from across the country.

During his address, Prof Tripathi shared valuable insights on the art of writing research papers with enthusiasm and joy. He emphasized the importance of choosing relevant research directions, em-



ploying robust methodologies, and ensuring the authenticity of findings. His talk, which lasted over an hour, provided practical guidance on conducting research that contributes positively to society.

Emergency a dark period: Dhankhar

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Describing Emergency as a "painful, dark" period, Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar on Saturday said if that period is ignored, the Parliament has done well. Addressing new MPs of the Rajya Sabha at an orientation programme here, Dhankhar said, "There has been only one painful, heart wrenching dark period and that was when Emergency was declared." During the period, the Constitution was reduced to just a paper, he said. "It was shredded and leaders were jailed. MISA (Maintenance of Internal Security Act) became a draconian word. One of the senior politicians of the country, Lulu Prasad Yadav, was so moved and touched by the atrocities of the Emergency that he named his child Misa," he said. Misa Bharti was a member of Rajya Sabha and is currently a Lok Sabha MP. "That was the sentiment. If we ignore that dark period, our parliament



has performed very well. It has done excellently," Dhankhar told the new RS MPs. He also lauded the members of Parliament, saying they have contributed to the growth of the nation. He said undignified behaviour during House proceedings to score a political point is a blow to the spirit of democra-

cy. He also lamented that members these days are not willing to listen to the views of others. "You are free to disagree with the views of others. To ignore the other point of view is not part of parliamentary practice," Dhankhar told new Rajya Sabha members at an orientation programme. He said some members try to

find space in newspapers, give media statements immediately after leaving the House and use social media to grab eyeballs. "Members come a minute before their speech and leave immediately. Your presence is not there that you adopt a hit-and-run strategy," he said. Dhankhar said Parliament has been a citadel of constitution-

al values and liberties. At times, there have been issues, but House leaders have shown the way using wisdom, he added. "But the situation now is worrisome. Undignified behaviour is being used as a political weapon, which is a blow to the spirit of democracy," he told the members.

Modi, Shah laud CRPF role on raising day

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday praised the role of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) on the occasion of its raising day. Modi lauded the CRPF's unwavering dedication and relentless service to the nation on the force's raising day on Saturday.



The CRPF is the country's largest organisation of its kind under the Union Government and is primarily engaged in counter-insurgency work in coordination with states. It is the country's premier central police force, entrusted with maintaining internal security. It was originally established as the Crown Representative's Police on July 27, 1939. "My greetings to all CRPF personnel," Modi said in a social media post. "Their unwavering dedication and relentless service to the nation are truly

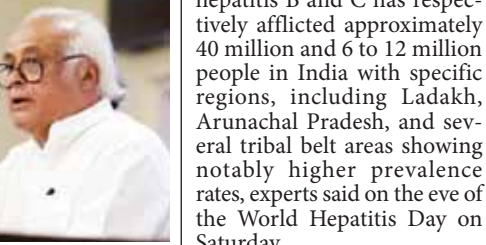
commendable. They have always stood for the highest standards of courage and commitment. Their role in keeping our nation safe is also paramount," the prime minister added in the post. Home Minister Shah greeted CRPF personnel and their families on the occasion of the force's raising day, saying its brave soldiers exerted all their might for National security without ever caring for their lives and emerged victorious every time.

"Greetings to CRPF personnel and their family members on their Raising Day. Since its inception, the @crpfIndia has taken National security as its mission," Shah said in a social media post. "The brave soldiers of the force have exerted all their might to accomplish this goal without ever caring for their lives and have emerged victorious every time. I bow to the martyrs of the CRPF who laid down their lives in the line of duty," he added.

Treatment meted out to Mamata unacceptable, says Congress

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday said the treatment meted out to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee at a NITI Aayog meeting here was "unacceptable".



The Opposition party's scathing criticism of the Government think tank came after Banerjee walked out of the 9th Governing Council meeting of the NITI Aayog, claiming she was unfairly stopped midway through her speech. The Government rejected Banerjee's charges, saying the time allotted to her for speaking at the meeting was over. The Congress alleged the Niti Aayog has functioned as a "drumbeater" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who was chairing the meeting, since it was set up 10 years ago. The meeting was boycotted by

Congress party Chief Ministers over alleged discrimination against non-NDA-ruled states in the Union Budget. Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "Since it was established ten years ago, NITI Aayog has been an attached office of the PMO and has functioned as a drumbeater for the non-biological PM." It has not advanced the cause of cooperative federalism in any manner, he said.

"Its functioning has been blatantly partisan, and it is anything but professional and independent," Ramesh alleged. "It muzzles all divergent and dissenting viewpoints, which are the very essence of an open democracy. Its meetings are a farce to be reckoned with." Its treatment of the West Bengal CM today, although typical of the NITI Aayog, is "unacceptable", Ramesh said in a social media post.

Hepatitis B leads to severe illness, deaths due to liver cancer: Experts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Despite being preventable and treatable, chronic hepatitis B and C has respectively afflicted approximately 40 million and 6 to 12 million people in India with specific regions, including Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and several tribal belt areas showing notably higher prevalence rates, experts said on the eve of the World Hepatitis Day on Saturday.

Hepatitis Day, the WHO issued a critical call for Southeast Asian countries to intensify their efforts in providing universal access to the prevention, vaccination, diagnosis, and treatment of viral hepatitis B and C. Dr Saima Wazed, the WHO's Regional Director for Southeast Asia, stressed the urgency, stating, "We have the knowledge and tools to prevent, diagnose, and treat viral hepatitis, yet people with chronic hepatitis B and C are still waiting to access the services they need. We need to accelerate efforts to deliver equitable services closer to communities, at the primary healthcare level."



In India, Dr Apurva Pande, consultant in the Gastroenterology and Hepatology Department at Fortis Hospital Greater Noida, highlighted the local situation, saying, "Hepatitis B and C are among the most com-

mon infections in India. During our clinical practice, we see a considerable number of cases from our district and surrounding areas. Especially during the monsoon season, cases of hepatitis A and E rise due to contaminated food and water." Dr Pande said hepatitis B infection is more prevalent in regions such as Ladakh (12.7 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh

(21.2 per cent), and the Nicobar Islands (23.3 per cent), including the Shompens (37.8 per cent) and Jarwa (65 per cent) tribal communities. Conversely, hepatitis C is more widespread in northeastern India, among tribal populations, and in Punjab. Dr Praveen Kumar, CEO of Fortis Hospital Greater Noida, pointed out that "Symptoms of hepatitis can include fatigue,

fever, nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, and jaundice (yellowing of the eyes and skin). If you experience any of these symptoms, it is crucial to consult a doctor." Dr Shiv Kumar Sarin, Director and Chancellor of the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) in Delhi, emphasised the importance of hepatitis prevention and combating associated stigma. "The theme for this year, 'It's Time for Action', underscores the urgent need for enhanced prevention, diagnosis, and treatment strategies," he stated. The institute also organised events aimed to educate school children about hepatitis and its prevention. There are five main strains of the hepatitis virus — types A, B, C, D, and E. While they all cause liver disease, they differ in transmission modes, illness severity, geographical distribution, and prevention methods.

There are five main strains of the hepatitis virus — types A, B, C, D, and E. While they all cause liver disease, they differ in transmission modes, illness severity, geographical distribution, and prevention methods.



SC to hear ED plea challenging HC's order granting bail to CM Hemant Soren

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on July 29 an Enforcement Directorate plea challenging the Jharkhand High Court's order granting bail to Chief Minister Hemant Soren in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. A bench of Justices B R Gavi and K V Viswanathan is scheduled to hear the federal agency's plea against the June 28 order of the high court. Soren, the Executive President of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), had resigned as Chief Minister shortly before the ED arrested him on January 31 in the case. After coming out of jail on bail in the case, he took oath as the Chief Minister of Jharkhand on July 4. Earlier during the hearing in the high court, the ED's counsel had argued that if Soren was released on bail, he might commit a similar offence and referred to cases against ED officers in the SC/ST police station.



"Though the conduct of the petitioner has been sought to be highlighted by the Enforcement Directorate on account of the First Information Report instituted by the petitioner against the officials of the ED, but on an overall conspectus of the case, there is no likelihood of the petitioner committing a

similar nature of offence," the high court had said. The single-bench order had also mentioned that the consequence of the findings recorded by the court "satisfies the condition as at section 45 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 to the effect that there is reason

to believe that the petitioner is not guilty of the offence as alleged". Soren's lawyer had argued strongly for his bail, contending that he was falsely implicated in a criminal case by the central agency. The ED, opposing Soren's bail plea, had alleged that he misused his position as the Chief Minister to "unlawfully" acquire 8.86 acres of land in the Bargain area in the state capital. The agency had claimed that during the probe, Soren's media consultant Abhishek Prasad admitted that the JMM leader instructed him to manipulate official records to change the ownership details of the plot. The ED had also claimed that the original owner of the land, Raj Kumar Pahan, had tried to lodge a complaint when his land was usurped but it was never acted upon. Soren had been summoned multiple times by the ED before he was questioned at his residence and subsequently arrested on January 31.



Genetic, environmental factors influence T1D risk, says study

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Children are nearly twice as likely to develop type 1 diabetes (T1D) if their father has the condition compared to if their mother has it, a groundbreaking research, the largest of its kind has said. To be presented next month at the Annual Meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), this research uncovers significant insights into the genetic and environmental factors influencing T1D risk.

Sweden and US performed a meta-analysis of data from five studies (BOX, Better Diabetes Diagnosis, TrialNet Pathway to Prevention Study, Type 1 Diabetes Genetic Consortium and StartRight) that contained information about individuals with T1D and their parents. The analysis involved 11,475 individuals with T1D who were diagnosed when they were between 0 and 88 years old. The results show they were almost twice as likely (1.8 times more likely) to have a father with T1D as a mother with the condition. This was the case for individuals who were diagnosed with T1D in childhood (=18 years) and as adults (>18 years). Individuals with mothers with T1D were diagnosed at a similar age to those with fathers with T1D. Taken together, our findings suggest the relative protection associated with having a mother versus father with type 1 diabetes is a long-term effect that extends into adult life," said Dr Allen. The researchers also used a genetic risk score that takes into account more than 60 different genes known to be associated with T1D, to compare the inherited genetic risk of T1D in individuals with affected mothers and fathers. Individuals with mothers with T1D had similar scores to those whose fathers had T1D, suggesting their relative protection against T1D wasn't due to the genes they had inherited. However, the timing of the parent's diagnosis was important. An individual was only more likely to have a father, rather than a mother, with T1D, if the parent was diagnosed before the individual was born, said the study.

Indian astronaut will travel to International Space Station

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

One of the four Indian astronauts undergoing training for the Gaganyaan mission will travel to the International Space Station as part of a collaborative effort with NASA, Union Minister Jitendra Singh has informed the Lok Sabha. In a written reply, Singh said NASA has identified a private entity Axiom Space and ISRO had signed a Space Flight Agreement with the American firm for the joint mission to the International Space Station (ISS). During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the US last year, President Joe Biden announced that India and the US were collaborating to send an Indian astronaut to the ISS in 2024.



Force for the Gaganyaan mission, India's first human space flight planned to take place next year. "All four astronauts have undergone training on a spaceflight basic module in Russia. Currently, astronauts are undergoing training at ISRO's Astronauts Training Facility (ATF) in Bengaluru for the Gaganyaan Mission," Singh said. The minister said two out of three semesters of the Gaganyaan training programme have been completed while independent training simulators and static mockup simulators have been realised. Sharing an update on the Gaganyaan mission, Singh said ground testing of propulsion systems stages, including solid,

liquid and cryogenic engine, towards human rating of the launch vehicle has been completed. Design and realisation of five types of crew escape system solid motors has been completed, he said. The Union minister said static testing of all five types of solid motors too has been completed. Also, the first Test Vehicle mission (TV-D1) for performance validation of crew escape system and parachute deployment has been successfully accomplished, he added. Singh said designs of the crew module and service module structure have been completed and various parachute systems have been tested through integrated main parachute airdrop test and rail track rocket sled tests. The ground test programme towards human rating of the Crew Module Propulsion System has been completed and the Service Module

Propulsion System test programme is nearing completion, the minister told Lok Sabha. He said characterisation of the Thermal Protection System has been completed. Critical ground facilities such as Orbital Module Preparation Facility (OMPF), Astronaut Training Facility (ATF) and Oxygen Testing Facility have been operationalised and works on the Mission Control Centre (MCC) facilities and establishment of Ground Station networks were nearing completion, Singh said. The minister said solid and liquid propulsion stages of human-rated launch vehicle was ready for flight integration and the C32 cryogenic stage was nearing completion. The crew module and service module structure realisation has been completed and flight integration activities were in progress, he added.

Israeli airstrike hits school in Gaza, killing at least 30

AP ■ DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP)

Israeli airstrikes hit a school and a hospital in central Gaza on Saturday as the country's negotiators prepared to meet international mediators to discuss a proposed cease-fire.

The evacuation order is in response to rocket fire that Israel said originated from the area. The military said it planned an operation against Hamas militants in the city, including parts of Muwasi, the crowded tent camp in an area where Israel has told thousands of Palestinians to seek refuge throughout the war.

The planned strike comes a day before officials from the US, Egypt, Qatar and Israel are scheduled to meet in Italy and discuss the ongoing hostage and cease-fire negotiations. CIA Director Bill Burns is expected to meet Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Abdul Rahman al-Thani, Mossad director David Barnea

and Egyptian spy chief Abbas Kamel on Sunday, according to officials from the US and Egypt who spoke on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to discuss the plans. It's the second evacuation order issued in a week that has included striking part of the humanitarian zone, a 60-square-kilometer (roughly 20-square-mile) blanketed with tent camps that lack sanitation and medical facilities and have limited access to aid, United Nations and humanitarian groups say. Israel expanded the zone in May to take in people fleeing Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population at the time had crowded. According to Israeli estimates, about 1.8 million Palestinians are currently sheltering there after being uprooted multiple times in search of safety during

Israel's punishing air and ground campaign. In November, the military said the area could still be struck and that it was "not a safe zone, but it is a safer place than any other" in Gaza.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, known as UNRWA, said it was increasingly difficult to know how many people would be affected by the evacuation order because those sheltering under there were constantly being displaced. "Referring to the orders as evacuation orders don't do any justice to what this means," said Juliette Touma, the agency's director of communications. "These are forced displacement orders. What happens is when people have these orders, they have very little time to move."

