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REMOVAL OF ANGEL TAX FOR STARTUPS TO HELP ATTRACT INVESTORS: GOYAL

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SINDHU OPENS CAMPAIGN WITH DOMINANT WIN 11 SPORTS

WHY? WHY? WHY?

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Phones kept buzzing with messages on WhatsApp groups with helpless students trying to find where their friends — studying at the Rau's Coaching centre's library on Saturday evening — were following the death of three civil services aspirants due to rain-induced flooding in the basement of the coaching centre. While reports claimed only three lives were lost, students who were witness to the tragic incident unfolding before their eyes claimed a higher number. All the deceased had cleared their preliminary examination, the results of which was declared a few days ago and were burning midnight oil to prepare for the Mains examinations scheduled in October-November which is second stage of Civil Services Examinations to qualify to become an IAS, IPS or allied services officer.



Police detain students protesting outside Karol Bagh metro station after three IAS aspirants died in the basement of Rau's IAS Study Circle at Old Rajinder Nagar area, in New Delhi, on Sunday

Thousands like the ones who fell prey to lackadaisical civic amenities make national Capital their karambhooni for a few years to get into elite Government services. "We have WhatsApp groups of UPSC aspirants. Those groups are full with students asking about the whereabouts of their friends. I am sure that the numbers are much higher

and the authorities are not giving us the full picture," said 27-year-old Ankit, adding that while protesting in the wee hours of Saturday, authorities also threw drainage water on them to disperse them. Old Rajinder Nagar, which is usually bustling with UPSC aspirants in haste to get to

their classes, witnessed protests of angry students who are worried about the whereabouts of their colleagues who are nowhere to be found. Albeit, police claiming three lives, students claimed on seeing at least four to five bodies being taken and the authorities shutting the lights

off regularly to not let the general public know the exact situation. Meanwhile, at the Ram Manohar Lohia (RML) Hospital, there was anger among the relatives of the deceased, who claimed they were not being allowed to see the bodies even though they have been waiting since morning. Deceased Shreya Yadav's uncle Dharmendra Yadav shared his harrowing experience. "I saw the news about the incident late at night and called Shreya over phone, but she didn't answer," he said. A resident of Ghaziabad, he said when his niece did not

Library running illegally in basement

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Rau's IAS Study Circle centre in Delhi's Rajinder Nagar, where three students died in rain-induced flooding, was functioning illegally as a library. The coaching institute was issued a fire safety certificate just 18 days before the incident. Notably, the institute, had falsely shown that the basement was being used for parking and as a store room, as per the building plan and No Objection Certificate (NOC) of the fire department.

respond to his calls, he rushed to the institute in Old Rajinder Nagar. "When I reached the coaching centre, I was directed to RML Hospital, where I learned that a body identified as that of Shreya had been found, but I was not allowed to see her," he added.

Two arrested

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

After arresting two people, the Delhi Police has registered an FIR and formed multiple teams to probe the Rau's coaching centre flooding incident which claimed the lives of three IAS aspirants, who had already cleared their prelims exam and were preparing in the library of the coaching institute for the Mains exams of UPSC. According to the police on Sunday, they have arrested owner Abhishek Gupta and coordinator Deshpal Singh of the Rau's IAS Study Circle and booked them for culpable homicide and under other charges. "Multiple teams have been formed to investigate the entire incident. We have asked the Delhi Fire Services to provide us report about the building and the basement which was being used as a library but mentioned as 'store room'," a senior police officer said. The officer said the basement was eight-feet below the ground level and more than 18 students were



present in it on Saturday evening when it got flooded after heavy rain. According to sources in the police department, the gate of the basement was closed, but due to high pressure of rain water, it got damaged and water gushed in. "We are checking CCTV footage from the area to ascertain the sequence of the events. After scanning the CCTV footage, we will identify the people who were standing close to the institute during the time of incident and will record their statements," said the officer.

Govt clarifies on tax clearance certificate for going abroad

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

After social media outrage over a Budget proposal making it mandatory to get tax clearance certificates for going abroad, the Government on Sunday clarified that the proposed amendment is not for all, and only those accused of financial irregularities or having substantial tax arrears need such clearance.



The Finance Ministry, in the Finance Bill, 2024, has proposed to add the reference of the Black Money Act, 2015, to the list of Acts, under which any person should clear his liabilities to obtain the tax clearance certificate.

"The proposed amendment does not require all the residents to obtain the tax clearance certificate," the ministry said in a statement.

As per section 230 of the Income-tax Act, 1961, every person is not required to obtain a tax clearance certificate. Only in the case of certain persons, in respect of whom circumstances exist, which make it necessary to obtain a tax clearance certificate will be required to obtain such a certificate.

Manu first Indian shooter to win medal at Olympics

RISHABH MALIK/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/PARIS

A 22-year-old Haryana girl clinched the first medal for India. Manu Bhaker strikes the bronze medal in Women's 10m Air Pistol event in Paris Olympics in 2024. With her medal she becomes the first female shooter to win medal for India in Olympic games.

On July 27 Manu Bhaker had qualified for the final of her event with a score of 580 points, finishing third out of 45 competitors with the top-eight going through to Sunday's final. Bhaker scored 221.7 in the final round in which she fought hard against Korea's Kim Yeji who bagged silver and Jin Ye Oh bagged the gold with a games record of 243.2. Bhaker stated, "I was fighting with all the energy I have. Really grateful that I could win the bronze. I read Bhagwat Gita and always tried to do what I am supposed to do, left everything else to god." "We can't fight destiny," said Bhaker who appeared in her second Olympic stint. Previously she couldn't make it to the final and registered a bronze in this 2024 Olympic ending a drought in Olympic event.



Manu Bhaker poses for a photograph with her bronze medal after finishing third in the 10m air pistol women's final round at the 2024 Summer Olympics, France, on Sunday

This was fifth medal in shooting for India. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore (silver in Athens Olympics, 2004), Bindra (gold, Beijing 2008), Gagan Narang (bronze, London 2012) and Vijay Kumar (silver, London) have brought prestige to the country in shooting. Bhaker is one of the favourite contenders for India to top the medals in the Olympic. Bhaker, who hails from Jhajjar district in Haryana, is an accomplished athlete with

a distinguished career, having secured 15 gold medals at various levels, including nine at the World Cups. At just 22, she made a stunning debut at the International Sport Shooting Federation (ISSF) World Cup in Guadalajara, Mexico, clinching gold in the 10m air pistol final against top competitors like Olympic gold-medalist Anna Korakaki and three-time World Cup medalist Celine Goberville and in her first appearance in

2018 Common Wealth Games she clinched gold in 10m air pistol at the age of 16. In 2018, Manu became the first Indian to win a gold medal at the Youth Olympic Games. She has competed in two Olympic Games but faced challenges during her debut in Tokyo three years ago when her pistol malfunctioned in the 10m air pistol qualification, preventing her from reaching the finals in both the mixed 10m pistol and 25m pistol events. Despite this setback, Manu is now on a redemption path, earning the distinction of being India's first female Olympic medalist. With her historic achievement, Bhaker has not only inspired millions of young Indians but has also solidified her position as one of the country's brightest shooting stars. Her bronze medal is a testament to her dedication, hard work, and unwavering belief in her abilities. India is celebrating this momentous victory, with the entire nation joining in to congratulate the young champion. Her achievement is expected to give a significant boost to shooting in the country, encouraging more young talents to take up the sport.

