



OPINION 6 PANDEMONIUM IN PARLIAMENT

WORLD 8 UK ELECTION SET TO DELIVER MORE DIVERSE PARLIAMENT

MONEY 10 INDIA'S SERVICES SECTOR GROWTH RISES IN JUNE: PMI

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## Modi silences critics on Manipur



Prime Minister Narendra Modi replies to the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address in the Rajya Sabha during ongoing Parliament session, in New Delhi, on Wednesday

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday silenced his critics on the Opposition benches in the Rajya Sabha by informing the House that violence in Manipur is continuously declining, schools have reopened in most parts of the State, and efforts are being made to ensure return of complete peace.

President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint sitting of Parliament, the Prime Minister said more than 500 people have been arrested and over 11,000 FIRs registered in Manipur. Modi said the Centre is working with the State Government and others to restore normalcy in the State. Addressing Rajya Sabha members, Modi said Manipur is also grappling with floods, prompting the Centre to dispatch two teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) to the flood-

hit State. Modi also promised action in the NEET paper leak case, and listed out achievements of his past two terms and priorities for the third. The Prime Minister spoke at length on the alleged irregularities in the conduct of competitive exams, and asserted that tough action will be taken against those involved in paper leaks. "We wanted there should be no politics on a sensitive issue like paper leak, but the Opposition is used to it. I assure the youth of India that

action is being taken to ensure that those who play with the future of students are handed down strict punishment," he said. On Manipur, Modi said Union Home Minister Amit Shah himself led from the front the efforts for peace by being in Manipur.

The Prime Minister pointed out that the deeply rooted social conflict in Manipur has a long history, leading to the imposition of President's rule 10 times since Independence. He also mentioned the five-year-long social conflict in Manipur from 1993 onwards. Modi emphasised that there is a need to handle the situation with wisdom and patience. He invited all the like-minded people to help him in his efforts to ensure normalcy and peace in Manipur. The Prime Minister has been facing the wrath of Opposition led by Congress which has charged that Modi is yet to speak on the floor of Parliament on the burning issue of Manipur violence and had again given a miss to the subject in his more than two-hour long speech in the Lok Sabha a day earlier. The Opposition also alleged that the Prime Minister did not address the issue of paper leaks about which Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had written to the Prime Minister requesting a discussion on NEET and NET paper leaks.



Police personnel keep vigil outside a hospital during Uttar Pradesh CM Yogi Adityanath's visit to meet the injured victims a day after the stampede that occurred during a 'satsang' (religious congregation), in Hathras district, on Wednesday

## Rush for darshan led to Hathras stampede

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chaos caused after Narayan Sakaar Hari's followers, who tried to reach near his vehicle to seek "darshan", were pushed by the godman's security and a "slippery slope" resulted in the stampede that killed 121 people in Hathras, a preliminary report of the SDM said. Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday announced a judicial probe into the tragedy while not ruling out the possibility of a "conspiracy" behind the stampede. Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) Sikandra Rao submitted the preliminary report on the stampede to the district magistrate (DM). The SDM, who gave permission for the "satsang" (religious congregation), was also present at the venue when the incident occurred, according to the report. "A crowd of more than 2 lakh people was present in the satsang pandal. Shri Narayan Sakaar Hari (Bhole Baba) reached the satsang pandal at

about 12.30 pm and the program went on for 1 hour. "After this, at about 1.40 pm, Narayan Sakaar Hari (Bhole Baba) came out of the pandal to go towards Etah on National Highway-91," the preliminary report said, adding that when the godman was leaving the venue, his followers started running towards him for a 'darshan' and collect soil from around his feet. "Satsangi women/men/children etc. Started applying the dust of Baba's feet on their foreheads (while trying) to get his darshan, touch his feet and take his blessings," reads the report dated July 2. The situation worsened when more people waiting on the divider of the road ahead began running towards his vehicle, it said. "A large number of people were already standing on the dividers in the middle and on the sides of GT road, who started jumping from the dividers and started running towards Baba's vehicle to get his darshan.

## Out on bail, Hemant Soren to become Jharkhand CM again

RAJESH KUMAR ■ RANCHI/NEW DELHI

In a major development, minutes after Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren resigned as the State's Chief Minister barely 152 days after taking oath, his predecessor and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's chief, Hemant Soren who is out on bail in the money-laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) staked claim to form the next Government which he relinquished a few months ago before his arrest by the probe agency.

This is for the third time that Hemant will become the Chief Minister of Jharkhand. He will be the 13th Chief Minister of the State, which was carved out of Bihar on November 15, 2000. "A few days ago, I was made the Chief Minister and I got the responsibility of the State. After Hemant Soren was back, our alliance took this decision and we chose Hemant Soren as our leader. I have resigned as per the decision of the JMM-led alliance. Our alliance is strong. All know what had happened with Hemant Soren... I was given the responsibility by the coalition partners. Now, the alliance has decided in favour of Hemant Soren", Champai said after coming out of Raj Bhawan.



A request was also submitted to Governor C P Radhakrishnan by Hemant to form the Government. After meeting with the Governor, Hemant told the media that all formalities to form the Government are complete.

## Kuki ailing in Manipur jail gets Supreme Court's healing touch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court Wednesday took a strong note of an undertrial prisoner lodged in a Manipur jail not being taken to a hospital for treatment just because he belonged to the minority 'Kuki' community, saying it does not "trust the State". A bench of Justices JB Pardiwala and Ujjal Bhuyan made some strong observations against the State while hearing a plea filed by Lunkhongam Haokip that he was suffering from piles and tuberculosis and was not taken to hospital by jail officials despite having severe backache. "We do not trust the State...The accused was not taken to hospital because he is from the Kuki community. So sad! We direct him to be examined now. If the medical report reveals something serious, we will take you to task," the bench said. The counsel for Haokip claimed the jail officials did not pay heed to persistent requests for medical help. The bench perused an order of the Manipur High Court and found that the



undertrial prisoner was not taken to hospital since he was from Kuki community and "shifting him to a hospital will be hazardous taking into account the law and order situation". Manipur has been in the grip of an ethnic conflict between the minority Kuki and majority Meitei communities. The bench directed the jail superintendent and the State authorities "to make necessary arrangements for his transportation to the Gauhati Medical College and get him examined therein. The medical exam shall be as regards piles, TB, tonsillitis, abdominal pain as well as problems in lower lumbar spine".

It sought a detailed medical report on or before July 15 and asked the State to bear all the expenses including the treatment cost. Manipur descended into chaos and violence in May last year over a high court order directing the State Government to consider including the non-tribal Meitei community in the list of Scheduled Tribes. More than 170 people have been killed and several hundred others injured since ethnic violence first broke out in the state on May 3 last year when a "Tribal Solidarity March" was organised in hill districts to protest against the majority Meitei community's demand for ST status.

## Seventh bridge collapse in 15 days alarms Bihar

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

Even as a high-level panel of the Bihar Government has launched a probe into the recent spate of bridge collapses across the State, yet another incident on Wednesday involving a bridge over the Gandak river in Siwan district of the State has raised serious concern about the quality of infrastructure and public safety.

The latest bridge collapse marks the seventh such incident in a span of just 15 days in the State and second in Siwan district in the last 11 days.

Mercifully, however, despite the severity of these collapses, there have been no casualties thus far. With the State's rivers swelling due to continuous heavy rain, the possibility of more such incidents occurring in the coming days cannot be discounted, members of the Bihar Engineering Services Association (BESA) have warned.

The troubling series of incidents began on June 19 with the collapse of an under-construction bridge in Araria, followed by collapses in Siwan on June 22, East Champaran on June 23, and Kishanganj on June 24. The collapse of the bridge over the Gandaki river in Deoria Block in Siwan district on



A view of the collapsed bridge amid heavy rain in Bihar's Siwan district on Wednesday

Wednesday has severed essential connections between several villages and Maharaiganj, leaving the locals at the receiving end. Deputy Development Commissioner Mukesh Kumar said the exact cause is under investigation. Senior officials from the block have already reached the site, he added. "A portion of a bridge in Deoria block collapsed this morning. The exact cause is being investigated," he added. "The incident took place around 5 am. As per initial information, the bridge was constructed in 1982-83. Repair work was going on the bridge for the last few days,"

Kumar added. Villagers suggested that heavy rainfall over the preceding days may have contributed to the collapse, with a surge in Gandaki river potentially weakening the bridge's structure. This incident follows closely on the heels of another bridge collapse in the district just 11 days ago. On June 22, a portion of a bridge collapsed in Darouanda area, prompting the Bihar Government to set up a high-level committee to investigate these occurrences. The cave-in was also reported from the Bheja police station area of Madhubani district, situated in the State's northern extreme, along the borders

with Nepal. The bridge that collapsed in Bihar's Thakurganj was built in 2007-08, and had been rendered unusable after it developed a crack and sank by a foot. Similarly, a bridge in Thakurganj block succumbed to rising water levels in the Bund River following heavy rains, causing it to sink by a foot and crack, rendering it too dangerous for use. The bridge, located in Khoshi Dangi village of Patharia panchayat, was constructed in 2007-2008 with funds from the MP budget of the then MP Md Tasleemuddin of Thakurganj and was connecting several

panchayats. This incident follows the collapse of an under-construction bridge in the Madhubani region on June 28 which was being built by the Rural Works Department of the Bihar government at a cost of ₹3 crore since 2021.

Following the collapses, the blame game has already begun, intensifying concerns about accountability and oversight in Bihar's infrastructure management. Rajya Sabha Leader of Opposition and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge took a swipe at the bridge cave-in in the State while Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi smelled a possible conspiracy behind the incidents, implying a deliberate attempt to defame the BJP-led State Government. "Why has the State suddenly started witnessing incidents of bridge collapse? Why is it happening after the Lok Sabha polls? Why were such incidents not taking place a month before? I suspect some conspiracy behind it. Authorities concerned must look into this aspect," Manjhi said. He also acknowledged the use of sub-standard materials by contractors as a contributing factor and assured that the State Government is taking action against those responsible.

## Twitters of Koo set to fall silent

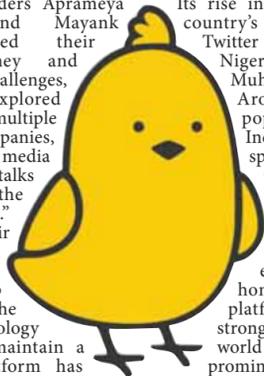
ASAD ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian dream of having an alternative to Twitter (now X) has been shattered as the 'desi' social media platform launched in 2020 with much fanfare, and with many top Indian politicians and Government departments joining in, is to shut down. The world came to know about the yellow bird, Koo, stopping to chirp when its co-founders penned a touching note on Wednesday about the tough decision to bid adieu. The disheartening news has been received with anguish by many Koo users. Die-hard Koo fan Vinit Goenka, former Governing Council Member of CRIS, Ministry of Railways, is upset with the news. "This shutdown will be a significant setback for those who believe in the democratic values of social media, as it highlights the unending

dominance of Western media and their colonisation of the social media app space," he said. In an emotion-filled post on LinkedIn, co-founders Aprameya Radhakrishna and Mayank Bidawatka shared their frustrating journey and insurmountable challenges, writing, "We explored partnerships with multiple larger internet companies, conglomerates, and media houses, but these talks didn't yield the outcome we desired." They expressed their regret, saying, "While we would have loved to keep the app running, the high cost of technology and services to maintain a social media platform has forced us to take this tough

decision." Founded in India, Koo soared to great heights, spreading its wings to Kenya and Brazil while in its prime. Its rise in Kenya followed the country's indefinite ban on Twitter for deleting a tweet by Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari. Around 2021, Koo's popularity surged in India amid a contentious spat between the Indian Government and Twitter. This conflict prompted calls to expand the ecosystem of homegrown digital platforms, echoing strongly across the virtual world and propelling Koo to prominence. For a while, it seemed that this homegrown

platform would significantly challenge and perhaps even surpass Twitter's popularity in India. However, this anticipated turn of event never came to pass as Twitter managed to smoothen its relationship with the Government. Koo experienced a rollercoaster ride in its short existence. At its peak, this indigenous platform boasted around 2.1 million daily active users, approximately 10 million monthly active users, and over 9,000 VIPs, including some of the most prominent personalities from various fields. "We were just months away from beating Twitter in India in 2022 and could have doubled down on that short-term goal with capital behind us," they said. "Unfortunately for us, the mood of the market and the fund crunch got the better of us," the note mentioned as the founders signed off.



## Sensex breaches 80,000 mark for first time

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark BSE Sensex breached the historic 80,000 level intraday for the first time while Nifty raced more than 162 points to close at a fresh lifetime high on Wednesday following heavy buying in banking and FMCG shares amid firm global market trends. The 30-share Sensex hit the historic 80,000 mark for the first time earlier in the day. It surged 632.85 points or 0.79 per cent to a record intraday high of 80,074.30. The index later closed near the 80,000 level at 79,986.80, up by 545.35 points or 0.69 per cent over the last close. As



many as 24 Sensex shares closed with gains and six declined. The BSE Sensex breached the 78,000 level on June 25 and 79,000 for the first time on June 27. The Nifty climbed 162.65 points or 0.67 per cent to end at an all-time high of 24,286.50. During the day, it zoomed 183.4 points or 0.76 per cent to hit a fresh intraday record peak of 24,307.25. As many as 40 Nifty shares advanced, nine declined and one closed unchanged. Among the Sensex pack, Adani Ports rose the most by 2.49 per cent.

Number of security guards at GDMC's emergency ward raised from 2 to 5

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

To ensure safety of both the hospital staffers and patients, the Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) has raised the presence of security guards at the emergency ward.

sitating the recent initiative to deploy more security personnel to safeguard the well-being of all patients and staffers.

He further informed that earlier there were only two security guards assigned to the task of overseeing the patients visiting the emergency ward.

He underscored the diverse range of patients, including those with alcohol-related issues and disruptive behaviour, visiting the ward, neces-

Bisht said that the hiked presence of security guards has significantly improved

crowd management in the emergency ward.

To recall, the recent incident of two persons brandishing a firearm at a doctor in the emergency ward prompted many post-graduate doctors at the hospital to demand enhanced security measures, especially in the emergency ward.

Taking note of the concern, the medical superintendent at GDMC, Dr Anurag Aggarwal had assured that the number of security guards in the hospital premises, particularly at the emergency ward, would be raised. He had also instructed the security guards to remain all the more vigilant round the clock to prevent recurrence of such incidents.

Rawat directs enhanced functioning of cooperative banks in U'khand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State cooperative minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that the functioning of cooperative banks must be further enhanced while presiding over a review meeting which was recently held with the registrar, cooperative; the chief development officers (CDO); general managers and top bank officials via video conferencing.

During the review meeting, Rawat stressed on the need to launch a rapid recovery campaign focusing on the biggest 20 dues. This targeted approach is aimed at addressing the issue of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and ensuring the financial stability of cooperative banks in the State, he said.

erative banks. Rawat also instructed the CDOs (administration) of every district to focus on revamping these banks in terms of infrastructure and technology to take on more pressure in the coming days. Invoking the Union Cooperative Minister Amit Shah, he said that more and more government accounts should be opened in cooperative banks and for this, CDOs and the bank officers must work diligently.

Lauding 33 per cent reservation for women in the board of directors of cooperative societies and banks as a historic decision of the State government, the minister directed all concerned to publicise this historic step by putting up hoardings in every cooperative

society and cooperative bank branch. Further during the meeting, the general manager of Garhwal Cooperative Bank Sanjay Rawat apprised the cooperative minister of the actions being taken against 20 big NPA defaulters. The bank is going to take possession of the land and property of eight such defaulters, he told the minister.

The general managers of the cooperative banks in Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar told the minister that NPA of Rs 25 crore each has been recovered.

Many other cooperative bank officials also shared information regarding their respective banks' functioning with the cooperative minister.

STF arrest man with smack worth Rs 3.6 crore

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Anti Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) unit of the Uttarakhand Special Task Force (STF) with the local police nabbed a 50-year-old man Gajraj Singh with smack worth Rs 3.6 crore from Doiwala

revealed that he worked as a paint brush maker in Paonta Sahib. He got involved in the drug smuggling business for quick money and had been smuggling smack from Bareilly and Dhampur to his fixed



area in Dehradun late on Tuesday. The accused belongs to Paonta Sahib of Sirmour district in Himachal Pradesh and was arrested with 1.2 kilograms of smack from near Windlass River Valley, Haridwar Road late on Tuesday. Agrawal said that the accused told during interrogation that he had brought the recovered smack from Dhampur in Uttar Pradesh.

agents in Paonta Sahib and Dehradun for the past two years, Agrawal said. The accused also revealed the names of many other drug smugglers and the authorities will act against them soon after making a concrete plan, he added. He also announced a cash reward of Rs 25,000 to the ANTF team.

He revealed that a smuggler from Bareilly usually delivered contraband to him till Dhampur and then Singh used to sell the drugs further through his agents in Paonta Sahib and Dehradun. The accused

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE. The general public is informed that I have changed my name from Arpit (old name) to ARPIT PRATAP SINGH (new name). In future I should be known as Arpit Pratap Singh s/o Rajveer Singh, address: Nigam Road, Central Hope Town, Dehradun, Uttarakhand

UVSP starts application process for board examination 2025

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Vidyalaya Shiksha Parishad (UVSP) has recently started the application process for the high school and intermediate board examinations slated for the year 2025. Informing this, the additional secretary of UVSP, Vinod Simlani said that the registration process for these examinations has begun and would continue until July 31.

pay Rs 600 for the registration process. Similarly, for the intermediate examination, students studying in school must pay Rs 350 whereas privately studying students must pay Rs 700. Additionally, an extra charge of Rs 10 is applicable for each student for both the migration certificate and mark-sheet. He further emphasised that students who do not submit the application forms with the fees by the allotted date will incur an additional charge of Rs 150 by the UVSP. It will be recalled that a total of 6,90,564 high school students and 4,47,596 intermediate students took the examination this year under UVSP. Additionally, in 2024, in Class X, 89.14 per cent of students passed the exam with a passing rate of 85.59 per cent for boys and 92.54 per cent for girls. Similarly, in Class XII, 82.63 per cent of the students passed the exam with a passing percentage of 85.96 per cent for girls and 78.97 per cent for boys.

Maharaj meets CM Yogi, discusses subjects of mutual interest

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State tourism and culture minister Satpal Maharaj met the Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath at the latter's residence on Wednesday and discussed various issues involving the two states with him. Among the subjects that figured in the meeting included road, irrigation, tourism, panchayat and culture. They agreed to take things forward with mutual cooperation between these two states.

Doon players win medals in badminton competition

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The players from Dehradun have bagged medals in the recently held Uttarakhand State Mini Sub Junior Badminton tournament in Bageshwar. The competition comprised two categories: under 11 and under 13. Ashray Agarwal from Negi Pro Academy in Dehradun clinched the gold medal in the Under-13 singles category while Sanyak Bhatt and Shaurya Mehta secured silver medals in the Under-13 doubles category. Mention worthy, Negi Pro Academy Dehradun's players collectively bagged a total of seven medals during the event. Expressing happiness over the achievement, the founders of the academy Manju Negi and Akshat Negi ascribed the success to hard work of the trainers and dedication of the players.

Cricketer Rana brand ambassador for youth- Mahant Devendra Dass

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Shri Guru Ram Rai (SGRR) University's brand ambassador Sneha Rana has received the title of player of the match in the recently held cricket match against the South African team. Rana is currently a member of the national women cricket team. She crushed the SA batting line with her bowling taking all the 10 wickets. Hailing her achievement, the SGRR University's president Mahant Devendra Dass congratulated

Rana, emphasising the importance of promoting the success of women at all levels. He lauded Rana as a role model for youth and the society, an exemplary figure for the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' initiative. "She is also a source of pride for Uttarakhand as well as the nation," he added. The university's faculty members and students conveyed their joy over Rana's accomplishment.

Health dept initiates transportation facility for disabled for weekly camps

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The State Health department has started providing transportation assistance to individuals with disabilities to help them reach the weekly camp designated for them. Informing this, the chief medical officer (CMO), Dr Sanjay Jainsaid on Wednesday that he had asked the district leprosy officer (DLO) to make transportation arrangements for the inmates of the leprosy ashrams to reach the weekly camp organised every Wednesday for the specially abled people. Besides, he had asked the DLO to complete the certificate procedures for them.

Lal Bahadur, Bela Devi, Ram Singh, Sulochana Devi and Rango Devi. Speaking on the initiative, the CMO said that this is meant to guarantee that the leprosy-affected individuals receive the maximum benefits from the government schemes designed for their welfare. "So, we are organising this weekly camp every Wednesday and bringing them to these camps with free transportation to help them reap the benefits from the schemes dished out for them," he added.

Acting on these directives, the departmental vehicles were sent to Shanti Leprosy Ashram, Navjeevan Leprosy Ashram and Rotary Leprosy Ashram in Dehradun to bring the inmates to the camp and then return them to the ashrams they reside in after the certificate procedures were completed. Among those who received disability certificates on this day are Surekha Devi,

Following the beat of his own drum- Mittal's journey from IIT to LA's music scene

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

By the time he graduated in September 2023, Dhruv Mittal's reputation had grown and his teachers' recommendations led to an audition for a faculty position at the Musicians Institute (MI) in Hollywood, which he secured. He recently shared the stage with world-renowned Santoor maestro Rahul Sharma and Tabla virtuoso Ojas Adhiya at The St. Regis in San Francisco. Being stylistically versatile and a proficient sight-reader, he was summoned as the percussionist for the Lineage Performing Arts Center's May '24 production of the Broadway classic "Cabaret".



While growing up he was exposed to music through his father's extensive collection of instruments and records. He started with the congas, moved on to the Tabla and transitioned to Hindustani classical music under Devanand Pathak. His passion for music deepened when he discovered drumming during middle school. Balancing academics with his burgeoning musical interests, Mittal excelled in his studies, securing a spot at IIT Kanpur after cracking the JEE-Advanced in 2016. Despite his academic success, including ranking first in his Materials Science and Engineering department, he realised that his true calling was music. With the support of his parents, he decided to pursue formal music education.

Only spirituality can provide the right guidance to Youth: Acharya Prashant

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The founder of the Prashant Advait foundation and former civil services officer, Acharya Prashant has said that Swami Vivekananda's teachings continue to serve as a major source of inspiration for the younger generation. He emphasized the critical need for today's youth to receive proper guidance through spirituality, much like Vivekananda inspired the youth of his time.

Acharya Prashant said that while spirituality has traditionally been associated with adults and the elderly, the current era has seen a significant rise in spiritual awareness among the youth. "Spirituality is the key to helping individuals navigate through challenging situations. Addressing today's pressing issues requires the active involvement of the younger generation," he said. Acharya Prashant said that youth play a pivotal role in shaping society, reinforcing beliefs and driving energy into meaningful efforts. Thus, it is imperative for everyone to strive to guide them towards a purposeful path, he said.