Israeli's punishing air and ground campaign. In November, the military said the area could still be struck and that it was "not a safe zone, but it is a safer place than any other" in Gaza.

Kamala Harris officially declares candidature for US presidency

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Vice President Kamala Harris on Saturday officially signed her forms, declaring her candidacy for the post of President of the US and voiced confidence that she would win the high-stakes election on November 5.

"Today, I signed the forms officially declaring my candidacy for President of the United States. I will work hard to earn every vote," 59-year-old Harris, who is of Indian and African origin, said on X.

"In November, our people-powered campaign will win," the presumptive Democratic Party candidate said, referring to her electoral battle with former president and the Republican Party's nominee Donald Trump.

Harris launched her presiden-

tial campaign last Sunday, hours after President Joe Biden, 81, withdrew from the race for a second term. She is, however, yet to be officially declared as the presidential candidate by the Democrats.

If elected on November 5 to succeed President Biden, Harris - the daughter of a Jamaican father and an Indian mother - would not only be the first woman, but the first Indian-American, the first Asian, the first Black woman and the first person of Jamaican descent to ascend to the office.

Meanwhile, no other Democrats have announced their candidacy for the presidential race. Harris has secured endorsements from more than 40 state delegations, surpassing the number of delegates she will need to win the nomination and if that support holds,



Democrats will officially nominate her for president during a virtual roll call vote early next month.

Under new rules adopted by the Democratic National Committee on Wednesday, the nominee will be selected as soon as August 1, and the candidate has until August 7 to

select a running mate. The party will meet for its convention in Chicago starting August 19.

Harris, who was a senator from California before she was elected vice president, quickly hit the campaign trail with events in Wisconsin, Indiana and Texas. Her campaign said it raked in more than USD 130 million since she officially joined the White House race.

The endorsement comes as 'Harris for President' kicks off a 'Weekend of Action' marking 100 days until Election Day (on November 5).

With over 1,70,000 volunteers and 2,300 events across the battleground states, Team Harris is making its case to the voters who will decide this election about the fundamental choice they will face this November at the ballot box.

Orban warns of EU's demise, backs Trump in anti-Western speech

AP ■ BAILE TUSNAD (ROMANIA)

Hungary's nationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Saturday that the European Union was sliding toward oblivion in a rambling anti-Western speech in which he warned of a new, Asia-oriented "world order" while throwing his support for Donald Trump's US presidential bid.

"Europe has given up defending its own interests," Orban said in Baile Tusnad, a majority-ethnic Hungarian town in central Romania. "All Europe is doing today is following the US's pro-Democrat foreign policy unconditionally... even at the cost of self-destruction."

"A change is coming that has not been seen for 500 years. What we are facing is in fact a world order change," he added, citing China, India, Pakistan and Indonesia as becoming the "dominant centre" of the world. Orban also alleged that the US was behind the 2022 explosions that damaged the Nord Stream gas pipelines built to carry gas from Russia to Germany, calling it "an act of terrorism carried out at the obvious direction of the Americans". He didn't offer any evidence to back up the claim.

The far-right leader's remarks come amid growing criticism from his European partners after he embarked on rogue "peace mission" trips to Moscow and Beijing earlier this month aimed at brokering an end to Russia's war in

Ukraine. Orban is widely considered to have the warmest relations with the Kremlin among all EU leaders.

On Ukraine, Orban cast doubt on the war-torn country becoming either a member of NATO or the EU. "We Europeans do not have the money for it. Ukraine will revert to the position of a buffer state," he said, adding that international security guarantees "will be enshrined in an agreement between the US and Russia".

Throughout Russia's full-scale war in Ukraine, Orban has broken with other EU leaders by refusing to provide Kyiv with weapons to defend against Russian forces and has routinely delayed, watered down, or blocked efforts to send financial aid to Kyiv and impose sanctions on Moscow.

Orban typically uses the annual Tusvanyos Summer University platform in Romania to indicate the ideological direction of his national government and to deride the standards of the EU bloc, which Hungary joined in 2004. Hungary currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, during which Orban has made a Trumpian vow to "Make Europe Great Again" and has openly endorsed Trump's candidacy in this year's US presidential election. Orban visited Trump twice this year at the former president's beachside compound in Mar-a-Lago.

Orban said on Saturday that Trump's bid for re-election aims "to pull the American people back from a post-

nationalist liberal state to a nation-state" and reshaped a slew of conservative tropes that Trump is being penalised unfairly to prevent his electoral bid. "That is why they want to put him in prison. That's why they want to take away his assets. And if that doesn't work, that's why they want to kill him," Orban said, referring to an assassination attempt on Trump at a Pennsylvania rally this month.

Orban's remarks on Saturday aren't the first time he's used the festival in Transylvania to stir controversy. In 2014, Orban declared for the first time his intentions of building an "illiberal state" in Hungary, and in 2022, he sparked international outrage after he railed against Europe becoming a "mixed race" society. He doubled down on his long-held anti-immigration stance on Saturday, saying it is not an answer to his country's aging population.

"There can be no question of a shrinking population supplemented by migration," he said in his Saturday address. "The Western experience is that if there are more guests than owners, then home is no longer home. This is a risk that should not be taken."

The EU's longest-serving leader, Orban has become an icon to some conservative populists for his firm opposition to immigration and LGBTQ+ rights. He has also cracked down on the press and judiciary in Hungary and been accused by the EU of violating rule-of-law and democracy standards.

Jamaat-e-Islami's protest against power price, tax hike continues

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's rightwing Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) on Saturday vowed to continue its protest in the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi as the party's sit-in entered the second day to press the government to reduce electricity price and taxes on the salaried class.

The party for the second day on Saturday held the protest to hold a rally at the D-Chowk in Islamabad.

The JI drive was, however, stopped by police. The party later changed its plan and announced holding a sit-in at three places, including Murree Road and Chungi No 22 in Rawalpindi and H-8 Bridge Islamabad.

JI chief Hafiz Naem addressed the participants camping on the Murree Road, the main artery of the garrison city connecting it with Islamabad, and vowed to continue the sit-in till the demands were accepted.

"Our demands are simple and we want the government to give relief to the masses," he said, adding that the party was aware of difficulties but was sure that the issue of power tariffs could be addressed. He said the protest would continue until its key demands were met, elaborating that negotiations be held with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs), a group of power companies considered the main cause of the exorbitant rise in the electricity bills.

Naem also expressed willingness to talk with the government if the latter showed seriousness in addressing the issues highlighted by the JI.

Trump continues to target Harris

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Kamala Harris will be the "most extreme radical liberal president in American history" if she is elected, Donald Trump has said, as he intensified his attacks on his Democratic rival in the presidential polls in November.

Vice President Harris, 59, is the new presidential candidate of the Democratic party after incumbent President Joe Biden, 81, withdrew from the race.

Trump, a former US president and the 2024 Republican presidential candidate, painted Harris as an overly liberal on immigration and abortion and called her a "bum" in a speech to a gathering of religious conservatives.

"She was a bum three weeks ago. She was a bum. A failed vice president and a failed

administration with millions of people crossing, and she was the border czar," Trump said in a speech at Turning Point USA's "The Believers Summit" in West Palm Beach, Florida.

The 78-year-old former president called her the most incompetent, unpopular, and far-left vice president in American history.

"If Kamala Harris gets in, she will be the most extreme radical liberal president in American history... As a Senator, Harris was ranked number one most far-left Democrat in the entire Senate, and that includes Bernie Sanders," Trump said, Harris will appoint hundreds of extreme far-left judges to "forcibly impose crazy San Francisco liberal values" on Americans nationwide, he alleged, invoking the spectre of

San Francisco — a liberal city long used as shorthand by conservatives eager to denigrate Democrats.

"Our task is to defeat socialism, to defeat Marxism, communism, to defeat the cartels and the criminals and the human traffickers, trafficking women. That means defeating Kamala Harris in a landslide. We want a landslide this November. We want something too big to rig," he said.

Trump said Harris supports free government healthcare for illegal aliens, abolishing the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, decriminalising illegal immigration and mass amnesty for illegals, he said, adding she wants to outlaw private health insurance and defund the police.

"Border Czar Harris will let murderers, child predators,

and bloodthirsty rapists and drug dealers charge across our borders by the tens of thousands a day. I will throw the killers, criminals, and illegal aliens and gang members the hell out of our country," he said.

In a statement later, Harris for President spokesperson James Singer said in his speech Trump couldn't pronounce words, insulted the faith of Jewish and Catholic Americans, and lied about the election (again).

He plans to fill a second Trump term with more criminals like himself, Singer said.

"America can do better than the bitter, bizarre, and backward-looking delusions of criminal Donald Trump. Vice President Kamala Harris offers a vision for America's future focused on freedom, opportunity, and security," he said.

Morari Babu to recite Ram Katha at United Nations

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Indian spiritual leader Morari Babu will recite Ram Katha for the first time at the UN headquarters in New York to spread the timeless relevance of the Ramcharitmanas, one of the most revered Hindu scriptures.

The Ramcharitmanas carries a global message, transcending religious and cultural boundaries, Morari Babu, who has been reciting Ram Kathas for over sixty-five years drawing from Vedic Sanatana Dharma, said.

"It speaks to the universal values that are needed in today's world—truth, love, and compassion," he told PTI in an interview.

"Recitation of Ram Katha at the UN is a divine grace and a step towards global harmony," he said on the eve of the start of the nine-day recitation of Ram Katha at the Delegates Dining Room at the UN Headquarters in New York.

This is the first time that Ram Katha is being organised at the United Nations headquarters in New York, said Morari Babu, noting that this is a dream come true.

Morari Babu, 77, so far has conducted Ram Kathas in numerous cities and pilgrimage sites across the world, including Sri Lanka, Indonesia, South Africa, Kenya, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, Australia, Israel, and Japan.

Mexican kingpin's arrest likely to set off violent power struggle

AP ■ MEXICO CITY

A new era is coming for Mexico's powerful Sinaloa cartel in the wake of the capture by US authorities of Ismael "El Mayo" Zambada, the last of the grand old Mexican drug traffickers.

Experts believe his arrest will usher in a new wave of violence in Mexico even as Zambada could potentially provide loads of information for US prosecutors.

Zambada, who had eluded authorities for decades and had never set foot in prison, was known for being an astute

operator, skilled at corrupting officials and having an ability to negotiate with everyone, including rivals.

Removing him from the criminal landscape could set off an internal war for control of the cartel that has a global reach — as has occurred with the arrest or killings of other kingpins — and open the door to the more violent inclinations of a younger generation of Sinaloa traffickers, experts say.

With that in mind, the Mexican government deployed 200 members of its special forces Friday to Culiacan, Sinaloa state's capital.

There is "significant potential for high escalation of violence across Mexico," said Vanda Felbab-Brown, a senior fellow in the Strobe Talbott Center for Security, Strategy and Technology at the Brookings Institution. That "is bad for Mexico, it's bad for the United States, as well as the possibility that the even more vicious (Jalisco New Generation cartel) will rise to even greater importance."

For that reason, Zambada's arrest could be considered a "great tactical success," but strategically problematic, Felbab-Brown said.

US, China air global differences

AP ■ VIENTIANE (LAOS)

The United States and China on Saturday renewed their mutual grievances as Secretary of State Antony Blinken and his Chinese counterpart held their sixth meeting since last year amid an uncertain political situation in the US and growing concerns about China's increasing assertiveness in Asia and elsewhere.

Blinken and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met for roughly an hour and 20 minutes on the sidelines of an annual Southeast Asian regional security forum in Vientiane, Laos, at which tensions between China and US ally Philippines over disputes in the South China Sea were a prime focus of discussion.

State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said Blinken and Wang had had "an open and productive" discussion but had not reached any significant agreements on the issues that divide them most in the Indo-Pacific, Europe and the Americas.

"The United States will continue to take necessary actions to safeguard our interests and values, and those of our allies and partners, including on human rights," Blinken told Wang, according to Miller.

Blinken "made clear that the United States, together with our allies and partners, will advance our vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific," he said, highlighting recently aggressive Chinese actions toward Taiwan, the self-governing island that Beijing claims as part of the mainland and has vowed to



reunify by force if necessary.

The top US diplomat also scolded China for "destabilizing actions in the South China Sea" and "affirmed the United States' support for freedom of navigation and overflight and the peaceful resolution of disputes, consistent with international law," Miller said.

However, Blinken also praised China and the Philippines for concluding an agreement earlier this week that allowed the Philippines on Saturday to make a supply trip to the disputed area without having to confront Beijing's forces, the first such trip since the deal was concluded.

"We are pleased to take note of the successful resupply today at the Second Thomas Shoal," Blinken told Association of Southeast Asian Nations foreign ministers before his meeting with Wang. "We applaud

that and hope and expect to see that it continues going forward."

Prior to the deal, tensions between the Philippines and China escalated for months, with China's coast guard and other forces using powerful water cannons and dangerous blocking maneuvers to prevent food and other supplies from reaching Filipino navy personnel.

Still, Blinken, who will be in Manila next week as part of his current six-country tour of Asia, also deplored China's "escalatory and unlawful actions taken against the Philippines in the South China Sea over the last few months."

In his meeting with Wang, Blinken also re-raised deep US and European concerns about China's support of Russia's defense industrial sector that Washington and capi-

ties in Europe believe Russia is using to ramp up the production of weapons for use in its war against Ukraine.

Blinken "made clear that if (China) does not act to address this threat to European security, the United States will continue to take appropriate measures to do so," Miller said.

Since that warning was first issued more than a year ago, the US and others have imposed sanctions on more than 300 Russian and Chinese firms engaged in the trade.

Asked whether the Chinese had responded to those sanctions in the way the US and its allies would like, a senior State Department official replied: "Not enough. Not enough that our concerns have been put to rest." The official spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss the private diplomatic meeting.

Blinken's Asia trip was announced just hours after President Joe Biden said he would step down as a candidate in November's election in favor of Vice President Kamala Harris. Although the senior official said the shake-up had not come up in Saturday's meetings, he said Blinken had pointed out to Wang that Harris had experience with China and had met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Bangkok in 2022.