Major gubernatorial reshuffle

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

President Draupadi Murmu effected major gubernatorial appointments with changes in the Governors of some States with Lakshman Prasad Acharya appointed as the Governor of Assam with the additional charge of Manipur while Gulab Chand Kataria replaced Banwarilal Purohit as the Governor of Punjab. Acharya has replaced Kataria, who has also been appointed the administrator of the Union Territory of Chandigarh, according to a communique issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Saturday night. According to a Rashtrapati Bhavan communication Murmu has accepted the resignation of Purohit as the Governor of Punjab and the administrator of Chandigarh, it said. "Lakshman Prasad Acharya, Governor of Sikkim, appointed as Governor of Assam and has also been given additional charge of the Governor of Manipur," the statement said. Anusuyi Uikye has been serving as the Governor of Manipur since February last year. Veteran BJP leader Om Prakash Mathur will be the new Governor of Sikkim, the communique said. Jharkhand Governor CP Radhakrishnan, who was also holding additional charge of Telangana, has been appointed as the new Governor of Maharashtra, succeeding incumbent Ramesh Bais. Former Union Labour and Employment Minister Santosh Kumar Gangwar will be the new Jharkhand Governor in place of Radhakrishnan. Former Deputy Chief Minister of



Tripura, Jishnu Dev Varma, will be the new Telangana Governor. Former IAS officer K Kailashnathan, one of the trusted aides of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has been appointed as Lt Governor of Puducherry with effect from the date he assumes charge of his office. Kailashnathan, chief principal secretary to Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, stepped down on June 30 after holding the post for more than a decade after his retirement. Senior BJP leader from Maharashtra Haribhau Kisanrao Bagde has been appointed the Governor of Rajasthan, succeeding Kalraj Mishra. Former Lok Sabha member from Assam Ramen Deka has been appointed as the Governor of Chhattisgarh, and C H Vijayshankar, the former Lok Sabha member from Mysore in Karnataka, will be Meghalaya Governor, the communique said. These appointments will take effect from the dates they will assume charge of their respective offices, the statement added.

Row as students seek special space for namaz in Kerala college

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Nirmala College at Muvattupuzha (established in 1953) in Kerala finds itself in the middle of a new controversy as hundreds of Muslim students in the institution are on a warpath with the college management. On Friday, students under the leadership of SFI (the students' wing of the CPI-M) and Muslim League gheraoed the college principal Father Justin K Kuriakose, for almost two hours demanding special classrooms/auditoriums for offering namaz. This is a new development in the history of the 71-year-old college, which was established by the Catholic Church to make higher education accessible to students belonging to the State's high

ranges. "We were taken aback by the action of the students picketing the principal or gheraoing the teachers or management. Till now the Muslim students were making use of the mosques in the neighbourhood for offering Friday prayers. What made them demand for special classrooms or auditoriums remains a mystery," Kuriakose told The Pioneer on Sunday. The demand made by the students has been put up before the college management. "To set apart exclusive prayer auditoriums for students believing in different sects is not an easy task. Though ours is a Christian minority institution, we follow the directives issued by the university and Government,"



said a senior official of the management. Though the church is keen on resolving the issue amicably, the recent developments in the State have to be seen as factors that made the students resorting to extreme measures. The CPI (M)-led Kerala Government has recently appointed a senior IAS officer as the de facto foreign secretary of the State to communicate and coordinate with Governments in Europe, USA, Australia and Africa. Sources in Government Secretariat said the move has turned out to be a "treatment worse than the disease" as the External Affairs is an area that comes under the exclusive domain of the Centre. Another demand that has been overlooked by the media

in the State is the creation of separate district of Muvattupuzha and the bifurcation of the State itself as Kerala and Malabar. The change in Kerala's religious demography and the emergence of Muvattupuzha as a hotbed of religious extremism are seen as the factors contributing to the change in the attitude of the people. Christian Association and Alliance for Social action (CASA) has condemned the students picketing the principal of the college over an issue which has nothing to do with academics. "We have heard about people who disrupt normal life and traffic by forcibly occupying public places under the pretext of religious congregation and namaz.

NTA announces CUET-UG results

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

National Testing Agency (NTA) on Sunday announced the results for the Common University Entrance Test (CUET)-UG, paving the way to begin the undergraduate admission process which has been delayed this year. The NTA had on July 7 released the provisional answer keys of the CUET-UG 2024. A retest for more than 1,000 candidates whose grievances were found genuine by the agency was conducted on July 19. The delay in the CUET-UG results came amid a row over alleged irregularities in competitive exams, including in the NEET-UG and the UGC-NET.



# CM monitoring rescue & relief efforts in disaster hit Tehri villages

## Affected villagers shifted to temporary relief camp in government school

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Following the two deaths and considerable damage caused following heavy rains and landslides in the Balganga and Budhakedar areas of Tehri district on Saturday, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has been in touch with the Ghansali MLA Shakti Lal Shah and Tehri district magistrate Mayur Dixit regarding the rescue and relief operations. The CM has directed the district administration that in addition to Tingarh village, the other vulnerable villages in the disaster affected area should be identified and the affected people should be shifted to safe locations without delay. The officials have also been directed to shift the cattle and other domesticated animals of the locals to safe locations.



The district magistrate informed that two persons had died in the Toli village of Balganga area. Cheques for compensation, amounting to Rs four lakh each for the deaths and Rs 1.35 lakh for

the damage to the home were presented to the bereaved family on Saturday. Further, cheques for Rs 57,500 were provided to the owners for the death of two cattle. Dixit further informed that Tingarh village was evacuated on Saturday and the villagers were shifted to the temporary relief camp at government inter college, Binakkhal, where all necessary arrangements have been made for them. A joint team of officials of Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Health, Revenue, Horticulture, Social Welfare and Cooperatives departments has been formed to survey and assess the damage caused to roads, farmland, drinking water and power lines in the disaster affected villages of Toli, Jakhana, Koti, Vishan, Thati Budhakedar, Pinswad, Urani, Agunda and other villages, the DM added.

# Govt sensitive, working for disaster-affected villagers: Agrawal

PNS ■ NEW TEHRI

Cabinet minister in-charge of Tehri district Prem Chand Agrawal said that the State government is sensitive to the condition of the disaster affected people. The authorities are working efficiently for them in this time of disaster, he said. The minister said this on Sunday while interacting with the disaster affected villagers in Tehri district after inspecting the damage caused by heavy rain and landslide in Toli, Tingarh and Thati Budhakedar villages. Visiting the temporary relief camp at



the government inter college Binakkhal, he inspected the facilities provided to the villagers there and directed officials maintain the desired level of health, food, electricity, drinking water and sanitation. Stating that the government is working efficiently for the disaster victims, he said that a geological survey has been conducted in disaster affected Tingarh village while

the process for identifying land for resettlement of the villagers is underway. The government will do whatever is better for the villagers according to the standards. Agrawal said that since the day of the disaster, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama and he have been in touch with the district administration. Dhama is in Delhi for an important meeting but taking regular feedback regarding the situation in Tehri, Agrawal said. He further said that the district administration has handled the situation in a better manner within a short span of time in this disaster scenario while the villagers have also shown patience. In Thati Budhakedar, the villagers demanded channelisation of the river, removal of debris from it and drafting a plan for the disaster affected area and undertaking a treatment on the lines of Uttarkashi. The minister assured them that action will be taken as per the standards. The Ghansali MLA Shakti Lal Shah and district magistrate Mayur Dixit informed the minister about the damage caused in various villages and the assistance being provided to the affected villagers.