53rd regional level sports meet concludes in KV ONGC

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The three-day 53rd regional level sports meet concluded at Kendriya Vidyalaya ONGC here on Wednesday. In all, 15 teams representing various KV's participated in the volleyball matches (U-17). KV New Tehri Town clinched

the final match. The five teams participated in the U-14 category matches. The KV Bageshwar won the final match. The principal of KV ONGC Sushil Kumar Dhiman gave the certificates to the winning teams.

DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DEHRADUN

Paras Tower, 2nd Floor, Majra Niranjanpur, Saharanpur Road, Dehradun. DEMAND NOTICE U/S 25 TO 28. Notice Under Sections 25 To 28 Of The Recovery Of Debts Due To Banks And Financial Institutions Act, 1993 And Rule 2 Of Second Schedule To The Income Tax Act, 1961. RC/503/2022. Punjab National Bank. Date: 26.06.2024. Versus M/s Maharaja Flour Mill & Anr. CD No. 1. M/s Maharaja Flour Mill, a Proprietorship concern, having its registered at Village Sahaspur, (Opposite Gas Godown), District Dehradun, Uttarakhand. CD No. 2. Narendra Pal Singh S/O Dharam Pal Singh, R/o Village Sahaspur, District Dehradun, Uttarakhand. This is to notify that as per the Recovery Certificate issued in pursuance of orders passed by the Presiding Officer, DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL DEHRADUN in TA/331/2018 an amount of Rs. 1,20,19,521.00 (Rupees One Crore Twenty Lakhs Nineteen Thousands Five Hundred Twenty One Only) along with pendente-lite and future interest @ 11.00% Simple Interest Yearly w.e.f. 29.02.2016 till realization and costs of Rs. 1,23,000/- (Rupees One lakh Twenty Three Thousands Only) has become due against you (Jointly and severally). 2. Whereas it has been shown to the satisfaction of the undersigned that it is not possible to serve you demand notice in ordinary course, therefore, this notice is given by way of this publication directing you to pay the above sum within 15 days of the publication of this notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the provisions of the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993 and Rules there under. 3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of your assets on or before the next date of hearing. 4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 29.08.2024 at 10.30 a.m. for further proceedings. 5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay. (a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate/execution proceedings. (b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due. Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on: 26.06.2024. Recovery Officer. Debts Recovery Tribunal Dehradun

PUBLIC NOTICE

Registered office: ICICI Bank Towers, Bandra-Kurla Complex, Bandra (East), Mumbai- 400051. Corporate Office: ICICI HFC Tower, JB Nagar, Andheri Kurla Road, Andheri East, Mumbai- 400059. Branch Address: 1st Floor, Ashwin Tower, Model Colony, Near Ranipur Mor, Haridwar-249407. Branch Address: First Floor, Khasra no. 110/1 & 110/2 Mauza Kanwali, R.D Tower, GMS Road, Pargana Kanwali, Dehradun-248001. Branch Address: Showroom no. 301, 3rd floor, Shri Ram Arcade, Old Municipal No. 74, Rajpur Road, Dehradun Pin: 248009. The following borrower/s have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loans facility obtained by them from ICICI Home Finance Company Limited ("ICICI HFC") and the loans have been classified as Non-Performing Assets (NPA). A notice is issued to them under Section 13 (2) of Securitisation and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 on their last known addresses, however it was not served and hence they are hereby notified by way of this public notice.

Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of the Borrower/ Co-Borrower/ Guarantor/ (Loan Account Number)/ Address, Property Address of Secured Asset/ Asset to be Enforced, Date of Notice Sent/ Outstanding as on Date of Notice, NPA Date. Contains 9 entries for various borrowers in Dehradun.

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## Expedite Pindar & Kosi river linking project: CM to Irrigation dept

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has directed the officers of the Irrigation department to expedite all the processes to be done at the State government level for the project of linking Pindar and Kosi rivers. The CM chaired a review meeting of the Irrigation department at the State secretariat on Wednesday. In the meeting the CM directed the officers to speed up the master drainage plan and flood plain zoning works of the cities. On a stern note the CM directed the officers to prepare a concrete plan for removal of silt from the dams and dredging system within two months. He said that streams should also be earmarked for construction of sewage treatment plants (STP) so that pure water enters Ganga and its tributaries. The CM said that special emphasis should be laid on the construction of Ghats and flood protection works should be expedited. He added that focus on increasing irrigation facilities in mountainous areas and protection of the canals.



Dhami directed the officers to complete required procedure till September for the Jamrani multipurpose and Song dam projects. He said that a provision of Rs 710 crore in the financial year 2024-25 has been made for the Jamrani dam project. This project will provide 117 MLD of drinking water to the Haldwani city and nearby areas and will create additional

irrigation facilities in 57,000 hectares of land. The Song dam project will ensure 15 MLD gravity water for Dehradun city and sub urban areas. A provision of Rs 300 crore in this year's budget for Song Dam project has been made.

The officers informed about the drinking water, flood protection and other projects

being undertaken by the department.

The meeting was attended by deputy chairperson of the State infrastructure monitoring committee Vishwas Dabar, chief secretary Radha Raturi, additional chief secretary Anand Bardhan, principal secretary RK Sudhanshu, secretaries R Meenakshi Sundaram, R Rajesh Kumar and others.

## Massive landslide occurs in Pithoragarh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN/PITHORAGARH

A massive landslide occurred near Tanakpur Tawaghat National Highway near Dharchula in Pithoragarh district on Wednesday morning. The landslide occurred around 8:30 AM on Tanakpur Tawaghat road near Rauti bridge which is 16 kilometres far from Dharchula. A huge boulder broke from the hill and fell into the Kali river. The officials said that the incident happened due to incessant rainfall in the area since Tuesday due to which, the highway was blocked due to huge amount of boulders and debris. This affected the connectivity of Darma, Vyas and Chaudas valley with the Tehsil headquarters. The officials also informed that the Kali river was already in spate due to heavy rainfall since past two days and when the big boulder fell into it, it led to the sudden rise in the water level. The sudden incident caused panic among the people around and many started running to save their lives. The officials said that the suspension bridge over the river narrowly escaped the damage when the boulder fell or it could have caused problems for the locals. They said that there is Khati village of



Nepal in front of the State's Rauti Bridge across the Kali River. There was also a massive landslide on Tuesday. The personnel of Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB) do regular patrolling of the area as it is close to the Nepal border. The SSB personnel head constable Ravi Shankar said that a huge boulder broke and fell in the middle of the Kali river. Shankar also made a video of the boulder falling into the river that also went viral in social media. The authorities reported no

casualty in the incident. The administration was trying to unblock the highway till late evening. Meanwhile, traffic on several routes was also affected in other districts too. The route in Peepalkoti near Badrinath national highway remained blocked for several hours after boulders and debris fell down the road due to rain in the morning. The traffic resumed in the afternoon. A boulder also fell into Chamoli-Gopeshwar road that caused a traffic jam in the area. It was

soon removed by the police. The Yamunotri national highway near Dabarkot in Uttarkashi was also blocked for several hours. The traffic resumed after the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) cleared the path, the officials said. The police also installed blinker lights and convex mirrors in accident prone areas and sharp turns near Yamunotri NH to minimise accident risks during monsoon.

## Weathermen issue Red alert for Kumaon districts again

Schools in Nainital, Bageshwar, Almora, US Nagar & Pithoragarh to remain closed today

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The districts of Kumaon region will continue to experience very heavy to extremely heavy rainfall at isolated places on Thursday as per the State meteorological centre. As per the red warning (Take Action) issued by the centre for Kumaon districts, very heavy to extremely heavy rain is likely to occur at isolated places with very heavy to heavy rain at a few places in Nainital, Bageshwar and Champawat districts on Thursday. Heavy to very heavy rain is also likely to occur at a few places in Almora, Pithoragarh and

Udham Singh Nagar districts. The districts of Kumaon division are also likely to experience thunderstorms accompanied with lightning or very intense to extremely intense spells of rain at isolated places on Thursday. Besides this, the centre also issued an orange alert (Be Prepared) regarding the possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall or thunderstorms accompanied with lightning or very intense to extremely intense spell of rain at isolated places in Dehradun, Pauri, Tehri and Haridwar districts. The centre also issued a yellow alert (Watch) regarding possible

heavy rainfall or thunderstorms accompanied with lightning or intense to very intense spell of rain at isolated places in Chamoli, Rudraprayag and Uttarkashi districts.

The maximum heavy rainfall on Wednesday was recorded at Chaukhutia in Almora district with 72.5 mm of rain. Considering the warning of heavy rainfall in the districts of Kumaon, the administration has decided to keep the schools closed in Nainital, Bageshwar, Almora, Udham Singh Nagar and Pithoragarh on Thursday.

## Transfers in secondary edu dept through counselling: Minister

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In an important measure aimed at bringing transparency in transfers, the State government has decided that the transfers of teachers in the secondary education department will be done through counselling. An order in this regard has been given by education minister Dhan Singh Rawat following which the department has started making preparations for the counselling process.

Rawat said that the officers of the department have been asked to complete the process of counselling before July 10. He said that the teachers were demanding for a long time to hold counselling sessions in the annual transfers. The government has accepted this demand, he said. The decision to hold counselling sessions for

the annual transfers will bring much needed transparency in the process of transfers. It was generally observed that the teachers coming in the ambit of compulsory transfers were transferred to the schools not mentioned in their choice form. The minister said that the counselling decision will ensure that teachers are transferred to the schools of their choice. He expressed confidence that the decision will help in improving educational activities in the schools which will benefit the students.

The education director (Secondary) Mahavir Singh Bisht said that the department has made all the preparations for transfers. He said that the dates for counselling sessions for transfers will soon be announced.

## ADG directs police in-charges to make SOPs for crowd management

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A day after the Hathras stampede in Uttar Pradesh in which over 120 people have died so far, the Uttarakhand additional director general of police

management at various fairs, religious events and other occasions across the State a day after the Hathras stampede. Since the Kanwad Yatra is expected to start from July

All police station in-charges should visit the respective sites and assess the crowd capacity of the venues, entry gates and parking and issue NOCs for the pro-



(Crime, Law and Order) AP Anshuman directed all senior/superintendent of police to prepare standard operating procedures (SOPs) for crowd management in all kinds of events happening in their respective districts.

It will be mandatory for all SSP/SPs to make SOPs copies available to the police headquarters. The ADG held a meeting with the police in-charges of all districts at Police headquarters in Dehradun regarding crowd

22 and will reach the State in the last week of the month, the ADG asked officials to keep special focus on crowd management, safety and security in Dehradun, Haridwar and Pauri districts.

He instructed that before issuing NOCs to organise programmes, the respective police in-charge should thoroughly brief all police personnel regarding programmes and how they should be conducted sensitively.

Accordingly, Anshuman said that the district in-charges will also prepare an annual calendar of all the fairs, festivals and programmes scheduled to be organised throughout the year to ensure the police can make necessary arrangements in time accordingly.

The respective in-charges should also take strict legal action against those organising programmes or events without permission, he added.

## U'khand resides in heart of PM Modi- Bhatt

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In his maiden speech in Rajya Sabha, the president of Uttarakhand BJP and Rajya Sabha MP Mahendra Bhatt said on Wednesday that Prime

the leadership of PM Modi, the State like Uttarakhand which is geographically inaccessible, backward and a border State got connected with



Minister Narendra Modi gave the gift of development to Uttarakhand and in return the people gave all the five Lok Sabha seats to him in the LS elections. Speaking on the vote of thanks on the address of the President of India, Bhatt said that he comes from Uttarakhand which is the land of Baba Badri, Kedar and Ganga and Yamuna. He started his speech by paying tributes to the Statehood activists and the martyrs.

Bhatt said that Uttarakhand resides in the heart of PM Modi and all round development of the State has occurred under his leadership in the last 10 years. He said that under

national mainstream. Bhatt said that every household in Uttarakhand has electricity connection and 55 lakh Ayushman cards have been made in the State.

He said that the All weather road is proving to be a blessing for the State. Bhatt said that Manaskhand Mandir Mala Mission, ropeway projects and the increase in air connectivity have brought positive change in the State. Bhatt expressed confidence that under the leadership of PM Modi, Uttarakhand will become a developed State of the country.

## TSR demands apology from RaGa for insulting Hindus

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Haridwar MP and former chief minister Trivendra Singh Rawat has said that the Congress leader Rahul Gandhi behaves childishly in the parliament. Interacting with media persons in Haridwar on Wednesday, Rawat said that Gandhi has no knowledge of Indian culture and traditions. He said that the Congress leader should seek apology for insulting Hindus in the parliament. Rawat expressed deep anguish on the Hathras stampede and paid homage to those who lost their lives in the tragic incident. He



said that work on long term projects for development of Haridwar will be done. Rawat said that he will pre-

pare a draft of overall development of Haridwar by ensuring better health and educational facilities.

## School bus runs over six women, one dead

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

One woman was killed while five others were injured in an accident in Rudrapur of Udham Singh Nagar district on Wednesday when a school bus ran over them.

The officials revealed that the accident occurred on Tuesday evening. The women were waiting for auto rickshaws on the Kashipur Road near Alliance flyover in Rudrapur when the bus ran

over them from behind. The injured were rushed for treatment to the district hospital where one was declared as brought dead, the officials said. They informed that the police received the information about the accident late in the evening.

The police have started an investigation into the matter as per the instruction of the Udham Singh Nagar senior superintendent of police

Manjunath TC. The police have sent the body of the deceased woman for post mortem. The other injured women are currently undergoing treatment in the hospital, the officials said. They stated that as per the CCTV footage of the accident, the name of a private school was written on the school bus. The police are investigating the matter and will nab the driver soon, they added.

## Pratap demands judicial probe in alleged custodial death

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Senior Congress leader Dharendra Pratap has requested chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami to order a judicial probe into the death of a Tehri Garhwal resident Ranveer Singh Rawat who allegedly was brutally beaten up by Police. He later died in Dehradun jail.

In a statement the Congress leader said that on one hand the BJP government of Uttarakhand is making false claims of zero tolerance and on the other the Police is acting in a very irresponsible manner and innocent citizens are being beaten brutally.

Demanding compensation of Rs 10 lakh to the family of the deceased, Pratap said that a criminal case should be filed against the Policemen responsible for the death of Ranveer Singh Rawat.

## Sensitisation workshop on vector borne diseases held

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A State level sensitisation workshop and review meeting on vector borne diseases (dengue, malaria, Chikungunya and Japanese encephalitis) was organised at the Health directorate on Wednesday. The programme was chaired by the mission director National Health Mission (NHM) Swati Bhadauria.

In the meeting, the MD directed all the districts to ensure that medicines, mosquito nets, test kits for prevention of dengue are procured in time.

She said that the potential breeding grounds of mosquitoes in cities and villages should be earmarked for destruction of larvae.

Bhadauria directed the officers to coordinate with the Panchayati Raj department and village Pradhans for prevention of dengue.

She said that coordination with other departments at block level should also be done for the purpose. The MD said that necessary directives to the schools mentioning sanitation activities and wearing full sleeved clothes should be sent. In the meeting the officer in charge of National

Vector Borne disease programme Dr Pankaj Singh gave a presentation on district wise situation of dengue. He said that the Asha workers have been directed to visit all the households to spread awareness about dengue and undertake source reduction activities.

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# Opp walkout during Modi reply a disgrace: Dhankhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday said the Opposition has set a "dangerous precedent antithetical to democratic values" by walking out during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's reply during discussion on the motion of thanks to President's address. In his concluding remarks of the 264th session of Rajya Sabha before adjourning the House sine die, Dhankhar also termed the instance of Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge walking into the well of the House during the session "a disgrace to parliamentary conduct and propriety".



over the disruptions that marred the proceedings". "Witnessing seasoned members conduct themselves irresponsibly was particularly disheartening. I wish to reiterate that disruption not only impedes the transaction of the listed business but also erodes the prestige of this esteemed institution," he asserted. Pointing out the instance of Kharge entering the Well of the Rajya Sabha on Friday, Dhankhar said, "It was extremely painful to notice that even the Leader of the Opposition walked into the Well of the House and that was

a disgrace to parliamentary conduct and propriety." He asked the members of the House to "exemplify their conduct so that this becomes a temple for deliberations, discussion, dialogue and debate". "Their walkout today was extremely painful. It was a historic occasion. The government was in its third term with the prime minister heading it continually after six decades. They walked away from their constitutional ordainment and that has set a dangerous precedent antithetical to democratic values," Dhankhar said.

The 264th session of the Upper House began with President Droupadi Murmu's address to both houses of Parliament, which the chairman described as "an important tradition that set the tone and outlined the government's agenda". The House also witnessed Modi introducing his new council of ministers after he was sworn-in as the prime minister for the third consecutive term. "The Motion of Thanks to the President's address witnessed lively participation by 76 members for over 21 hours. The House also heard maiden speeches by 19 newly-elected members," Dhankhar said. The Rajya Sabha chairman said while the prime minister gave a "spirited address while participating in the debate", the House lost 43 minutes due to forced adjournments but the shortfall was "made up by continuing discussion during lunch break and sitting beyond the scheduled time".

# Putin, envoys condole devotees' deaths in Hathras stampede

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday expressed condolences over the stampede at a religious congregation in Uttar Pradesh in which 121 people were killed. Several envoys here including Germany, China, France and Israel also mourned the deaths. "President of Russia Vladimir Putin sent a condolence message to President of India Droupadi Murmu & Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi over the tragic stampede in #UttarPradesh: Kindly accept the most sincere condolences over the tragic accident in Uttar Pradesh," the Russian Embassy in India said in a social media post. The stampede took place on Tuesday at Phulrai village in Sikandra Rao area of the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh. The victims were part of the crowd of thousands that had gathered near Phulrai village in the Sikandrara area for the 'satsang' by religious a

preacher. Meanwhile, envoys of several countries, including Germany, France, China and Israel have mourned the loss of lives in a stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras and extended condolences to the victims' families. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a social media post on Tuesday had said he was deeply distressed by the tragic incident. "Deeply saddened by the tragic loss of lives in a stampede in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh. Sincere condolences to the bereaved families. Pray for the speedy recovery of the injured," he wrote on the social media platform. The stampede at a religious congregation killed 121 people as devotees suffocated to their deaths and bodies piled atop each other in the worst such tragedy in recent years. The incident took place as the devotees -- most of them women -- headed home after a 'satsang' in the Hathras district's Phulrai village. The 'satsang' was conducted by Baba Narayan Hari, who is also



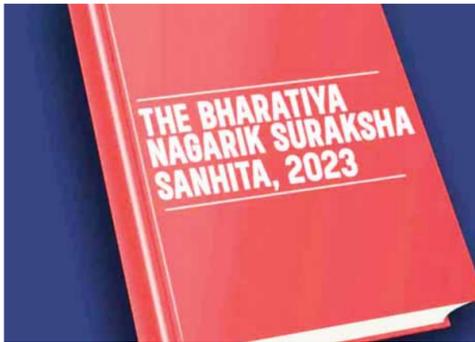
known as Jagat Guru Saakar Vishwahari's Bhole Baba. German envoy Philipp Ackermann in a post on Tuesday evening offered condolences to the families that lost their loved ones in the stampede and said he was deeply saddened about the tragic incident. "Deeply saddened about the tragic events in Hathras. My condolences to the families that lost their loved ones. We hope that help quickly reaches the injured," he wrote on the social media platform. Later on Tuesday night, Chinese envoy Xu Feihong also took to X to mourn the loss of lives in the incident.

"Shocked and saddened about the tragic events in Hathras, UP. Deeply mourn for the lives lost and extend heartfelt sympathies to victims' families. Wish the injured a speedy recovery," he wrote on the social media platform. French Ambassador to India Thierry Mathou also posted a message on X, which was reposted by the French Embassy in New Delhi. "Deeply saddened by the loss of lives following the tragic stampede in Uttar Pradesh's #Hathras district. France expresses its deepest condolences to the bereaved families of the victims and wishes the injured a speedy recovery," the envoy wrote on X. Israeli Ambassador Naor Gilon also echoed the sentiments expressed by the other envoys. "Deeply saddened about the loss of lives at the tragic stampede in #Hathras, UP. Our thoughts are with the families of the victims. Wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. Such incidents are truly heart-breaking," he wrote on X.

# New law makes sexual offences gender neutral

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A police officer can detain a person who resists or disregards lawful directions to prevent a cognisable offence, according to the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) which came into effect on Monday. Also, the newly enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which replaces the British-era Indian Penal Code, has made sexual offences "gender neutral" for the victim and the perpetrator, according to official documents. The BNSS, which replaced the British-era Code of Criminal Procedure, has introduced "a new insertion" as Clause 172 in 'Preventive Action of the Police'. It states that people must conform to directions of the police issued in the course of preventing the commission of a cognisable offence, officials said. The provision allows a police officer to detain such person and produce them before a magistrate or, in petty cases, release the person as soon as possible within 24 hours, they said. Under the BNSS, police officials have been given a layer of immunity in cases of dereliction in carrying out duties on the orders of an executive magistrate to disperse unlawful assembly. In such cases, police officers cannot be prosecuted without the sanction of the government.



Under clause 58 of the BNSS, police personnel can now produce an arrestee before any magistrate within 24 hours even if the judicial officer does not have jurisdiction, officials said. A provision has also been made under Clause 53 that a medical practitioner conducting an examination of an arrested person can conduct one more medical exam if the practitioner deems it fit, the officials said. To misuse arrest provisions by the police, an additional obligation has been cast on the state governments under BNSS clause 37/B to designate a police officer who would be responsible for maintaining information about all arrests and arrestees. The information will have to be prominently displayed in every police station and at district headquarters. The new criminal law also makes it mandatory for a police

officer to get permission from an officer ranked Deputy Superintendent of Police or above in case of offences punishable with imprisonment below three years and the accused being infirm or above 60 years of age. Information related to an arrest can now be furnished to "any other person" apart from the present arrangement of "relative or a friend". "The category of persons who could be informed regarding the arrest of an arrestee has been expanded to include 'any other person', apart from the existing provisions related to informing any relative or a friend," an official said. Clause 48/3 of BNSS makes it mandatory that an entry of the fact as to who has been informed of the arrest shall be made in a book to be kept in the police station in such form as the state government may provide.