The official said Blinken referred to the Biden-Harris administration's desire to keep relations with China on a positive track and noted that while "he has mentioned her before, obviously there's a different context now."

TikTok collected US user views on issues like abortion, gun control

AP ■ WASHINGTON

In a fresh broadside against one of the world's most popular technology companies, the Justice Department late Friday accused TikTok of harnessing the capability to gather bulk information on users based on views on divisive social issues like gun control, abortion and religion.

Government lawyers wrote in a brief filed to the federal appeals court in Washington that TikTok and its Beijing-based parent company ByteDance used an internal website system called Lark to enable TikTok employees to speak directly with ByteDance engineers in China. TikTok employees used Lark to send sensitive data about US users, infor-

mation that has wound up being stored on Chinese servers and accessible to ByteDance employees in China, federal officials said.

One of Lark's internal search tools, the filing states, permits ByteDance and TikTok employees in the US and China to gather information on users' content or expressions, including views on sensitive topics, such as abortion or religion. Last year, the Wall Street Journal reported TikTok had tracked users who watched LGBTQ+ content through a dashboard the company said it had since deleted.

The new court documents represent the government's first major defense in a consequential legal battle over the future of the popular social media platform, which is used by

more than 170 million Americans. Under a law signed by President Joe Biden in April, the company could face a ban in a few months if it doesn't break ties with ByteDance.

The measure was passed with bipartisan support after lawmakers and administration officials expressed concerns that Chinese authorities could force ByteDance to hand over US user data or sway public opinion towards Beijing's interests by manipulating the algorithm that populates users' feeds. The Justice Department warned, in stark terms, of the potential for what it called "covert content manipulation" by the Chinese government, saying the algorithm could be designed to shape content that users receive.

"By directing ByteDance or TikTok

to covertly manipulate that algorithm; China could for example further its existing malign influence operations and amplify its efforts to undermine trust in our democracy and exacerbate social divisions," the brief states.

The concern, they said, is more than theoretical, alleging that TikTok and ByteDance employees are known to engage in a practice called "heating" in which certain videos are promoted in order to receive a certain number of views. While this capability enables TikTok to curate popular content and disseminate it more widely, US officials posit it can also be used for nefarious purposes.

Justice Department officials are asking the court to allow a classified version of its legal brief, which won't be

accessible to the two companies. Nothing in the redacted brief "changes the fact that the Constitution is on our side," TikTok spokesperson Alex Haurek said in a statement. "The TikTok ban would silence 170 million Americans' voices, violating the 1st Amendment," Haurek said. "As we've said before, the government has never put forth proof of its claims, including when Congress passed this unconstitutional law. Today, once again, the government is taking this unprecedented step while hiding behind secret information. We remain confident we will prevail in court."

In the redacted version of the court documents, the Justice Department said another tool triggered the suppression of content based on the use

of certain words. Certain policies of the tool applied to ByteDance users in China, where the company operates a similar app called Douyin that follows Beijing's strict censorship rules. But Justice Department officials said other policies may have been applied to TikTok users outside of China. TikTok was investigating the existence of these policies and whether they had ever been used in the US in, or around, 2022, officials said. The government points to the Lark data transfers to explain why federal officials do not believe that Project Texas, TikTok's USD 1.5 billion mitigation plan to store US user data on servers owned and maintained by the tech giant Oracle, is sufficient to guard against national security concerns.

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Govt to decide on sugar MSP hike in coming days: Food Secy

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The government is likely to take a decision on increasing the minimum selling price (MSP) of sugar within the next few days, Union Food Secretary Sanjeev Chopra said on Saturday.

Speaking on the sidelines of a conference organised by All India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA), Chopra said, "We are discussing the MSP (proposal). In the coming days, we will hopefully take a call."

MSP of sugar has remained unchanged at Rs 31 per kg since 2019, despite annual hikes in the fair and remunerative price (FRP) paid to sugarcane farmers. Industry bodies, including National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories (NFCFSF), have urged the government to raise the MSP to at least Rs 42 per kg to help mills sustain operations amid rising production costs.

Chopra noted that sugar production for the 2024-25 season (October-September)



looks promising, with the area sown to sugarcane increasing to 58 lakh hectare so far from 57 lakh hectare during the same period last year.

For the 2023-24 season, sugar production is estimated at 32 million tonne, lower than 32.8 million tonne in the previous season, but sufficient to meet the domestic demand of 27 million tonne.

Earlier, addressing the event, the food secretary also mentioned that the agriculture ministry is conducting research to

increasing the minimum selling price of sugar in line with cane prices, among other demands.

"I totally agree that we need a long-term predictability and consistency of the policy. Otherwise, it will be difficult for the sector," Kant said at a conference organized by All India Sugar Trade Association (AISTA). Highlighting the sector's importance, Kant noted that sugar contributes 1.1 per cent to the country's GDP and plays a pivotal role in reducing crude import bills, energy transition, promoting circular economy, and achieving net zero emissions.

"The sugar industry will be a major driver to make India a developed economy by 2047," he added.

Kant urged the industry to explore diversification beyond ethanol and invest in research for developing high-yielding, low water-consuming cane varieties, given India's limited water resources compared to the top producer Brazil.

India steel production to cross 300MT by 2030: Official

PTI ■ KOLKATA



Expressing optimism in steel demand amid headwinds, a senior central government official said on Saturday that the domestic production is likely to cross 300 million tonnes by 2030. The ministry also does not foresee any hurdles in capacity addition due to decarbonisation efforts in the steel sector and will soon release a draft roadmap seeking public opinion to reduce the carbon footprint in the steel sector, which accounts for 12 per cent of total emissions, Steel Secretary Nagaendra Nath Sinha said.

"The current steel demand remains strong with infrastructure push from the government and expecting a growth of about 10 per cent. The GDP is also growing robustly, and with continued emphasis on infrastructure from both government and private sectors, steel demand will continue to stay strong," Sinha said, while addressing members of the Bharat Chamber of Commerce (BCC).

Finished steel output during 2023-24 was 138.5 million tonnes, up 12.4 per cent year-on-year. To achieve 300 million tonnes of installed capacity, a CAGR of 12 per cent would be required. From January to April 2024, steel production was 49.5 million tonnes, a jump of 8.5 per cent, BCC president N G Khaitan said.

Sinha also stated that some steel makers were not reporting production and sales data accurately, and the ministry feels there are gaps. He urged companies to report correctly to support policy framing.

The steel makers complain of several headwinds like iron ore shortage, cheap steel imports and policy shortcomings. The steel makers of eastern India raised serious concerns about iron ore shortages in the sector and suggested several steps to address the 53 million tonne iron ore shortage in the Indian steel industry.

Asked about steel import concerns from the industry, Sinha said imports in quantity are only 5 per cent of consumption, but there are complaints about hot-rolled coil from Vietnam, which the Directorate General of Trade Remedies, under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has taken up.

Speaking about the decarbonisation roadmap, Sinha said the government had set up 14 task forces on this and, after inter-ministerial discussions, the report will be released for public feedback soon. The roadmap focuses on increased hydrogen use in the steel industry and carbon capture, among others.

The short-term target for the government aims at about a 20 per cent reduction in carbon intensity. Currently, the average carbon intensity is 2.5 tonnes per tonne of steel production. A consortium has been planned with labs, IITs, primary and secondary steel makers, and equipment makers to develop indigenous green technology. Sinha stated that the steel ministry has written to the Finance Ministry to support keeping Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd as a "going concern" during times of crisis so it does not lose its valuation.

About 151 GW renewable capacity under implementation in India: Minister Pralhad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Renewable energy projects of about 151 GW capacity are under various stages of implementation in the country, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi has said. The Minister for New and Renewable Energy further said that around 76.42 GW of renewable energy capacity will be operationalized in next 3-4 years.

"The government is taking several initiatives to prioritise renewable energy. Nearly 151 GW of renewable projects are being implemented, and 76.42 GW will be operationalized in 3-4 years," he said addressing a session at 'Mercom India Renewables Summit 2024' in the national capital on Friday.

The tendering process for 76.42 GW capacity of projects has already been completed, the minister said. The renewable energy capacity has increased over



2.5 times from 76 GW in 2014 to more than 195 GW as of June 2024, Joshi said. The solar power capacity witnessed a steep jump from just 3 GW in 2014 to more than 85 GW now while wind power capacity increased from 21 GW to more than 46 GW, the minister added.

"The recent bidding trajectory has been a great initiative. If government agencies continue to exceed their targets and start

mandating auctions through PPA/PSA signing, as a part of the trajectory, we will witness a significant increase in installations in the coming years," Raj Prabhhu, CEO of Mercom Capital Group said. The installations are poised to take off in a big way starting this year as the market enters the next level of growth and becomes one of the top three solar markets in the world, he added.

Himachal to develop ₹350-cr medical devices park with own resources

PTI ■ SHIMLA



The Union government would have no stake in Rs 350-crore Medical Device Park coming up at Nalagarh in Solan district as the state government has decided to construct the park from its own resources and return Rs 30 crore received from the centre, according to a release. The decision has been taken in the interest of the state. The project would come up in over 265 acres of land and in case Rs 30 crore received from the centre was not returned, the land would have been provided to industrialists at the rate of Re 1 per square meter, electricity at Rs 3 per unit and water, maintenance and warehouse facilities, free of cost for ten years, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said. The state government has so far spent Rs 74.95 crore for the project, a statement issued here on Saturday said. Keeping the interests of the state and steering out of the

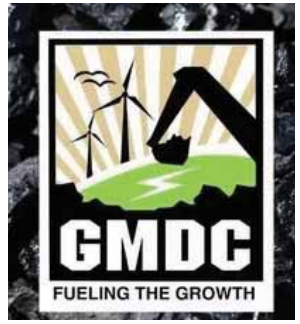
bindings, the government has decided to build the Park by itself as the project when commissioned would accrue benefits amounting to Rs 500 crore from the sale of land and other resources in the next five to seven years, he added. The state government will take a loan from SIDBI (Small Industries Development Bank of India) under the cluster development scheme for the construction of the medical device park and with restructuring of the project, 25 per cent of the land will be allotted exclusively for medical device industries and

75 per cent for other strategic industries, he said. The industrial park will be developed as a modern industrial hub which will become a perennial source of income for the state government along with economic development and better infrastructure in the coming years, he said. Earlier also the state government had decided not to take help from any private agency in the Bulk Drug Park being built at Haroli of Una district and the government will provide Rs 1,000 crore from its own resources, the statement added.

GMDC Q1 profit falls 16% to ₹184 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gujarat Mineral Development Corporation (GMDC) has reported 15.8 per cent decline in consolidated profit at Rs 184.05 crore for the quarter ended June 30, 2024. The company had logged a profit of Rs 218.70 crore in the year-ago period, GMDC said in a filing. However, income during April-June FY25 increased to Rs 877.90 crore from Rs 826.77 crore in the year-ago period. The total lignite production during the quarter increased to 22.96 lakh tonne from 18.27 lakh tonne in the year-ago period. Revenue from thermal projects increased to Rs 28 crore as against Rs 17 crore in March quarter FY24. Revenue from wind



projects rose 67 per cent to Rs 40 crore in Q1FY25 compared to Rs 24 crore in Q4FY24. In a statement, GMDC Managing Director Roopwant Singh said April-June proved to be a pivotal quarter for the company whose strategic initiatives paid off with a remarkable revenue from operations. GMDC is the country's second-largest lignite-producing company and the top merchant seller of lignite.

PNB records its highest ever quarterly profit of ₹3,252 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Punjab National Bank (PNB) on Saturday reported its highest ever quarterly standalone profit at Rs 3,252 crore in April-June FY25 helped by decline in bad loans and improvement in interest income. The state-owned bank had posted a net profit of Rs 1,255 crore in June quarter FY24. This is the highest ever quarterly profit recorded by the bank on account of improvement in various parameters, including net interest income, recovery and CASA, Managing Director Atul Kumar Goel said. Total income in the quarter rose to Rs 32,166 crore from Rs 28,579 crore in the same period a year ago. The lender's interest income also increased to Rs 28,556 crore from Rs 25,145 crore in the same quarter a year ago, as per a regulatory filing. Net Interest Income (NII) increased to Rs 10,476 crore in Q1 FY25 from Rs 9,504 crore earlier, showing an improvement of 10.23 per cent. Gross Non Performing Assets (NPA) declined to 4.98 per cent of gross advances by June 2024 from 7.73 per cent in the same quarter a year ago. Similarly, net NPAs declined to 0.60 per cent from 1.98 per cent.

As a result, provisions for bad loans came down drastically to Rs 792 crore in April-June FY25 as against Rs 4,374



crore in the year-ago period. Provision Coverage Ratio improved to 95.9 per cent as of June 2024 from 89.83 per cent a year ago. On a consolidated basis, the bank reported a net profit of Rs 3,976 crore in the quarter under review as against Rs 1,342 crore a year ago. The consolidated financial result of the bank comprises five subsidiaries and 15 associates. The capital adequacy ratio of the bank improved to 15.79 per cent at the end of June 2024 compared to 15.54 per cent in the year-ago period. With improvement in capital position, Goel said, the bank has decided to cut the proposed share sale size through Qualified Institutional Placement (QIP) to Rs 5,000 crore from an earlier estimate of Rs 7,500 crore. Asked when the capital will be raised, he said the bank is evaluating the opportune time for that. Besides, he said, the board has given approval to raise Rs 7,000 crore from Tier I bonds and Rs 3,000 crore from Tier II bonds to fund business growth.