# Arya accuses Govt of inefficient disaster management, seeks special assistance for affected villagers

PNS ■ NEW TEHRI

The leader of opposition in the Vidhan Sabha, Yashpal Arya visited the disaster affected areas of Tehri district on Sunday and interacted with the villagers affected by heavy rain and landslides a day earlier. Stating that the government must take immediate steps to prevent such disasters in the future and provide special assistance to the affected villagers, Arya alleged that the government is not focusing

agement standards and work to fully relocate residents of Tingarh and Toli villages. Alleging that the government is not serious, he said that the people are presently in shock and should be provided full assistance. It is not possible to build a home with Rs 1.30 lakh in the mountains while Rs 10,000 is not adequate compensation for an acre of farmland. The government should soon provide special assis-



seriously on disaster management.

The senior Congress leader visited disaster-affected Tingarh, Toli and Budhakedar to check the damage caused by the disaster after visiting the temporary relief camp and meeting the affected villagers. Arya inspected the damaged homes and other parts of Tingarh. He visited Toli to meet and express condolence to Virendra Shah, whose wife Sarita Devi and daughter Anikta had died in the landslide debris on Saturday. The LoP said that the government should amend disaster man-

stance to the people affected by the disaster, he said. Arya further said that in Budhakedar, the rivers swelling at the confluence of Dharmganga and Balganga are posing a threat to Budhakedar Bazaar, Thati, Raksiya and Gaufal villages. The danger has been exacerbated due to heavy silt in both the rivers. Stating that this region is very vulnerable to disasters, Arya said that the government should make a long-term plan for this area. Pratapnagar MLA Vikram Singh Negi and other local Congress leaders accompanied Arya during his visit to the area.

# Bhatt directs party workers to aid in rescue & relief in disaster-hit areas

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Bharatiya Janata Party State President Mahendra Bhatt has expressed grief at the deaths caused by landslide in the Budhakedar area of Tehri district. He said that the party organisation is working in coordination with the government to help the disaster affected across the State. Bhatt also directed the party workers to cooperate in the rescue and relief efforts, while also appealing to the Congress and other opposition parties to rise above politics and help the disaster-affected.

The BJP State chief said that on the directions of chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama, cabinet minister Prem Chand Agrawal had visited the disaster hit Budhakedar area where he issued necessary instructions

to enhance the rescue and relief efforts. Teams of the administration, State Disaster Response Force, Police and the Fire Service are working to provide relief to the affected in places hit by disasters, he said.

Bhatt also directed all BJP workers to get involved in providing assistance to those affected by disasters in their area. The party workers should work in coordination with the police and disaster relief teams. "In addition to the assistance being provided by the government, we should strive at the individual and social level to ensure that the disaster victims have foodgrains, accommodation and other important assistance. The party workers should also ensure that in case of road blockage,

the pilgrims and travellers do not face any hardships," he said.

The BJP State president also appealed to the Congress and other opposition leaders to rise above politics amidst the disaster scenario and work together to help the victims. The disaster management machinery is working with public cooperation to tackle this situation and one should avoid making unnecessary statements for political gains in such a situation. This is also important so that the morale of the general public and agencies involved in the efforts is not affected. All should work as social activists instead of political activists to succeed in minimising the damage, Bhatt added.

# Govt machinery functioning efficiently in affected areas: BJP

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Responding to statements made by leader of opposition in the Vidhan Sabha, Yashpal Arya, regarding disaster management, the BJP State media in-charge Manver Singh Chauhan said that despite the difficult mountainous terrain, the government machinery is working properly. He said that the landslide in Toli vil-

lage occurred past midnight, after which the rescue team reached the site and the rescue efforts were started. Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama is monitoring the relief efforts, seeking regular updates from the local MLA and DM.

"There are two sections in the Congress claiming to be

working in public interest. One is on a political tour to Kedarnath while the other section is keeping its distance from this rally and focusing on the disaster. Instead of looking for gaps, united effort is needed to provide relief to those affected by the disaster at such times," Chauhan said.

# Warning- heavy rain and thunderstorms likely in five districts

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Dehradun and some other parts of the State received light rain on Sunday. The State meteorological centre has yet again issued a yellow warning (Watch) regarding the possibility of heavy rainfall and thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/intense to very intense spells of rain likely to occur at isolated places in Dehradun, Pauri, Champawat, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar districts on Monday. Thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/intense spells of rain are likely to occur at isolated places in the remaining districts today. Apart from this, light to moderate rain/thunderstorms are likely to occur at most places in Champawat and Nainital districts, at many places in Tehri, Pauri, Dehradun and Udham Singh Nagar districts and at a few places in the remaining dis-

tricts. The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness a partly to generally cloudy sky. Few spells of light to moderate rain/thunderstorms are likely to occur, of which one or two spells may be intense/heavy in some areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 35 degrees Celsius and 25 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. Meanwhile, there was 14.3 millimetres of rain in Dehradun and 5.5 millimetres in Thalising on Sunday. The maximum and minimum temperatures were 35 degrees Celsius and 25.7 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 36.2 degrees Celsius and 28.2 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 25.5 degrees Celsius and 17.2 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 26.9 degrees Celsius and 19.1 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

# Corbett authorities conduct checks under Operation Monsoon

PNS ■ RAMNAGAR

The Corbett tiger reserve administration is currently undertaking a special intensive patrolling and combing campaign as part of Operation Monsoon. The patrolling and combing in the jungles was extended to settlements and also reached the railway station where personnel questioned suspicious persons and also raised awareness on wildlife conservation. Corbett authorities have prepared the schedule for various patrols including special patrol, long range patrol, weekly patrol, elephant patrol, drone surveillance and night ambush as part of this special campaign. These activities are being undertaken regularly to minimise the possibility of poaching, illegal entry, illegal tree felling and other



criminal activities in the forest area. The Bijrani range officer Bhanu Prakash Harbola is monitoring activities under the campaign. On Sunday, the staff conducted checks in the local railway station, bus station and other areas. People from outside and nomads living in

tents and temporary shelters were also questioned by the personnel. The local residents were also requested to keep an eye out for suspicious elements and to inform the Forest department in any emergency situation.

# Route violations by Kanwadias pose safety risks, disrupt traffic in Haridwar

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Many Kanwadias have been allegedly resorting to inappropriate methods such as tearing down tin sheets, jumping over railings, climbing dividers and leaping over boundary walls to access the national highways rather than going on routes predetermined for them by the authorities in Haridwar. The Kanwad Yatra is currently at its peak, with the number of Kanwadias increasing rapidly each day. The police have identified certain routes for Kanwadias in Haridwar to ensure they can travel along with their Kanwads without any inconvenience. The police also diverted several routes accordingly. However, many Kanwadias are violating these designated paths which is causing significant issues for the police. According to the officials, Kanwadias are

resorting to inappropriate methods to access seemingly empty roads and the national highways. When attempts are made to stop them, many of them resort to unnecessarily confronting the police. In some instances, Kanwadias even claimed that they could not turn back with their Kanwads after reaching a certain point as per religious tradition and insisted on staying or proceeding via the same route. These violations not only disrupt the traffic on main roads but also pose a constant risk of accidents or damage to the Kanwads. The officials said that the police are deployed at all duty points and directing Kanwadias to follow the specified routes. However, this has led to occasional confrontations between the police and the Kanwadias. Some Kanwadias have also

been caught on drone cameras near the VIP Ghat, jumping over railings to reach the ghat from the cable bridge and the high bridge. These actions were captured by a drone flying at a height of approximately 300 metres. The Haridwar senior superintendent of police Pramendra Dobhal said that it is crucial for Kanwadias to understand that the entire arrangement is designed to ensure their safety and the safe transport of their Kanwads to their destination. The coordinated efforts by the authorities aim to facilitate a smooth and secure pilgrimage experience for everyone involved. "We appeal to them to cooperate with the police and carry out their pilgrimage peacefully and follow rules for their own and the public's safety," he said.