# BJP flays Opposition MPs for RS walkout

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday flayed the opposition members for staging a walkout during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in the Rajya Sabha and said their intention was to only create ruckus in the House as they did not have the "strength" to hear the truth. The opposition parties' INDIA bloc, led by the Congress, staged a walkout of the Rajya Sabha after the Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge was not allowed to intervene during Prime Minister Modi's reply on the motion thanking President Droupadi Murmu for her address to the joint sitting of Parliament. "The opposition is demoralised, aimless and anarchic due to its defeat (in the Lok Sabha polls) for the third time in a row. It is disrespecting our constitutional values and is busy in conspiracy to hide its defeat," BJP chief and Leader of the Rajya Sabha JP Nadda said in a social media post. "These negative efforts by them cannot hinder the NDA government's journey towards achieving its goal of building a 'developed India'," he added. Nadda said that Prime Minister Modi paved the way for building a "developed India" in the



Rajya Sabha in his reply to the Motion of Thanks to the President's address. This will become a roadmap for the progress of people and rapid development of the country, he added. Nadda said the last 10 years under Prime Minister Modi's leadership have been marked by "revolutionary decisions, historic progress and upliftment" of people. "This journey of development will acquire new dimensions in 'Modi government-3.0'," the BJP chief said. "We will take the global prestige of the nation to new heights," he added. Slamming the Opposition members, BJP Rajya Sabha MP and national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi alleged that they staged a walkout during the prime minister's speech as they did not have the strength to hear the truth. "It's sad. They had boycotted the prime minister's speech in

the last session. They created uproar (in the Lok Sabha) in the current session as well and boycotted (PM's speech) in the Rajya Sabha. This shows that perhaps, as the prime minister also said, they do not have the strength to hear the truth," he told reporters in Parliament complex, when asked for comment. On the Opposition's charge that Kharge was not allowed to intervene during the prime minister's speech, Trivedi said the Leader of the Opposition spoke in the Rajya Sabha for about 90 minutes and the treasury benches listened to him "peacefully". "They started making noise when the prime minister was speaking. This clearly means that they did not intend to hear the truth. Their objective was not to hear the reply to their questions but only create uproar," the BJP MP charged.

# India-Mongolia joint military exercise to defence boost ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a further boost to bilateral defence ties, the 16th edition of India-Mongolia Joint Military Exercise 'Nomadic Elephant' commenced on Wednesday at Foreign Training Node, Umroi (Meghalaya). The Exercise is scheduled to be conducted from July 3-16, army said here. Last edition of the annual exercise was conducted in Mongolia in July 2023. Giving details about the latest drill, officials said Indian contingent comprising of 45 personnel is being represented by a battalion of Sikkim Scouts along with personnel from other arms and services. The Mongolian contingent is being represented by personnel from 150 Quick Reaction Force Battalion of the Mangolian Army. The Opening Ceremony of the Exercise was attended by His Mongolian Envoy to India Dambajavyn Ganbold and Major General Prasanna Joshi, General Officer Commanding 51 Sub Area of the Indian Army. The aim of the Exercise is to enhance joint military capability of both sides to undertake counter insurgency operations in a Sub Conventional scenario under Chapter VII of the United Nations Mandate. The exercise will focus on operations in the semi-urban and mountainous



terrain. Tactical drills during the Exercise include Response to a Terrorist Action, Establishment of a Joint Command Post, Establishment of an Intelligence and Surveillance Centre, Securing of a Helipad/ Landing Site, Small Team Insertion and Extraction, Special Heliborne Operations, Cordon and Search Operations besides Employment of Drones and Counter Drone Systems amongst others. Major General Gyanbamba Sunrev, Chief of General Staff of the Armed Forces of Mongolia is scheduled to attend the closing ceremony on July 16 along with Lieutenant General Zubin A Minwalla, General Officer Commanding 33 Corps of the Indian Army. The Exercise will enable both sides to share their best practices in Tactics, Techniques and Procedures of conducting joint operations. The exercise will also facilitate developing interoperability, bonhomie and camaraderie between the two armies. This will also enhance the level of defence cooperation, further augmenting bilateral relations between the two friendly nations.

# Cabinet panels on security, economy, political affairs formed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Modi government on Wednesday constituted various cabinet committees, including the country's highest decision making bodies on security, economic and political affairs. According to an official notification, the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) comprises Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Home Minister Amit Shah, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar. Apart from Prime Minister Modi, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs comprises Defence Minister, Home Minister, Finance Minister, External Affairs Minister, Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari, Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, and Heavy Industries and Steel Minister HD Kumaraswamy. Others in the committee are: Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and Minister of Panchayati Raj and Fisheries Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh.

# Aspirin can reduce flu-induced inflammation in blood vessels in pregnancy, says study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Aspirin, commonly used to manage preeclampsia (a type of high blood pressure) in pregnant women, shows potential in alleviating flu-induced inflammation in blood vessels when administered in low doses, according to a first-of-its-kind study in the world. This approach could enhance placental blood flow, critical for foetal development during pregnancy, said the study led by Dr Stella Liong, a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow at RMIT University. The researchers investigated whether therapies used for preeclampsia could be adapted to mitigate the effects of flu infections. Influenza A infections during pregnancy is a big concern as every pregnancy overlaps with part of a flu season. The outcomes were promising in mice, highlighting aspirin's role in reducing inflammation and improving foetal outcomes, found the study. It was conducted in collaboration with Professor John O'Leary from Trinity College Dublin and Professor Doug Brooks from the University of South Australia. Low-dose aspirin is commonly taken to

prevent preeclampsia, as it stops the body from creating chemicals that cause inflammation. "When the vascular system is inflamed, it leads to poor blood flow and affects the aorta's function," she said. "This is especially a problem during pregnancy where good blood flow to the placenta is crucial to the development of the foetus." The research found foetuses and placenta from mice with influenza A were smaller than those from uninfected mice. Markers of low oxygen to the blood and poor blood vessel development were also evident in the foetuses. However, mice treated daily with low-dose aspirin had less inflammation and improved fetal development and offspring survival. Brooks said influenza A infections during pregnancy were a big concern. "There are long term implications for both the mother and the foetal, and aspirin might provide a simple solution for preventing this influenza associated pathology," Brooks said. As per health experts, the flu virus during pregnancy could trigger a damaging hyperactive immune response, causing the virus to spread around the body from the lungs through the blood vessels.



# First Indian woman Naval officer scales Mt Kilimanjaro

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a historic feat Surgeon Commodore Diviya Gautam has become the first serving Naval Woman Officer from India to climb Mount Kilimanjaro, at a height of 19,341 ft on 6 June, Coast Guard said here on Wednesday. Mt Kilimanjaro is world's highest freestanding mountain and Africa's tallest peak. Giving details, officials said Diviya Gautam is posted as Principal Director Medical Services at Coast Guard Headquarters on deputation from Indian Navy. She joined the Indian Navy as a Doctor after graduating from Government Medical College Patiala in 1995. She climbed the peak along with her husband Commodore Gaurav Gautam (Retired) and 8 other Indian friends now set-

tled in the US. Though the couple did not have adequate physical preparation due to service exigencies but they owe their success to their military training, mental grit, endurance and proper acclimatisation, given the high altitude and varying weather conditions. Despite the physical and mental challenge involving diverse climatic zones making it an even more challenging endeavor, Diviya Gautam demonstrated remarkable perseverance and determination. The couple's ascent to the snow-clad peak is a testament of their good order training, will power and support of their organizing team and the teammates. They had started the final trek at 12 midnight and reached the summit of Mount Kilimanjaro, Uhuru Peak on 6 June 2024 at 7:20 am after trekking non-stop for 7 hours.

# Congress predicts fall of Modi Govt any time

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Wednesday claimed that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's legitimacy has been diminished to "one-third" and his Government is on its "last legs" and can fall anytime. Hitting out at the Prime Minister over his remarks on Manipur in the Rajya Sabha, the Congress also said he made an "astounding claim" that the situation is normal there when in actuality it is still tense and pointed out that he has still not visited the State since violence erupted in May last year. The Opposition party's assertion regarding recently held Lok Sabha polls came over the Prime Minister's remarks in the Rajya Sabha that since the results came out, one Congress leader kept on beating the drum that there is a "one-third government" in place. "What can be a bigger truth than this that we have completed 10 years, 20 more are left. One-third is done, two-thirds are still left and so we are very happy for this prediction," Modi said in his reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address to the joint sitting of Parliament. Modi's remarks were an apparent dig at Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, who has been referring to the PM as 'one-



third PM'. Reacting to the remarks, Congress general secretary Ramesh said, "As always, the 'one-third' Pradhan Mantri is distorting. The label of 'ek tihai' (one-third) does not refer to his government's tenure. It refers to our very own non-biological PM." "After the resounding personal, political, and moral defeat of June 4th, it is his legitimacy and aura that has been diminished to one-third - and he himself is dependent on two other Ns for his political survival. His Government is anyways on its last legs and can fall anytime," Ramesh said in an apparent reference to JD(U)'s Nitish Kumar and TDP's N Chandrababu Naidu. In his speech in the Rajya Sabha, Prime Minister Modi said the 2024 general election verdict showed people have rejected propaganda and voted for performance. He said the politics of misleading people has been defeated. Modi said for his party BJP, the Constitution is not just a compilation of articles but its spirit and words are very important

too. As regards Manipur, Congress criticism came after Prime Minister Modi said violence in Manipur is continuously declining and the schools have reopened in most part of the state, and efforts are being made to ensure a return of complete peace. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, Modi said the Centre was working with the state government and others to restore normalcy in the state. In his reaction to the remarks, Jairam Ramesh said, "Today in the Rajya Sabha, after months of absolute silence on the issue, the non-biological PM made the astounding claim that the situation in Manipur is normal." "In actuality, the situation is still tense as the MP from Inner Manipur pointed out in the Lok Sabha on 1st July. And the non-biological Pradhan Mantri has still not visited Manipur since it erupted on the night of May 3rd, 2023 - nor has he met with the political leaders of the state. The President's Address too was silent on the issue," he said.

# MP Budget focuses on infrastructure development, women and tribal welfare

PTI ■ BHOPAL

The Madhya Pradesh government on Wednesday presented its budget for FY 2024-25 with an outlay of Rs 3.65 lakh crore, marking substantial allocations for infrastructure development and initiatives for women and tribals, amid din by Congress over a nursing college "scam". Finance Minister Jagdish Devda described the budget as "sarvparshi" (all-inclusive), announcing no new taxes during its presentation in the state legislative assembly. The assembly session, however, saw disruptions from Congress members who demanded the resignation of former medical education minister Vishvas Sarang over the nursing college "scam" and sought the setting up of a House committee of members of all parties. "The budget for the year 2024-25 aims to double its size in the next five years, with increased capital investment in roads, irrigation, electricity, quality health facilities, attracting investments for employment generation, and promoting good governance," Devda stated amidst din created by Congress members. Speaking to reporters after the Budget presentation, Devda condemned the conduct of the opposition in



the House. The budget proposes an outlay of Rs 3.65 lakh crore, marking a 16 per cent increase from the previous year. Significant allocations include Rs 26,560 crore for the women and child development department, up 81 per cent from the last fiscal. Capital expenditure is expected to rise by 15 per cent compared to the previous year, amounting to 4.25 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product. The fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 4.11 per cent of the GSDP, the minister said. Allocations have also been enhanced for infrastructure from Rs 49,009 crore in the previous fiscal to Rs 53,460

crore, urban and rural development from Rs 39,326 crore to Rs 44,588 crore, Scheduled Tribe sub-plan (Rs 40,804 crore), and Scheduled Caste sub-plan (Rs 27,900 crore). The 'Ladli Behna Yojana', the BJP government's flagship scheme under which eligible women are paid Rs 1,250 per month, receives Rs 18,984 crore, while Rs 15,509 crore is earmarked for establishing government primary schools and Rs 9,258 crore for middle schools. The agriculture sector allocation has been raised from Rs 22,732 crore in the previous FY to Rs 26,126 crore. Devda highlighted plans to double the budget size in the

coming years, citing improvements in per capita income and poverty alleviation efforts. "The per capita income in the state has gone up to Rs 1.42 lakh in 2022-23 from Rs 13,465 in 2003-2004," he said. Devda, citing Niti Aayog data, reported a notable reduction in poverty with 2.30 crore people lifted out of it over the past decade. The budget allocates 15% for infrastructure, 13% for health, 11% for education, and 7% for agriculture, with 8% each designated for loan repayment and interest. The 'Ladli Laxmi Yojana' has benefited 48.03 lakh women since its inception, while other provisions include constructing Sant Ravidas memorials in 30 districts and a Rs 500 crore provision for infrastructure related to the 2028 Simhashta congregation in Ujjain. Additionally, cultural and religious tourism initiatives like the "Shri Krishna Pathy Yojana" to identify and develop the route covered by lord Krishna in Madhya Pradesh and "Ram Path Gaman Yojana" were emphasised, alongside a Rs 341 crore allocation for establishing "Vedant Peeth". While Devda was reading the budget speech, many MLAs from the Opposition entered the well of the House raising slogans over the nursing college scam.

Notably, the CBI is probing the alleged irregularities in the functioning of several nursing colleges that lacked infrastructure while some existed only on paper. Before Devda could complete his speech, which remained inaudible amid the din, the opposition members led by Singhar staged a walkout from the House and sat on a dharna in front of Mahatma Gandhi's statue in the assembly complex. Ahead of the Budget speech, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav had said appropriate time was given to the Opposition for raising the issue on Tuesday and they should participate in the budget presentation as per the House tradition. Legislative Affairs Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said the assembly proceedings will run as per the rules and traditions of the House and the opposition should raise their grievances through an appropriate procedure. Speaker Narendra Singh Tomar said the issue (nursing college scam) was raised by the opposition on Tuesday after the relaxation of the House rules. However, the opposition members ignored Vijayvargiya's suggestion and kept raising slogans in the well of the House. After standing for a while before the speaker's podium, the opposition members squatted on the floor of the well.

## Assam Govt keen to develop clean source of coal for industries, says Chief Secy

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Assam government is keen to develop the state as a sustainable and environmentally clean source of coal for relevant industries, Chief Secretary Ravi Kota said. Kota said this while reviewing coal projects in the state with chairman and managing director of Coal India Limited (CIL) P M Prasad. The state government, under the leadership of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, is also exploring ways to maximise exploration and utilisation of coal resources to accelerate economic growth, to reduce import of coal and to help in employment generation, Kota said while reviewing the progress of the ongoing projects of the North East Coalfields India Limited (NECIL) with Prasad. A delegation of senior CIL officials, led by Prasad, called on the chief secretary. At present, one coal mine in Margherita sub-division in Tinsukia district, under NECIL is actively extracting coal with an annual production of two lakh metric tonnes of coal. The production is likely to increase to three lakh tonnes per annum very soon and efforts are being undertaken to expand the same to 15 lakhs tonnes (1.5 mn tonnes) per annum, he said. "To achieve the same, coordinated action of the revenue and disaster



management, environment and forest, and mines and mineral departments of Assam with NECIL will be undertaken. It is anticipated that the increased production of coal will not only meet the requirements of state-based industries but also increase the revenue to the state exchequer significantly, Kota said. The chief secretary said that to improve the livelihood of the mining workforce of the state through targeted CSR activities, Coal India authorities may identify schools and hospitals in the areas of mining and work on infrastructural development wherever required. The concerned district administrations will provide necessary assistance as and when CIL shares the proposal in this context. Highlighting the sporadic incidents of illegal mining activities, the chief secretary suggested that the CIL authorities in coordination with the respective district administrations must mitigate such incidents by considering area-specific issues like coal intake by locals residing near the extraction areas.

## BRS MLA booked for obstructing Govt officials on duty

PTI ■ KARIMNAGAR (TELANGANA)

A case was registered against BRS MLA P Kaushik Reddy for allegedly obstructing the District Collector and other government officials from discharging their duties in Karimnagar district, police said on Wednesday. The MLA from the Huzurabad constituency was booked under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), which came into force from July 1 and he perhaps became the first public representative in the state to be booked under the new law. Kaushik Reddy, who had staged a protest during the Zilla Parishad General Body meeting here on Tuesday, "restrained" District Collector Pamela Sathpathy and others officials from discharging their duties, they said. "Demanding immediate action against an official, the BRS legislator sat on the floor in the Zilla Parishad meeting hall when the District Collector was about to leave the conference hall," a police official said. The Collector told the legislator that she would enquire into the allegations (against the official). Dissatisfied with the reply of the Collector, he "obstructed" her from doing duty, police said. On a complaint by the ZP Chief Executive Officer Srinivas, a case under Section 221 (obstruction of public servant) and Section 126(2) (Wrongful restraint) of BNS was registered against the BRS MLA on Tuesday, police added.

## Assam floods: 11 wild animals drown in Kaziranga National Park

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Eleven animals, mostly hog deer, have drowned while 65 other animals have been rescued from floodwaters in Kaziranga National Park in Assam, an official said on Wednesday. Forty-two hog deer, two otters and sambars each and a Scops owl have been rescued, the official of the national park said. Of the 233 forest department camps in the Eastern Assam Wildlife Division, 173 have been inundated by gushing floodwaters, up from 167 on Tuesday, he said. In the Agorotoli range of the national park, 24 of the 34 camps have been inundated, while 51 of 58 camps in the central range, 37 of 39 in Bagori, 13 of 25 in Burapahar and seven of nine in Bokakhat range are under floodwaters. Altogether nine camps have been vacated by forest personnel so far, including two in Agorotoli, three in Bokakhat, two in the central range and one each in Biswanath and Nagaon wildlife divisions. The forest department employees, including security personnel, stay in the camps inside the national park to conduct patrolling for the protection of



flora and fauna. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma reviewed the situation in the national park on Tuesday and directed the authorities to take adequate precautions, including regulation of vehicular traffic on NH 715, to ensure that wildlife is not harmed. Meanwhile, prohibitory orders under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) have been imposed to restrict the movement of vehicular traffic on NH 715 passing through the national park. Experts pointed out that floods are essential for the preservation and rejuvenation of the ecosystem of the Kaziranga National Park as Brahmaputra's overflow and increase in the level of water not only revitalises the grasslands but the excess water flow also flushes out the aquatic weeds and unwanted plants.

## Five held for clash between BJP, Cong workers in Ahmedabad; two FIRs filed

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Police arrested five persons in Gujarat's Ahmedabad on Wednesday, a day after workers of the BJP and Congress hurled stones at each other outside the opposition party's state headquarters here on Tuesday during a protest against "anti-Hindu" remarks made by Rahul Gandhi in the Lok Sabha. Deputy Commissioner of Police Shivam Verma said two FIRs were registered at the Ellisbridge police station regarding the clash and five persons were arrested on Wednesday. Five policemen, including an Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), were injured in the stone-pelting by both the sides outside Rajiv Gandhi Bhavan, Congress's state headquarters near Ashram Road in Paldi area of the city. While one FIR was registered against nearly 450 workers of both - Congress and BJP, another was registered against Congress workers on a complaint given by the youth wing of the BJP's Ahmedabad unit, Verma said. Both the FIRs were registered under relevant sections of the



Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) for offences, including unlawful assembly, rioting, endangering life or personal safety of others and causing hurt to an on-duty public servant. "Five police personnel, including an ACP, were injured in yesterday's incident. We have registered two FIRs - one based on a complaint given by a policeman, and another by city BJP's youth wing. Five persons, who might be associated with any of the party, were already arrested by us. CCTV videos revealed that they were involved in the

violence," said Verma, DCP (Zone 1) of the city police. The DCP said police did not take into consideration party affiliation while making arrests. In the first FIR, registered based on a complaint given by injured police constable Karmraj Bhagvatsinh, Congress' Leader of Opposition in the BJP-ruled Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), Shehzad Khan Pathan and two women leaders of the opposition party - Pragati Ahir and Hetaben Parikh - were named in the FIR. Along with them, police have named a mob comprising around 250 Congress workers and 200 BJP workers as accused in the FIR. As per the FIR, it was Congress workers who first charged towards BJP workers after being incited by some Congress leaders. When police tried to stop them, the mob started throwing stones and thick wooden sticks towards the other side. After the attack, the BJP workers also engaged in stone pelting, said the FIR, adding that the complainant was rushed to hospital after a stone hit his head. Apart from him, two other police constables, a Home Guard and an ACP received injuries during the clash. Around 2.30 pm on Tuesday, the BJP's Ahmedabad unit announced that the party's youth wing will hold a demonstration outside Congress office in the evening against Rahul Gandhi's remarks in Hindus. Upon learning about the protest, the city police had deployed its personnel to thwart any violence. After the clash, the police detained several persons from both sides and brought the situation under control.

## ED questions TV actors in fraud forex trading app case



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Enforcement Directorate on Wednesday recorded the statement of two television actors here as part of a money laundering investigation linked to the operations of an "illegal" online forex trading platform that is alleged to have duped investors to the tune of Rs 500 crore, official sources said. The sources said actors Krystel Dsouza and Karan Wahi were called for questioning in order to elicit information about some payments being made for promotions of the app named OctaFx which also had a website - www.Octafx.Com. The statements of the two have been recorded as the ED is investigating this case under the provisions of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said. Another TV actor and model Nia Sharma has also been summoned, the sources said. It is understood that the agency wants to understand the operations of the platform and these actors may not be seen as wrongdoers or accused. The money laundering case of the ED stems from a Pune Police (Shivaji Nagar police station) FIR filed against the app and its promoters who are alleged to have duped numerous investors by luring them with high returns. The federal agency had earlier said that the app (OCTAFX) and its website were "not authorised" by RBI to deal in forex trading. It had said that the platform was widely promoted on social networking sites and is following referral-based incentive models for acquiring users. "It has emerged in the investigation that multiple accounts of different Indian banks were being shown to investors/users on OctaFx trading app/www.Octafx.Com

for collecting funds in the guise of facilitating forex trading. "It was found that OctaFx has manipulated trade activities and information shown on its platform ultimately resulting in net loss to the traders," the ED alleged in a statement after it conducted raids against the company and its promoters in April in Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata and Delhi. These accumulated funds, after "defrauding" these investors/users, were transferred to multiple e-wallet accounts or to bank accounts of dummy entities, it claimed. "This way, OctaFx India Pvt Ltd, OctaFx, and their entities have cheated investors in the guise of forex trading thereby earning a profit of more than Rs 500 crore from the Indian region," the ED said. A portion of these funds, as per the agency, were "layered" through a web of complex transactions with the help of shell entities and remitted abroad to its related entities in the garb of bogus freight services, import of services, etc. The agency had claimed that a network of chartered accountants and professionals, who gave fake certificates of remittances and facilitated bank accounts/companies for layering of such funds, was involved in running this platform. The entire process of reflecting account numbers of dummy entities, managing the funds collected in these accounts and diversion of the same were being managed and operated by owners of OctaFx group entities based in Spain, Russia, Georgia and Dubai, the agency said. It said OctaFx hired several Indian individuals working in Spain/Russia for operating the trading platform. It has attached crypto currencies, bank deposits and gold coins worth Rs 35 crore in this case till now.