PepsiCo India revenue in April-December 2023 at ₹5,954 cr

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



PepsiCo India Holdings' consolidated revenue from operations during April-December 2023 was at Rs 5,954.16 crore and profit was Rs 217.26 crore, according to financial data accessed by business intelligence platform Tofler. Total income, which also includes other income, was at Rs 6,094.70 crore in the nine-month period. The company has changed its financial year from April-March to January-December, hence it has come out with three quarters results of 2023. It follows the calendar year as financial year from January 2024. During the nine months, its

revenue from sales in the domestic market was at Rs 5,533.63 crore. Exports contributed Rs 266.19 crore to the total revenue of the company, which is not a publicly listed entity. Revenue from the snacks business in which it operates with brands including Kurkure, Lays, Doritos and Quaker was at Rs 4,763.29 crore. PepsiCo India's revenue from

the beverages business in which it operates with fizzy-based drinks and juices with brands such as PepsiCo, 7up, slice, Tropicana, and Gatorade was at Rs 1,036.53 crore for the nine months. Advertising promotional expenses in April-December 2023 were at Rs 694.52 crore. On the results, a PepsiCo India Spokesperson said: "In this 9-month period compared to the earlier 12-

month period, PepsiCo India delivered resilient topline performance amid a challenging external environment." "Demand for our brands remained robust backed by strong marketing campaigns, marketplace execution, and consistent focus on end-to-end productivity. "We remain committed to our growth in India and continue to invest behind our brands and marketplace infrastructure to build scale while maintaining margins in what will remain a high-demand market for many years." For financial year 2022-23, which was of 12 months, PepsiCo India's revenue from operations was at Rs 8,203.19

crore and its total profit was at Rs 267.43 crore. Total income was Rs 8,302.34 crore. Earlier this month, during an investors' call, PepsiCo Chairman and CEO Ramon Laguarta said India is a "high demand market", where it is investing to scale up the infrastructure. The company is investing in the brands to build up scale to capture the growth opportunity, he had said. "We continue to see a lot of growth in many parts of the AMESA (Africa, Middle East & South Asia) region, in particular India is a big growth space for us and it's an investment area for sure," Laguarta had said. In the second quarter (April-

June) of 2024, its global parent company PepsiCo logged double-digit growth in beverages volume and convenience foods unit volume in the Indian market. For the first quarter (January-March), the New York-headquartered multinational reported a "high single-digit growth" in its beverage unit volume and a "double-digit growth" in convenient foods business in the Indian market. PepsiCo entered India in 1989 and has grown to become one of the largest MNCs engaged in the business of manufacture and trading of aerated and non-aerated beverage products, juice and juice-based drinks and packed food products.

Budget important step towards building new India: MoS Pankaj

PTI ■ GORAKHPUR

Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary on Saturday said that this year's budget is an important step towards building a new India, and is dedicated to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Chaudhary, who was in Gorakhpur on Saturday, in a post on X in Hindi, said, "Addressed the media friends in a specially organized press conference on Budget-2024 in Gorakhpur. This budget is an important step towards building a new India. It is dedicated to the vision of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi Ji and building a new India."



Speaking with reporters at the Circuit House, Chaudhary emphasized that this year's budget has been crafted by keeping the interests of the citizens in mind. "GST has been reduced, and

significant relief has been provided in the tax slabs," he said. The 2024-25 budget aims to transform India into a developed nation by 2047, focusing on four key areas: women, the poor, farmers,

and youth. "This budget is entirely dedicated to employment and business. It is designed to boost GDP growth and create job opportunities, while also further developing the education sector. This year's budget is inclusive of all regions and sections of society," he said. On the comparison between Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, Chaudhary criticized the opposition for not highlighting the positive aspects. "The overall budget has been increased, including the Railway Budget. The opposition should acknowledge these improvements," he said. He assured that Uttar Pradesh

has received a significant budget allocation when analysed department-wise. The Union minister reiterated that the budget has been increased across various sectors, including agriculture, education, and the military, reinforcing the government's commitment to comprehensive development. Seven-time MP Pankaj Chaudhary, who took oath as minister of state for the second time in the new BJP-led NDA government, started his political career as a corporator of the Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation in Uttar Pradesh. Pankaj Chaudhary currently represents Maharajan constituency in the Lok Sabha.

IFB Industries Q1 revenue up 16.9%

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IFB Industries Ltd on Saturday reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 37.54 crore for the first quarter ended in June 2024, helped by the engineering and home appliances business. The company had posted a consolidated net loss of Rs 0.62 crore in the April-June quarter a year ago, according to a regulatory filing from IFB Industries. Its revenue from operations was up 16.87 per cent during the quarter under review. It was Rs 1,085.91 crore in the year-ago period. Total expenses of IFB Industries in the June quarter were up 12.24 per cent to Rs 1,222.14 crore.

BHUBANESWAR | SUNDAY | JULY 28, 2024

MANU SETS SIGHTS ON OLYMPICS GLORY, STORMS INTO 10M AIR PISTOL FINALS

PTI ■ CHATEAUROUX/PARIS

Manu Bhaker made a statement of intent by storming into the 10m air pistol finals on a day when most of her compatriots endured a forgettable outing at the shooting range before shuttler Lakshya Sen and paddler Harmeet Desai dazzled on debut in India's sedate start at the Olympic Games on Saturday.

Bhaker, who is competing in her second Olympics, seemed determined to wipe off the memories of her tearful past outing as she qualified third for the 10m air pistol women's final which will be held on Sunday afternoon at the Chateauroux Shooting Centre.

The shooters have drawn a blank at every Olympics after 2012 and the apprehensions began to set in early for this one too before Bhaker decided to take control.

The 22-year-old, who hails from Jhajjar in Haryana, shot 580 in the qualifications in which Hungarian ace Veronika Major claimed the top spot with a score of 582. The other Indian in the field,

Rhythm Sangwan, ended 15th with an underwhelming 573.

Bhaker, who was in control for the major part of the one hour 15 minute session, will have to maintain the same composure in the all-important final.

India has not won an Olympic medal in shooting since 2012 and Bhaker is well placed to end that lean run.

Standing at a distance, Bhaker's personal coach Jaspal Rana could not stop his tears before saying that the job was only half done.

"What happened today doesn't matter anymore. Tomorrow is when it counts. We start afresh," he told PTI before pointing out the heat factor at the range with the air conditioning not being the most effective.

"She needed to take time and drink a lot of water as it was hot," he added.

At the other end of the spectrum was Sarabjot Singh, who felt the pressure on his Games debut to narrowly miss out on a final berth in the men's 10m air pistol. Both he and Arjuna Singh Cheema showed promise before



finishing ninth and 18th with scores of 577 and 544 respectively. Germany's Robin Walter, who also shot 577, grabbed the last qualifying spot after managing to shoot one inner heartbroken. Coach Samresh Jung tried to console him but Sarabjot

knew he had missed the opportunity of a lifetime. As many as 17 out of the 21 Indian shooters here are competing in the Olympics for the first time and are bound to feel pressure despite the best possible preparation.

"There are only two types of people who don't feel pressure. One are the dead and others are fools. He is neither dead nor a fool," said Jung who expects Sarabjot to bounce back in the mixed team event.

At the rifle range, Indians were eliminated from the 10m mixed team qualifications.

Ramita Jindal and Arjun Babuta finished sixth with a total score of 628.7, while Elavenil Valarivan and Sandeep Singh ended 12th with an aggregate score of 626.3.

SEN AND DESAI ADD SHEEN IN EVENING: Sen, who worked on his front-court alertness and closing stage composure, in the build-up to the Games, gave a demonstration of the improvements in the match against Cordon.

The Indian was unnerved

despite conceding a big lead in the second game and staved off four match points before sealing the deal against the reigning Pan American champion in 42 minutes.

The gold-medallist from the 2022 Commonwealth Games will face Julien Carraggi of Belgium on Monday in his second group match.

In table tennis, Desai had no trouble in getting the better of his opponent, ranked 538th in the world, in a one-sided preliminary round match that lasted exactly 30 minutes.

The 31-year-old from Surat, who was part of the side that clinched the team gold medal at the Commonwealth Games in 2018 and 2022, is an established name in the Indian TT circuit.

He has been toiling for many years in his quest to compete at the Olympics, having played in all other top global competitions.

PANWAR MOVES TO REPECHAGE IN ROWING: India's lone rower at Games, Balraj Panwar moved to the repechage after finishing fourth in heat 1 of the men's singles scull competition.



China wins first diving gold

AP ■ SAINT-DENIS (FRANCE)

One down. Seven to go. China won its first gold medal in diving on Saturday on the first full day of competition in the Paris Olympics, a perfect start for the team of Chang Yani and Chen Yiwon.

China has ruled diving for decades, and three years ago in Tokyo, it won seven of eight gold medals. But, it's never pulled off the elusive gold sweep. That's the goal this time.

The Chinese were first on Saturday in the women's synchronized 3-meter springboard with 337.68 points on five dives.

They were followed by Sarah Bacon and Cassidy Cook of the United States with 314.64 points and the British team of Yasmin Harper and Scarlett Mew Jensen with bronze and 302.28 points.

The same Chinese duo also

won gold in the last three world championships and were heavy favourites going in.

The crowd, heavy with Chinese fans and flags, chanted "jiiyou" - roughly translated "let's go" - each time the Chinese walked out to dive.

This event was added in 2000, and Chinese women have won gold six times in seven Games.

The only loss was to Russia in 2000. China won three years ago in Tokyo with Shi Tingmao and Wang Han.

Starting with the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics where China claimed its first diving gold, it had won 47 of 64 gold medals in diving. Add to that 23 silver and 10 bronze.

If you start counting from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, China won 27 of 32 gold at the Olympics.

These are the numbers before Paris. Now, add another gold to the total and watch the numbers climb as the Olympics roll on in Paris.

Olympic cyclists criticise streets of Paris

AP ■ PARIS

Remco Evenepoel was unimpressed by the rough roads that Olympic cyclists had to cover in the time trial through Paris on Saturday, while Nino Schurter was just as critical of the gravel covering the man-made mountain bike course in nearby Elancourt.

Evenepoel, fresh off his third-place finish in the Tour de France, described the first and last five kilometres of the time trial as bad roads being made worse by the rain, which made for a damp opening ceremony on Friday night and continued into Saturday when the start of skateboarding had to be postponed due to the weather.

The time trial began upstream from the Eiffel Tower on the Esplanade. It covered 32.4 kilometres (19.8 miles) past Place de la Bastille and through the Polygone de Vincennes, before finishing at the gilded Pont Alexandre III bridge over the Seine River.



"Quite some beautiful sightseeing as well," Evenepoel acknowledged, "but the road surface is pretty bad in the beginning and in the end. So, that might be a problem if you have black spots in front of your eyes in the last kilometres. It's not so nice."

The Belgian is the reigning time trial world champion and won the first of two-time trials during the Tour de France.

Meanwhile, at Elancourt Hill about 40 kilometres (24.8 miles) outside of Paris, the Olympic mountain bike course was carved through the site of a former sandstone quarry-turned-landfill.

It was regenerated into a park in the 1980s, and one of the highest points in the region now offers sprawling vistas of the Eiffel Tower, La Defense and the forests around Paris.

The course was designed by South African expert Nick Floros, who also designed the mountain bike venue for the 2016 Rio and 2020 Tokyo Games, and features man-made jumps and rock gardens with stretches of gravel-covered paths.

The women's competition is Sunday and the men cover the same course on Monday.

"It's slippery. It's quite loose," said Schurter, a three-time Olympic medalist and the champion in Rio.

"If you go fast it's super slippery. I hope the gravel still goes a bit to the side and makes it less loose everywhere. You can feel there was no mountain biking before and it's 100% man-made, like we saw in London and in Rio.

"It could be a bit more natural," Schurter acknowledged, "but in general it's nice."

Olympic organisers apologise for introducing South Korean athletes as North Korea

AP ■ PARIS

Olympic Games organisers said they deeply apologise for introducing South Korean athletes as North Korea during the opening ceremony in Paris.

As the South Korean athletes waved their nation's flag on a boat floating down the Seine River Friday evening, they were announced in both French and English as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. South Korea is the

Republic of Korea.

"We deeply apologise for the mistake that occurred when introducing the Korean team during the opening ceremony broadcast," the International Olympic Committee said in a post on X in Korean.

The South Korean Ministry of Culture Sports and Tourism Vice Minister Jang Mi Ran requested a meeting with IOC President Thomas Bach over the incident, the ministry said in a statement on Saturday. It said the ministry also asked

South Korea's Foreign Ministry to file "a strong government-level complaint" with the French government.

The statement said South Korea's Olympic committee separately asked the organizers of the Paris Games to prevent the recurrence of similar incidents.

IOC spokesperson Mark Adams on Saturday called the error "clearly deeply regrettable".

"An operational mistake was made. We can only apologize,



Katie starts Olympic swimming with fastest time in 400 free prelims, just ahead of Titmus

AP ■ NANTERRE (FRANCE)

Katie Ledecky fired the first salvo in her duel with Ariarne Titmus, posting the fastest time in the preliminaries of the women's 400-meter freestyle Saturday as the swimming competition began at the Paris Olympics.

In one of the most highly anticipated events of the Games, Ledecky claimed the prime No. 4 lane for the evening final with a time of four minutes, 2.19 seconds.

Titmus, the Australian star known as "The Terminator," got off to a fast start but couldn't hold off the hard-charging Ledecky on the final lap.

Titmus posted the second-fastest time of the heats in 4:02.46, setting up a side-by-side showdown with the American in the evening final.

Titmus is the reigning Olympic champion in the 400 free, knocking off Ledecky at the

Tokyo Games three years ago. The Aussie also holds the world record of 3:55.38 - a sign that she's got a lot left to give in the final.

Also, keep an eye on Canadian phenom Summer McIntosh, who should be in the medal mix after going 4:02.65 in the prelims for the fourth-fastest time. She was just behind New Zealand's Erika Fairweather (4:02.55).

Tokyo bronze medalist Li Bingjie and Chinese teammate Liu Yaxin finished ninth and 10th, respectively, and failed to advance to the final.

Their team has been under intense scrutiny after reports that nearly two dozen swimmers tested positive for a banned substance before the 2021 Olympics, but were not sanctioned.

Ledecky is looking to add to her haul of six individual gold medals - already the most by any female swimmer in Olympic history.



Indians fail to qualify for 10m mixed rifle and men's pistol finals

PTI ■ CHATEAUROUX (FRANCE)

Sarabjot Singh and Arjun Singh Cheema sparkled in patches but could not make the men's 10m air pistol final after both the air rifle mixed teams also fell by the wayside during qualification in a disappointing start for Indian shooters in the Olympic Games here on Saturday.

Sarabjot finished ninth with a total score of 577 in the qualifications while Arjun ended way behind at 18th with 574.

Germany's Robin Walter, who also shot 577, grabbed the last (eighth) qualifying spot after managing to shoot one inner 10 (X) more than Sarabjot's 16.

A perfect 100 in the fourth series propelled the 22-year-old Sarabjot into the top-three after a poor start but he failed to sustain the momentum and fizzled out.