# Trio caught with two elephant tusks

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Special Task Force (STF) arrested three men with two elephant tusks from Shyampur in the Haridwar district in a joint operation with the Terai Central forest division and Shyampur police. The

to Bijnor in Uttar Pradesh and was found in possession of an ivory tusk weighing about seven kilogrammes. Further interrogation led to the late night arrest of Jitendra Singh from Shyampur with another

leading to the arrests and recovery of the ivory. He said that the arrested accused are notorious criminals. Gautam has a prior murder charge in Bijnor about seven years ago and Jitendra had previously been jailed under the Forest Act in 2017 in Shyampur, he stated. The arrested traffickers will be booked under the Wildlife Protection Act and further investigation will reveal details about the poaching of the elephants. The authorities cannot reveal more information about this case right now, he added. Besides this, Agrawal also highlighted the crucial roles of chief constables



STF senior superintendent of police Ayush Agrawal said that the team conducted a covert operation to nab these wildlife traffickers. The STF first arrested two accused Gautam Singh and Chandan Singh from Shyampur. The duo belongs

to an ivory tusk of about seven kilogrammes. Agrawal said that the STF had received inputs about the involvement of these men in wildlife trafficking in the Haridwar area for a long time. A team was secretly deployed to take action,

Mahendra Giri and Kishore Kumar in the successful execution of the operation. He also appealed to the public to report any wildlife trafficking activities to the nearest police station or contact the STF Uttarakhand at 0135 2656202.









## FIRST COLUMN

## A PATH TO PERSONAL LIBERATION

With unwavering determination and faith, one can conquer even the most persistent habits



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

We are what we repeatedly do, said Aristotle... If we have a look at the dictionary meaning of habit, then it says 'something that you do often and regularly, sometimes without knowing that you are doing it.' To define it simply, habits can be described as involuntary actions. They are a kind of 'automatic behaviour' as it were, for one does not do them after much thought. There is no doubt in it that almost everyone in this world has one or other bad habit. Don't we all have? Like, many people have the bad habit of smoking. But, if you tell them that it is a bad habit, some of them will bring in a little bit of philosophy and some would try to support it with medical opinion also.

They will say, "Smoking is very exhilarating. It is good for my brain because it brings me concentration." Others will say, "Smoking keeps my bowels free." Others still will confess that it is a bad habit that they find hard to give up. Little do most people realise that it is a bad habit that pollutes their physical system and the atmosphere and causes diseases like cancer. Similarly, some people have the habit of talking too much. They just can't keep quiet even for a couple of minutes. Little do these people realise that much breath and energy is wasted on useless talk.

This could usefully be spent in silent meditation. But the problem is that he who talks and talks is, today, considered as a smart, clever and wise person, and a person who talks less is thought to be lacking in general knowledge or to be deficient in the art of conversation! Such examples of bad habits can be multiplied, but, what we need to understand from these examples is that, in most cases, people do not realise that it is a bad or a harmful habit and where this truth is realised, there isn't the strong desire to get freed from its grip and that is why some people philosophically say; This habit of mine will die only when I die.

So what is the solution to get over one's bad habits? Is it practically possible? Yes! With a little effort and attention, it is indeed possible. To start with one needs great enthusiasm which is very essential for leaving bad habits. There is a well-known proverb in English: "Well-begun is half done". So, after realising that the habit which you have decided to give up is



really bad, you should put up a brave and enthusiastic fight against this evil. From the very outset, call forth all your latent energies not only to cut its root and branch but also to destroy its seed, for if the seed remains, the tree is likely to grow up again. When a house is on fire, how promptly and energetically the inmates react? At that time, they are fully concentrated and they use all the means to extinguish the fire.

Put your resolve into action immediately. Secondly, remove the words 'impossible', 'difficult', 'I cannot' etc. from your mind. These are the expressions of a weakling or a timid person. Cheer yourself up. Realize the truth that the evil habit is your own creation, you have given birth to it and nourished it to bring its growth and now you should not say with a weak will that it is difficult to control it.

Always remember! habits are not your original nature; they are your second nature. You have acquired them and you say that you cannot give them up? You are their Master and you believe yourself to be their slave? 'Faith, it has been rightly said, "can move mountains and this your habit is only a molehill. Therefore, rise and take up the bow of endeavour and become an instrument to the Divine to shoot this devil—your bad habit—for, God is with you as He always is on the side of the virtuous. But, remember! A mere wish or desire to eradicate evil is not enough. You must have pure and strong will besides a definite aim and purpose. Wish or desire is a small, temporary ripple in the lake of mind but Will is the power that executes the desire to fulfilment. There is nothing impossible for a man of strong willpower to achieve. So let's make a resolve that we will liberate ourselves in the true sense.

(The writer is a spiritual educator and a popular columnist views are personal)

## Budget is pro-growth but stability concern remains



UTTAM GUPTA

Major expenditure items may go out of control, raising concerns about the budget's feasibility; moreover, the Government's gross tax revenue target of Rs 38.40 lakh crore is overly ambitious



On top of a GDP (gross domestic product) growth of 8 per cent plus for three consecutive years, the Union Budget for FY 2024-25 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23, 2024, has all the ingredients to sustain the momentum during the current year as well. For the current year, she has proposed capital expenditure at Rs 111,111 crore, which is 17 per cent higher than the revised estimate (RE) for FY 2023-24. In her Budget for 2019-20, she had laid a roadmap for catapulting the Indian economy to US\$5 trillion by 2024-25. In sync with this target, she had projected an investment requirement of over Rs 100 lakh crore to build the infrastructure over five years.

Out of this, 39 per cent or Rs 39,00,000 crore was to come from the Centre and states each and the balance was Rs 22,00,000 crore from the private sector. The Centre's capital spend during the previous four years was 2020-21: Rs 439,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 554,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 750,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 1000,961 crore. This adds up to Rs 2700,000 crore. Add to this Rs 111,111 crore for 2024-25, the total over five years comes to Rs 3800,000 crore which is more or less close to the amount the Centre intended to contribute. The Central government has also been helping the states to boost their capital spend. During 2022-23, it provided them with 50-year Rs 100,000 crore interest-free loans. During 2023-24, such transfers were Rs 130,000 crore. For the current year, the transfers are kept at Rs 150,000 crore.

To promote investment in the private sector, the Centre has reduced the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent for new manufacturing enterprises and 22 per cent for existing enterprises. In this year's budget, the corporate tax rate on foreign firms has been reduced from extant 40 per cent to 35 per cent. With this and assuming that private consumption/demand remains strong (a relief of around Rs 17,500/- in personal income tax or PIT resulting from the change in tax slabs under the New IT regime and increase in a standard deduction by Rs 25,000/- will give some boost) besides exports getting a leg up, courtesy



THE GROSS TAX REVENUE TARGET OF RS 3840,000 CRORE IS OVER-AMBITIOUS AND THE BUDGET ASSUMES RECEIPTS OF RS 50,000 CRORE FROM DISINVESTMENT OF GOVERNMENT SHARES IN PSUs, A PROGRAM IT HAS DECIDED NOT TO PURSUE. EVEN MAJOR EXPENDITURE ITEMS COULD GET OUT OF CONTROL

rebound in the US economy, India could achieve growth even higher than 6.5-7 per cent projected in the Economic Survey for 2023-24. But, there is a flip side to it. This has to do with the fiscal deficit or FD (excess of total expenditure over total receipts). Sitharaman has set it at 4.9 per cent of the GDP which is 0.2 per cent less than a target of 5.1 per cent fixed in the interim budget. This has been made possible due to a mammoth dividend transfer of Rs 210,000 crore by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the Central Government from its operations during the FY 2023-24 which is Rs 130,000 crore higher than the provision of Rs 80,000 crore made in the interim budget. It won't be easy to achieve the 4.9 per cent target during the current year. This is because the gross tax revenue (GTR) target of Rs 3840,000 crore is over-ambitious and the budget assumes receipts of Rs 50,000 crore from disinvestment of government shares in PSUs, a program it has decided not to pursue. Even major expenditure items could get out of control as the year progresses.