## Amaravati will be rebuilt by restoring investor confidence: Andhra CM

PTI ■ AMARAVATI (ANDHRA PRADESH)

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Wednesday vowed to start rebuilding Amaravati by restoring investor confidence and reconstructing its brand image, after crossing all the hurdles set in its path allegedly by the erstwhile YSRC regime. Releasing a white paper on the state of the greenfield capital city conceptualised during the TDP government between 2014 and 2019, the Chief Minister said he will tell everything about Amaravati to the Centre and move in a fast and time-bound manner to execute it. "Rebuilding Amaravati would have already started from yesterday and officials were given instructions. Crossing all the legal hurdles, we will go ahead," said Naidu.

## Jailed radical preacher Amritpal likely to take oath as MP on July 5

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH/AMRITSAR

Jailed radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh, who recently won the Khadoor Sahib parliamentary seat in Punjab, is likely to take oath as Lok Sabha member on Friday. The chief of the 'Waris Punjab De' outfit, who is currently lodged in Assam's Dibrugarh jail along with nine associates under the National Security Act, has been granted a four-day parole to enable him to take oath, officials in Amritsar said. Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa, an Independent MP from Faridkot, said Amritpal Singh is likely to take oath as MP on July 5. "I went to meet Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla at his residence in Delhi on Wednesday. He said the oath will be administered on July 5," Khalsa told PTI over



phone. He also said that clearances and permissions from various quarters to enable Amritpal Singh to take oath have come. "I understand that he will be flown in from the prison for taking oath, which will be in the private chamber of the Speaker," he said. Khalsa said the sole purpose of his meeting the Speaker

that has been communicated to Jail Superintendent Dibrugarh." In response to another query about the parole, Thori said in a brief statement, "...Granted by District Magistrate, Amritsar, after authorisation by the Home Department." According to Rajdev Singh Khalsa, a lawyer of Amritpal Singh who meets him in jail, said he (Amritpal), through the Dibrugarh jail superintendent, had recently sent a letter to the Amritsar deputy commissioner, who in turn forwarded it to the state government for necessary clearance to allow the jailed preacher to take oath. His temporary release was sought under Section 15 of the National Security Act. Having fought the 2024 Lok Sabha elections as an independent, Amritpal Singh won from the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat after he

defeated Congress candidate Kulbir Singh Zira. He won by a margin of 1,97,120 votes. Amritpal Singh, who styled himself after slain Khalistani militant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, was arrested in Moga's Rode village on April 23 last year following an over a month-long manhunt. The Khalistan sympathizer had escaped the police net in Jalandhar district on March 18, switching vehicles and changing appearances. The Punjab Police had launched the crackdown after the February 23 Ajnala incident last year in which Amritpal Singh and his supporters, some of them brandishing swords and guns, broke through barricades and barged into the police station on the outskirts of Amritsar city, and clashed with police for the release of Lovepreet Singh Toofan, one of his aides.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Innocent lives lost

Stampede at a satsang in Hathras kills at least 121, highlighting the urgent need for stronger regulations

In a tragic and devastating incident in the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh, a stampede during a satsang resulted in the deaths of at least 121 people. Although the exact cause of the mishap will be determined after a detailed investigation, eyewitness accounts reveal that the stampede occurred when devotees surged forward to seek blessings from Narayan Sakar Vishwa Hari, also known as Bhole Baba. The devotees rushed to touch Bhole Baba's feet and attempted to gather soil from his path, a customary practice that led to the chaos. Many people fell into a nearby drain. Some eyewitnesses reported that after the satsang concluded, many followers rushed toward Bhole Baba to touch his feet or catch a glimpse of him as he departed in his car. People wanted to get his *darshan* and collect soil from the road on which his car left the venue. As the satsang ended, people started leaving in groups. Due to the rain, many slipped, and others fell on top of them, leading to a crushing cascade. Others maintain that people started rushing out due to the humidity when the incident occurred, and many followers, most of whom were women, felt suffocated.



The incident exposes many disturbing facts, ranging from the negligence of the administration to the unchecked influence of godmen over innocent people. Bhole Baba is reportedly absconding. First of all, the number of attendees far exceeded the permitted limit. The chief sewadar (organizer) of Baba's program estimated an attendance of around 80,000 people, but the actual number was significantly higher. Indeed, this breach of the permitted capacity likely exacerbated the situation, leading to overcrowding in a venue that was inadequate. Now, after this horrific incident, the government is in damage control mode. Compensation for the deceased has been announced, and the Chief Minister is expected to visit Hathras. Additionally, a team has been set up to investigate the cause of the incident. However, in all probability nothing will change and that this incident will soon be forgotten like many before. As we mourn the loss of 121 lives and support the injured and their families, it is imperative to learn from this tragedy and implement effective measures to prevent such incidents in the future. We must prioritise safety, preparedness, and responsible management to ensure the safety of the people. Moreover, shouldn't there be a check on the activities of mushrooming godmen who exploit people's faith and endanger their lives? Many such godmen become so powerful that they are able to dictate terms to the administration and have considerable political clout which gives them power. However, the lack of awareness among people and their sense of helplessness contribute to the proliferation of these godmen who thrive on the ignorance and innocence of the people.

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### PICTALK



Farmers carry paddy saplings for plantation in an agricultural field, in Nadia

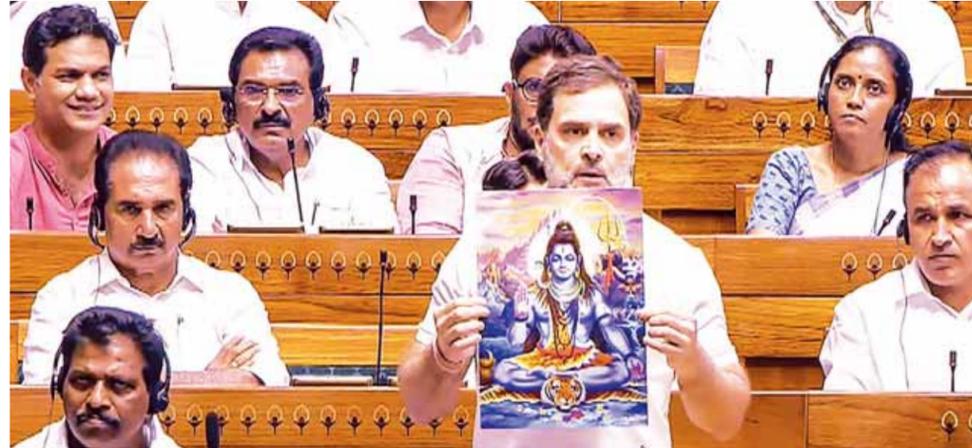
PTI

# Pandemonium in Parliament

As the Modi Govt navigates a new power dynamic, the increased presence and assertiveness of the Opposition suggest a challenging path ahead

The 18th Lok Sabha has the potential for positive functioning. The Modi government said they wanted consensus. Prime Minister Narendra Modi sought agreement and criticised the Opposition for causing problems. Modi stated that in his third term, his Government would aim to build consensus. The Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, also emphasised the importance of the Opposition's role in representing the 'voice of the people' in the House. But at the start of the session, they couldn't agree on important issues. Congress leader Sonia Gandhi wrote in an editorial recently in an English daily that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was "Preaching consensus, provoking confrontation."

Sonia Gandhi criticised Prime Minister Modi for not acknowledging the electoral outcome and for promoting confrontation over consensus. She expressed disappointment with the first few days of the 18th Lok Sabha, pointing out that there's no sign of a changed attitude from the Prime Minister. The 18th Lok Sabha is a significant shift in Indian politics, marking the first time in a decade that Modi is leading a Parliament from a less dominant position. This shift in power dynamics requires him to navigate a coalition and contend with a more assertive opposition. The Modi government now relies on crucial support from two key allies - JD(U) and TDP. This means the NDA allies could significantly influence the Government's plans and actions, a departure from the substantial majority the BJP enjoyed in 2019 and 2014. The increased presence of the Opposition in various parliamentary panels is likely to generate greater engagement. The first session of the current Lok Sabha began with a strong Opposition asserting its rights. Before the session started, there was a dispute over the appointment of BJD M.P Bhartruhari Mahtab as the protem Speaker to administer. The Congress and the INDIA



bloc members felt that Congress MP Kodukkunil Suresh, elected eight times, should have been given the position. However, the BJP argued that they followed the rules. Mahtab was elected to the House seven times in succession, while Suresh lost two elections. This appointment is significant as the Speaker plays a crucial role in the Indian parliamentary system as the head of the Lok Sabha, responsible for maintaining order, conducting debates, and ensuring the House's smooth functioning. Secondly, Rahul Gandhi said he would back Om Birla, the NDA candidate, but only if the Deputy Speaker position, usually given to the Opposition, was assured. While Thambi Durai of the AIADMK, a BJP ally at the time, served as the Deputy Speaker from 2014 to 2019, the position remained vacant from 2019 to 2024. Article 93 states two Lok Sabha members will be selected as the Speaker and Deputy Speaker. Om Birla has been re-elected as the Speaker of the 17th Lok Sabha, bringing continuity and stability to the House. After being congratulated, the newly elected Speaker took out a paper and read a resolution against the 1975 Emergency imposed by

SOME OPPOSITION PARTIES THOUGHT THE PRESIDENT'S INAUGURAL SPEECH TO A JOINT SESSION OF PARLIAMENT IGNORED THE COUNTRY'S MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS. ALSO, THE OPPOSITION CALLED FOR REMOVING THE SENGOL, WHICH THE PRIME MINISTER HAD INSTALLED WITH MUCH FANFARE BEFORE THE ELECTION

late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. This surprising move caught many off guard and caused tension with Congress, as the Emergency was declared on the same date in 1975. This led the Leader of the Opposition, Rahul Gandhi, to lead a group to the Speaker to express their objection to a political statement from the chair. Fourthly, some opposition parties thought the president's inaugural speech to a joint session of Parliament ignored the country's most serious problems. Also, the Opposition called for removing the Sengol, which the Prime Minister had installed with much fanfare before the Election. Fifthly, Rahul and other Opposition MPs proposed discussing the leakage of the NEET question paper first. The Speaker, however, insisted that a discussion on the Motion of Thanks to the President's address, a significant issue, should be held first. The first week's confrontation shows despite the decrease in numbers, the BJP is unlikely to change its working methods. An energised opposition will also be belligerent. The proceedings in Rajya Sabha also saw disruptions and adjournments as Opposition members raised slogans demand-

ing a discussion on the NEET question paper leak issue. There was also a heated argument between the Chairman and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge. The functioning of the House lies with the Speaker, a position of utmost importance in maintaining order and ensuring fair debates. The Rajya Sabha Chairman presides over the Upper House. A functioning House is necessary and a prerequisite for a healthy democracy. The need for constructive cooperation between the Government and the Opposition cannot be overstated. The House functions effectively in addressing the pressing issues facing the nation. Both sides must recognise the truth and collaborate to make Parliament more organised. After all, the Government is accountable to Parliament. The parliamentary system emphasises collective responsibility, accountability, and flexibility. As former President Pranab Mukherjee said, its functioning is based on Debate, Dissension, and Decision.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views expressed are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### CYBERCRIME ON THE RISE

Madam — Despite warnings, people are losing huge amounts of money to cyber criminals via stock market investments and online purchases. Fraudsters generally target the middle-aged and the elderly but youngsters are not spared. People are lured by attractive advertisements on social media platforms like WhatsApp, telegram, Instagram and facebook. When innocent citizens are asked to pump money through websites, they fall in line because the "profit accrued by similar investors" is prominently displayed in the common group. Furthermore, the fraudsters "train" the investors in stock market intricacies. Unsuspecting investors are unaware that another victim's money is transferred to his/her "account" to show profit. Duped investors sense something is amiss when they are asked to cough up a substantial commission and when their genuine queries go unanswered or are vaguely shrugged off. However, only when the scamster swindles the hard-earned money out of a person does the latter go to the cyber police. Since most states, if not all, have cyber crime helplines, it is vital to report the fraud very quickly because the cheaters are known to waste little time in hoodwinking the law. It is always a good practice to ask SEBI or RBI licence from the opposite party. Fake websites can always be checked. Sharing one-time password(OTP) is never a good idea.

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

#### RAHUL GANDHI MUST INTROSPECT

Madam — Rahul Gandhi's recent speech in Parliament was nothing short of a disgraceful spectacle. His attempt to lecture on Hinduism was an insult to the intelligence of the nation. By clumsily parroting platitudes about Hindu philosophy, Gandhi not only displayed his profound disconnect from

#### Tragedy strikes Hathras



More than 100 people died and several others were injured in a stampede at a religious congregation in a village in Hathras district on Tuesday, 2 July, police said. Senior Superintendent of Police, Etah,

Rajesh Kumar Singh said the incident occurred at a 'satsang' in Pulrai village. The people had gathered large numbers for the event. The stampede occurred due to overcrowding, Sikanara Rao police station SHO Ashish Kumar said. Victims, dead or unconscious, were brought to the Sikanara Rao Trauma Centre in trucks and other vehicles. The bodies were laid outside the health centre as people milled around them. One video clip showed a woman crying, sitting among five or six bodies in a truck. Another picture showed a man and a woman lying lifeless in another vehicle. Eyewitness Shakuntala Devi said that the stampede took place while people were leaving the venue at the end of the 'satsang'. With this the tragedy struck at the Hathras.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

#### CONCERNS ON NEW CRIMINAL LAWS

Madam — The editorial on the three new criminal laws(2-7-24) is welcome. In the name of extending justice, the government has hurried through at every stage keeping all democratic norms aside. The Bills were introduced after suspending around 140 opposition members in the parliament and were passed with the least discussion. Such an important Bill should have been placed before the public for widespread discussions and debates and the opposition members who are also elected by the people should have been involved in the process, besides consulting the luminaries in the field. Nothing is done. How such a law is going to ensure justice? Moreover, it may take quite a long time for all those in the legal field to get themselves familiarised with the new versions. It looks to be a case of smashing a mountain to catch a small rat.

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Modernising Govt IT: Imperative shift to a multicloud future



SRINIVASCHARY T

This will ensure that services are not only delivered effectively but also in a cost-efficient and secure manner as it bolsters cybersecurity

From cybersecurity threats to unprecedented data management complexity to systems outages, outdated IT hinders the government's ability to provide important services in the safest and most efficient manner possible.



Our technology infrastructure should receive the same attention and investment as our roads, bridges, energy, and broadband infrastructure. Instead, current policies deter government IT leaders' ability to choose the best solutions to meet modern challenges. Public agencies are too often using outdated technology and face too many barriers to effectively modernize their systems. With modern technology and data availability, the government will be able to better track life-threatening illnesses, while policymakers would be armed with relevant data to chart robust policies for prevention and treatment. According to a Deloitte research report, BFSI sector is also investing more on cloud to transform systems.

Federal and state agencies have been slowly upgrading IT infrastructure over the past decade by shifting to a public cloud computing model. This is primarily driven by the promise of increased efficiency, lower costs, and improved continuity to enhance the services they offer to the public. While many government organizations have taken advantage of the flexibility public cloud computing offers, given privacy, compliance and security concerns, this approach does not work in every situation. It is critical that IT leaders have flexibility to choose the most cost-effective solutions. Government agencies should consider a multicloud by design approach,

where you use cloud services from multiple public and private cloud providers. While a single-cloud strategy might seem simpler, it limits service offerings and often commits organizations to a single vendor, which often costs more in the end.

A multicloud approach to cloud computing is used for better data control, allows access to the best services from each provider, and offers more flexibility as IT leaders can optimize workload requirements. While government agencies - and ultimately taxpayers - that adopt multicloud approaches can also have greater control over cost, which is critical at a time when research firm IDC estimates that nearly two-thirds of organizations are spending more on cloud than initially budgeted. Policymakers need to make this multicloud modernization process a reality by investing in the technology modernisation fund allowing government agencies to replace legacy equipment with upgraded multi-

cloud computing solutions that will ensure agencies can provide critical services quickly and securely. This will require that all agencies conduct multicloud computing readiness assessments through an evaluation of current IT infrastructure, processes, and policies to determine the best path for adoption. The assessment should look at things like are the agency's applications considered cloud-enabled, what is the cost of migration, do cloud computing solutions meet security and compliance requirements, as well as what is the impact on civil service employees. We cannot fight off cyberattacks and provide the best services possible in the digital age with inadequate and outdated IT infrastructure. Adopting a multicloud approach will help secure management critical data, cut costs, and allow for our government to use the solutions that are most effective to meet our citizens' needs. (The writer is Lead Solution Architect, Dell Technologies India; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

### UNDERSTANDING THE DIVINE HAND

Recognise and reciprocate God's boundless efforts by embracing dharma



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

We don't give credit to God, because we take it for granted that Creation will go on. How about a business? We are all aware that it has limited longevity, however long it may run. But Creation, which is God's business runs and runs. Why? Because God keeps it going. Just picture this. There are many nuclear-armed countries; some of whom have crazy leaders. How does God prevent an all-out nuclear war? Simple; God has access to our hearts. He knows what we are thinking. (The Bhagavad-Geeta 13.2) And He knows how to mould it if His Creation is at risk. God is fully alert all the time; there is no chance of a slip-up. And we may be thinking that God is sitting somewhere or even sleeping. If this task undertaken by the Lord was not too much, just imagine being available to all eight billion of us all the time. You pray and God has to respond appropriately, if at all warranted. Why? Because most of the prayers are ridiculous like a student, having not studied all year, who prays for passing.

How does God achieve this task? Lord Krishna explains, "Having limbs on all sides; having eyes, head and mouth on all sides; having ears on all sides, God is situated in this world pervading all. (13.13) God does it in His unmanifest form. (9.4) He doesn't have to be doing it in gross form like we perceive someone to do. God is different from us, very different. If this task is not onerous enough, God ensures that we are justly rewarded and yes, punished also. Justice is always done, and no one is rewarded at the expense of another. Imagine two teams playing and their supporters fervently praying for victory. Who wins? The team with the right karmaphalas of course, i.e. what was destined. We don't know how it was arrived at but be sure that this was the right result.

Yes, God responds to prayers, but only to those who deserve it. And He knows who deserves it; more praying is not sufficient. One must pray and also qualify for a favourable result. If we wish to know what is required to qualify for God's kripa (favour), God has given detailed instructions in bonafide scriptures like the Bhagavad-Geeta. Additionally, God is very keen to guide, us if we pray sincerely for it. Picture our requesting for guidance from a local if lost. What does the local do? He does his best



to help us. God is not different; He helps. God is very much in the picture to safeguard good people from demons, as there is always a tussle going on between divine and demonic forces. God sides with the divine forces without infringing dharma, as was done in the Mahabharata War and during Lord Ramachandra's incarnation; the Lord killed Ravana among many other demons. Not only big killing, God takes care of all big tasks as Karta (doer) for His devotees.

How do you think Arjuna was able to kill/maim big warriors? Because God controls all the relevant five factors for success; nobody else has this control; we can control only ourselves. The place of action is determined by circumstances. Similarly, the instruments at our disposal are limited, for example, a doctor is hampered if all the right medicines are not readily available. Our efforts are also limited because we are limited by our health, etc. And the providence is surely not in our control. (18.14) God has no such infirmities.

God is always very busy. Not only engaged, but God is very carefully engaged in action. Why? Because men follow His lead, God is the most superior entity. As pointed out earlier, God has taken upon Himself many tasks; I have pointed out only a few. What is the message of this article? That we should become aware of God's enormous contribution to our well-being if we choose to take His shelter and follow His instructions, especially dharma. What does God want in return from us? That we should work actively towards our progress and help and serve others so that they do likewise. God wants us to be useful just as God is. (The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

# Wake-up call against rising plastic pollution



SRIRAJ KOTA

International Plastic Bag Free Day, observed annually on July 3, aims to raise awareness about the escalating crisis of plastic pollution



The International Plastic Bag Free Day is celebrated on Jul 3 every year. The awareness created due to observance of this day helps put focus on the threat of the silently growing footprint of plastic pollution. This is essential given the fact that plastic pollution, especially of Single Use Plastics (SUP) has now permeated all aspects of the environment. Today SUP and plastic microfibre pollution can be found from the highest point to the deepest part of the earth. The influx of 45,000 trekkers per year to Mt. Everest has unfortunately ensured that microplastic pollution can now be found in snow samples close to the peak of the world's highest mountain. Similarly, relentless marine traffic and indiscriminate disposal of garbage into the oceans has resulted in high microplastic pollution across the seas including in The Mariana Trench, Earth's deepest point in the Pacific Ocean, more than 11 km deep from mean sea level. As humanity achieves this dubious distinction of spreading litter to virtually all corners of the planet, India unfortunately is firmly at the forefront of plastic pollution spree. The figures speak for themselves. According to the Plastic Overshoot Day report by Swiss non-profit EA, Earth Action states that global plastic waste generation has risen by 7.11 per cent since 2021. The world is estimated to have generated 220 million tons of plastic waste this year, 70 million tons of which will end up polluting the environment. India is not far behind. India ranks 3rd globally contributing 5.5 KT of SUP and ranked ninety-fourth with per capita single-use plastic waste of 4 kg per year. The much-publicised SUP ban in India addresses only 11 per cent of the entire gamut of SUP plastic waste. India is among the twelve countries responsible



THE VARIOUS WATER BODIES IN THE COUNTRY ARE RIFE WITH MICROPLASTIC CONTAMINATION. IN THIS REGARD, INDIA CAN TAKE A LEAF OUT OF THE INNOVATIVE INITIATIVE TAKEN BY GERMANY. WASSER 3.0 IN GERMANY HAS PERFECTED THE PROCESS OF NOT ONLY REMOVING MICROPLASTICS BUT ALSO MICRO-POLLUTANTS FROM WATER

for 60 per cent of the planet's mismanaged plastic waste. With a population of more than 1.44 billion, India generates 26,000 tonnes of plastic waste every day. This is the equivalent of approximately 26,000 small cars. Unfortunately, only 8 per cent of this plastic is recycled. The Swiss report also states that India is poised to release 391,879 tonnes of microplastic into water bodies by the end of 2024. Second only to China. With abysmal conditions such as these, India's grip on plastic pollution can at best be described as feeble. The efforts to rein in the runaway plastic pollution have to begin at the grassroots level.