Cheema shot 10 perfect 10s off his last 10 shots, which lifted him to the fourth position but he too lost the plot after promising much.

The 23-year-old Cheema collected 97 points from Series 2 (8, 10, 10, 10, 9, 10, 10, 10, 10) and was placed 10th in the list. He collected 96 points from Series 1. However, a poor 7 followed by a 9 from Cheema saw him slip outside the top eight.

Both Cheema and Sarabjot were part of the Indian side that won the 10m air pistol team gold at the Asian Games in Hangzhou last year.

DISAPPOINTMENT IN MIXED RIFLE EVENT: Earlier in the day, the Indian shooters were eliminated in the 10m air rifle mixed team qualifications stage.

Ramita Jindal and Arjun Babuta finished sixth with a total score

of 628.7, while Elavenil Valarivan and Sandeep Singh ended 12th with an aggregate score of 626.3.

The duo of Ramita and Babuta came close and was placed fifth with three shots remaining but fell 1.0 point short of the medal round cut-off.

Babuta enjoyed a fine start in the second relay and had a sequence that read 10.5, 10.6, 10.5, 10.9, while Ramita managed 10.2, 10.7, 10.3, 10.1 in the second series.

But, to get into the bronze medal round, they needed to do more than what they eventually achieved. Shooters from China, Korea and Kazakhstan dominated the qualifications.

China eventually won the first gold medal of the Games in this event after qualifying as the top team for the finals.

A side has to get to the top four to enter the medal matches.

American cowbell clanging will be raucous again at Paris Games

AP ■ PARIS

Before Tokyo three years ago, the US Olympic swim coaches pondered how to best support their athletes and help fire them up before a race, given there were no family or friends or fans in the stands. They turned to clanging cowbells.

While spectators return to the pool in Paris on Saturday, American women's coach Todd DeSorbo and his staff plan to continue what worked so well - even if it's not popular with the rival Australians or others.

Given that most everybody at the pool by now has heard about the Aussies' disdain for the noise, the rivalry could reach new decibels at these Summer Games.

Australian star Cate Campbell, who is rarely afraid to speak her mind, referred to the Americans as "such, such sore losers" after Australia won more gold medals at the world championships last year in Fukuoka, Japan, and expressed her disgust with all the cowbells ringing out.

"I've never wanted to punch someone more and steal the cowbell, and I really hope that someone did," Campbell said in an interview with Australia's "Today" show last year.

You better believe the Americans heard about that and took notice. Michael Phelps hopes Campbell's complaints only provide more motivation for the US, saying, "I would watch that thing every single day, give me that little extra."

American Abbey Weitzeil said last month at the U.S. Trials: "We're all



bringing the cowbell.

"Whenever comments are made about your country or your jobs, it's all competitive. I think we all are competitive, our competitive side comes out, so we're all bringing the cowbell, extra loud!"

DeSorbo didn't realize the motivational tactic would cause an international uproar.

"That was an interesting thing," he said. "I think that not having fans in the stands you had to create an environment to help them get excited, to help them get motivated. I do think you can't get motivated with the opportunity to win an Olympic medal, then I don't know what would motivate you, but the fans and the spectators certainly help."

"Being in an environment where we as a coaching staff had to create that

excitement for them, I think probably the cowbells were probably rang louder at that Olympics than ever before because of that.

"And, that might be part of why there's a little bit of trash-talking going on back and forth about that because it was really loud in '21 and probably since then it has been."

Indeed, the clanging isn't always popular with some athletes from opposing countries.

American Hunter Armstrong spoke about the 4x100 freestyle relay foursome chasing a world record in Paris while making sure to point out, "We definitely want that world record, but most importantly we need more cowbell."

Campbell shared how thrilled she was not to hear the US national anthem as regularly at worlds last year.

"Australia coming out on top of the world is one thing, but it is just so much sweeter beating America," she said. "There were a couple of nights, particularly the first night of competition, where we did not have to hear Star-Spangled Banner' ring out through the stadium and I cannot tell you how happy that made me.

"If I never hear that song again it will be too soon. So, bring on Paris. That's all I have to say, US, stop being sore losers. ... "When we're like right next to each other in the warmup areas, the US. Have this infernal cowbell that they ring and as someone leaves to go to the competition pool they ring out USA! USA! and I've never wanted to punch someone more."

Turns out, Campbell won't be competing and perhaps not as bothered by those bells at Paris La Defense Arena.

Yet, those thoughtful gestures by the U.S. Coaches - no matter how loud - have meant so much to their swimmers.

"Since I've been on Team USA, we've always had a lot of pride and interest in our teammates' success. When they go off to the ready room before a race, there's typically a big raucous," Ryan Murphy told The Associated Press.

"Whether it's a cowbell, USA chants or a fist bump, we know that we have the whole team behind us when we step up on the blocks."

DeSorbo and men's coach Anthony Nesty are bringing along the last two head coaches as key support: Stanford's Greg Meehan on the women's side and University of California-Berkeley men's coach Dave Durden.

In most heated of times, exhale, take a step back: Dravid's message to Gambhir

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Former India coach Rahul Dravid passed a lead to his successor Gautam Gambhir in taming the tough situations he is bound to encounter - "exhale, take a step back", a message that left the latter "emotional."
Dravid vacated the hot seat after India's triumph in the T20 World Cup in the Americas last month, and Gambhir took over the reins of the team from the on-going whiteball tour to Sri Lanka.
"From one Indian cricket coach to another, one last thing. In the most heated of times, exhale, take a step back. I wish you the very best Gautam. I am sure you will take the Indian team to even greater heights," Dravid said in a video posted by BCCI on its 'X' handle.
Dravid's dry wit came to the fore even amidst that touching message.
"Even if it's difficult for you, crack a smile. Whatever else happens, that will shock people," he said, eliciting a wide smile from Gambhir.
Gambhir sounded moved while thanking his predecessor for the wise words "I don't get too emotional but I think this message actually made me a lot emotional

which normally I shouldn't. But it's a great message.
"It's massive shoes that I can hopefully fill. Hopefully, I can do that with absolute honesty, transparency and hopefully, I can make the entire nation and more importantly, the person I have always looked up to - Rahul Bhai - proud," he said.
Dravid was certain that Gambhir, who carried a never-say-die attitude in his playing days, will bring his fighting qualities to the coaching job as well.
"As your teammate, I saw you giving it your all on the field. As your batting partner and fellow fielder, I saw your resilience and refusal to surrender. Across many IPL seasons, I noted your desire to win, your assistance to younger players and your drive to extract the best out of your team on the field.
"I know how dedicated and passionate you are about Indian cricket and I am sure you will bring all these qualities into the new job," he said.
The 51-year-old, however, offered a word of caution to his one-time teammate about living under constant scrutiny. "As you know, the expectations will be high and the scrutiny will be intense," he said, also



reminding that there will be overwhelming support for him from all quarters.
"But even in the worst of times you will never be alone. You will have the support of the players, your support staff, the leaders of the past, the management and never forget for whom you play - for fans who are very demanding but will always be behind the team."
Dravid hoped that Gambhir will have a fully-fit squad to work with, and will have the assistance of fortune in crunch moments.
"I also hope that you will also have the availability of fully fit players in every squad. Good luck with that. I also wish you a little bit of luck, as you know that all of us coaches need to make us look that little bit wiser and smarter than we actually are," he noted.
The former Indian captain also urged Gambhir to forge a strong bond with the team members - something he managed to do during his tenure.
"Hello Gautam, and welcome to the most exciting job in our world, as coach of the Indian cricket team. It's been three weeks since I ended my stint with the Indian team in a manner that was beyond my dreams, both in Barbados and

a few days later in that unforgettable evening in Mumbai.
"More than anything else I will cherish the memories and friendships I made in my time with the squad. As you take over the role of India coach, it's what I wish for you as well," he added.
Gambhir imbibed Dravid's words in their true sense, and said he has not seen a more "selfless" servant of Indian cricket.
"I don't know how to react because this message means so much to me. The reason is not because it comes from the person who I have succeeded but from a person who I have always looked up to when I was playing.
"I have always felt that and I said it in a lot of my interviews - I think the most selfless cricketer I have actually ever played with. Rahul Bhai has done anything and everything Indian cricket needed."
Gambhir said Dravid's association with Indian cricket is a text book for others to learn from.
"I think there is so much to learn from, not only for me but for the next generation and the current generation as well. That's how important Indian cricket is, not me, not individuals," he said.

Kevin hopefully will play for US in its Olympic opener against Serbia

AP ■ PARIS
There is hope that Kevin Durant will play for the US in its Olympic opener against Serbia on Sunday, which means the men's national team may have 12 players available for the first time this summer. That is unless something else happens.
The Americans open their path toward what they hope is a fifth consecutive Olympic gold medal when they take on three-time NBA MVP Nikola Jokic and World Cup finalist Serbia in the opener for both teams at the Paris Games.
Durant missed all five exhibition games the US played coming into Paris because of a calf strain, and coach Steve Kerr stopped short of definitively saying Saturday that he is in the line-up for the opener.
"Hopefully," Kerr said. Durant was on the floor for practice, while presumed starting centre Joel Embiid was not because of illness.
Kerr said he didn't expect Embiid to miss Sunday's game. "I'm confident we'll have everybody ready tomorrow," Kerr said.
There have been signs in recent days that USA Basketball expects Durant - a three-time gold medalist, now bidding to become the first player who can say he's a four-time Olympic men's basketball champion - will be ready to go.
First, it didn't replace him on the roster. Second, it released clips of a Thursday scrimmage where Durant was active and even had a reverse dunk (plus got dunked on by Anthony Edwards, who idolizes him). And third, Kerr insisted earlier in the week that he wasn't concerned about Durant's status.
"We'll see how things go in practice today," Kerr said Saturday. "So far, so good. He came through the scrimmage two days ago pretty well."
The team convened for its first summer practice in Las Vegas on July 6, about a week and a half after Durant strained the calf.
He couldn't participate in practices there, didn't play in the first exhibition win over Canada before the Americans left for their overseas legs of the pre-Olympic tour and



then the waiting game was on.
Durant did some on-court work in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, but missed two more exhibitions there against Serbia and Australia.
He did more work in London but missed the two exhibitions the US played there against South Sudan and Germany as well. He said he made the best of the situation.
"It's been incredible," Durant said. "I mean, I haven't played yet, but just being on the sideline, on the bench, I've got more energy than I've had in the past. I hate not playing, but just watching these guys, how they operate, it's just been incredible."
In Olympic play, Durant has been incredible as well.
Before Durant came along, Adrian Dantley had the highest scoring average for a US men's player in an Olympic tournament; he averaged 19.3 points at the 1976 Montreal Games.
That's now fourth on the single Olympics US list behind Durant's 20.7 points per game at the Tokyo Games three years ago, Durant's 19.5 points per game at the 2012 London Games and Durant's 19.4 points per game at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games.
He has scored 435 points in Olympic play, the most in US men's history, 99 more than Carmelo Anthony. He is third in rebounds for the U.S. Men with 118, seven behind

Anthony and six behind David Robinson. He is the all-time US men's leader in Olympic 3-pointers made with 74 and the all-time leader in free throws made with 69.
"Instant impact. Instant impact," U.S. Forward LeBron James said when asked about what Durant would add to the mix when he returns.
"He looked extremely well the other day in practice. Obviously, his wind, his rhythm is going to continue to come, but to be able to get him back, it makes a huge impact for our club."
And, if all that wasn't enough, there's this: The US is 21-1 in Olympic games with Durant in the line-up, and he's won a pair of NBA championships with Kerr during their three seasons together with the Golden State Warriors.
"I know how hard he works because I've seen it up close and personal for three years, and I know the level that he's trying to get to competitively to be his best self and why he is the all-time leading scorer in (U.S.) Olympic history," Warriors guard and first-time Olympian Stephen Curry said.
"So, you thrive off of that, that preparation to give you confidence that says Hey, we're here for business, but we're also here to continue to learn from each other.

Great Britain rides strong effort of Olympic veterans to early lead in men's gymnastics qualifying

AP ■ PARIS
Great Britain surged to an early lead during men's gymnastics qualifying, posting a team total of 256.561 to finish ahead of the United States in the first of three subdivisions Saturday.
The Americans, who finished third at the 2023 world championships ahead of Great Britain, dealt with issues on the high bar and pommel horse to finish second at 253.229.
The US arrived in Paris believing it had a legitimate chance to medal in the team competition for the first time since earning a bronze in Beijing 16 years ago.
There is work to be done after the British put on a largely mistake-free clinic across six rotations.
Jake Jarman (84.897) and Joe



Fraser (84.666) posted the top all-around scores and six-time Olympic medalist Max Whitlock provided a jolt with an electric pommel horse routine - his signature event - that left the 31-year-old looking relieved. Whitlock's 15.166 trailed only American Stephen Nedoroscik, a specialist whose 15.200 likely earned him a spot in the event finals and gave his teammates some early momentum.
It didn't last. Brody Malone, who returned from a horrific leg injury to win his third US championship in June, fell twice on a high bar and once on a pommel horse to scuttle

his chances of returning to the all-around finals.
Instead, Frederick Richard and Paul Juda will represent the Americans. While Richard - who earned bronze in the all-around at the 2023 world championships - is expected to advance, Juda's performance is a bit of a surprise.
The 23-year-old - who unabashedly broke down in tears after being named to the five-man Olympic squad - thrust his arms into the air after his dismount on floor exercise. His all-around total of 82.865 was fourth among early qualifiers, trailing only Richard (83.498), Jarman and Fraser.
Qualifying continues later Saturday, with longtime rivals and gold medal favourites Japan and China competing in the second of three subdivisions.