For instance, the 'fertilizer subsidy' is budgeted at Rs 164,000 crore during 2024-25. This is based on the assumption that the declining trend in the international price of fertilizers and raw materials used in their production seen during 2023-24 continues during the current year as well. It takes a small disruption in the global supply chain (given the current highly uncertain geo-political situation, this is quite likely), for this assumption to go haywire. That apart, to go down from 4.9 per cent to 4.5 per cent next year set by the FM her 2021-22 budget (this by itself is far more generous than FD of 3 per cent that was to be achieved in 2020-21 as per the amendment to the FRBM Act, 2018) can be daunting, all the more when the

RBI is unlikely to repeat its bonanza/gift to the Centre. During an interactive with the press, Sitharaman alluded to the Centre's plan to design fiscal trajectory in a manner such that from FY 2026-27 onward, its debt to GDP ratio starts declining. Sans target setting, this may not instil confidence. Yet, she won't set the target as these are often missed. The Centre's debt-to-GDP ratio is currently around 57 per cent against the 40 per cent mandated for 2024-25 under the FRBM Amendment Act (2018).

Meanwhile, to address the concerns on employment, MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) and agriculture, the budget has proposed several initiatives. For MSMEs, it proposes a new credit guarantee scheme to facilitate term loans to enable them to purchase machinery and equipment without requiring collateral or third-party guarantees (a self-financing guarantee fund is mooted that could provide each applicant with guarantee coverage of up to Rs 100 crore); increase in the limit of Mudra (Micro Units Development Refinance Agency, a subsidiary of SIDBI) loans to Rs 2000,000 for those who have repaid previous loans; expanding SIDBI branches to provide the much-needed access to credit and additional support for further growth.

The initiatives on employment all aligned to the EPFO (Employees Provident Fund Organization) enrollments include Scheme A: a one-month wage payout of up to Rs. 15,000 per month (payable in three instalments) to first-timers in the workforce, with all formal sectors with an eligibility limit of a salary of Rs 100,000 per month. Scheme B: meant for creating 'additional' jobs in the manufacturing sector linked to first-time employees; it includes an incentive to employees and employers con-

cerning EPFO in the first 4 years of employment.

These schemes are expected to benefit 240 lakh youth. Scheme C meant support to employers to enable them to give additional employment in all sectors for those earning up to Rs 100,000 per month. The government will reimburse employers up to Rs. 3000 per month for two years towards EPFO contribution for each additional employee. This Scheme will benefit 50 lakh persons. To make the youth employable, Sitharaman has announced a new centrally sponsored scheme for skilling in collaboration with States and industry. 2000,000 youth will be skilled over five years under this scheme. One thousand industrial training institutes (ITIs) will be upgraded in the hub and spoke arrangement, with course content aligned to the skill needs of the industry. In agriculture, the measures include initiating 10 million farmers into natural farming in the next two years; releasing 109 climate-resilient new seed varieties across 32 field and horticulture crops in the next 100 days; Jan Samarth-based Kisan Credit Card in five States to give a boost to shrimp farming and export; launch a national cooperation policy; digital public infrastructure (DPI) to create a registry of 60 million farmers with the details of their land over the next three years; developing large-scale vegetable clusters closer to major consumption centres; promoting FPOs, cooperatives and start-ups for vegetable supply chains; pursuing the mission for pulses and oilseeds production etc. All the above announcements sound like the proverbial 'Many a slip between the cup and the lip'. For instance, on employment, Sitharaman clarified 'the government can only nudge private firms.'

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

## Flying towards sustainability: The aviation industry's tryst with carbon neutrality

Through technological innovation and green solutions like adoption of sustainable aviation fuel, the aviation sector is becoming environment friendly

The global aviation industry is undeniably a significant contributor to carbon emissions, accounting for about 2.5-3.0% of the world's carbon output. Recognising this impact, initiatives like IATA's "Fly Net Zero" are crucial steps towards achieving carbon neutrality by 2050. Airlines are actively pursuing various strategies to reduce their environmental footprint, with fleet modernization being a cornerstone. One key pillar of the industry's sustainability strategy is investment in a modern, fuel-efficient fleet. Jazeera Airways, for instance, has invested in the Airbus A320neo aircraft, known for its 20% reduction in fuel consumption and emissions. The



ROMANA PARVI

airline was also the first to order over 2000 of the world's lightest aircraft seats from Explesiat. These seats will contribute to a weight saving of 1.2 metric tons per aircraft resulting in enhanced fuel efficiency and reduced emissions per flight. Beyond fleet upgrades, airlines are implementing carbon offsetting programs as part of their sustainability efforts. These programs allow passengers to mitigate the environmental

impact of their air travel by investing in projects that reduce greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere. Jazeera Airways' carbon offsetting initiatives specifically support projects in renewable energy and reforestation, allowing passengers to contribute to environmental conservation efforts directly linked to their flights.

Technological innovation also plays a pivotal role in enhancing operational efficiency and passenger experience. Airlines are increasingly adopting digital solutions such as paperless ticketing, digital baggage tracking, and personalized sustainable travel options. These technologies not only streamline operations but also minimize waste and carbon emissions associ-

ated with traditional paper-based processes. Addressing plastic waste is another important aspect of the industry's sustainability efforts. Airlines are replacing single-use plastics with biodegradable alternatives and exploring sustainable options like Palmade products made from palm leaves. Energy efficiency is another critical focus area for airlines, extending to both aircraft operations and airport infrastructure. State-of-the-art airport terminals are designed with sustainability in mind, incorporating energy-efficient lighting, climate control systems, and renewable energy sources.

The airline industry is actively leading the way towards a more sustainable future for air



travel, setting a precedent for environmentally responsible practices that extend beyond its operations. The adoption of CORSIA (Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation) marks a substantial advancement in its commitment to mitigating environmental impact and combat-

ing climate change. CORSIA ensures that international aviation contributes to global efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while continuing to support global connectivity and economic growth. Additionally, the development and adoption of Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) and the utilization of

advanced software solutions like those offered by NAVBLUE are critical milestones in the airline industry's efforts to achieve net-zero emissions and address climate change.

Achieving net-zero emissions by 2050 requires collaboration among airlines, governments, and passengers. Through ongoing innovation, investment in sustainable technologies like SAF, reduction of plastic waste, and improvements in operational efficiency, the aviation industry is actively leading the way towards a more environmentally friendly future for air travel. These efforts not only aim to reduce the industry's carbon footprint but also set a precedent for sustainable practices

that can inspire broader global initiatives beyond aviation.

Aviation industry today is dedicated to collaborating closely with partners, passengers, and communities to foster a greener and more sustainable future for air travel. This commitment drives us to innovate and implement initiatives that reduce our environmental footprint, promote sustainable practices, and contribute positively to the global effort against climate change.

Together with our stakeholders, we aim to lead by example and inspire lasting change in the aviation industry and beyond.

(The writer is regional manager South Asia - Jazeera Airways; views are personal)

Strike in Israeli-controlled Golan Heights kills at least 12

AP ■ TEL AVIV

A rocket strike on Saturday at a soccer field killed at least 12 children and teens, Israeli authorities said...



A boy walks past bicycles left next to the area that was hit by a rocket on a soccer field in the Druze town of Majdal Shams, in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights...