The International Plastic Bag Free Day focuses on the same by increasing awareness about the harmful impact of plastic bag usage and pollution. Additionally, stress is also laid on encouraging individuals, businesses, and organisations to adopt sustainable alternatives for SUP products. The special day urges governments across the world to step up policy changes and introduce radical systemic solutions to reduce plastic use and waste. The current statistics of plastic pollution in India demand serious and innovative solutions that look beyond the traditional answers such as simple unsorted recycling of plastic, landfilling or co-processing. The need of the hour is ultra-innovative remedies that deliver scalable and sustainable results in

record time. While India continues to construct a circular economy that reduces plastic waste, the focus must now be firmly shifted to handling the plastic pollution problem on large scale basis. As a part of this India must set up large-scale waste sorting facilities that can use artificial intelligence-based algorithms to automatically sift through various types of plastic waste and identify the same. This as compared to traditional recycling methods can speed up the process of recycling and therefore increase the quantum of plastic recycled at the facility in one shift. This in turn can ensure that the facility can sort and recycle an entire district's monthly plastic waste within a week. An example in this regard is Sweden's plastic waste sorting facility called Site Zero which can handle up to 200,000 tonnes of plastic packaging every year, more than any other facility in the world, and enough to deal with the whole country's household plastic packaging waste. Similarly, microplastic pollution in water is a major concern.

The various water bodies in the country and the seas are rife with microplastic contamination. In this regard, India can take a leaf out of the innovative initiative taken by Germany. Wasser 3.0 in Germany has perfected the process of not only removing microplastics but also micro-pollutants from water—that too without any filters.

The process followed is called "Agglomeration Fixation" which clumps microplastics together on the surface of the water after which they are simply skimmed off. The process is simple, scalable with no side effects and can be applied to a variety of water bodies be it freshwater, seawater or even wastewater. Furthermore, the science of biochemical research can be leveraged to access plastic-degrading enzymes that can degrade and consume plastic waste in record time. This can go a long way in accelerating a year's plastic waste recycling activity to a few months.

With the aid of science, and artificial intelligence (AI) software the possibilities of innovative plastic pollution combat options are endless. AI aided by satellite support for instance can help India clean up its seas on a large-scale manner, special software-driven clean-up technologies can dredge up decades of plastic and other pollutants thereby providing a chance of survival for the delicate marine life. Plastic is in our everyday life and diet as well. A World Wildlife Fund study has revealed that an average human being ingests 5 gm of plastic every week. It is time to cut the growing footprint of this harmful substance to size in the interests of mankind and the environment. So next time we reach for that plastic bag, let us not.

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

# Unveiling the leadership legacy of Narendra Modi: A definitive exploration

A new book, 'Power Within: The Leadership Legacy of Narendra Modi,' offers a profound examination of Modi's leadership journey

Last ten years have been dominated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the helm of affairs. An outsider as he would call him has made deep inroads into the Indian politics as also into the hearts and minds of the millions of Indians who adore him for his unwavering determination and fulfil his promise of making India a developed nation. His leadership is indeed exemplary and has provided the country with a sense of purpose and confidence.

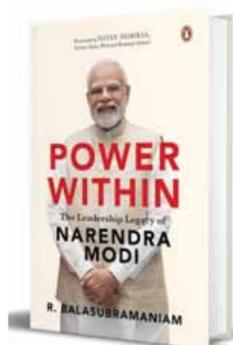


MADHU SEN

A new book delving into the leadership qualities of Narendra Modi is a treat. Power Within: The Leadership Legacy of Narendra Modi, authored by the distinguished development scholar Dr R Balasubramaniam, offers an

in-depth exploration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership journey, meticulously capturing his contributions to India's socio-economic landscape. Launched amidst notable dignitaries such as former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant, NASSCOM President Debjani Ghosh, and Prof. B Mahadevan from IIM Bengaluru, the book is a testament to PM Modi's significant impact on the nation's

development, particularly in the realm of digital public infrastructure. Dr. Balasubramaniam, renowned for his pioneering work with rural and tribal communities, brings a unique perspective to the narrative. He contrasts Western trait-oriented leadership approaches with Indian practice-oriented philosophies, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics. This blend of perspectives provides a nuanced view of Modi's fifty years in public life, from his formative years to his tenure as Prime Minister, underscoring the enduring qualities that have defined his leadership. The book is particularly compelling in its discussion of PM Modi's role in the digital trans-



formation of India. As highlighted by Amitabh Kant during the launch, under Modi's leadership, India has achieved an astounding 130 billion fast

payment transactions annually. This achievement, stemming from initiatives such as the 100 Digital Melas in 2017, reflects Modi's relentless and meticulous approach to enhancing digital public infrastructure. Kant's insights, drawn from his tenure as NITI Aayog CEO, provide a vivid illustration of Modi's forward-thinking vision and commitment to digital inclusion. Dr. Balasubramaniam captures these achievements through a series of poignant anecdotes and testimonies from Modi's colleagues, including Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. The narrative paints a vivid picture of a leader dedicated to self-discovery and service, striving to uplift the nation through innovation and hard work. The

author's detailed exploration of Modi's leadership style, juxtaposing it with both Western and Indic leadership frameworks, offers valuable lessons for aspiring leaders and public servants. His work encapsulates wisdom on leadership and its true essence. He suggests that, "exercising leadership is a way of giving meaning to our lives by contributing to the lives of others. And such an opportunity to express leadership crosses our paths every day. What is required is the sensitivity to recognize purpose when it emerges and the courage to act on it as a labour of love."

Notable figures such as Anand Mahindra, Chairman of the Mahindra Group, and Falguni Nayar, Founder and CEO of

Nykaa, have praised the book for its thought-provoking insights and its ability to shift perceptions on leadership. Mahindra hails it as a work that will "undoubtedly change perspectives and perceptions on powerful leadership," while Nayar emphasizes its relevance in understanding the dynamics that have propelled India to new heights. Power Within is more than a biography; it is a guide to understanding the essence of leadership. Dr. Balu's reflections on the nature of leadership, emphasizing the importance of sensitivity to purpose and the courage to act, resonate deeply. His portrayal of leadership as a labor of love, a way of giving meaning to our lives by contributing to others, is a pow-

erful message that underlines the entire narrative. The book is a must-read for anyone interested in leadership, public service, and the transformative journey of one of India's most influential leaders. Dr. Balasubramaniam's nuanced portrayal of Narendra Modi's legacy provides not just a look at the man behind the political figure, but also a roadmap for those aspiring to lead with purpose and integrity. Power Within: The Leadership Legacy of Narendra Modi promises to be an essential addition to the library of anyone seeking to understand the dynamics of impactful leadership.

(The writer is a senior journalist and an arts critic; views are personal)

# 'Israel has made largest West Bank land seizure in 3 decades'

AP ■ JERUSALEM

An anti-settlement watchdog says Israel has approved the largest seizure of land in the occupied West Bank in over three decades. The Israeli group Peace Now said Wednesday that authorities recently approved the appropriation of 12.7 sq km (nearly 5 sq miles) of land in the Jordan Valley. The group's data indicate it was the largest single appropriation approved since the 1993 Oslo accords at the start of the peace process. The land appropriation was likely to worsen already soaring tensions linked to the ongoing Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Violence has surged in the West Bank since the start of the war, with Israel carrying out near-daily military raids that often spark deadly gunbattles with Palestinian militants. The land seizure, which was approved late last month but only publicised on Wednesday, comes after the seizure of 8 sq km (roughly 3 square miles) of land in the West Bank in March and 2.6 sq km (1 square mile) in February. That makes 2024 by far the peak year for Israeli land seizure in the West Bank, Peace Now said. The parcels are contiguous and located northeast of the West Bank city of Ramallah, where the Western-backed

## Strike kills family as Israeli evacuation order sparks panicked flight from Gaza

Deir Al-Balah (Gaza Strip) (AP) An Israeli airstrike killed a prominent Palestinian doctor and eight members of his extended family after they complied with military orders to evacuate their home and moved into an Israeli-designated safe zone.

The Hamdan family — around a dozen people from three generations — fled their home in the middle of the night after the Israeli military ordered an evacuation from the southern Gaza city of Khan Younis. They found refuge with extended relatives in a building further north, inside an Israeli-declared safe zone. But hours after they arrived, an Israeli airstrike on Tuesday afternoon hit their building in the town of Deir al-Balah, killing nine members of the family and three others. In all, five children and three women were among the dead, according to hospital records and a relative who survived. Israel's order on Monday for people to leave the eastern half of Khan Younis — the territory's second-largest

city — has triggered the third mass flight of Palestinians in as many months, throwing the population deeper into confusion, chaos and misery as they scramble once again to find safety.

About 250,000 people live in the area covered by the order, according to the United Nations. Many of them had just returned to their homes there after fleeing Israel's invasion of Khan Younis earlier this year — or had just taken refuge there after escaping Israel's offensive in the city of Rafah, further south. The order also prompted a frantic flight from European General Hospital, Gaza's second-largest hospital, located in the evacuation area. The facility shut down after staffers and more than 200 patients were evacuated overnight and on Tuesday, along with thousands of displaced who had sheltered on the hospital grounds, according to the staff and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which had a medical team there.

Palestinian Authority is headquartered. By declaring them state lands, the Israeli government has opened them up to being leased to Israelis and prohibited private Palestinian ownership.

The Palestinians view the expansion of settlements in the occupied West Bank as the main barrier to any lasting peace agreement and most of the international community considers them illegal or illegitimate. Israel's current government considers the West Bank to be the historical and religious heartland of the Jewish people and is opposed to Palestinian statehood. Israel captured the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Mideast war. The Palestinians want all three territories for a future state. Israel has built well over 100 settlements across the West Bank, some of which resemble fully developed suburbs or small towns. They are home to over 500,000 Jewish settlers who have Israeli citizenship. The 3 million Palestinians in the West Bank live under seemingly open-ended Israeli military rule. The Palestinian Authority administers parts of the Israeli-occupied West Bank but is barred from operating in 60% of the territory, where the settlements are located.

# Stop Labour's 'supermajority': UK PM's message as election campaign winds up

PTI ■ LONDON

Stop Labour's "supermajority" is the final message British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is trying to drive home on Wednesday, the final day of campaigning ahead of polling day on Thursday, as most of the incumbent Conservatives seem to have all but conceded defeat in the general election. "This is what unites us. We need to stop the Labour supermajority that will put up your taxes. The only way to do that is to vote Conservative tomorrow," said 44-year-old Sunak on social media, as he focused on drumming up support in the last few hours of the campaign trail.

With his party trailing far behind the Keir Starmer-led Labour Party, the British Indian leader and his team's strategy seems to be to canvas their traditional voters to ensure a strong enough turnout in the polls on Thursday and narrow the gap of their widely expected defeat after Tory victories in the last three elections.

"I totally accept where the polls are at the moment means that tomorrow is likely to see the largest Labour landslide majority — the largest majority that this country has ever seen. Much bigger than 1997," Sunak's Work and Pensions Secretary Mel Stride told the BBC.



"I have accepted that where the polls are at the moment... that we are therefore tomorrow highly likely to be in a situation where [Labour has] the largest majority that any party has ever achieved," he said, effectively conceding his party's defeat. It is being seen as a fear tactic to jolt Tory voters into action, with the hope of keeping the Labour majority under that won by former prime minister Tony Blair led Labour Party in 1997 of 179 seats. "Thursday's vote is now all about forming a strong enough Opposition. One needs to read the writing on the wall: it's over, and we need to prepare for the reality and frustration of the Opposition," Suella Braverman,

sacked as home secretary by Rishi Sunak, told 'The Telegraph'. Meanwhile, former prime minister Boris Johnson — not exactly a close ally of Sunak ever since the partygate scandal of COVID pandemic law-breaking parties — was also rolled out by the party at a campaign event in London to warn against a "sledgehammer majority" being handed to the Keir Starmer led Labour Party. "When Rishi asked me to come and help, of course I couldn't say no. We're all here because we love our country," Johnson told a cheering Tory crowd. "They can achieve nothing in this election except to usher in

the most left-wing Labour government since the war with a huge majority, and we must not let it happen," he warned. The Labour Party, meanwhile, is keen to override this message of victory as a foregone conclusion a day before the polls to fight against any complacency within the ranks and among its own voter base.

"People are saying the polls predict the future — they don't predict the future, every single vote counts, every single vote has to be earned... It isn't 'job done'," said Starmer. Polling experts have forecast a low turnout, which stood at 67 per cent in the last general election in December 2019 when Johnson won a solid majority on his "get Brexit done" message. On Thursday, polling booths will open across the country at 7am local time and close at 10pm local time as voters elect their MPs for the UK Parliament's 650 constituencies — with 326 required for a majority and to avert a hung Parliament. All eyes will then be on the election night exit poll at 10pm, which gives a fair snapshot of what can be expected nationally as the counting commences and centres up and down the UK. If opinion polls are to be believed, the incumbent Tories are in line to win anywhere between 53 and 150 seats, with Labour projected to win a landslide.

# Deuba asks PM Prachanda to quit to allow formation of new govt

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepali Congress president Sher Bahadur Deuba Wednesday asked Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' to step down and pave the way for the formation of a new government after the Himalayan nation's two largest political parties struck a power-sharing deal to oust the former guerrilla leader. "The Prime Minister should resign after the largest parties NC and UML said that they would form a new government together," Deuba told reporters after a crucial meeting of the party at his residence at Budhanilkantha on the outskirts of Kathmandu. Deuba, 78, and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman K P Sharma Oli, 72, — both former premiers — inked a power-sharing deal Monday night to form a new government. They

agreed to share the Prime Ministerial position on a rotation basis for the rest of the term of the Parliament.

Nepali Congress, the largest party in the 275-member House of Representatives, has 89 seats at present, while CPN-UML has 78 seats. Their combined strength of 167 is sufficient for a majority of 138 seats in the lower house. Prachanda's party has 32 seats.

The Nepali Congress Central Work Performance Committee (CWC) met at Deuba's residence at Budhanilkantha to discuss the current political situation and the party's future strategy.

"The meeting reviewed the latest political situation in the country and discussed the future course of action," said former foreign minister Narayan Prakash Saud. The meeting also endorsed the agreement reached between Deuba and Oli to form a new coalition and share the post of

Prime Minister on a rotation basis.

The meeting mainly discussed the agenda and modality of formation of the new coalition government, said Saud, who is also a Nepali Congress central committee member.

The seven-point deal finalised between Deuba and Oli on Monday night includes the sharing of the remaining three-year term of Parliament between the two parties, the ministerial division, provincial leadership roles and a rotation for the prime ministerial position. Oli will assume the post of Prime Minister in the first phase and after one-and-a-half-year, the Nepali Congress will get the leadership of the government.

Speaking to journalists after the meeting, party spokesperson Dr Prakash Sharan Mahat said, "The prime minister should pave the way after the largest parties —

Nepali Congress and UML — said they would form a new government together. This is also included in the decision." "Other parties, too, are supporting the new Nepali Congress-UML alliance. So, the Nepali Congress CWC has requested the prime minister to pave the way," he added.

Mahat said a new government will be formed through the constitutional process if the prime minister does not pave the way for the formation of a new government.

A senior leader of CPN-UML indicated that all the ministers of the CPN-UML will resign en masse to put pressure on Prachanda to step down.

"Our ministers are ready to quit the post en masse but we are waiting for the Prime Minister to resign by Wednesday evening," said Bishnu Rijal, central committee member of UML. The UML has already urged the Prime

Minister to resign from the post paving the way for the new government formation.

Meanwhile, the spokesperson of Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal Manish Suman said that his party will support the new coalition but has not yet decided on joining the government.

JSP Nepal has five members in the Parliament. Rastriya Prajatantra Party with 14 members in the House of Representatives and Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party with four seats have also indicated support for the new coalition.

However, embattled Prime Minister Prachanda has refused to resign from the post and said he would rather face a vote of confidence in Parliament.

According to the constitutional provision, the prime minister losing a majority support in the House will be required to prove a majority within 30 days. The prime minister must seek a vote of

confidence once a ruling alliance withdraws support. This will be the fifth time Prachanda, 69, will seek a vote of confidence within a term of one and a half years.

The former guerrilla leader has won three votes of confidence in Parliament.

The CPN-UML has already urged Prime Minister Prachanda to step down from the position so that a new government can be formed as per the constitutional provision.

It also asked all the political parties to join the "national government" under the leadership of Oli to bolster political stability in the country.

But delaying its earlier decision, the party has decided to not recall ministers from the Prachanda-led Cabinet immediately.

"We don't want more animosity [against the CPN-Maoist Centre] and so we did not recall our ministers today,"

# UK election set to deliver more diverse Parl, high number of British Indian MPs

PTI ■ LONDON

The UK general election on Thursday is expected to deliver the most diverse Parliament in the country's history, including in the number of parliamentarians of Indian heritage likely to be elected from across the nation. According to an analysis by the British Future think tank, the Labour Party is set to have by far the largest number of ethnic minority MPs if the party wins an overall majority and even more in a landslide scenario. With around 14 per cent of MPs coming from an ethnic minority background this time, the analysis finds that the new Parliament will be closer than ever to reflecting the diversity of the British electorate. "This election will see the biggest rise in ethnic minority representation and the most diverse Parliament ever," said Sunder Katwala, Director of British Future. "In the space of 40 years, we'll have gone from zero to one in seven MPs being from an ethnic minority background. Britain is closing the gap between the diversity of Parliament and the electorate much faster than anyone thought possible," he said.

The last general election in 2019 resulted in 15 MPs of Indian heritage crossing over the line, many of whom are contesting again alongside several first-timers. Conservative Party MP Alok Sharma and Labour veteran Virendra Sharma are among the most high-profile British Indians not seeking re-election this time, from Reading West and Ealing Southall, respectively. The latter constituency, with a large Punjabi electorate, has two British Sikh candidates contesting as Independents — Sangeet Kaur Bhail and

Jaginder Singh. Some of the key British Indian candidates to watch in Thursday's polls include Praful Nargund, who is contesting for the Labour Party in Islington North — the seat of the party's now-suspended former leader Jeremy Corbyn, who is contesting as an Independent candidate.

Jas Athwal is contesting in another Labour stronghold of Iford South, while Baggy Shanker in Derby South, Satvir Kaur in Southampton Test, and Harpreet Uppal in Huddersfield are contesting more marginal seats for the party. Rajesh Agrawal, the Indore-born former Deputy Mayor of London for Business, is fighting to become a first-time MP from Leicester East and is up against a fellow British Indian Conservative candidate, Shivani Raja. This constituency, representing a large Indian heritage electorate, will be keenly watched as its former long-term Goan-origin MP, Keith Vaz, is also in the race as an Independent candidate.

British Sikhs, including solicitor Warinder Juss from Wolverhampton West in central England and Gurinder Singh Josan from Smethwick, will be hoping to make gains for Labour, as will Bihar-born Kanishka Narayan contesting in Vale of Glamorgan — hoping to be elected as the first Indian-origin MP from Wales, and Sonia Kumar hoping to overturn a Tory majority in Dudley. For the Conservative Party, Chandra Kanneganti in Stoke-on-Trent Central and Ameet Jogia in Hendon are facing a tough fight in a race consistently forecast in favour of the Opposition Labour Party. "A diverse parliament brings different perspectives to its work, which can lead to more effective policy-making.

# Egypt swears in new Cabinet

Cairo (AP): Egypt's new Cabinet was sworn in Wednesday as the country faces an ailing economy and raging conflicts in neighbouring nations. Prime Minister Mustafa Madbouly — who was first appointed in 2018 — has been again tapped to form the new Cabinet which includes several technocrats. Some ministers, including those in charge of police and tourism, remain in place, but others, particularly defence, foreign affairs and economy-related portfolios, represent major challenges. The ministers have taken the oath before President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi in Cairo. Among the changes were the finance, electricity, justice, petroleum, education and investment portfolios. The new government comes three months after el-Sissi was sworn in for his third term.

# Trump Campaign outraises Biden by over \$67 mn in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Republican presumptive nominee and former president Donald Trump has out-raised incumbent President Joe Biden by over USD 67 million in the second quarter of this year by raising USD 331 million. Trump, 78, the presumptive Republican Party candidate, is pitched against 81-year-old incumbent President Joe Biden for the November 5 presidential elections. The Trump Campaign raised USD 331 million against the USD 264 million raised by the Biden-Harris Campaign during the second quarter of this year, according to the figures released by the two campaigns. However, the Biden-Harris Campaign out-raised Trump in June, raising a record USD 127 million. Of this, USD 38 million was raised in the four days following the first presidential debate in Atlanta on June 27.



The Biden-Harris Campaign has USD 240 million in cash on hand — up from USD 212 million last month. Team Trump's cash on hand at the end of June is USD 284.9 million. "President Trump's campaign fundraising operation is thriving day after day and month after month. Winning this quarter brought us a cash-on-hand advantage, which is punctuated by a Biden burn rate that grows while yielding no tangible results for them," said Chris LaCivita and Susie Wiles from the Trump Campaign. "Despite Biden spending nearly USD 120 million on TV, cable and radio alone, polling and voter enthusiasm continue to grow for President Trump. This fundraising momentum is likely to grow even more as we head into a world-class convention and see the Democrats continue their circular firing squad in the aftermath of Biden's debate collapse," they said.

"June's USD 127 million haul was not just Team Biden-Harris' best month overall, it was the strongest grassroots month to date. Nearly two-thirds of June's raise came from grassroots donors, and of the USD 38 million raised following the debate, more than USD 30 million came from grassroots donations," said the Biden-Harris Campaign. This second quarter haul is USD 75 million more than Team Biden-Harris' raise in the first quarter of 2024. Since launch, more than 2.5 million Americans have contributed to Team Biden-Harris — more than 1.1 million of them are brand new donors, it said. Team Biden-Harris also now has 1.3 times more recurring donations than at this point in the 2020 cycle, and 95 per cent of all donations are less than USD 200 — another proof point of strong, sustained grassroots support, it said. "Our Q2 fundraising haul is a testament to the committed and growing base of supporters standing firmly behind the President and Vice President and clear evidence that our voters understand the choice in this election between President Biden fighting for the American people and Donald Trump fighting for himself as a convicted felon," said Biden-Harris 2024 Campaign

Manager Julie Chavez Rodriguez. "President Biden is building a positive future for our country — where every American has a fair shot, our rights are protected, and our president fights to strengthen our democracy — not tear it apart," she said. "And on the other side, every single day, Trump becomes more unhinged and dangerous, whether he's bragging about his role in overturning Roe or proudly and openly refusing to commit to accepting the results of this November's election," she added. National Democratic Committee Chair Jaime Harrison said in June, Democrats had their best fundraising month to date. "These dollars will go to opening offices, hiring staff, and spreading Democrats' message of hope — all of which will power Joe Biden and Kamala Harris back to the White House," he said.