Swiatek starts 2024 Olympics tennis event with win at site of her French Open triumphs

AP ■ PARIS
Iga Swiatek shook off a bit of a dip in the first round of the Paris Olympics tennis competition and grabbed the last four games to beat Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 6-2, 7-5 on Saturday under a closed roof at Roland Garros, the site of the No. 1-ranked Polish player's four French Open titles.
Swiatek, who won a third consecutive championship at Court Philippe Chatrier just seven weeks ago, got broken in that same stadium to trail 5-3 in the second set before getting back to her usual clay-court expertise. She wrapped up the victory by breaking at love when Begu double-faulted on the last point.
Day 1 of tennis began with showers that might have contributed to slow lines for umbrella-toting spectators at the facility's security checks near entrances and postponed by hours the start of matches at the 10 courts without retractable roofs.
It's a good thing the French tennis federation built a pair of covers recently: 15,000-capacity Chatrier added one in 2020, and the second-



largest arena, 10,000-capacity Court Suzanne Lenglen, has one as of this year.
Italy's Jasmine Paolini, who was the runner-up to Swiatek at the French Open in June and to Barbora

Krejcikova at Wimbledon two weeks ago, was the first tennis player to win a match at these Summer Games, eliminating Romania's Ana Bogdan 7-5, 6-3 at Lenglen.
Among the other big names from the

sport scheduled to play later Saturday were reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz - facing Lebanon's Hady Habib in singles in the afternoon and pairing with Spanish teammate Rafael Nadal in doubles at night - along with 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic of Serbia and four-time major champion Naomi Osaka.
Nadal has won a record 14 of his 22 Slam titles at Roland Garros and owns Olympic gold medals in singles and doubles. He carried the torch and rode on a boat in the Seine River with retired tennis star Serena Williams during the drenched opening ceremony Friday night.
Coco Gauff, the female flag bearer for the United States on Friday, was slated to make her Olympic debut Saturday with Jessica Pegula in doubles.
Gauff won the French Open doubles title with Katerina Siniakova of the Czech Republic last month and the US Open singles trophy last September.
+Three years ago, Gauff missed the Tokyo Games after testing positive for COVID-19 right before she was supposed to fly to Japan.

Honda India riders impress in Asia Road Racing Championship

PTI ■ LOMBOK (INDONESIA)
The riders of the IDEMITSU Honda Racing India team impressed in Race 1 of Round 4 of the 2024 FIM Asia Road Racing Championship in Indonesia on Sunday.
The Indian duo of Kavin Quintal and Mohsin Paramban completed the race with determination and consistency at Pertamina Mandalika International Circuit.
Starting strong from the 27th position on the grid, Chennai's 19-year-old rising star, Kavin Quintal, swiftly moved up after the first lap and maintained consistency throughout the race.
Leveraging his experience and executing strategic moves effectively, he gave tough competition to international riders and continued to elevate his performance despite an injury. He finished the race at 19th position with



a total time of 18:37.226.
Kavin's teammate, Mohsin Paramban from Mallapuram, started the race from 21st on the grid and delivered a good performance on international soil.
He maintained consistency throughout the race, navigating the track and crossing the chequered flag at 22nd position with a total time of 18:44.784.
Both the riders, however, could not secure any points

for the team in Race 1 of Round 4.
Quintal, "I began this round on a strong note, but yesterday's crash and my subsequent injury disrupted my plans for the race. Despite the tough competition, I'm pleased that we performed well and made no mistakes today.
"Having recovered well, I'm optimistic about securing better results and earning points for the team in tomorrow's race."
Paramban added, "Today's round was quite challenging, and my focus was on maintaining consistency throughout the race. I managed to hold my position and stay focused.
"Taking the lessons learned, I will be pushing harder tomorrow to achieve better results. Working closely with our instructors, we will refine our strategies to compete effectively and secure a better position for the team."

the pioneer agenda

"It is not part of a true culture to tame tigers, any more than it is to make sheep ferocious"
— Henry David Thoreau



INTERNATIONAL TIGER DAY

Forests, which are essential carbon sinks and wildlife habitats, play a crucial role in combating climate change.

Strengthening tiger conservation programs is vital to protect their ecosystems, benefiting both tigers and humans, writes **BK SINGH** on the eve of International Tiger Day

DON'T LET THE ROAR DIE DOWN

Scientific studies have consistently brought out that the planet Earth is warming at a faster pace than ever before. The report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned of the consequences of frequent and destructive climatic catastrophes if the global rise in temperature is not contained within 1.5 degrees Celsius concerning pre-industrial (1850–1900 levels). Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) dealing with the European Union's 'earth observation program' launched in January 2023, has recently taken stock of the project and found that June 2024 marks the 13th month of global temperature at 1.50 C above pre industrial levels. The monthly average surface air temperature from June 2023 to June 2024 was 16.660C and was .760C higher than the average for 1991-2020 and 1.640C above pre industrial 1850-1900 levels. So far 2023 has been the warmest year on record, but 2024 is on course to break this.

We are left with no option but to transition away from fossil fuel consumption and develop renewable energy with speed and scale. Forests are the biggest carbon sink that can suck CO2 emitted into the atmosphere due to industrial activities and fossil fuel burning. It is the home of wild animals. Forests not only provide food and shelter to wild animals but also provide a series of ecological services necessary for the survival of mankind. Tiger is at the apex of wild animals. If a tiger is saved, other wild animals and the forests are secure. Project Tiger was launched in India in 1973 by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi covering nine tiger-bearing areas extending over 16338 sq km of good quality forests across the country namely Corbett, Kaziranga, Melghat, Bandipur etc. Since then many more areas have been added to the list and by now there are 53 Tiger Reserves (TRs) in India. To commemorate 50 years of Project Tiger an international conference was held at Mysuru on 9th April 2023, which was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The most important takeaway of the conference was the launch of the international big cat alliance to protect seven species namely tiger, leopard, jaguar, lion, snow leopard, puma and cheetah worldwide. Among 94 member countries harbouring these species, the Ministers from India, Armenia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Kenya, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Suriname, Tanzania, Vientiane, and Vietnam presented the status of conservation of big cat species in their country. They also pledged to conserve the species. Forests and wildlife have a symbiotic relationship and both cannot survive without the other.



BK SINGH

PROJECT TIGER WAS LAUNCHED IN INDIA IN 1973 BY THE THEN PRIME MINISTER INDIRA GANDHI COVERING NINE TIGER-BEARING AREAS EXTENDING OVER 16338 SQ KM OF GOOD QUALITY FORESTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY NAMELY CORBETT, KAZIRANGA, MELGHAT, BANDIPUR ETC. SINCE THEN MANY MORE AREAS HAVE BEEN ADDED TO THE LIST AND BY NOW THERE ARE 53 TIGER RESERVES (TRS) IN INDIA. TO COMMEMORATE 50 YEARS OF PROJECT TIGER AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE WAS HELD AT MYSURU ON 9TH APRIL 2023, WHICH WAS INAUGURATED BY PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI

In this long journey of 50 years, the Project tiger coverage has been increased from 9 to 53 sites. The area under Project Tiger management has also been increased from 16338 sq km to 75000 sq km. Though tiger security was the focus in all 53 tiger reserves of the country, aggressive activities of interstate poaching gangs who killed tigers at will and decimated tigers from many reserves namely Sariska (Rajasthan), Panna (Madhya Pradesh), Buxa (West Bengal), Namdapha and Kamlang (Arunachal Pradesh) and Dampa (Mizoram). Project Tiger was revamped when the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) was brought in 2006 and enabling provisions were made in the Wildlife (Protection) Act through amendment. A robust methodology for All India Tiger estimation was developed by our Scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India and experts from NTCA and used for tiger estimation in the same year. First first-ever exercise was carried out in all forest areas of the country, which revealed that India had 1411 tigers in the wild. Thereafter the estimation was repeated every four years that was in 2010, 2014, 2018 and 2022 which brought out the tiger numbers as 1710, 2226, 2967 and 3682 respectively.

An increasing trend in tiger numbers has been noticed, but the most worrying part that surfaced was the shrinkage in the areas of tiger occupancy. Though the recovery of tigers has grown from 1411 to 3682, the area of its occupancy has declined. From 92,000 sq km area in the first cycle of estimation in 2006, it has been reduced to 88,000 sq km in the fourth cycle in 2018. Despite all stringent measures the fragmentation of habitats and encroachments in forest lands have continued resulting in the loss of tiger-occupied areas. The western Ghats landscape itself has lost 527 sq km of tiger occupancy in four years between 2014 and 2018. North northeastern part of the country has lost more than 6000 sq km area under tiger occupancy in this period. Survey of India biannual report, which was last published in 2021 has assessed the change in forest cover of all tiger reserves over a decade (from 2011 to 2021). The report brings out that the forest cover has decreased by 22.62 sq km (0.04%) in this period. Twenty tiger reserves have gained in forest cover, while the remaining 33 have lost. While Buxa (West Bengal, Annamalai (Tamil Nadu) and Indravati (Chhattisgarh) have gained, Kawal (Telangana), Bhadra

(Karnataka) and Sunderbans (West Bengal) have lost.

The latest tiger estimation report about the Western Ghats landscape reads, "Majority of tiger populations remain stable and some have declined, a significant reduction of tiger occupancy has been observed throughout the landscape." Central Indian Highlands and Eastern Ghats landscape are reported to have added tigers but several threats are looming large; The report adds "High concentration of mining activity poses a significant challenge to conservation. The forests of this region are under threat from various activities, despite their high biodiversity and conservation significance. - Tiger occupancy declined in states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and Telangana." The description from the north eastern landscape is no different. It indicates some major threats the region is facing "The landscape has experienced extensive change in land-use patterns in the past, leading to severe loss of natural habitat." Overall, the report is positive about the increase in tiger numbers from 2967 to at least 3167; the loss in the Western Ghats

landscape has been wiped out by the gains in the central Indian landscape. Human-carnivore conflict is prevalent in several landscapes, especially where buffer forests are disturbed due to human and livestock presence. When an area of occupancy decreases and the number increases, tigers are bound to stray outside the reserve and come in conflict with humans. Forest department faces challenges across the tiger landscapes; the conflicts can disturb the relationship with communities. The country should pledge to focus on conservation even outside tiger reserves. Diversion of natural forests, whether inside or outside the tiger reserve is detrimental to conservation. There is a mechanism for paying

compensation for the loss of human life as well as livestock, but the community has to be taken in confidence. Losing tigers would mean losing tree cover and vice versa. Loss of forest cover is the loss of sink for Carbon dioxide and further warming of the planet.

The writer is retired Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Karnataka; views are personalK

Image Source: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting on X post



RICH LEGACY OF INDIA'S TIMELESS CUISINE

With global trends and multinational narratives challenging the nutritional value of traditional Indian dishes, it is crucial to preserve the unique flavours and benefits that define Indian cuisine, writes **ANIL RAJPUT**

Air, water, and food are essential for life, and in India, they have had a revered status from the beginning of civilisation. In this article, I will focus on the third—Indian Food and cuisine! The history and deep connection of Bharat with food are perhaps among the oldest in the world; it is actually timeless. The people of early Vedic civilisations in India were nomadic pastoralists who practiced elaborate rituals to placate their gods. Agni, the god of fire, was considered the mouth through which the gods ate their sacrifices, and one of his favourite foods was ghee (clarified butter), which remains popular to this day. The Indus Valley Civilisation that spanned from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE was known for barley, millet, ragi, amaranth, wheat, sorghum, rice, as well as oilseeds such as sesame, linseed, and mustard.



frontiers of India. The biryani, a celebratory meal made using meat, rice, yogurt, onion, and spices, originated in Persia but evolved in India during this era. Biryani now has multiple variants across the country, with the most popular ones credited to the Mughals and the nizams of Hyderabad. The Islamic conquest of India also introduced fruits such as apricots, melons, and plums, as well as a rich gravy style of cooking. Kebabs cooked over coals and pilaf became popular during this period and are still classified as Mughlai cuisine in present-day India. To the east, in West Bengal and Odisha, the amount of spice used in cooking decreases, and the use of mustard oil is more common. There is much importance given in this region to 'Shadrasa' or the six basic flavours in Ayurveda, with particular emphasis on tikta (the bitter taste). The cuisine of northeastern India is rice-based—rice is grown on terraced fields in the region's hilly terrain—and freshwater fish appears in many dishes, as does pork, mutton, and chicken. This reflects the cohesive nature of Indian regional cuisines, where the use of local ingredients and the customisation/ modification



A Pillar of Corporate Leadership

ANIL RAJPUT'S leadership journey, marked by strategic roles and impactful projects, showcases his deep understanding of finance, policy matters, and stakeholder management

Anil Rajput serves as a Member, Corporate Management Committee and Head of Corporate Affairs at ITC Limited, a leading Indian conglomerate with diversified presence in FMCG, hotels, information technology, packaging, paperboards and agribusiness.

Anil Rajput joined ITC in 1976, and in the course of last 48 years, he has held various positions in the organisation. Starting his career in the finance function, he was seconded to International Travel House Limited in 1983 as part of the start-up team. During his tenure with International Travel House

Limited, he assumed the charge of General Manager-Travel at the age of 27 and laid a strong foundation for its domestic network across India.

Upon completion of his secondment in International Travel House Limited in 1989, he was assigned the responsibility in ITC's Hotels Division as Divisional Project Controller. In this assignment with the Hotels Division, he was tasked with the critical functions of finance, projects and development. He has been closely associated with iconic hotel projects like ITC Grand Maratha, Mumbai, ITC Sonar Bangla, Kolkata and ITC Grand Central, Mumbai. In the year 2003, he held the position of Vice-President - Project



Finance & Development, before he moved to ITC's Corporate Affairs function as Vice President, Corporate Affairs. Anil Rajput has been heading the Corporate Affairs Division since 2007. He is the first corporate affairs chief of

ITC to be designated as its President. With a keen global perspective, clear and deep understanding of policy matters, he is highly attuned to the developments, nuances and impact of regulatory and policy issues. Over the years, he has forged effective and strategic relationships with key stakeholders in the government, public affairs, media and the industry chambers.

In his capacity as President, Corporate Affairs he also represents the organisation in all major industry Chambers of the country like CII, FICCI, ASSOCHAM, PHD, and International Chamber of Commerce. He is on the

Executive Committee of FICCI, ASSOCHAM, and PHD and he chairs/co-chairs various sectoral committees in these chambers. He holds the Membership of Academic / Professional organisations such as FMS and Skal International. He is a Non-Official Member of the Managing Body of the Indian Red Cross Society (Delhi Branch) and Secretary, Cuisine India Society.

He is also a Non-Executive Director on the Board of International Travel House, a subsidiary of ITC Ltd, engaged in the Travel & Tourism Business, since May 2000. Anil Rajput is an alumnus of Faculty of Management Studies, Delhi University.