Hezbollah chief spokesman Mohammed Afif told The Associated Press that the group "categorically denies carrying out an attack" on the town of Majdal Shams...

still have sympathies for Syria and rejected Israeli annexation, but their ties with Israeli society have grown over the years.

were no reports of casualties and the strikes were no more intense than what has become routine over the past 10 months.

Landslide in China kills 15, injures 6

Beijing (PTI): A landslide caused by heavy rains from a tropical storm hit a house in central China's Hunan on Sunday, killing 15 people and injuring six others.

US-Japan security talks focus on bolstering military cooperation

AP ■ TOKYO

Japanese and US defence chiefs and top diplomats agreed to further bolster their military cooperation by upgrading the command and control of US forces in the East Asian country...

tial race. "We are standing at a historic turning point as the rules-based, free and open international order is shaken to its core," Kamikawa said.

over the crucial South China Sea. It also claims self-governing Taiwan as its territory, to be annexed by force if necessary.

rence", which includes atomic weapons — a shift from Japan's earlier reluctance to openly discuss the sensitive issue...

Ultra-liberal Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, mayhem and death to US: Trump

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Kamala Harris will deliver crime, chaos, mayhem, and death to the US, Donald Trump has said, intensifying his attacks on his Democratic rival as the 2024 presidential election campaign entered a critical final 100 day stretch.

'Biden's exit from 2024 race was a coup'

Washington (PTI) Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has said incumbent US President Joe Biden was forced to exit the presidential race, describing it a "coup" by the Democratic Party.

the 25th Amendment," Trump, 78, alleged. The 25th Amendment of the US Constitution was passed by Congress to determine the presidential succession after the assassination of former President John F Kennedy.

and we will stop the horrible invasion into our country... No person in American politics has been more of an open border zealot than Border Czar Harris," he said.

UK is 'broke and broken', new govt says

AP ■ LONDON

Britain's new left-leaning government said Sunday that the nation is "broke and broken," blaming the situation on its predecessors ahead of a major speech on the state of the public finances that is widely expected to lay the groundwork for higher taxes.



of the new Cabinet, said in a statement. "We are calling time on the false promises that British people have had to put up with and we will do what it takes to fix Britain."

ple," saying its policies would deliver faster economic growth and generate the additional revenue needed by the government.

should have levelled with the British public." The government on Sunday released an overview of the spending assessment Reeves commissioned shortly after taking office.

more than during the same period in 2023. "The assessment will show that Britain is broke and broken - revealing the mess that populist politics has made of the economy and public services," Downing Street said in a statement.

Cooler weather aids firefighters in battling blaze larger than LA

Forest Ranch (AP): Thousands of firefighters battling a wildfire in Northern California received some help from the weather hours after it exploded in size, scorching an area greater than the size of Los Angeles.

tions, while an evacuation order means to leave immediately. Temperatures are expected to be cooler than average through the middle of next week, but "that doesn't mean that fires that are existing will go away," said Marc Chenard, a meteorologist at the National Weather Service Weather Prediction Centre in College Park, Maryland.

helicopters and numerous air tankers. Jeremy Pierce, a Cal Fire operations section chief, said firefighters were taking advantage of the cooler weather while it lasts: "We're having great success today." Susan Singleton and her husband packed their SUV with clothes, some food and their seven dogs and rushed to evacuate their home this week in Cohasset, a town of about 400 northeast of Chico.

7 killed in Congo's music concert stampede

AP ■ KINSHASA

Seven people were killed and many others were injured during a stampede at a music concert in Congo's capital Saturday, authorities said. The stampede occurred at the 80,000-capacity Stade des Martyrs stadium in the heart of Kinshasa where Mike Kalambayi, a popular Congolese gospel singer, was performing, Kinshasa Gov. Daniel Bumba said.



local music management company that organised the event said the chaos erupted when "the security services

tried to neutralise some troublemakers." An estimated 30,000 people attended the concert, which featured several other musicians and pastors, the management company Maajabu Gospel said in a statement.

New British Sikh MP wants to strengthen Labour Party's connection with India

PTI ■ LONDON

Jeevun Sandher, one of Britain's newest members of Parliament elected in the Labour Party's landslide general election victory earlier this month, is determined to restore trust in politics and strengthen his party's connection with India and its diaspora communities.

India earlier this week as a symbol of the high level of priority the incoming government places on the relationship as it gets on with the job of "delivering change".

deal in the works as well. It is about ensuring that we achieve a lot together for the mutual benefit of both nations," he said.

achieved and look forward to achieving even more in the weeks, months and years to come," he said of his party's diaspora outreach.







# India set for double-digit medal haul at Paris Olympics, says Nita Ambani

PTI ■ PARIS

After the highs of Tokyo Olympics where India secured their best ever medal haul, the country is poised to get medals in double digits in Paris, sports administrator and IOC member Nita Ambani has said.

Talking to PTI in an exclusive interaction on the sidelines of the opening of 'India House' at La Villette, she also said the day India hosts the Olympics is "not far".

In October last year, Prime

Minister Narendra Modi had announced India's bold intent to bid for the 2036 Olympics, pledging to spare no effort to fulfil the dream of 1.4 billion people in the country.

"We are going to do very well. Forty seven per cent of our athletes are girls. All for women power and all for our young boys and girls, we are rooting and cheering for them. I hope we can see double digits in medals for the first time. Go India go, make India proud," Nita said.

A day after the Paris Olympics began with a



glimmering opening ceremony that had the attention of the world, the India House, the first-ever country house at the Olympics, had a star-studded opening ceremony attended by BCCI secretary Jay Shah and IOC officials and administrators.

"India has arrived. It is time that the flame that was first lit in Athens must light the sky in our ancient land - Bharat. The day is not far when India will host the Olympic Games. Let this be our collective resolve at the

opening of the India House," she added.

"For the first time, India has its own house at the Paris 2024 Olympics. It's a place where we are going to honour our athletes, celebrate their achievements, and wish them well.

"We will celebrate our heritage and our culture, with many of our artisans present and cultural programs scheduled. This is going to be a home away from home for our athletes.

Asked how this idea came to her mind, she said: "When I

went to Brazil, Korea Winter Olympics, and then Tokyo, we didn't have an India House. "I just felt that India, with its 1.4 billion people, needed a house of its own. So that's when I started thinking about having an Indian House at the Olympics for our athletes and everyone to see what the spirit of India really is.

"Envisioned as a symbol of India's Olympic aspiration, we hope that it becomes a home away from home for our athletes where we honour them and salute their achievements," she added.

## Ramita qualifies for women's 10m air rifle final at Olympics



PTI ■ CHATEAUROUX (FRANCE)

India's Ramita Jindal gave a strong display of marksmanship to qualify for the women's 10m air rifle final in fifth place even as Elavenil Valarivan succumbed to pressure to miss out despite being among the contenders, finishing 10th at the Olympic Games here on Sunday.

Ramita, the Hangzhou Asian Games bronze medallist in the event, aggregated 631.5 to become

the second shooter from the country after pistol exponent Manu Bhaker to secure a berth in the final, while Elavenil scored 630.7. Ramita had a sluggish start and was not among the top-eight till the sixth and final series but she rallied superbly to book a berth in the final while stalwart Elavenil, who had finished 16th at the Tokyo Olympics three years back, held on to the fifth position for much of the qualification round. But a poor last series of 103.8 saw the 24-year-old former

junior world champion take a mighty tumble from fifth to 10th slot and miss the eighth-shooter final.

Ramita, who had scored 636.4 points, 0.1 more than the world record during the Olympic Selection Trials in New Delhi and Bhopal, was patchy initially, shooting a below-par 104.6 in the opening series before she shot 106.1 in the next round. Another ordinary 104.9 was followed by two successive 105.3 and a 105.7 which fetched her a dream entry into the final.