# Indian mission in NY launches initiative to help students find internship opportunities

New York (PTI): In a new initiative to support Indian students here, the Consulate General of India in New York has developed a special platform for them to find internship opportunities at companies in the US as well as provide access to attorney and medical information. The Consulate General of India in New York serves the north-eastern US states of Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Vermont. As part of the initiative to support Indian students in its jurisdiction, @IndainNew York has developed a platform for Indian Students to find internship opportunities at companies in the USA, the Indian Consulate said in a post on X on Tuesday. The new facility for students is part of

the Consulate's effort to support Indian students in its jurisdiction. "Several Indian and American companies and organisations have agreed to consider deserving Indian students for internship opportunities," the Consulate said, adding that students are advised to apply directly to the companies as per the details provided in the portal. The portal lists student internship opportunities in companies across several sectors such as finance, IT, investment banking, automotive, software, science and technology, healthcare, hotels, multinational corporations and technology, government agencies, aviation, artificial intelligence, pharma and Tata Sons. The Consulate is also offering attorney and doctor information to support and help the students.

Committed to serving the Indian diaspora, the Consulate said it has reached out to some renowned attorneys within its jurisdiction who have agreed to "assist distressed Indians residing in the Northeast United States of America." "Members of the community may reach out to the Attorneys directly with the Consulate General's reference. It may please be noted that this initiative is aimed at assisting the Indian community and that the Consulate does not hold any responsibility for the outcome of the case," it said. Further, the Consulate has also reached out to some renowned doctors in its jurisdiction, who have agreed to assist Indian students enrolled in the 10 states under its jurisdiction with "psychiatry counselling and other consultations (including via telemed if needed)".

# Beryl heads toward Jamaica

St Georges (AP): Hurricane Beryl roared through open waters Tuesday as a powerful Category 4 storm heading toward Jamaica after earlier crossing islands in the southeast Caribbean, killing at least six people. A hurricane warning was in effect for Jamaica, Grand Cayman, Little Cayman, and Cayman Brac. Beryl was losing intensity but was forecast to still be near major-hurricane strength when it passes near or over Jamaica early Wednesday, near the Cayman Islands on Thursday and into Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula on Friday, according to the National Hurricane Centre. A hurricane watch was in effect for Haiti's southern coast and the Yucatan's east coast. Belize

issued a tropical storm watch stretching south from its border with Mexico to Belize City. Late Monday, Beryl became the earliest storm to develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic and peaked at winds of 165 mph (270 kph) Tuesday before weakening to a still-destructive Category 4. On Tuesday night, the storm was about 300 miles (480 kilometres) east-southeast of Kingston, Jamaica. It had top winds of 150 mph (240 kph) and was moving west-northwest at 22 mph (35 kph), the centre said. Beryl was expected to bring life-threatening winds and storm surge to Jamaica, where officials warned residents in flood-prone areas to prepare for evac-

uation. "I am encouraging all Jamaicans to take the hurricane as a serious threat," Prime Minister Andrew Holness said in a public address Tuesday. "It is, however, not a time to panic." In Miami, National Hurricane Centre Director Michael Brennan said Jamaica appears to be in the direct path of Beryl. "We are most concerned about Jamaica, where we are expecting the core of a major hurricane to pass near or over the island," he said in an online briefing. "You want to be in a safe place where you can ride out the storm by nightfall (Tuesday). Be prepared to stay in that location through Wednesday." Storm surge of 6-9 feet (1.8 to 2.7 metres) above typical tide levels are likely in

Jamaica, as well as heavy rainfall. "This is a big hazard in the Caribbean, especially with the mountainous islands," Brennan said. "This could cause life threatening flash floods and mudslides in some of these areas." A tropical storm warning was in place for the entire southern coast of Hispaniola, an island shared by Haiti and the Dominican Republic. As the storm barrelled through the Caribbean Sea, rescue crews in southeastern islands fanned out to determine the extent of the damage Beryl inflicted on Carriacou, an island in Grenada. Three people were reported killed in Grenada and Carriacou and another in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, officials said.

# 'Current Pak govt brought disrepute to country'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Bushra Bibi, the jailed wife of former prime minister Imran Khan, has claimed that Pakistan is now ruled by "fraudsters and thieves" and that the government is responsible for bringing disrepute to the country and its military. Bushra Biwi, the 49-year-old wife of the 71-year-old founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, has been imprisoned at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi since February. Khan has been imprisoned since last year. The Express Tribune newspaper reported: "Bushra Bibi, the jailed wife of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)'s imprisoned founding leader Imran Khan has said that the government is responsible for bringing disrepute to the country and its military."

"In the afterlife, there are two places: Alim Barzakh, where there are muttaqis (righteous people) and abstainers, while the other is the prison where souls come

to Earth, where there is a place where there is a government of devils," Bushra Bibi, said to be a faith healer, said while speaking informally with journalists at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi. "She went on to say that the country is ruled by fraudsters and thieves, and labelled every individual within the government as the devil," the newspaper reported. Khan has accused the current federal government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as illegitimate and accused the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) party of stealing its mandate in the February 8 general elections when candidates backed by PTI won the maximum number of seats. However, in a post-election deal, the PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party led by former foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, formed the government, sidelining Khan's PTI. Bushra, who was sentenced to 14 years in prison on January 31 along with Khan in the

Toshakhana (a gift repository) case, was first confined to their Bani Gala residence, declared a sub-jail. The couple was later acquitted in the case. However, both of them were later convicted in what is popular as the Iddat case in February, days before the general elections on February 8. A Pakistani anti-corruption court on Tuesday granted pre-arrest bail to her in a case of alleged corruption. Khan and Bibi, along with other accused, face charges of causing a loss of about Rs 50 billion to the national exchequer in the Al-Qadir Trust corruption case, which involves allegedly providing benefits to a property tycoon in return for getting land for a university. Judge Muhammad Ali Warraich presided over the hearing at Adiala Jail and approved her pre-arrest bail plea. However, despite the grant of bail, Bushra will remain behind bars due to a conviction in the illegal marriage case.

## Iddat case of Imran & Bushra: Court to announce verdict on July 12

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court on Wednesday said it will announce on July 12 the verdict on the appeals of Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi against their conviction in the illegal marriage case, the only case keeping the embattled former prime minister behind bars. On February 3 - days before the general elections on February 8 - an Islamabad court convicted the couple based on a complaint filed by Bushra Bibi's ex-husband, Khawar Fareed Maneka, who alleged that they contracted marriage during the former first lady's Iddat period. In Islam, a woman can't remarry before completing four months after divorce or the death of her husband. In his plea, Maneka urged the court to declare the marriage



null and void. After hearing the arguments, District and Sessions Court Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka adjourned the case until July 8 with remarks that the defence lawyer should complete their arguments. Judge Majoka also declared that the court must deliver its decision by July 12.

On June 27, the same court rejected the appeals of Khan and Bushra Bibi to suspend their sentences in the case. After the hearing, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Gohar Khan said that the Iddat case was a first of its kind designed to politically victimise Khan and put pressure on him. "A personal nature case was

created to bring Khan Sahib into compromising situations, but he has remained strong despite the involvement of a woman in this case," he said. Khan and Bibi married in 2018, the year Khan went on to win elections and become prime minister. Bibi was ostensibly his spiritual guide but the two developed affection for each other during their meetings. She got divorce from her husband of 28 years with whom she had five children. She is the third wife of Khan, a former cricketer hero, who during his heydays of sporting career had a playboy reputation. Khan, 71, has been behind bars since August last year after he was sentenced in the Toshakhana corruption case and subsequently sentenced in other cases ahead of the February 8 elections.

## Pakistan court acquits ex-PM Imran Khan in protest case

Islamabad: A Pakistani court on Wednesday acquitted former prime minister Imran Khan and several senior party colleagues in a case registered against them for protesting against the jailed premier's disqualification by the election commission in the Toshakhana corruption case. Other leaders who have been exonerated in the case by the district and sessions court here are Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Sheikh Rasheed, Asad Qaiser, Shehryar Afridi, Faisal Javed, Raja Khurram Nawaz and Ali Nawaz Awan. Judicial Magistrate Yasir Mehmood pronounced the verdict, which was reserved last week on the petitions seeking acquittal, during the hearing on Wednesday, the Geo News reported. The case was registered against the 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Khan and other politicians at Aabpara Police Station for protesting against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) Toshakhana corruption verdict in 2022, which disqualified him from holding office for a limited time. The Toshakhana is a department under the administrative control of the Cabinet Division and stores precious gifts given to rulers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and officials by heads of other governments and states and foreign dignitaries. The Toshakhana issue over the sale of state gifts received by the former cricketer-turned-politician became a major issue in national politics after the ECP disqualified Khan for making "false statements and incorrect declaration". Khan had earlier contended that recent amendments to the Elections Act 2017 limit the ECP's jurisdiction in deciding the qualification or disqualification of a member based on a court conviction. He had accused the ECP of acting with unlawful zeal and haste to exclude him from the February 8 general elections rather than ensuring fair and free elections. On August 5 last year, Khan was sentenced to three years in imprisonment and fined Rs 100,000 in the Toshakhana corruption case, a conviction later suspended by the Islamabad High Court. PTI

## 'China told coast guard to not interfere in detention of Taiwanese boat crew'

AP ■ TAIPEI

Taiwan said Wednesday that China warned Taiwan's coast guard against interfering in the detention of a Taiwanese fishing boat, in what is seen as Beijing's latest attempt to encroach on Taiwanese territory. The incident comes amid heightened political tensions following the election of President William Lai Ching-te, whose party rejects unification with the mainland, and an apparent threat by Beijing to execute supporters of Taiwanese independence. Taiwan's coast guard repeated its call for the release of the boat and its crew members who were taken from waters off the Taiwanese-controlled island of Kinmen just off the Chinese coast on Tuesday night. That call is complicated by China's refusal to communicate with Taiwan's government. A spokesperson for Taiwan's coast guard, Hsieh Ching-chin, said the boat was not in Chinese waters when it was boarded by Chinese agents

and steered to a port in the Chinese province of Fujian. "First, we call on the (Chinese side) to provide an explanation, and second to release the boat and its crew," Hsieh said. The Dajinman 88 was intercepted by two Chinese vessels, and Taiwan dispatched three vessels to help but the one that got close to the fishing boat was blocked by three Chinese boats and told not to interfere, the coast guard's initial statement said. Hsieh said four other Chinese boats joined in the operation, a sign of the massive expansion in recent years of China's navy, coast guard and maritime militia. The pursuit was called off to avoid escalating the conflict, Hsieh said. The boat had a captain and five other crew members, according to Taiwan's official Central News Agency. The crew are Taiwanese and Indonesian. The vessel was just over 20 km (12 miles) from Jinjiang in mainland China when it was boarded, Taiwanese authorities said. China claims self-governing Taiwan as its territory and says

the island must come under its control. Fishermen from both Taiwan and China regularly sail the stretch of water near Kinmen, and tensions have risen as the number of Chinese vessels has increased. In February, two Chinese fishermen drowned while being chased by Taiwan's coast guard off the coast of Kinmen, prompting Beijing to step up patrols. China has been increasing military action around Taiwan, as well as the island groups of Kinmen and Matsu, which lie within sight of the Chinese coast. More worrying is China's daily dispatch of warplanes and navy ships around the island and military exercises, seen as rehearsals for a potential blockade or invasion. Taiwan's Defence Ministry said 20 Chinese People's Liberation Army Air Force planes crossed the median line of the Taiwan Strait between Tuesday and Wednesday morning. Last month, China passed new injunctions threatening to hunt down and potentially

execute "die-hard Taiwan independence separatists". In response, Taiwan warned its citizens to avoid visiting the mainland and the semi-autonomous Chinese cities of Hong Kong and Macao. On Tuesday, a spokesman for the Chinese Cabinet's Taiwan Affairs Office said the threat would affect only a hard-core minority of Taiwanese, and accused the ruling Democratic Progressive Party of "willfully misinterpreting" the action in an attempt to spread fear. Taiwanese citizens overwhelmingly favour the island's current status as de-facto independent, even while it faces military threats and diplomatic isolation imposed by Beijing. A former Japanese colony, Taiwan rejoined China after World War II, but split away in 1949 as the Nationalists under Chiang Kai-shek were swept from the mainland by Ma Zedong's Communists. No peace treaty has ever been signed, even as ties including direct flights between the sides have burgeoned.

## Taliban and US envoys discuss release of American prisoners

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The Taliban's delegation to the third United Nations-led Doha meeting on increasing engagement with Afghanistan met with US envoys on the sidelines and discussed the two Americans imprisoned in the central Asian country. Zabihullah Mujahid told reporters in Kabul Wednesday that the meeting aimed at "finding a solution". He said: "During our meetings, we talked about the two American citizens who are in prison in Afghanistan," adding, "but they must accept Afghanistan's conditions. We also have prisoners in America, prisoners in Guantanamo. We should free our prisoners in exchange for them." Special Representative Tom West and Special Envoy Rina Amiri met directly with the Taliban, according to State Department spokesman Vedant Patel. West pressed for "the immediate and unconditional release of US citizens unjustly detained in Afghanistan," Patel said on Tuesday. When prodded if there was any headway on the matter, Patel said the issue "was

just raised." One of the two Americans believed to be held by the Taliban for nearly two years is Ryan Corbett who was abducted Aug 10, 2022, after returning to Afghanistan, where he and his family had been living at the time of the collapse of the US-backed government there a year earlier. He arrived on a valid 12-month visa to pay and train staff as part of a business venture he led aimed at promoting Afghanistan's private sector through consulting services and lending. Corbett has since been shuttled between multiple prisons, though his lawyers say he has not been seen since last December by anyone other than the people with whom he was detained. It was the first time that representatives of the Afghan Taliban administration attended the UN-sponsored meeting in the Qatari capital on Sunday and Monday that focused on increasing engagement with Afghanistan. However, a UN official said Monday the gathering did not translate into a recognition of the Taliban government.

Envoys from some two dozen countries also attended the meetings. The Taliban were not invited to the first meeting, and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said they set unacceptable conditions for attending the second one, in February, including demands that Afghan civil society members be excluded from the talks and that the Taliban be treated as the country's legitimate rulers. Ahead of Doha, representatives of Afghan women were excluded from attending, paving the way for the Taliban to send their envoys — though the organizers insisted that demands for women's rights would be raised. Mujahid said there was an opportunity for them to meet with representatives of various countries and they had 24 side-line meetings. He added that the messages from the Taliban "reached all participating" countries at the meeting. Afghanistan needs cooperation with the private sector and in the fight against drugs, he also said. "Most countries expressed their willingness to cooperate in these areas."

## Japan issues first new bills in two decades

Tokyo (AP): Japan issued its first new banknotes in two decades Wednesday, yen packed with 3-D hologram technology to fight counterfeiting. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida praised as "historic" the state-of-the-art anti-counterfeit traits of the new 10,000 yen, 5,000 yen and 1,000 yen bills. "I hope the people will like the new bills, and they will help energize the Japanese economy," he told reporters at the Bank of Japan. While the new bills were released with fanfare, currency already in use will remain valid. In fact, people will still need older bills to use most vending machines and to pay bus fares, local media reported. Kishida noted the people featured on the bills celebrate Japanese capitalism, women's equality and scientific innovation. The 10,000 yen bill, worth about USD 62 at the current exchange rate, has the face of Eiichi Shibusawa, known as "the father of

Japanese capitalism," a key figure in building Japan's modern economy. He is credited with founding hundreds of companies. The 5,000 yen bill, worth about USD 30, features Umeko Tsuda, a pioneer feminist and educator who founded a college. The 1,000 yen note, worth about USD 6.20, portrays physician and bacteriologist Shibasaburo Kitasato, who was instrumental in the research of tetanus and the bubonic plague. The backs of each of the bills feature Tokyo Station, wisteria flowers and ukiyo-e artist Katsushika Hokusai's Mount Fuji, respectively. The new bills also feature larger printing so they're easier to read, especially for the nation's aging population. By the end of March next year, nearly 7.5 billion new banknotes will have been printed, according to the government. The amount of money in the new bills going out in a single day is estimated at 1.6 trillion yen (USD 10 billion).

## Leaders of Russia and China to meet in Central Asian summit

AP ■ ASTANA

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping will meet Thursday for the second time in as many months as they travel to Kazakhstan for a session of an international group founded to counter Western alliances. Putin and Xi last got together in May when the Kremlin leader visited Beijing to underscore their close partnership that opposes the US-led democratic order and seeks to promote a more "multipolar" world. Now they'll be attending a session of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in the Kazakh capital of Astana. A look at the summit: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was established in 2001 by China and Russia to discuss security concerns in Central Asia and the wider region. Other members are Iran, India, Pakistan,

Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Observer states and dialogue partners include Turkiye, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Besides Putin and Xi, and summit host President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, other leaders there will be Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan, President Emomali Rakhmon of Tajikistan, and President Sadyr Zhaparov of Kyrgyzstan. President Alexander Lukashenko of Belarus will attend because his nation is becoming a full member. Iran is still choosing a successor to President Ebrahim Raisi, killed in a helicopter crash in May, with a runoff election Friday, so acting President Mohammad Mokhbar will attend. Other guests of the SCO include President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey and President Ilham Aliyev of Azerbaijan.

Also present will be UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who is visiting Central Asia. Guterres wants "to position the UN as an inclusive organisation that's talking to all the big clubs," said Alexander Gabuev, director of the Carnegie Russia Eurasia Centre. Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India is sending his foreign minister S Jaishankar. Putin wants to show that Russia is not isolated over Western sanctions from the invasion of Ukraine in 2022. An arrest warrant has been issued for him by the International Criminal Court for war crimes, accusing him of personal responsibility for abductions of children from Ukraine. Kazakhstan is not party to the Rome Statute and thus is not obliged to arrest him. For Putin, the meeting is about "prestige and the symbolic optics that he's not alone," Gabuev said. The meeting is another chance

for Putin and Xi to demonstrate the strong personal ties in their "strategic partnership" as they both face soaring tensions with the West. They have met more than 40 times. Putin's meeting with Xi in May showed how China has offered diplomatic support to Moscow and is a top market for its oil and gas. Russia has relied on Beijing as a main source of high-tech imports to keep its military machine running. The SCO helps China project its influence, especially across Central Asia and the Global South. Xi called for "bridges of communication" between countries last week and wants to further promote China as an alternative to the US and its allies. Erdogan could use the meeting to hold talks with Putin, who has postponed several visits to Turkiye. The leader of the NATO member has balanced relations with both Russia and Ukraine since the

war began, frequently offering to serve as a mediator. For most Kazakhstan and the other Central Asian nations, the meeting is a way to further their cooperation with bigger, more powerful neighbours. Kazakhstan, for instance, frequently engages with both neighbouring Russia and China, while also pursuing links with the West, with visits this year from US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and British Foreign Secretary David Cameron. Countering terrorism is a key focus. Russia had what it has called two terrorist attacks this year, with more 145 people killed by gunmen at a Moscow concert hall in March, and at least 21 people were killed in attacks on police and houses of worship in the southern republic of Dagestan in June. In the March violence, the US warned Russian officials about the possibility of an attack — information that was dismissed by Moscow.

The SCO is not a collective security or economic alliance, and there are "significant security differences between its members," said Nigel Gould-Davies, a senior fellow for Russia and Eurasia with the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London and a former British ambassador to Belarus. The "principal value" of the organisation lies in the optics of non-Western countries gathering together, he added. Gabuev agreed, saying the SCO is a place for conversation rather than a platform where "collective decisions are made, implemented and have an impact." This year, close Moscow ally Belarus will become a full member of the organisation, and its admission indicates how Russia wants to bolster blocs of non-Western countries. Gould-Davies said the SCO is raising its profile "by growing its membership rather than by deepening its cooperation."

## Malaysian court tosses jailed ex-PM's bid to serve graft sentence in house arrest

Kuala Lumpur (AP): A Malaysian court on Wednesday dismissed a bid by imprisoned former Prime Minister Najib Razak to serve his remaining corruption sentence under house arrest. In an April application, Najib said he had clear information that then-King Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah issued an addendum order allowing him to finish his sentence under house arrest. Najib claimed the addendum was issued during a Jan 29 pardons board meeting chaired by Sultan Abdullah, which also cut his 12-year jail sentence by half and sharply reduced a fine. Najib's counsel, Mohamed Shafee Abdullah, said it was disappointing for the High Court to rule Wednesday that the gov-

ernment has "no legal duty" to verify if such an order existed. He said they would file an appeal. "The court said there is no legal duty but in terms of ethics, the government should have answered," Shafee told a news conference at the court building. In his application, Najib has accused the pardons board, home minister, attorney-general and four others of concealing the sultan's order "in bad faith". Sultan Abdullah hails from Najib's hometown in Pahang. He ended his five-year reign on Jan 30 under Malaysia's unique rotating monarchy system. A new king took office Jan 31. Home Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said he had no knowledge of such an order as

he wasn't a member of the pardons board. The others named in Najib's application have not made any public comments. Shafee said Najib's application was not based on hearsay but that there was "digital evidence" of the addendum as Trade Minister Zafrul Aziz had taken a snapshot of it on his mobile phone when told by Sultan Abdullah. He said the government's silence also implied there is such an addendum order. "One thing is clear, not one person or any government institutions have said that this addendum doesn't exist. If it doesn't exist, just say so...If the government dare says clearly there is no addendum, we can all go home and sleep," he said.

## Employer arrested for Indian farm worker's death in Italy

Rome (PTI): Italian police have arrested the owner of the agricultural company who dumped a 31-year-old Indian worker on the road without medical assistance after his arm was severed by heavy farm machinery, causing his death, a tragic incident that shocked the country and its leadership. Satnam Singh was abandoned by his employer after a strawberry wrapping machine severed his arm in Lazio, near Rome, last month and died due to "copious bleeding", the ANSA news agency reported. The Sikh casual farm labourer died in a hospital in Rome two days later after being airlifted there when he was eventually found. Police on Tuesday arrested the alleged gangmaster, Antonello Lovato, on suspicion of caus-

ing Singh's manslaughter death, the report said. Prosecutors said in a statement that the Sikh farmer, who died of a massive haemorrhage in a Rome hospital, "would in all likelihood have been saved if he had been promptly assisted". "We were waiting for this news, we were angry," the president of the Lazio Indian community, Gurmukh Singh, said. "The worst thing (Lovato) did was to leave him outside his home instead of taking him to hospital," he was quoted as saying. "An accident can happen, but not calling for medical assistance is unacceptable," he said. Singh's death has spurred outrage at gangmastering, which is widespread in Italy, especially in the south of the country, and modern forms of slavery. According to an earlier report,

Lovato loaded Singh and his wife into a van and left them by the side of the road near their home. Singh's severed arm was placed in a fruit crate. Meanwhile, Singh's widow Soni, who was treated for shock after the incident, received a special 'justice' stay permit to end her illegal status in Italy, it said. On June 26, India asked Italy to take prompt action against those responsible for Singh's death. Muktesh Pardeshi, Secretary [CPV & OIA], conveyed to Luigi Maria Vignali, the Director General for Italian Citizens Abroad and Migration Policies, India's "deep concern" about the death of Singh, the Indian Embassy in Italy said in a post on X. He "called for prompt action against those responsible. Embassy is in con-

tact with the family of Satnam Singh for consular help & transportation of mortal remains," the mission added. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said last month that Singh, one of thousands of Indian immigrants who work the fields in the country, was the victim of "inhuman acts". "These are inhumane acts that do not belong to the Italian people. I hope that this barbarity will be punished harshly," she said following a Cabinet meeting. Italy's Minister of Labour, Marina Calderone, said the death of Singh had been an "act of barbarity". Opposition 5-Star Movement (M5S) leader Giuseppe Conte had urged Meloni to act to stamp out brutal gangmastering. "You lose your arm while

you're working in the fields for four euros an hour. You're not immediately treated. They put you in a van, and they dump you like rubbish outside your home," Conte wrote on X. "Beside you, a strawberry basket in which your severed arm is left. You bleed out and die. It sounds like the story of a slave centuries ago. We can't close our eyes, we can't think about making profits while cancelling the dignity of work and the last shreds of humanity," he wrote. "We are ready to do our bit in parliament against these barbarities, which must be rooted out of the fields all over Italy," he added. Gangmastering and the often violent exploitation of migrant farm labourers is a chronic problem in Italy, especially in the south.