Foreign invasions have had a profound impact on Indian food. When Alexander came to India in 350 BCE, several parts of the country were introduced to fresh herbs like mint, coriander, oregano, and essential oils like olive oil. The Turk-Mongol conqueror Timur brought the precursor of Biryani when he arrived at the



of dishes from different regions is done with perfection. In southern India, rice is the staple food, and it is eaten with sambhar, a watery stew comprising lentils, tamarind, and vegetables. Many fruits and vegetables are pickled and

consumed with meals, and coconut oil and gingelly (sesame) oils are used as the mediums for cooking. Seafood is common along the coast, along with high sugar and salt content, which is scientifically supported due to the high humidity and the resulting loss of body fluids from excessive perspiration in these regions. Within southern India, there are also diverse cuisines—

Andhra, Tamil, Chettinad, Kerala, and Mangalore, among others. Each region cooks sambhar differently and uses different varieties of rice. Tamil cuisine classifies food into six tastes—sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent, and astringent—and aspires to include each taste in every main meal.

The west coast of India has its own distinct cuisines. In Goa,

rice and fish are staples. Goan Hindu cuisine is less spicy and includes many vegetables, though little onion and garlic. Portuguese cuisine in Goa includes meat and uses a vinegar-based gravy (vindaloo) for many dishes. The arrival of New World vegetables by way of the Portuguese in the 16th century resulted in further changes to Indian cuisines. They introduced chilies, tomatoes,

potatoes, and peanuts, and brought beans, corn, cashews, peppers, and more from the Americas. Vinegar, which is used to season achar and chutneys, was also introduced by them in India.

In coastal Maharashtra, fish and rice are quite common. Mutton Kohlapuri is famed, and then there is the legendary Pav Bhaji. Things

change within the state as well, and we find the increased consumption of millets and groundnuts in inland areas instead of rice and coconut. Further north, Gujarat is predominantly vegetarian, and most dishes have some sweetness due to the use of sugar. This is quite unique to the state and indicative of the sheer variety and changes.

A CULINARY SYMPHONY

CHEF PRATEEK SADHU and **CHEF MANISH MEHROTRA** Shine at Indian Accent Pop-Up

FOODFREAK



Pawan Soni
Food critic and founder of the Big F Awards

I had long yearned to savor Chef Prateek Sadhu's cuisine, which I had heard so much about. However, during my brief visit to Mumbai, I only had time for lunch, and his ingredient-driven restaurant, 'Masque,' was only open for dinner. Later, I learned about his new restaurant, 'Naar'-meaning fire in Kashmiri—near Kasauli, where all dishes are cooked over a wood fire, symbolising the passion of the entire team to deliver something extraordinary. Chef Manish Mehrotra, a household name, has given



India a strong contender in Asia's 50 Best Restaurants with Indian Accent. So, when Rohit Khattar, the media-shy promoter of Indian Accent and other popular restaurants, invited me to a unique pop-up at Indian Accent featuring both Chef Prateek and Chef Manish, I immediately said yes with great excitement. The event was graced by many luminaries from the culinary world, including Vir Sanghvi, Rocky Mohan, Rocky Singh, and Sourish da, with whom I had the pleasure of sharing a table



and discussing each dish as it arrived. While I could detail the 12 exquisite courses we enjoyed, I'll focus on a few standout dishes: **DIRTY TOAST BY CHEF SADHU:** This fluffy fermented wheat bread topped with trout, flavoured with Kashundi and perhaps a



hint of ketchup, was both comforting and gourmet. **GHEE LAMB BY CHEF MEHROTRA:** This dish exemplified the principle that less is more. The best meat from the shank was cooked with just four ingredients—ghee, salt, red chili, and garlic. The result was a flavour explosion, and I

guarantee you won't find better meat. **LEMON CRAB BY CHEF MEHROTRA:** Cooked with Karnataka's byadgi chili, it boasted vibrant color and flavour without being overly spicy, and was served with dried shrimp poppadom for an added crunch. **PAHADI PORK BY CHEF**

SADHU: This dish, served with bakharkhani, white butter, and fermented bamboo shoot pickle, featured a perfect fat-meat ratio and was my overall favourite. The handmade noodles called sundar-kala were also delightful. Each course was expertly paired with wine, and the desserts, such as the classic Kashmiri shufta served like a pinwheel paneer, were equally delicious. Unfortunately, the pop-up is already over. It was priced at Rs. 9800 per person for both vegetarian and non-vegetarian offerings. The food was so exceptional that I am already planning a visit to Naar to enjoy a meal in its serene environment.



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

A DAZZLING DEBUT IN THE WORLD OF KUCHIPUDI

Aadya Gupta's breathtaking Kuchipudi debut, Rangapravesham, showcased her years of dedication and passion. Guided by the esteemed Drs. Raja Radha Reddy and Guru Kaushalya Reddy, Aadya's performance beautifully highlighted her mastery of the classical art form, illustrating her journey from student to accomplished dancer, writes **SAKSHI PRIYA**

As one steps into Kamani Auditorium, they are immediately transported into the heart of a spellbinding Kuchipudi recital - Rangapravesham. This cherished milestone, marking a dancer's formal debut, was brilliantly embodied by Aadya Gupta. Under the esteemed guidance of Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri awardees Drs. Raja Radha Reddy and Guru Kaushalya

Reddy, Aadya's performance was a radiant showcase of her dedication and passion. Her recital not only highlighted years of rigorous training but also celebrated her remarkable journey from an earnest student to a consummate performer. The evening was more than just a performance; it was a celebration of art and tradition that captivated everyone present. The audience's presence in the hall was a tribute to the enduring

appreciation for Kuchipudi, as people from all age groups came together to admire the rich heritage of this classical dance form. The non-stop applause and standing ovation from the audience, spanning from children to elders, underscored the universal appeal and excellence of Aadya's performance. This enthusiastic response highlighted not only her individual talent but also the remarkable mentorship of her Gurus.

The evening's celebration was enhanced by a meticulous attention to detail in every aspect of the performance. The light design added a captivating depth to the visual experience, enhancing the emotional impact of the dance. The costumes and makeup, elegant and alluring, played a crucial role in bringing the traditional essence of Kuchipudi to life, ensuring that each movement was complemented by its visual presentation. A particularly magical aspect of the performance was the live orchestra, whose contribution was essential to the recital's success. The musicians created a soothing and heavenly auditory experience, particularly in the Raga Ragamaalika, which accompanied the piece "Chhaap Tilak Sab Cheeni." The harmonious balance and deeply devotional quality of the music elevated Aadya's performance, creating a rich, immersive experience that resonated deeply with the audience. The symbiotic relationship between the dancer and the musicians underscored the true essence of classical performance, highlighting the integral role of live music in enhancing the beauty and emotional depth of the dance. The program featured a range of pieces that demonstrated Aadya's mastery over Kuchipudi's expressive depth and technical brilliance. She began with "Shree Venkateshwara Stothram," a devotional piece that set a serene tone for

the evening. This was followed by "Jathikattu" in Raag Maand and Taal Khanda Chapu, a dynamic dance that showcased her precision and rhythmic mastery. One of the evening's highlights was "Bhamakalapam," a narrative dance that vividly portrayed Satyabhama's intense love for Krishna. Aadya's nuanced performance captured the emotional complexity of the character, showcasing her ability to convey deep emotions through her dance. Her rendition of "Chhaap Tilak Sab Cheeni," a poem by the 14th-century Sufi mystic Amir Khusro, was another standout, blending romantic and devotional themes in a mesmerizing performance. The recital concluded with "Tarangam," a traditional Kuchipudi piece celebrating Lord Krishna's childhood stories. Aadya's skillful execution of intricate footwork on a brass plate was a breathtaking display of her virtuosity and command over the dance form. Drs. Raja and Radha Reddy, along with Kaushalya Reddy, have played a pivotal role in promoting Kuchipudi globally. Their unique choreographic style and ability to blend tradition with modern sensibilities have garnered them numerous accolades. Natya Tarangini,

founded in 1976, stands as a testament to their dedication and vision, nurturing countless dancers over the years. Aadya's journey, shaped by the disciplined and compassionate guidance of her Gurus, reflects the transformative power of Kuchipudi. The institute's focus on technical precision and emotional depth has enabled her to perform on prestigious platforms across India. This debut marks not just an achievement but a new beginning for Aadya, promising greater heights in her dance journey. Aadya Gupta's Rangapravesham was a radiant celebration of her talent and dedication. The performance, accentuated by beautiful lighting, elegant costumes and a supportive audience, was a seamless blend of technical brilliance and emotional depth. The live orchestra's contribution added a magical dimension, making the evening an immersive experience that beautifully highlighted the essence of Kuchipudi. The overwhelming appreciation from attendees, coupled with the meticulous execution of every element of the recital, left a lasting impression. With the unwavering support of her family, friends and mentors, Aadya is poised to achieve even greater success in her future endeavors.



A Celebration of Connection

M-tastic's inaugural Mother & Kids Exhibition offers a perfect blend of quality shopping and interactive fun. This vibrant event celebrates the special bond between mothers and children, featuring curated products and engaging activities that create unforgettable family moments, says **TEAM AGENDA**



In a world where family moments meet unforgettable experiences, M-tastic's inaugural Mother & Kids Exhibition has set a new benchmark for joy and connection. This enchanting event celebrates the special bond between mothers and their children, blending quality shopping, imaginative play and creative activities into a magical experience for families. Founded by Suryashi Juneja and Surbhi Sachdeva, the exhibition reflects their combined expertise and passion. Suryashi, a seasoned chartered accountant with a background in logistics, and Surbhi, who holds dual MBAs and extensive corporate experience, have crafted an event dedicated to enhancing family life. Their goal is to bridge the gap between emerging homegrown brands and discerning parents, providing a premier platform for quality brands and enthusiastic parents to connect and discover. The exhibition features a curated selection of products catering to every child's needs. Visitors are greeted with chic clothing, imaginative toys, innovative educational tools and stylish accessories. Highlights include the Norah Kids Collection and PNK by

Isha Arora, which offer adorable pink dresses capturing the essence of childhood wonder. Tiny COCO adds to the excitement with its chic finds for little minds, appealing to both children and their parents. Beyond shopping, the event is a celebration of creativity and fun. Children can participate in art workshops, science experiments, dynamic STEM projects and cupcake decorating. Face painting, gel nail art and a dedicated play area provide endless entertainment, while older kids enjoy exciting games. The creative free art corner stands out, allowing children to express their artistic talents and share special moments with their families. Seeing their faces light up with joy and concentration highlights the simple yet profound pleasures of childhood. A standout feature is the face painting, adding a special touch of joy to the event. Children and mothers are thrilled to see their favourite stars and characters come to life with vibrant designs. A particularly heartwarming sight was a little girl with a doll painted on her face in sparkling glitter, capturing the fun and creativity that define the exhibition. The event also includes free nail art by the talented Vaishali

Nagpal. Her decision to offer this service at no charge underscores the significance of such exhibitions in providing small businesses with a valuable platform. Vaishali's work adds glamour to the day and highlights how events like M-tastics play a crucial role in supporting the visibility and growth of emerging brands. This commitment enriches the experience for all attendees. Another highlight is the variety of stalls. Rakhi stands by a mother-daughter duo buzzing with activity as children eagerly choose their favourite designs, reflecting the creativity and personal touch of the event. The Ritwik Collection, featuring handmade tote bags and file folders crafted by a mother-son duo, exemplifies collaborative creativity and practical products from small businesses. M-tastic's dedication to a holistic experience is evident in its food offerings. Health-conscious parents will appreciate the homemade bakery items and granola bites from Pinks & Grumps, crafted without preservatives. Sanchita's Gourmet Medleys provides a selection of additive-free snacks, including Nutri Hexas cheese basil crackers and Millet Murukku. This focus on wholesome, artisanal products underscores the organizer's commitment to creating a nurturing environment for families. In essence, M-tastic's Mother & Kids Exhibition resonates with laughter, joy and discovery. It has set a new standard for family-centric celebrations and illuminated the beauty of shared experiences. Families leave with hands full of delightful finds and hearts brimming with cherished memories, experiencing a renewed sense of wonder and connection. M-tastic's dedication to thoughtful curation and the joy of family moments ensures that this exhibition will be remembered as a radiant chapter in the story of family celebrations.

Discover the Depths of Abstraction

Tejinder Kanda's latest exhibition is a vivid exploration of the human psyche, inviting viewers to delve into the realm of self-discovery through a mesmerising display of abstract artistry

BY **TEAM AGENDA**

Tejinder Kanda's latest exhibition, "In-Within," at the Shridharani Art Gallery, is a profound exploration of the human psyche through abstract art. Kanda, a celebrated contemporary artist known for his evocative and thought-provoking pieces, continues to push the boundaries of abstraction with this new series. The exhibition features 32 artworks, each painted with acrylic on canvas, offering viewers an opportunity to engage with art that is both visually stunning and deeply introspective. Kanda's work in this exhibition showcases a mastery of abstract techniques, utilising impasto methods and a vibrant palette to create canvases that evoke a powerful emotional response. The use of impasto techniques adds a tactile dimension to his work, inviting viewers to experience the paintings not just visually, but almost physically. This adds depth and complexity, drawing the audience into the layered and textured world Kanda creates. The swirling strokes and tonal gradations are reminiscent of the Abstract Expressionist movement, echoing the work of artists like Jackson Pollock and Mark Rothko. However, Kanda's approach is distinct in its exploration of the "unidentified and unknown," pushing beyond the traditional confines of abstraction. Kanda's versatility as an artist is evident in his wide range of influences and mediums. While this exhibition focuses on acrylic paintings, Kanda's artistic practice extends to vibrant silk-screen prints and ceramics, showcasing his ability to adapt and explore various forms of artistic expression. This diversity is a monument to Kanda's commitment to exploring the creative process in its many facets, providing a richer context for understanding his work. It also speaks to his broader artistic philosophy that art is not confined to a single medium or style, but is a continually evolving dialogue between artist, material,



Photos: Pankaj Kumar

and audience. The palette in "In-Within" is notably varied, ranging from earthy tones of reds and browns to cool blues, purples and greens. This wide spectrum of color not only reflects Kanda's skillful use of color theory but also the emotional depth of his work. He also incorporates pinks, pastels and yellows, which are traditionally seen as more feminine colors. However, Kanda employs them with a vigorous application and powerful strokes that inject a masculine energy into his paintings, subverting traditional color associations.