South Korea's Ban Hyojin smashed the Qualification Olympic Record (QOR) with a superb score of 634.5, eclipsing the previous mark of 632.9 set by Norway's Jeanette Hegg in Tokyo Games.

Elavenil, who had struggled following the Tokyo Games and could not enter the squad for the Hangzhou Asian Games last year, kept averaging a score of 10.5 throughout the qualifying round as she shot superb series of 105.8, 106.1, 104.4, 105.3, 105.3 but a rank poor final series of 103.8 saw her bowing out.

## Sindhu opens campaign with dominant win over Fathimath

PTI ■ PARIS

Two-time Olympic medallist Indian shuttler PV Sindhu began her Paris Olympics campaign with a resounding straight games win over Maldives' Fathimath Abdul Razzaq in the women's singles group stage match, here on Sunday.

The gulf of class between the two players was evident as Sindhu, who is vying for a third Olympic medal, took just 29 minutes to dispatch her lower-ranked opponent 21-9 21-6 in the Group M fixture.

"It was a good start, I am happy. I was able to get used to the court and the atmosphere. It has been a long time, coming back after three years, it's a very special one. 2016 (Olympics) was different and 2020 (2021) was completely different. It is a sort of mixture of both," said Sindhu about her Olympic journey.

"I am enjoying and looking to the second match." After a couple of unforced errors, Sindhu was quick to assess the condition and took control of the proceedings, racing to a 11-4 lead.

The world No 111 Fathimath



was no match against the former world champion who finished the first game in a mere 13 minutes.

The second game followed a similar manner with Sindhu claiming the first four points in the blink of an eye to take an early lead.

However, Razzaq capitalised on Sindhu's error to bridge the gap to make it 3-4. But it

became a one-sided contest once again as the Indian increased the gap to 10-3. In the end, Sindhu had as many as 14 match points but the world No 13 needed only one to seal the tie.

The 10th seeded Indian, who won the silver medal in the Rio Games in 2016 and a bronze in the last edition in Tokyo, will take on World No 75 Kristin

Kuuba of Estonia in her second group match on Wednesday.

Sindhu has been mentored by the legendary Prakash Padukone in the past few months, and she said the association has been beneficial to her.

"I have been with Prakash sir for more than six months now and it's going on very well. Everything is coming together.

We have to know each other very well to work together," she said.

"Prakash sir is a legend, he is very experienced and he will come and tell me what is required, what I need to change."

Asked about the aspects of her game which has improved since she started working with Padukone, she said, "Overall, it has not changed the way I feel but there have been add-ons.

"When after I got injured it was getting difficult to move well on court and it was at times getting hard to get the momentum back. We worked on that, we worked on strokes, not just on net and defence but on overall game. You need to be at your 100 per cent in every big tournament or on every stroke."

She said mental strength is very important for players, especially during a big event like the Olympics.

"It is very important to be mentally strong. You at times don't know what is happening, everything gone from you. We worked on the mental things also. I tried to be positive, keep myself calm and do yoga."

## US women's Olympic basketball team fine-tunes its defense ahead of first game

AP ■ PARIS

One of the challenges that the U.S. Women's basketball team faces at the Paris Olympics with limited practice time is getting everyone on the same page defensively.

There's no doubt that all 12 players on the roster can score at will, but it takes time to build the chemistry and trust necessary to be a great defensive team.

For now, it's a work in progress, with the first test coming Monday against Japan.

"We spent a little more time on it," U.S. Coach Cheryl Reeve said before practice Sunday. "Each team that you play poses a different challenge. Certainly Japan, you know plays different than the rest of the group. We have to tweak our scheme a little bit."

Japan plays a style with all five players on the perimeter, which negates a little bit of the Americans' interior advantage. That means that players like Brittney Griner, Aja Wilson and Breanna Stewart may have to guard more on the outside with no true post player for the Japanese team.

"I know I may have to play



outside more defensively and I'm ready for it," Griner said.

The two teams met for the gold medal in the Tokyo Games and the Americans came away with a 90-75 victory. Griner finished with 30 points, making 14 of her 18 shots. It was the most points ever by a U.S. Player in a gold medal game, surpassing the 29 by Lisa Leslie in 1996.

While the Americans have been able to outscore their opponents easily during the 55-game Olympic winning streak that dates to the 1992 Barcelona Games, being able to stop the opponent certainly has helped.

The U.S. Gave up an average of 68.7 points at the Tokyo Games, the most since the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, when the streak of seven straight gold medals started.

There is a wealth of talented defenders on the U.S. Team. It just takes a little bit of time to get used to playing with one another and the defensive plan that Reeve has installed. The U.S. Had only about 14 hours of practice time together before the Olympic opener.

"I think the biggest thing was taking away our schemes that we may have with our (WNBA) teams where we just know how to guard people and just trust the process," two-time WNBA defensive player of the year Aja Wilson said. "Sometimes we're just so used to schemes and this player wants to get here versus overseas is like literally just play everyone honest."

Wilson said the biggest thing is trust and that just takes time. "The more we play alongside each other, the better," she added. "I think we're slowly starting to trust each other and getting an understanding of just knowing we have to have layers and we're starting to get it."

## Olympics pre-race triathlon event in Seine River cancelled over water quality concerns

AP ■ PARIS

Concerns over the water quality of Paris' Seine River have continued into the 2024 Olympics, with a pre-race triathlon event there canceled Sunday.

Organizers said they nixed the swimming leg of the triathlon familiarization scheduled for Sunday morning after a meeting about water quality among authorities tasked with carrying out water quality tests. That included representatives of World Triathlon, as well as city and regional authorities.

Swimming in the Seine has been banned for over a century in big part due to poor water quality. Organizers have invested \$1.5 billion to prepare the Seine for the Olympics and the government has said the river would be clean enough to hold events, including the swimming portion of the triathlon and the marathon swimming event.

Daily water quality tests in early June indicated unsafe levels of E. Coli bacteria, followed by recent improvements. Parisian Mayor Anne Hidalgo took a famous dip in the river less than two weeks before Olympic events were set to start, fulfilling a promise to show that the long-polluted waterway was clean enough to



host swimming competitions. Heavy rain during the opening ceremony revived concerns over whether the long-polluted waterway will be clean enough to host swimming competitions, since water quality is deeply linked with the weather in the French capital.

Since 2015, organizers have invested heavily to prepare the Seine for the Olympics and to ensure Parisians have a cleaner river after the Games. The plan included constructing a giant underground water storage basin in central Paris, renovating sewer infrastructure and upgrading wastewater treatment plants.

Triathletes have expressed hope that the waters would be clean enough for them to swim in.

"Hopefully we get to swim, bike and run because I don't swim this much to just run and bike," Spanish triathlete Alberto Gonzalez said.

## Australian cyclist undergoes abdominal surgery after fall during Olympic time trial

AP ■ PARIS

Australian cyclist Lucas Plapp underwent abdominal surgery overnight at a Paris hospital following a hard crash on rain-slicked roads during the Olympic time trial on Saturday, the Australian team said.

AusCycling, Australia's cycling governing body, confirmed the procedure early Sunday. No other details were available.

Plapp was among the last riders to start on the 32.4-kilometer (20-mile) course and was laying down a medal-worthy ride at the first time check, trailing then-leader and eventual bronze medalist Wout van Aert by just two seconds. But when Plapp reached a technical portion of the course, his bike slid out from under him and he crashed hard onto the pavement.