# India's services sector growth rises in June: PMI

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India's services sector growth quickened in June from May's five-month low, amid a stronger rise in new orders and an unprecedented expansion in international sales, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index rose from 60.2 in May to 60.5 in June, pointing to a sharp expansion in output.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

"Activity growth in India's service sector accelerated in June, with the index rising by 0.3 ppt (percentage point) to 60.5, led by an increase in both domestic and international new orders. This encouraged services firms to increase their staffing levels at the fastest pace since August 2022," said Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

Demand strength and rising intakes of new business were cited as the key determinants of growth. New orders received by Indian service providers continued to increase in June, extending the current sequence of expansion to nearly three years.

There was also a record expansion in international orders. Asia, Australia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and the US were all cited as sources of new work from abroad.

Positive client appetite



encouraged service providers in India to recruit additional staff at the end of the first fiscal quarter. Staffing levels increased at the fastest pace since August 2022, as short-term and permanent staff were taken on to support pipelines of new work.

On the price front, service providers recorded a moderate increase in their average expenses due to higher food, fuel and labour costs. The pace of inflation was nevertheless the weakest in four months. Subsequently, selling prices also rose at the slowest pace since February.

Going ahead, service providers remained confident of a rise in business activity over the course of the coming 12 months, with nearly 23 per cent of panellists expressing optimism.

"Input costs rose at a moderate pace, resulting in a softer uptick in output charges in June. Overall, service providers remain confident about the year ahead business outlook,

# Food services market in India to reach ₹10 lakh crore by 2030: Report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

The food services market in India is expected to reach up to Rs 10 lakh crore by 2030 with the addressable customer base estimated to expand to up to 45 crore, according to a report.

The online food delivery segment is estimated to grow at 18 per cent CAGR (compound annual growth rate) and penetration is set to rise from 12 per cent in 2023 to 20 per cent by 2030, said the report titled 'How India Eats' by Bain & Company and Swiggy.

The food services market in India, which encompasses dining out and ordering in, is currently valued at Rs 5.5 lakh crore. The market is poised to grow at 10-12 per cent annually over the next seven years, reaching Rs 9 lakh crore to Rs 10 lakh crore by 2030, it said.

"This growth trajectory will be driven by robust fundamentals, including an expanding customer base, growing consumption occasions, and a rise in supply. Additionally, online food delivery is expected to grow faster at (around) 18 per cent CAGR, contributing 20 per cent to the overall food services market by 2030," the report said.

Swiggy Food Marketplace CEO Rohit Kapoor said the Indian food services market, especially food delivery, has witnessed buoyant growth over the last few years.

"Higher incomes, digitisation, improved customer experience, and an inclination to try new experiences have all contributed to this growth," he added.

Upbeat about the growth in the coming years, Kapoor said China has four times the number of restaurants per million urban population compared to India and the study highlights this headroom.

Bain & Company Partner and co-author of the report Navneet Chahal said the Indian food services market is at the cusp of transformation and the sector's dynamic nature, characterised by shifting consumer behaviours, digitisation, and regional diversity, offers immense growth potential.

"As we look toward the next decade, with an estimated growth rate of 10-12 per cent annually, exciting opportunities loom on both the demand and supply fronts. By 2030, the market is poised to serve an additional 110 million customers, gradually shifting eating out from a special event into a convenient lifestyle," she said.

The addressable customer base for the Indian food services market is expected to expand by 11 crore, growing from the current 32 crore to 34 crore to approximately 43 crore to 45 crore by 2030.

"This surge will be supported by macroeconomic tailwinds, including rapid urbanisation and a rise in affluence," the report said.

The study pointed out that approximately 70 per cent of food services consumption as of 2023 is concentrated in the top 50 cities and among upper-middle and high-income segments, which are expected to remain demand hotspots in the medium term.

# Sebi notifies institutional mechanism for brokers to prevent market abuse

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Markets regulator Sebi has notified an institutional mechanism that requires stock brokers to put in place systems for detection and prevention of market abuse.

Before this, there were no specific regulatory provisions that cast responsibility on brokers to have a system to prevent market abuse.

Under the institutional mechanism, broking firms as well as its senior management will be accountable for detection and prevention of fraud or market abuse, by setting up robust surveillance and control systems, according to a notification.

Further, brokers need to frame appropriate escalation and reporting mechanisms. Sebi has also listed out probable instances of fraud or market abuse which a broker's system needs to be equipped to monitor. The probable instances can include creation of misleading appearance of trading, price manipulation, front running, pump and dump, insider trading and mis-selling and unauthorised trading, including facilitation of 'mule accounts'.

In its notification dated June 27, the stock broker will have to inform details pertaining to detection of any suspicious activity to the stock exchanges within 48 hours from such detection.

Further, they will have to submit a summary analysis and action taken report on instances of suspicious activity, fraud and market abuse or a 'nil report' where no such instances were detected, on a half-yearly



basis to the stock exchanges. "Any deviation in adherence to internal controls, risk management policy, surveillance policy, policy for onboarding of clients along with the proposed corrective actions for such deviation shall be placed before the appropriate Committee, Board of Directors or such other equivalent or analogous bodies of the stock broker at regular intervals and such deviations shall also form a part of the report to be submitted by the stock broker to the stock exchanges," Sebi said.

The stock broker will have to establish and implement whistleblower policy providing for a confidential channel for employees and other stakeholders to raise concerns about suspected fraudulent, unfair or unethical practices. The policy should establish procedures to ensure adequate protection of whistleblowers.

Also, the regulator has tightened rules to curb trading through the mule accounts.

In its notification, Sebi said that transactions through mule accounts for indulging in manipulative, fraudulent and unfair trade practice shall be and shall always be deemed to have been included in PFUTP (Prohibition of Fraudulent and Unfair Trade Practices) norms.

Mule account is a trading account maintained with a stock broker or a demat account or bank account linked with such trading account, which is controlled by another person.

To give these effects, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has amended stock brokers and PFUTP rules that became effective from June 27.

# Tyre makers facing severe crunch in domestic natural rubber availability: ATMA

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Automotive Tyre Manufacturers' Association on Wednesday said its members are witnessing a 'severe crunch' in the availability of domestic natural rubber and it may disrupt production unless supply issues of the raw material are addressed.

Despite high prices of natural rubber (NR), its availability has shrunk, Automotive Tyre Manufacturers Association (ATMA) said, expressing apprehension that some "sections of natural rubber producing interests or trade are withholding the material in anticipation of an increase in the NR prices worsening the availability".

The "tyre industry has been

experiencing tightness in domestic availability of natural rubber for some time. However currently a severe crunch is being witnessed despite the fact that NR prices have touched a multi-year high. The paucity of natural price needs to be addressed at the earliest so that tyre production processes are not disrupted," ATMA Director General Rajiv Budhraj said in a statement.

The Rubber Board had estimated the total domestic natural rubber stock available in the country at 3.7 lakh tonnes at the start of the current fiscal, it said, adding that "unfortunately, the visibility of such a high stock to support domestic demand is not there".

# India faces high debt, but sustainable for now: NCAER director

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

At nearly 82 per cent of AGDP, India's public debt is very high, but the country doesn't face debt sustainability issue on account of high growth rate and higher share of local currency debt, NCAER Director General Poonam Gupta has said.

Participating in an event organised by NCAER, Gupta said India's high debt levels are sustainable for now because of higher real or nominal GDP and as most of

the debt is held in rupee. The states together hold one-third of the total debt, and in the 'business as usual' situation, their debt levels will only increase further over the next five years, Gupta said.

"In a handful of states like Punjab and Himachal Pradesh, Debt-to-GDP ratio could increase by 50 per cent," Gupta said, adding that the states, including the most indebted ones, also don't face sustainability issue as they have implicit guarantee of the Centre and as states cannot hold debt in foreign currency



or floating rate. Drawing a comparison between Punjab, one of the most indebted states, and Gujarat, with low debt, she pointed out that the most indebted states are ironically better off, as the interest rate

is similar for all and in fact more indebted states hold longer maturity and pay little premium.

"More prudent states need a better deal. They are de facto subsidizing the more indebted states. The Finance Commission may reward such states for their fiscal prudence, and incentivize the profligate ones to become fiscally more responsible," Gupta said.

Participating in the discussion on "States' Fiscal Challenges", M Govinda Rao, Councillor, Gujarat, cited "proliferation of subsidies for electoral gains" as one of the reasons for rising debt of the states.

Pointing to the Centre's overall responsibility of control of debt and stressing the need for a different approach, he said, "interest payments of profligate states are still taken as legitimate."

As of 2022-23, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Bihar are top three most indebted states, while least indebted are Odisha, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

# DigiPivot 5.0 to be launched

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

For the fifth consecutive year, Avtar, a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) Solutions firm, has teamed up with Google India and the Centre for Executive Education at the Indian School of Business (ISB) to launch DigiPivot 5.0. This initiative focuses on empowering women through free skill development in the digital marketing field. The move aims to provide career opportunities to women.

Dr Saundarya Rajesh, Founder-President of Avtar Group, underscored the transformative potential of

DigiPivot 5.0, inviting women from diverse career stages to participate. Registrations for DigiPivot 2024 are open and the last date for registration is July 9. She highlighted Avtar's research findings, stating that a significant portion of women on career breaks are eager to explore new career paths, while many in continuous employment seek meaningful transitions in their careers.

Dr Rajesh said that the field offers remote work flexibility, substantial earning opportunities, global prospects, and demands valuable digital skills.

# Rupee falls 4 paise to close at 83.52 against US dollar

**PTI ■ MUMBAI**

The rupee depreciated 4 paise to settle at 83.52 (provisional) against the US dollar on Wednesday, weighed down by elevated crude oil prices.

Forex traders said the Indian rupee depreciated on strength in crude oil prices, which touched a two-week high on Tuesday. However, a firm tone in domestic markets and favourable macroeconomic data cushioned the downside.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.51 and hit the intraday high of 83.49



and a low of 83.56 against the American currency during the session. It finally settled at 83.52 (provisional) against the dollar, 4 paise lower than its previous close.

On Tuesday, the rupee depreciated 4 paise to settle

at 83.48 against the US dollar.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on softening of the US dollar and rise in global risk sentiments. Strength in the domestic markets may also support sentiments," said Anuj Choudhary — Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

"However, elevated crude oil price and FII outflows may cap sharp upside. Traders may take cues from ADP non-farm employment, weekly unemployment claims, ISM services PMI, Challenger job cuts, trade balance and factory orders

**BABA FARID UNIVERSITY OF HEALTH SCIENCES, FARIDKOT** BFU-24/14

**VACANCIES**

Online applications are invited w.e.f **06/07/2024 to 31/07/2024** from eligible candidates through University website i.e **www.bfuhhs.ac.in** for the recruitment of 120 Staff Nurse under Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot. For eligibility, terms & conditions & other information visit university website i.e **www.bfuhhs.ac.in**

**Sd/ REGISTRAR**

**MUNICIPAL CORPORATION CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR (EXECUTIVE ENGINEER MECH)**

Tel No.: (0240)2333536-40 Address: Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar Municipal Corporation, Executive Engineer (Mech) Head Office : Town Hall, Pin No.4311 E-Tender Call CSMC (For Help) Mob No : 9764999780 No.CSMC/Mech/448 /2024 Dt. 02/07/2024

**Corrigendum**

Ref: Tender ID No. 2024-AMCA-998054-1

As per the reference, tender called for Fabrication & supply of 70 Mtr. Hydraulic Platform for fire fighting and rescue operation with 10 years CSMC (01 No.). Regarding this tender corrigendum is published on **www.mahatenders.gov.in** portal. Rest of the condition remains unchanged.

Executive Engineer (Mech) Municipal Corporation Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar

**उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण, U.P.SIDA**

कार्यालय प्रधान महाप्रबन्धक (आर) उ.प्र. राज्य औद्योगिक विकास प्राधिकरण, ए-1/4, लखनऊ, कानपुर

**ई-निविदा सूचना**

एकदिवसीय विस्तृत निविदा प्रक्रिया के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित प्रस्तावों में निम्न औद्योगिक क्षेत्रों के विस्तृत विकास एवं विद्युत अद्यतन एवं सड़क-संचालन कार्यों हेतु सरकारी विभागों/सार्वजनिक उपक्रमों/निगमों/प्राधिकरणों/परिचालन निकायों में पंजीकृत विद्युत लाइसेन्सी एवं अनुभवी उद्योगों/कर्मों से ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है जो दिनांक 06.07.2024 को अपरान्ह 4.00 बजे से दिनांक 24.07.2024 को अपरान्ह 5.00 बजे तक अपलोड की जा सकती है। निविदा को दिनांक 25.07.2024 को अपरान्ह 04.00 बजे खोला जायेगा। निविदादाता द्वारा राज्य पत्रों की मूल प्रतियां दिनांक 29.07.2023 को सायं 5-00 बजे तक कार्यालय में जमा की जा सकती है। ई-निविदा के माध्यम से आमंत्रित की जाने वाली निविदा सम्बन्धी विवरण निम्नवत् है-

क्रमांक	कार्य का नाम	कार्य का लागत रु. (लाख में)
1.	Upgradation of Street Light & High Mast with 3 year AMC at Bhara Pachpera, Distt-Pilibhit	100.18

नोट- 1. निविदादाता अपनी निविदाओं में समस्त कर सचिव दरे अंकित करें। जी.एस.टी. अलग से देय होगी। 2. विद्युत कार्यों हेतु निविदादाता को निविदा अपलोड करते समय 'विद्युत सुरक्षा विभाग' उ.प्र. शासन, लखनऊ में श्रेणी 'क' अनुमोदित लाइसेन्स अपलोड करना अनिवार्य होगा, अन्यथा निविदा को Consider नहीं किया जायेगा। निविदा सम्बन्धी विस्तृत जानकारी प्राधिकरण की **website:www.onlineupsida.com** पर स्थित ई-लिक एवं यूपीएलकी **website:http://etender.up.nic.in** पर देखी जा सकती है।

सचिव प्राबन्धक (यू.) विद्युत उ.प्र. शा.औ.वि.प्रा.कानपुर

# Herbal beverage Pio aims to disrupt MNC-dominated soft drink market

**ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI**

Move over multinational cola giants, there's a new 'Made-in-India' fizz in town! The CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (NBRI) has introduced 'Pio', a revolutionary herbal beverage aiming to shake up the competitive soft drink market.

Free from artificial sweeteners and caffeine, 'Pio' blends time-tested traditional herbs with modern nutritional science, offering a healthier alternative that is poised to redefine refreshment in keeping with consumer's taste.

"This drink represents a healthier alternative to conventional sodas, reflecting the country's commitment to fostering indigenous, health-conscious food and beverages

options," Union Science and Technology Minister Jitendra Singh said about the drink developed by the government's premier science research affiliated lab situated in Lucknow.

Backed by rigorous research, no preservatives have been used in the product and its expiry is of four months for the drink which comes with the tagline 'Pio Herbal, Jio Har Pal'.

"Soft drinks are consumed by people of all ages, be it children or elderly. Hence, there was an urgent need for replacing these unhealthy drinks with healthy options. A team of scientists carried out an in-depth study to develop scientifically validated and standardised health beverages by fortifying them with certain health protective/promotive



functional attributes," said NBRI Director Ajit Kumar Shasany.

"Based on traditional knowledge, we selected certain herbs. Extracts of herbs like liquorice (Glycyrrhiza

commonly known as 'mulethi', heart-leaved moonseed (giloy), Ashwagandha, punarnava (Boerhavia diffusa), common grapevine, and cardamom have been used in the product," he added.

"These extracts are blended with carbonated water in such a way that the drink tastes like any other synthetic drink available in the market. Sugar mixing is kept on a minimum level to tackle the bitterness of plant-based extracts," he said.

The NBRI Director added that Pio had no alcohol, cocoa, and other synthetic chemicals and has been successfully evaluated for its efficacy.

"The product is a unique blend of modern nutraceutical concepts with traditional knowledge in the soft drink category where the product is fortified with medicinal plants having colour and taste similar to synthetic beverages," Shasany said.

"The herbal plant extract used in the drink has hepatoprotective, antioxidant, immuno-enhancing, cardio-tonic, diuretic and digestive properties. The technology and process of the soft drink has also been patented," he said, adding that the technology to manufacture this herbal soft drink has been transferred to a private company.

Sandip Vyas, managing director of the private firm now overseeing 'Pio's production, expressed confidence in its potential to disrupt the competitive soft drink market.

"Having conducted comprehensive tests to ensure production efficiency and efficacy at the high-tech labs of the NBRI following intensive research, 'Pio' is all set to become a preferred choice among consumers seeking healthier beverage alternatives.

# Chopra says Paris Diamond League was not part of his competition calendar

**PTI ■ SAARBRUCKEN, (GERMANY)**  
Olympic and world champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra on Wednesday clarified that Sunday's Paris Diamond League was never a part of his competition calendar this year. The statement came after a media report stated that Chopra pulled out of the event due to the adductor niggle that has been troubling him for the past couple of months. The 26-year-old took to 'X' to say that there was no question of a withdrawal when he had not even entered his name. "Hello, everyone. Just to clarify: the #ParisDL wasn't part of my competition calendar this season, so I haven't 'withdrawn' from it. I'm focusing on getting ready for the Olympic Games. "Thanks for your understanding and support, and wishing all the athletes competing all the best! #RoadToOlympics," Chopra



He was exempted from last week's National Inter-State Championships, which was a mandatory event for all Indian athletes, by the Athletics Federation Of India. The AFI said the relaxation was given to him due to the short turnaround time between the domestic event and the Diamond League on July 7. "We have made it very clear that every athlete will compete in India at the Inter-State Championships," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla had said, "But Paris Diamond League is clashing with the Inter-State Championships and we feel that Paris Diamond League will be very important for him (Neeraj) before the Olympic Games therefore he is the only guy who has been given special permission to participate in the Federation Cup," he added. However, Chopra had indicated last month that his schedule will be decided according to the state of his body. "We had a discussion that I would play in the

National Inter-State Championships (June 27-30) and it's going to be held in Panchkula in Haryana but it was very near to the Paris Olympics," Chopra had said. "Since I was playing in Doha which is near to India. Moreover, there is Paris Diamond League (on July 7) between National Inter-State and Olympics. So, we decided to compete here (Federation Cup)," Chopra had said. "Further competition schedule will be decided later according to situation and my body. Otherwise, I will go to Paris from there (after competing in Turkey)." Chopra, who scripted history by becoming the first Indian to win a track and field medal at the Tokyo Olympics, had won the gold at the at the Paavo Nurmi Games last month. Following this, he had opened up about his adductor niggle which has affected his season, saying he will consult "different doctors" after the Paris Olympics.

## Much-improved Netherlands beats Romania 3-0 to reach first Euros quarterfinals in 16 years

**AP ■ MUNICH**  
The Netherlands could be peaking at just the right time. The Dutch team reached its first European Championship quarterfinal in 16 years with a 3-0 win over Romania on Tuesday after its best performance by far at Euro 2024. Cody Gakpo broke the deadlock in the 20th minute and substitute Donyell Malen scored two late goals to send the Dutch to their first quarterfinal in the tournament since 2008. "I think the whole performance today was outstanding and that's what we need to have a chance to continue in this tournament," coach Ronald Koeman said. "This is the level. If you go down in that level, then we don't reach the final." The Netherlands had missed a plethora of earlier opportunities to add to the lead and captain Virgil van Dijk also hit the woodwork. It was nevertheless a much-improved display compared to its disappointing group stage performance, which ended in a 3-2 loss to Austria. Koeman's side could get a quick rematch in Berlin on Saturday if Austria beats Turkey in the final round of 16 match later Tuesday. "Sometimes it's difficult to explain why you play bad," Koeman said. "Even today, the start was difficult. They were really aggressive. But finally we found our ball position. "What we created was good football... Maybe one critical point was that it took too long to score the second one. ...It's difficult to explain why one time you play badly and the next time you are really sharp from the beginning." It was nevertheless a match



to remember for Romania and its loud mass of yellow-clad fans, who have lit up the tournament. It was only the second time Romania had qualified for the knockout stage at a European Championship and it did so as group winner. The bouncing yellow wall at one end of the stadium gave its team such a magnificent send-off - singing and applauding the players long after the final whistle - that it was almost as though Romania had won the game. "Today we ended a great story, which we started two years ago. We continued that story here in Germany along with the fans of the national team," Romania coach Edward Iordanescu said. "The team gave a great effort, but there is some sadness. "We wanted more, but we gave our all. Thank you to my lads, the supporters and Romanians everywhere in the world who supported us." Romania had dominated possession until Gakpo's goal, but never really tested Netherlands goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen. Instead the opener came when Xavi Simons surged forward before finding Gakpo on the left. The Liverpool forward cut inside the blue-haired Andrei Rău and fired into the near bottom corner.



## No Messi in Argentina's Olympic soccer squad

**AP ■ BUENOS AIRES**  
Lionel Messi won't be in Argentina's squad at the Olympics starting later this month in Paris. Coach Javier Mascherano included four World Cup winners in the squad he announced Tuesday, including striker Julián Álvarez and defender Nicolás Otamendi. The 37-year-old Messi, who has struggled with injuries this year, is now playing at the Copa America, aiming to defend the continental title he won in 2021. That victory served as a springboard for Argentina to lift the World Cup in 2022. Messi won the gold medal at Beijing in 2008 in his only Olympic campaign. The Olympic men's soccer tournament is for under-23 teams, but three older players are allowed on each squad. Mascherano, who won the Olympic gold medal as a player in 2004 and '08, will add goalkeeper Gerónimo Rulli, Otamendi and Alvarez to his squad after Copa America is finished. Midfielder Claudio Echeverri, a recent signing for Manchester City from River Plate, will also join. Argentina will play two friendlies in France before its Olympic soccer tournament opener against Morocco on July 24.