This interplay of color and technique creates a dynamic tension in the artwork, allowing viewers to experience a range of emotions from calmness and contentment to intensity and excitement. One of the most compelling aspects of Kanda's work is his ability to capture the passage of time and emotion. The fluid application of watered-down acrylics allows him to layer colors in a way that reflects his emotions and thoughts at the moment of creation. This technique gives his work a sense of immediacy and authenticity, inviting viewers to

connect with the artist's emotional journey. It's as if each painting captures a fleeting moment in Kanda's personal exploration of his own psyche, offering a glimpse into his inner world. The exhibition is curated by Georgina Maddox, who highlights the transformative power of abstraction in Kanda's work. Maddox emphasises how abstraction goes beyond the physical realm, allowing viewers to connect with the intangible essence of the world. In this regard, Kanda's work invites the audience to engage in a shared journey of self-discovery. His art dissolves the boundaries between the physical and the metaphysical, revealing the true essence of the human experience. In "In-Within," Tejinder Kanda offers more than just an art exhibition; he provides a profound and introspective experience that invites viewers to look beyond the surface and engage with the deeper layers of meaning and emotion embedded in his work. This series represents a significant milestone in Kanda's artistic journey, as he delves into the depths of his psyche, translating his internal exploration into a visually stunning and emotive body of work. The exhibition is a tribute to Kanda's skill and creativity, offering a compelling exploration of the human condition that is both intimate and universal. "In-Within" offers a unique opportunity to experience the transformative power of abstract art in a profoundly personal and meaningful way.



YOUR WEEK AHEAD

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week, you may sense a feeling of constraint or restriction in your enthusiasm and energy. External influences might be causing you to perceive barriers that don't actually exist. It's advisable to approach situations with care and thoughtful planning. Stay alert to any misleading situations and steer clear of unneeded risks. Employ your sharp intellect and adaptability to tackle challenges effectively. Remember, obstacles are just temporary hurdles. This period calls for using your inherent resourcefulness and flexibility to navigate through any difficulties and liberate yourself from any self-imposed limitations. Focus on being proactive yet thoughtful to accomplish your objectives during this time. Embrace patience; it will be your ally in turning challenges into stepping stones for success.

Lucky number 2 | Lucky colour Coral
Lucky day Monday

LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week, your creative energies and nurturing spirit are heightened, making it an ideal time for artistic projects and deepening relationships. Express your true self and foster meaningful connections with those close to you. This period brings a surge of abundance and creativity, highlighting growth in both personal and professional spheres. Embrace your innate ability to lead with kindness and generosity. This is a moment to appreciate your accomplishments and take pride in what you have created. Prioritize self-care and engage in activities that enhance your well-being. This season in your life is marked by a significant boost in confidence and energy, empowering you to excel in various pursuits and make a positive impact.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Saffron
Lucky day Sunday

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, you may encounter challenges or unexpected setbacks. The universe is encouraging you to stay strong and keep going. When facing obstacles, draw on your innate ability to adapt and find creative solutions. This period calls for courage and a readiness to explore new territories. Embrace these tests as opportunities to strengthen your resolve and assert your convictions. Your natural curiosity and eagerness to learn will guide you through any difficulties. Let this time be a lesson in growth and discovery, as you harness your inner strength to navigate through any adversities that come your way. Embrace this journey with an open heart and mind, ready to learn from each experience.

Lucky number 20 | Lucky colour Green
Lucky day Thursday

TAURUS April 20-May 20

This week brings a strong focus on self-reflection. While reminiscing about the past can offer valuable insights, it's crucial not to get lost in thoughts of what might have been. You might find yourself feeling somewhat disconnected or unsatisfied with where you are right now. It's essential to take this time to evaluate your ambitions and desires, as there's possibly a deep-seated yearning for more meaningful experiences. Avoid focusing too much on perceived deficiencies, which can obscure potential avenues for personal development and appreciation. Instead, stay engaged with the present. Finding joy in your current situation and exploring creative pursuits or rekindling connections with close ones could spark fresh motivation and emotional enrichment. Be open to new possibilities that may emerge, inviting transformative experiences into your life.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Denim Blue
Lucky day Wednesday

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week presents a challenge to your meticulous planning and dedication. You may face unexpected delays or setbacks that test your ability to stay on track. Despite these obstacles, it's crucial to maintain your focus and adjust your strategies accordingly. You might find yourself managing multiple tasks and feeling overwhelmed by responsibilities. To prevent burnout, prioritize your workload and consider delegating tasks where possible. Patience and persistence are essential as you navigate this period. Setting achievable goals and pacing yourself will help conserve your energy. Don't hesitate to seek support from colleagues or friends, as collaborative efforts can significantly ease your burden. Staying organized and communicating effectively will be key in overcoming these challenges.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Pink
Lucky day Saturday

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week, your drive for achievement is exceptionally strong. You'll find yourself encouraged to take decisive steps toward your objectives, infused with an energy and zeal that will fuel your pursuits. This is an excellent time to embrace new opportunities and invest your efforts in inventive projects. The groundwork you lay now promises to yield fruitful outcomes. Trust your intuition and make courageous moves to turn your aspirations into reality. Focus on meticulous planning and maintaining self-discipline; these will be your keys to enduring success in your ventures. Stay committed, and watch as your efforts gradually lead to significant achievements. Remember, perseverance is essential, as the most rewarding accomplishments often require sustained effort.

Lucky number 23 | Lucky colour Lemon
Lucky day Tuesday

GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week calls for careful decision-making as you might find yourself drawn toward quick fixes or unhelpful attachments. The current cosmic setup might challenge your resistance to immediate pleasures, emphasizing the importance of choices that support your future aspirations. Resist the urge to fall into old habits or behaviors that obstruct your progress. It's crucial to address any deep-seated fears or restrictive beliefs that may be limiting your growth. Avoid excessive indulgence in physical comforts or negative thinking. Try to channel this energy to productive projects and chores. Communication is also key this week; speak thoughtfully and aim for clear, effective exchanges to navigate through potentially intense discussions.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Lilac
Lucky day Tuesday

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you may encounter some challenging interactions that could test your diplomatic abilities. It's a time when differing views might surface, prompting the need for thoughtful negotiation and tactful communication. To keep the peace and ensure all parties feel valued, it's essential to listen actively and propose solutions that accommodate diverse viewpoints. Such an approach not only fosters mutual respect but also enhances your ability to navigate through disagreements without compromising the respect between all involved. Embrace these moments as opportunities for growth, allowing you to refine your skills in mediating and creating cohesive environments. This approach will help maintain a sense of balance and respect in all your interactions.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Yellow
Lucky day Wednesday

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

This week focuses on cultivating tranquility and a sense of security. It's an excellent time to foster your personal connections and ensure your living space is a haven of comfort. Engage closely with your friends and family, showing gratitude and relishing quiet, serene moments together. You might find that your support network is particularly uplifting now, contributing to a nurturing environment. Take a moment to recognize the positive aspects of your life and commemorate your accomplishments with those close to you. This period is ideal for reinforcing relationships and creating cherished memories. Trust your inner feelings and emotional perceptions to guide you in your social exchanges, helping you to strengthen your bonds with important people in your life.

Lucky number 19 | Lucky colour Red
Lucky day Friday

CANCER June 21-July 22

This week, your intuitive senses are exceptionally acute. Embrace your profound emotional insight and heightened sense of justice. Current influences favor straightforward communication and assertive actions. It's a prime moment to advocate for your values and defend your positions. You'll find that clarity comes easily now, enhancing your ability to navigate complex issues and generate innovative solutions. Your knack for dispelling ambiguity and viewing situations from new angles is amplified. Take this chance to speak up boldly and share your thoughts with conviction. As you navigate through the week, rely on your inner guidance to ensure your choices resonate with your core emotional desires. Your inner wisdom will lead you towards positive life.

Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Emerald Green
Lucky day Friday

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week is centered on deep personal reflection and embracing solitude. Current celestial alignments prompt a journey into your own feelings, urging you to connect deeply with your inner guidance. Dedicate moments for personal introspection, perhaps through journaling, as this process will help refine your clarity and vision. Trust your internal compass to guide you through any uncertainties or decisions that arise. Prioritize self-care and take some time to think about your goals. Give yourself the space to recharge and connect with your true desires. Use this period as a chance for meaningful self-discovery. This period is marked by significant personal transformation, encouraging you to welcome change and let go of any old patterns or beliefs that hinder your progress.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Gold
Lucky day Saturday

PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week focuses on finding peace and stability. Planetary influences encourage nurturing your relationships and creating a sense of comfort at home. Connect with loved ones, express appreciation, and enjoy moments of tranquility. You may find yourself surrounded by supportive friends or family, fostering a positive and nurturing atmosphere. Take time to appreciate the blessings in your life and celebrate achievements with those close to you. It's a favorable period for strengthening bonds and creating lasting memories. Trust your intuition and emotional insights to navigate social interactions and deepen connections with those who matter most. This is an ideal time to focus on building harmonious relationships and cherishing the warmth and support of your loved ones.

Lucky number 22 | Lucky colour Teal
Lucky day Monday

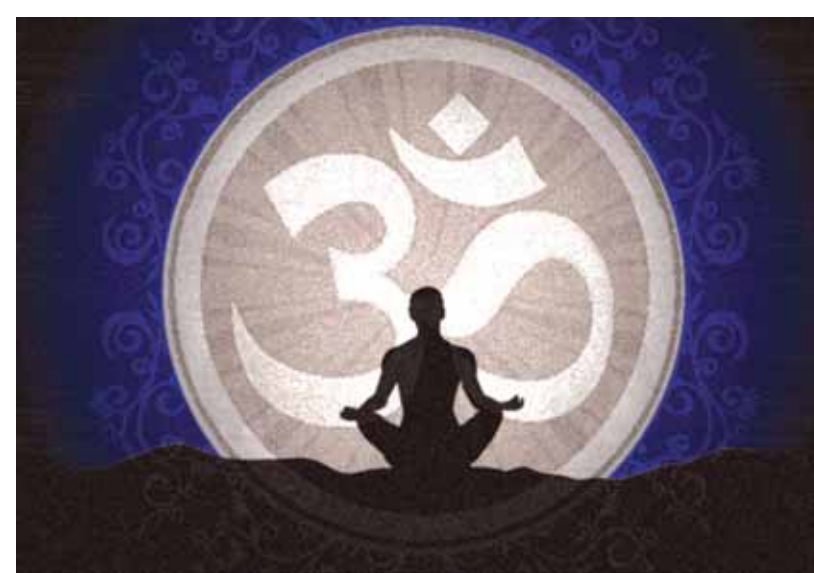
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ASTROTURF
 BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Three dimensions of 'Om?'

“Om?” is supposedly indivisible but said to have in its womb three modes of Shakti - Sata, Rajasa, and Tamasa, and so termed as Shakti-trinity. Each of them is marked with individual specific functional aspects of creation process. They are also identified with attributes manifested in human beings. It doesn't mean that Om split into three different modes. Om sound corresponds to causal stress arising at primordial source, which when gravitated, three different energy variants inherent with the primordial source got excited. The word Shakti need not be mistaken as being synonymous with energy as we understand in modern sense. Here, it is worth adding that mechanically excited energy does not have a drive of its own. It will move the way it gets directed. Shakti on the contrary, is believed to be a self-intelligent force, which involuntarily subscribes to self-evolved design parameters underlying the making of this world. It is in this sense that Shakti is perceived as self-conscious enough to follow nature driven design parameters. Had it not been true, a dynamic world would not

have spontaneously come into being, which has been doing its rounds in an orderly fashion since time immemorial, and with absolute precision. And all through its run, the forces in play remain in perfect harmony and balance. We call Sata, Rajasa, and Tamasa, as three modes of Shakti. They are marked with three functional aspects of the world process. The three, working in unison, excited a creation chain that progressively evolved into the manifest plural world. Self-intelligent that they supposedly are, led them get drawn towards each other to carry forward the creation chain. It is pertinent to note here that though the three are believed to be marked with varying attributes, they do not have any relevance in isolation. They carry meaning only when acting in support of each other as a collective organism to carry forward the creation chain. Though at different stages of evolutionary chain, the attribute of one or the other may be prominently in evidence, but simultaneously the other two would be playing a supportive role from the background. As per the second law of



thermodynamics, once there is entropy (disorder), it multiplies. So, following causal stress (disorder) at the primal-source, energy trinity got excited. That followed random mutation of the three modes of energy, which led to emergence of voluminous streams of

differentiated energies. Evolved thus, step-by-step, the corporeal world of forms and names together with all dynamic mechanisms’ operative in between. And since matter and energy are inter-convertible, so has the world with form and name come out of forces

in play in the world process. Here, it may not be out of place to draw a parallel between emergence of three Shakti variants and the nuclear fission process. Following nuclear fission, each nuclei of a radioactive substance splits into three and then multiply in geometric progression. It sounds reason, if we hypothesize that the Big-Bag event would be nothing short of nuclear reaction type of an event. Even the issuance of energies with a roaring Hum? sound as described in Indian scriptures should also fall in the same category. Inferential logic would suggest that it would be quite fair to hypothesize the Primal-Source as the self-intelligent ‘Energy-Whole’. The issuance of the in-laid constituents set into motion the creation chain, which finally culminated in the manifest plural world. Premise on which the shakti-trinity stand. Out of the above three Shakti variants, Sata (the eternal reality) supposedly carries in its womb the seeds of creation – the radical potential to manifest into a world with form and name. Rajasa is said to be the activating force, which

stirs up the seeds of creation. Tamasa, with its inherent sense of inertia has the capacity to bind whatever is subtle within the limitation of form. On this strength, it holds on what Rajasa stirred up, and then objectifies them into form-existence with name. It is something like forces of two opposite polarities such as male and female principles converging for the sake of creation. Sata, further lends support to provide temporary stability to the objectified form-existence, which could be captured by our cognitive instruments. Here again, the convergence of the three Shakti variants, provides the ground necessary for us to have a feel of the presence of “The fundamental element of Consciousness” in the form of life sparks available to all dynamic existences. The Shakti variants, thus, serve as three aspects of creative intelligences of nature, vital to carry forward the world process.

The issue continues.....

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