The crash was not shown on the race broadcast, but AusCycling said Plapp was conscious and moving afterward. He was lifted into the team vehicle and taken to the hospital for precautionary scans, and later he required the abdominal procedure.

"Plapp slid under a barrier fence shortly after passing the first checkpoint approximately 14 kilometers into the 32-kilometer course," AusCycling said. "His parents



and an Australian team doctor were at the hospital with him."

The 23-year-old Plapp, who won bronze at the Tokyo Games as part of the reigning national time trial and road race champion. He was supposed to ride alongside Simon Clarke in the support of teammate Michael Matthews in the Olympic road race next Saturday.

Remco Evenepoel won the time trial, giving Belgium two riders on the podium, while Filippo Ganna of Italy finished second. But both the women's and men's races were marred by a series of crashes on a course made treacherous

by the rain.

Among those who fell was American rider Chloe Dygert, the reigning time trial world champion, who remounted her bike and rallied to finish third behind gold medalist Grace Brown of Australia and Anna Henderson of Britain.

"If we were in Britain, these (conditions) would be absolutely perfect. The roads are better to take corners on. When we're in Spain, France or Italy, I feel like it's a little more icy," said Dygert, who still plans to compete in the road race and team pursuit this Olympics. "But for sure it definitely plays a factor into the race itself."

## Small town comes to life for Olympics but with fair share of organisational hurdles

PTI ■ CHATEAUROUX (FRANCE),

Norway shooting coach Tore Brovold, the silver medallist at the 2008 Olympics, is being forced to stay away from skeet shooters in the national team as there are not enough rooms available at the Athletes' Village here.

Chateauroux, a quiet town in central France with a population of less than 50,000, is hosting all the shooting events of the Paris Olympics. It is a two-and-a-half hour train ride from the bustling French capital, leaving 340 Olympians pretty much cut off from the Games

hub.

After completing the 270km long journey from Paris, one would struggle to commute within Chateauroux due to limited public transport, which is free for everyone. For athletes, coaches, officials and media staying outside the Village, the only way to commute between the Games' venues is via the transport provided by the Organising Committee.

"These Games have been a disaster on the transport front. I went to the bus stop near the train station last night but this morning they changed the timings and the athletes had to go ahead with



the training in my absence," Brovold, who has also worked with Indian shotgun shooters, told PTI.

Due to limited availability of rooms, he had a choice to make: either stay at the Games' Village at the expense of a shooter or stay at a hotel outside. Keeping in mind the best interest of the team, he chose the latter.

"I have also come to know that the organisers are offering free accommodation to visiting teams outside the village as they are short on rooms," said the 54-year-old. Emin Jafarov, the deputy chef de mission of the Azerbaijan

contingent, too is staying in a hotel due to shortage of rooms.

"I am in staying in a hotel as there are not enough rooms at the Village and the athletes need it more than me," said Jafarov.

A majority of Great Britain's shooting squad is staying outside the Athletes' Village by choice as that ensures them the food of their choice.

"It just works better for us. The hotel staff takes care of our individual requirements and we can also go out to eat in different places," said a support staff from Team GB on condition of anonymity.

The 21-member Indian team too is going out to eat everyday as the shooters are not getting the food of their choice.

"If you want food like home, then it is not possible. The shooters have been going out for meals and that is totally fine," said a coach with the Indian team.

On Sunday, a team doctor associated with the Portugal team arrived here due to a transport delay.

"It has only been a day so far. I can tell you more about the challenges we are facing here after three four days," the doctor said without wanting to be named.

Suryakumar is a bowlers' captain, says Axar Patel

PTI ■ PALLEKELE

India all-rounder Axar Patel says new T20I skipper Suryakumar Yadav is a bowlers' captain who allows them the freedom to execute their plans.



"Whenever you get hit, he comes and says that it was a good ball. He keeps giving you inputs. As a player, there is a good bond with him."

much change," he said. "In the first three overs when we were going for runs, he was telling me that we can do this or do that and how we can take a wicket. There is no problem if a four or six goes in it. As a bowler, you get confidence from that if the captain is backing you and telling you that you can do

this." Axar said India's batting lineup in the opening T20I which did not feature Rishabh Pant at the top was formulated with the idea that the team maximises its left and right-hand options.

whereas on Saturday skipper Suryakumar came out at the coveted spot and the wicketkeeper-batter dropped down to No 4.

them? You also have to keep changing the batting order as per the bowling options that the opposition has got," he added. The spinner said the message from India's new staff under head coach Gautam Gambhir has been that the team will not experience a major overhaul in the way it operated.

USA Cricket fulfils critical requirement, appoints Jonathan as CEO

PTI ■ NEW YORK

USA Cricket has fulfilled one of the two critical requirements to avoid being disqualified as an ICC Associate nations by appointing Jonathan Atkinson as its chief executive officer effective August 1.



US stays alive with 4-1 win over New Zealand in men's soccer

AP ■ MARSEILLE (FRANCE)

Djordje Mihailovic converted a penalty as the United States pounced early in a 4-1 victory over New Zealand to stave off possible elimination at the Olympics.

Saturday - and this time the goal stood. On Wednesday, Morocco fans rushed the field and threw bottles in protest when Cristian Medina appeared to score an equalizer in the 16th minute of stoppage time for Argentina - causing the game to be suspended for around two hours.

Swiatek, Alcaraz and Djokovic start Olympics with win at French Open's site

AP ■ PARIS

Iga Swiatek and Carlos Alcaraz got the Paris Olympics tennis competition started with first-round victories under closed roofs at Roland Garros, the site of their French Open titles less than two months ago.

what's going to happen," Nadal said Saturday. "I don't know if I'm going to play or not."

and owns two Summer Games golds, was a surprise torch carrier during the rain-soaked opening ceremony along the Seine River on Friday night.



major championships in Paris and grabbed the last four games to beat Romania's Irina-Camelia Begu 6-2, 7-5, while reigning French Open

and Wimbledon champ Alcaraz defeated Lebanon's Hady Habib 6-3, 6-1. Serbia's Djokovic, who is seeded No. 1 in the men's field after Jannik Sinner pulled out with tonsillitis, needed less than an hour for a 6-0, 6-1 win against Australia's Matthew Ebden - a doubles player participating in a tour-level singles match for the first time in two years.

the front of his yellow shirt over his head and baring his chest to roars from the flag-dotted crowd. The last time Djokovic was in Paris, early last month, he needed surgery for a torn meniscus in his right knee after getting injured during the French Open.

Australia takes early lead against US On Day 1 of swimming

AP ■ PARIS

Australia took the lead in its swimming showdown against the United States at the Paris Olympics by claiming two of three gold medals on the first full day of competition.

career. Australia took the silver. CHINA TAKES FIRST GOLD OF GAMES The first gold medal of the Paris Olympics went to China when Huang Yuting and Sheng Lihao beat South Korea's Keum Jihyeon and Park Hajun in the final of the 10-meter air rifle mixed team event Saturday morning.



hadn't competed in a tour-level, main-draw singles match since June 2022. Djokovic felt other singles players deserved a spot at the Olympics instead of Ebden.

the first woman to compete at 10 Olympic Games in a career which began representing the Soviet Union. She has competed at every Summer Olympics since 1988, when she won gold as a 19-year-old Soviet prodigy.



Boxer Preeti beats Vietnam's Vo Thi Kim Anh to enter pre-quarterfinals

PTI ■ PARIS

Indian boxer Preeti Pawar picked up an unanimous decision win against Vietnam's Vo Thi Kim Anh to enter the women's 54kg category pre-quarterfinals at the Paris Olympics.

After the chaos and violence that marred the end of its 2-1 win over Argentina in the Olympic men's soccer tournament, Morocco conceded late again against Ukraine on