## Colombia draws Brazil 1-1 and will play Panama in quarterfinals while Seleção face Uruguay

**AP ■ SANTA CLARA (US)**  
Daniel Muñoz scored the tying goal in the first-half stoppage time, and Colombia won its first-round group at the Copa America with a 1-1 draw against Brazil that extended its unbeaten streak to 26 games. Colombia goalkeeper Camilo Vargas saved Brazil's final chance on a shot by Andreas Pereira in the fifth minute of second-half stoppage time. Colombia plays Panama in a quarterfinal on Saturday at

Glendale, Arizona, while Brazil fell into what appears to be a more difficult game against Uruguay later that night at Las Vegas. Los Cafeteros, who finished with seven points to Brazil's five, had back-to-back scoring chances in the 84th minute but couldn't capitalize. Brazil went ahead in the 12th minute when Raphinha launched a left-footed free kick into the upper right corner of the net just above the outstretched hand of Vargas. The Brazilian winger jumped



and pumped his fist as the seasoned Seleção struck first on a blazing-hot night at Levi's Stadium, home of the NFL's San Francisco 49ers.

Players put on an entertaining show in the Group D finale, with Brazil's Bruno Guimarães calling Colombia "a stone in our shoe" in the lead up to Tuesday. What was expected to be a tense, physical, foul-filled match more than lived up to that hype featuring five yellow cards as a sea of jerseys the same color representing both countries packed the seats - once the fans finally got inside, that is. Some scanning equipment became very hot and slowed down the process. A crowd of 70,971 attended the

game, and the 24 group-stage games drew 1,115,400 for an average of 46,475. The Bay Area is facing an excessive heat warning and the temperature at kickoff was 98 degrees - though about half the field on one sideline was shaded. In the eighth minute, James Rodríguez had Colombia's best early chance when he hit the bar on a left-footed shot on a direct free kick from outside the penalty area He had another shot in the 16th that sailed high.

## Gunok's wonder-save at Euro 2024 sparks Turkish celebrations

**AP ■ LEIPZIG (GERMANY)**  
A moment of Mert Gunok's brilliance sparked celebrations for Turkish fans and a big exclamation from Austria rival Michael Gregoritsch, who described it as one of the best saves he'd ever seen. Goalkeeper Gunok pulled off one of the saves of the European Championship deep into injury time on Tuesday to secure Turkey's place in the quarterfinals. He leaped instinctively into a full-stretch dive to his right to palm away a close-range header from Austria's Christoph Baumgartner four minutes into stoppage time, preserving his team's 2-1 win and preventing the round-of-16 match from going into extra time. "I think that's one of the best saves I've ever seen live on the field," Gregoritsch said. "You have to give credit to the Turkish goalkeeper because I think it was extremely difficult to stop.



Unbelievable, really." Austria coach Ralf Rangnick was asked if the goal reminded him of England goalkeeper Gordon Banks' famous stop to deny Pelé at the 1970 World Cup. "True," he replied. Later, Rangnick rued the save, saying he was sure that if the ball had gone in, Austria would have gone on to win the match. "With Gordon Banks in

## 30 swimming prospects to get training at IIS for Olympic & Asian Games glory

**PTI ■ BELLARY**  
As many as 30 "high-potential" swimmers have been identified for training as part of a newly-launched 'Mizuho Elite Programme' at the Inspire Institute of Sports here to prepare them for the 2026 Asian Games and the 2028 Olympic qualifiers. Inspire Institute of Sports has entered into a partnership with Mizuho Bank for this. The two entities have identified swimming as one of the key sports which can be developed at the grassroots level and announced a partnership to support 30 swimmers. Launched in 2023, the IIS Swimming Programme features two state-of-the-art pools, and promises technical coaching, competition exposure, and support in sports science, strength and conditioning, nutrition, education, mental



health, and residential facilities. Talented young swimmers Maana Patel, Kushagra Rawat, Ishaan Mehra, Astha Choudhury, Ashmitha Chandra, and Bikram Changmai are part of the programme. Maana Patel said the partnership will go a long way in helping them realise

echoed the sentiment. "It energises our mission to make India a sporting superpower. Their belief in our swimming programme is inspiring, and I am excited for the future," he said. "Mizuho's support will significantly raise our standards. Our rapid growth and success promise a transformative impact on Indian sport," Rushdee Warley, CEO of IIS, added. Mizuho, a leading global bank with over 28 years in India, operates five branches and four entities, including Mizuho Bank and Mizuho Securities. Piyush Agarwal, Senior Managing Director & Head - Corporate & Institutional Banking (India) at Mizuho, said, "We believe India, with its youthful population, deserves a place on the global podium. Sports build essential skills like resilience and teamwork, and we hope to inspire many through this initiative."

## Vondrousova is 1st defending woman Wimbledon champ out in first round since 1994

**AP ■ LONDON**  
Marketa Vondrousova became the first defending women's champion at Wimbledon to lose in the first round the next year since 1994, eliminated 6-4, 6-2 by Jessica Bouzas Maneiro at Centre Court. Vondrousova was a surprise title winner at the All England Club 12 months ago, the first unseeded woman to claim the trophy at the grass-court Grand Slam tournament. Now she enters the books in another - and less-wanted - historic way. The only other time in the sport's Open era, which dates to 1968, that a woman went from a championship at Wimbledon to an immediate exit a year later was when Steffi Graf was defeated by Lori McNeil 30 years ago. "I was happy to be back on the Centre Court," Vondrousova said. "It just didn't go as planned today." Vondrousova was seeded No. 6 this time, but the left-hander, who was the runner-up at the 2019 French Open and a silver medalist at the Tokyo Olympics three years

ago, was never quite able to demonstrate her full game Tuesday. She appeared to still be suffering after-effects from a fall during a tuneup tournament on grass in Berlin last month that hurt her hip. "I was a bit slower, maybe. I was a bit scared," Vondrousova said. "But credit to her. She was playing a good match, too. I didn't feel at my best, (but) she didn't give me many points for free." How big a deal was this for Bouzas Maneiro? She is competing in a Grand Slam tournament for only the third time and came into the day with an 0-2 record at those events. Bouzas Maneiro also had never won a match at a tour-level grass tournament and never beaten an opponent ranked in the top 10. "This is one of the most important moments in my life, in my career, here in this sport. This is amazing," said Bouzas Maneiro, a 21-year-old from Spain who is ranked 83rd this week, equaling her career high. "I was like, I have no pressure. Just enjoy the moment, enjoy the



tournament. Just trying to be free playing, and I did it, so I'm happy for that," she said. Vondrousova added to the series of past major title winners dropping out of the singles

brackets within the first 30 hours of action at Wimbledon this year - although others did so without playing a point. Earlier Tuesday, Andy Murray pulled out of singles because he decided he wasn't able to compete a little more than a week after having surgery to remove a cyst from his spine. His final appearance at Wimbledon, which he won in 2013 and 2016, will

come in doubles alongside his older brother, Jamie. Two seeded women who both have been ranked No. 1 and own two Australian Open championships apiece, No. 3 Aryna Sabalenka and No. 16 Victoria Azarenka, withdrew on Monday before their first-round matches because of shoulder injuries. Sabalenka was the pre-tournament favorite to take the women's title, according to BetMGM Sportsbook. Intermittent rain delayed matches on the outside courts more than once Tuesday, and the retractable roofs at Centre Court and No. 1 Court were shut to allow play in those two stadiums. No. 6 seed Andrey Rublev lost, while winners on Day 2 included No. 1 Iga Swiatek, 2022 champion Elena Rybakina and No. 5 seed Jessica Pegula among the women, and seven-time champion Novak Djokovic, No. 4 seed Alexander Zverev and No. 7 Hubert Hurkacz among the men. For Djokovic, his 6-1, 6-2, 6-2 win against qualifier Vit Kopriva was the first match since having

surgery to repair a torn meniscus in his right knee on June 5. "Obviously started a little bit more cautiously, I would say. I didn't really maybe go for certain shots 100% ... (in) the first set," said Djokovic, who wore a gray sleeve on his right knee. "I played, I think, just enough to win confidently in straight sets. I felt like as the match progressed, I moved better." The initial signs of trouble for Vondrousova on Tuesday came right away: She double-faulted three times in the very first game and got broken to trail 1-0. "My serve wasn't so good today," Vondrousova said. "Overall, I think, I wasn't at my best." She would wind up with seven double-faults, part of her total of 28 unforced errors, twice as many as Bouzas Maneiro in a match that lasted only a little more than an hour. "I'm surprised with myself, honestly. At the beginning, I was a little bit nervous, but then ... The atmosphere was so nice," Bouzas Maneiro said. "I was comfortable here playing, and I was like at home.

# GILL-LED TEAM INDIA LANDS IN HARARE FOR T20IS AGAINST ZIMBABWE

PTI ■ HARARE

A young Indian cricket team led by skipper Shubman Gill and with National Cricket Academy chief VVS Laxman as coach arrived here to play a five-match T20 International series against Zimbabwe beginning July 6. The team was seen exiting the airport with their luggage in a video posted by Zimbabwe Cricket on X. The entire squad had departed from Mumbai on Tuesday, while Gill, who was a travelling reserve with the T20 World Cup side in the Americas, arrived here from New York after a break. "We welcome T20 World Cup champions India," wrote ZC on Tuesday night in a post on X. Young top-order batter Riyan Parag, who will be making his India debut in the series, said in a video posted by BCCI that he had a childhood dream of travelling like this (with the national side).

"The feel of donning India jersey, travelling with the side is different. Coming from Assam, I had this dream of playing for India. Really happy. There will be a special connection for Zimbabwe when I play my first match. "That will be a special moment for that ground and myself, which would be very sacred," he said. "After misplacing my passport, to phones, we are finally here after a 20 hour journey. Now, really looking forward to the tour," Parag added. Another newcomer, medium pacer Tushar Deshpande, said the feeling of being in the national setup is "slowly sinking in and it's like a dream come true for me. Playing for the country is a very special thing." "Travelling with the team is the most important and getting to know them, knowing the atmosphere of the team and most important for me is the fun we have during travel," added



Deshpande. Big-hitting left-hander Abhishek Sharma said from the day he started playing cricket, he had only one dream, which was to play for the country. "I know if I continue working hard, I will get an opportunity but I didn't know I will get it outside India in Zimbabwe. "I got a call from (skipper) Shubman after my name was announced in the squad. Everyone has been giving me so much of affection. For me it was a very big thing," added Sharma. "When I reached home after my name had been announced, I saw my family members giving interviews. So, I think, that was one moment I will always remember," he said. India will play their opening match against the Sikandar Raza-captained Zimbabwe on July 6 at the Harere Cricket Ground. The remaining four games will also be played at the same venue. The series will

conclude on July 14. T20 World Cup travelling reserves Sanju Samson and Yashasvi Jaiswal along with all-rounder Shivam Dube were slated to join the Zimbabwe-bound group but are stranded in Barbados due to hurricane Beryl. Sai Sudharsan, Jitesh Sharma and Harshit Rana were on Tuesday named as replacements for trio in the Indian squad for the first two matches of the series. Samson, Jaiswal and Dube along with the other senior players will be arriving in India aboard a charter flight on Thursday morning. The players will later be felicitated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi. Pacer Khaleel Ahmed and batter Rinku Singh, travelling reserves for the T20 World Cup, are also currently in Barbados. The BCCI has not named replacements for the duo even though they are in the squad for Zimbabwe series.

## Hardik Pandya becomes first Indian to occupy top spot in ICC T20I all-rounders' rankings

PTI ■ DUBAI

Hardik Pandya rose two places to become the first Indian to occupy the number one spot in the ICC's T20I all-rounders' rankings on Wednesday, as the country's cricketers improved their standings following their title-winning performance in the just-concluded World Cup. The 30-year-old, who handed telling blows to South Africa in the T20 World Cup final on July 29 by dismissing half-century Heinrich Klaasen and David Miller in his 3/20 effort, climbed up two places to go level with Sri Lankan star Wanindu Hasaranga as the top-ranked men's T20I all-rounder. Following a topsy-turvy IPL where he was the target of fans' boos as Mumbai Indians' new captain, Pandya turned it around in style in the T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean. His best performance came in



Pandya made impactful cameos down the order with the bat and made breakthroughs with the ball when the team needed him to. He finished with 144 runs at a batting strike-rate of over 150 and also took 11 wickets in the tournament. His best performance came in

runs to help India pip South Africa by seven runs and win their second T20 World Cup title.

### BIG MOVER BUMRAH

India's star fast bowler Jasprit Bumrah, who won the Player of the Tournament award at the T20 World Cup for his 15 wickets, moved up 12 spots to be just outside the top-10. He's at 12th, his highest position since the end of 2020. There were other movements in the top 10 of the T20I all-rounders' rankings, with Marcus Stoinis, Sikandar Raza, Shakib Al Hasan and Liam Livingstone rising by one spot each. Mohammad Nabi moved down four spots to go out of the top five. In the T20I bowling rankings, South Africa's Anrich Nortje rose seven places to a career-best second spot to be just behind top-ranked Adil Rashid with 675 rating points.

## Praggnanandhaa draws with Bogdan-Daniel, Alireza shines in Superbet Classic chess

PTI ■ BUCHAREST

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa was held to a draw by lowest ranked Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania in the sixth round of the Superbet Classic tournament, a part of the grand chess tour here. Iranian-French Grandmaster Alireza Firouzja shined with his moves against Wesley So of the United States. With the World Championship on his mind, India's D Gukesh seemed to keep in reserve his real weapons and signed for peace with Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France. Praggnanandhaa tried his hand against the ever-solid Nimzo Indian defense. But it was an off day for the Indian who was confidently breached by the Romanian. Bogdan-Daniel matched Praggnanandhaa move for move and the game was drawn through repetition after 38 moves.



It was not so easy for Gukesh as well as he seemed to withhold his true preparation for the World Championship match against Ding Liren, scheduled in November this year in Singapore. Alireza stole the show on a dull day in the grand chess tour. He was at his best and crawled back with his second win of the tournament to be in striking distance of tournament leader Fabio Caruana of the United States. With just three rounds remaining in the USD 350000 prize money tournament, Caruana seems to be sitting pretty at the top, with three aspirants in Gukesh Praggnanandhaa and Alireza in pursuit.



## Markram was brave, tactically astute while leading South Africa in T20 World Cup: Smith

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Aiden Markram was 'brave' and 'tactically astute' while leading South Africa to their first-ever appearance in the final of the T20 World Cup which they narrowly lost to India last week at Barbados, said former skipper Graeme Smith on Wednesday. South Africa had a near-perfect campaign in the T20 World Cup under Markram's captaincy with their only defeat coming in the final when India pipped the Proteas by seven runs. "Aiden was particularly good during the tournament. He was tactically astute, had good plans and was brave enough to make the big calls and then get it all his players to commit to it," said Smith in a media release. "We have, of course, seen Aiden captain in this manner before over the course of the past two SA20 seasons, leading the Sunrisers Eastern Cape to back-to-back championship titles, but now he has transferred this experience to the international arena," added Smith, who is SA20's league commissioner. Smith said SA20, in its two seasons so far, has been able to prepare the South African cricketers to be ready for

pressure and challenges at the highest level. "From the outset, the league, alongside Cricket South Africa, has wanted to provide South African cricketers with the opportunity to be exposed to a higher level of domestic cricket where the players are able to rub shoulders and learn from some of the best the game has to offer," he said. "Players are exposed to high-pressure and competitive cricket and this experience stood them in good stead in the US and Caribbean," said one of the greatest South Africa captains. Smith praised Ottneil Baartman for his impressive performances, particularly in the group stage, wherein the right-arm bowler produced measly spells. "Ottneil is the epitome of a SA20 success story. A relatively unknown player before SA20 that has transformed and grown in confidence due to experiences with the Sunrisers Eastern Cape is phenomenal," Smith said. "Despite playing in his very first T20 World Cup, he backed his skills under immense pressure. The four wickets against the Netherlands and the last over against Nepal definitely stands out," he added.

## I had momentum, could have done better: Nagal on first-round loss in Wimbledon

PTI ■ LONDON

Indian tennis ace Sumit Nagal feels he had the momentum in the third set of the Wimbledon first-round tie against higher-ranked Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia but his relative inexperience on grass cost him the match. The 26-year-old Indian, who is set to participate in his second Olympics in less than a month, lost the Wimbledon men's singles opener to Kecmanovic, ranked 19 places higher than him, in a marathon four-setter lasting nearly three-and-a-half hours. Nagal lost 2-6, 6-3, 3-6, 4-6. The 71st-ranked from Jhajar, making it to the Wimbledon main draw for the first time, won the second set to come

on even terms but the Serbian, ranked 52nd, won the next two to advance. "This is my first main draw at Wimbledon, and playing on the grass surface is not easy; you need a bit of experience. But I think I did whatever I could, I fought hard. I felt like I could have served better, and there were a few things here and there in the match I could have done better," Nagal told Star Sports. "Later on in the third set, the momentum was kind of shifting towards me. I think, like I said, if I could have broken him at 5-3, him serving, I think the match could have changed in a funny way." He said the SW19 experience was the one to cherish. "It was a great experience.



Obviously, when you play for three, three-and-a-half hours, you always feel like, 'this could have been done or that could have been done.' But like I said, if I could have changed things in the third set, I would have really liked that (broken the opponent at 5-3). Nagal said his aim is to keep climbing up the rankings ladder and he is looking forward to a good show at the Paris Olympics, where he will have to shift to clay courts. "I keep on climbing the rankings. There are a few

goals that I need to finish, and that will be one of them - to keep on climbing the rankings. "Now, I'm going back on clay to get ready for Paris. I'm looking forward to it; it's going to be my second Olympics, and I'm super, super excited for it." Nagal, who was ranked 160th during the Tokyo Olympics, had lost in straight sets to Daniil Medvedev in the second round. Tennis legend Mahesh Bhupathi also indicated that Nagal should have converted half chances. "Everyone's disappointed, but he's had a breakthrough year, he's played high-quality tennis. That guy's a good player and he had his chances there in the third set and that's

the way it is. In events like this, you've got to take your chances, otherwise, you're going to come out on the losing end." Former Davis Cupper Zeeshan Ali said Nagal should not get disappointed as he gave his opponent a tough time. "I feel that Sumit should not be very disheartened by this loss because he played a very good match. He played an incredibly good second set and he had a lot of chances. "Going forward, I think he definitely needs to prepare better to play in a tournament like Wimbledon, maybe get a couple of matches in before the main draw of Wimbledon starts, and that would definitely help him prepare better," said Ali.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Star Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty has "cracked" the service variation challenge and is focusing on "comprehensive physical and mental conditioning" to ensure peak performance at the upcoming Paris Olympics. Satwik, 23, and Chirag, 26, have been troubled by the wide variations of tumble, spin and wide serves that their opponents, mainly the Koreans and Indonesians, have employed against them during the recent tournaments. Chirag said they have addressed the "new challenge" and remains confident of negotiating it during the Paris Games. "Regarding serve variations, they are a new challenge, but placing complete importance on that wouldn't be right," Chirag told PTI in an email interview. "There was a time when we struggled with receiving them, but we eventually cracked it. We know what to do, we've been practicing, and we're confident we'll come out strong at the Olympics to counter that."

## Satwik-Chirag eyeing great things at Paris Olympics after cracking service variation challenge

The current world number 3 pair had narrowly missed out of a quarterfinal berth in the last Olympics when despite winning two of their three group matches, the duo couldn't qualify for the knockout stage as it was settled on the basis of the number of games won and lost. "The experience of playing in the Tokyo Olympics has been invaluable in our preparation for the Paris Games. Competing at such a high level has taught us crucial lessons about handling pressure, staying focused, and adapting to different playing conditions," Satwik said. Chirag added: "The intensity and atmosphere of the Olympics are unparalleled, and having been through it once, we now have a better understanding of what to expect and the initial jitters of being at the Olympics for the first time are also not going to be there. "Additionally, winning the



French Open has naturally given us a significant confidence boost." In the last couple of years, the duo worked its way to become the world number one after a

series of sensational performance, including winning the Commonwealth Games gold medal, a bronze at the World Championships in 2022, and gold in the Hangzhou Asian

Games. They also played a crucial role in India's epic Thomas Cup win in 2022. Satwik and Chirag have won the French Open and Thailand Open this

year after reaching the finals at the Malaysian Super 750 and India Super 750. "As the Olympics draw closer, our approach is becoming more focussed and strategic. We're fine-tuning every aspect of our game to ensure peak performance when we step onto the court in Paris," Satwik said. "This includes developing specific game plans for our potential opponents by studying their strengths and weaknesses in detail, concentrating on targeted drills, and enhancing our on-court positions and shot selections. "We are taking a holistic approach to our preparations. We're in a good rhythm and are eagerly looking forward to be back at the Olympics. Comprehensive physical and mental conditioning is at the heart of our preparation." The duo has been troubled sometimes by the left-right combinations such as Korean Seo Seung-jae and Kang Minhyuk and Danish Kim Astrup

and Anders Skaarup Rasmussen but Chirag feels they don't have any problem against any particular pair. "I can't really pinpoint a specific pair that we find particularly tricky to play against. On any given day, if a pair plays well, they can pose a challenge. However, I believe that if we play at our best, we can beat anyone," he said. "So, there's no specific pair or lefty-righty combination that particularly affects us. That said, all our competitors in the Olympics will be quite good..." On expectations and handling pressure at the big-ticket event, Satwik said: "We understand Olympics is the greatest, biggest tournament there is and naturally there are hopes and wishes from each Olympic-bound athlete. "We don't want to think so much about the pressures, we're looking to go out there, enjoy the atmosphere, have a great time on court and take it one game at a time and see

how it goes. We do not want to put ourselves under any pressure from the world go. "We're used to the expectations and pressures that come along in our game... We're primarily looking to go out there and do great things on the court and have fun while doing that." Chirag and Satwik are also mentors of PNB MetLife Junior Badminton Championship (JBC), which will begin on August 1 in the national capital. "JBC offers a fantastic opportunity to nurture budding badminton talent in India. JBC also offers players access to mentoring, coaching, and training from veterans in the sport. Badminton has significantly shaped my life, and I want to share its benefits with the next generation, helping them achieve their dreams," Chirag said. Satwik said: "As JBC mentors, we offer guidance on videos to young athletes on drills, techniques, strategies to improve their game, tips on mental resilience, and managing competition stress. Chirag and I will also be offering tips to players in person, whenever we visit any city edition matches."