



OPINION 6
 NUANCED SHIFT IN
 PARLIAMENTARY CONDUCT

WORLD 8
 ISRAEL CONDUCTS MILITARY
 OPERATION IN WEST BANK

MONEY 10
 NIFTY SCALES NEW
 LIFETIME HIGH

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Scrapping NEET-UG not rational: Centre to SC



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

NEET-PG 2024 exam to be held on August 11

New Delhi: The NEET-PG 2024 entrance examination will be held on August 11 in two shifts, the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences announced on Friday. The examination was earlier scheduled to be held on June 23. "...It will now be held on August 11 in two shifts. The cut-off date for the purpose of eligibility to appear in the NEET-PG 2024 shall continue to be August 15, 2024," the Board said. **PNS**

Amid the growing clamour for cancellation of the controversy-ridden NEET-UG, 2024 exam over alleged malpractices, the Ministry of Education and the National Testing Agency told the Supreme Court on Friday that scrapping it would be "counter productive", not rational and "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates in the absence of proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality.

The Ministry and the NTA said there was no proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in the examination which was taken by over 23 lakh candidates at 4,750 centres in 571 cities.

Union Education Ministry have been at the centre of media debates and protests by students and political parties over alleged large-scale malpractices ranging from question paper leak to impersonation in the test held on May 5. In its affidavit, the Ministry said invalidating the exam would "seriously jeopardise" the efforts of lakhs of honest candidates who appeared in the exam. In the absence of proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in the examination, it argued that it would not be rational to take the step. This is the first time that the Centre is placing its stand on holding a retest of NEET-UG for all 24 lakh candidates on record. The Ministry has only acknowledged that there were "instances of irregularities, cheating, impersonation, malpractices" during the conduct of NEET-UG. There is no mention of a paper leak. It goes on to state further that "in the absence of any proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in a pan-India examination it would not be rational to scrap the entire examination." **Continued on Page 2**

The Union Education Ministry and the NTA filed separate affidavits opposing the pleas which have sought scrapping of the exam plagued by controversy, a re-test and court-monitored probe into entire gamut of issues involved. The top court is scheduled to hear on July 8 a batch of pleas, including those alleging irregularities in the examination held on May 5 and seeking a direction that it be held afresh. The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses, and the

Rishi Sunak Exits 10 Downing Street

PTI ■ LONDON

Keir Starmer on Friday promised a phase of "national renewal" as Britain's Prime Minister-elect after he led the Labour Party to a landslide victory in a landmark UK general election with a gain of over 200 seats, as outgoing leader Rishi Sunak conceded defeat with his Conservative Party suffering its worst election defeat in history. Starmer, 61, now stands poised to take charge at 10 Downing Street after his audience with King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, following Sunak's meeting with the British monarch. As Labour crossed the halfway mark of 650 constituencies in the early hours of Friday to clinch the minimum 326 required for a majority in Parliament, Starmer stepped up to make his victory speech in London: "Change begins now. And it feels good, I have to be honest. "A mandate like this comes with a great responsibility. Our task is nothing less than renewing the ideas that hold this country together. National renewal. Whoever you are, wherever you start in life, if you work hard, if you play by the rules, this country should give you a fair chance to get on. It should always respect your contribution and we have to restore that." Meanwhile, the country's first British Indian Prime Minister



Britain's Labour Party leader Keir Starmer reacts on stage as he is elected for the Holborn and St Pancras constituency, in London (l). Britain's outgoing Conservative Party Prime Minister Rishi Sunak speaking outside 10 Downing Street before going to see King Charles III to tender his resignation in London, on Friday **PTI**

Modi congratulates Starmer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday congratulated Labour Party leader Keir Starmer on his party's landslide win in the UK general elections and said he looked forward to their positive and constructive collaboration to further strengthen the India-UK comprehensive strategic partnership. Modi also praised outgoing British Prime Minister and

Conservative Party leader Rishi Sunak for his admirable leadership of the United Kingdom and his active contribution to deepen the ties between India and the UK during his term in office. "Best wishes to you and your family for the future," he said. Congratulating him, Modi said, "Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Keir Starmer on the remarkable victory in the UK general elections..."

comfortably held on to his own Richmond and Northallerton seat in northern England with 23,059 votes but failed to turn

things around for his party at a national level after 14 years in Government. **Continued on Page 2**

J&K Assembly elections likely after Amarnath Yatra



A sadhu poses while waiting to get registered for Amarnath Yatra at Ram Mandir base camp, in Jammu, on Friday **PTI**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAMMU

The Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir are likely to be announced after the Amarnath Yatra, which will conclude on August 19. Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a late night meeting with Jammu and Kashmir unit party leaders and directed them to be ready for the upcoming Assembly elections. The two-hour long meeting was attended by BJP chief and Union Minister JP Nadda, MPs Ravinder Raina, Jitendra Singh and Jugal Kishore Sharma — and other top leaders. Jammu and Kashmir is likely to see its first Assembly election in September this year, according to the timeline fixed by the Supreme

Court after the erstwhile State's special status was scrapped in 2019. The last Assembly election in the erstwhile State was held in 2014. At the meeting, top leadership has made it clear that the party will not enter into a pre-poll alliance with any party in the State. It was also conveyed that the party would remain open to seat adjustments and "electoral understandings" with "like-minded parties. Besides, it was also conveyed that the party will not project any face for the Chief Ministerial candidate in the run-up to the Assembly polls and there will not be any changes in leadership or organisational rejig in the State BJP unit, currently headed by Ravinder Raina. In the coming days, key

Union Ministers and BJP national leaders are expected to visit the State. The party will also launch a mass contact programme with the people in the State. The Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was dissolved in November 2018 ahead of the revocation of the State's Special Status in August 2019. The BJP-led Government scrapped Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 and bifurcated the State into two Union Territories. There have been demands from political parties for early Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and restoration of Statehood. Moreover, during a recent visit to Kashmir, the Prime Minister stated that preparations for elections had begun and that J&K would soon have its own Government. The revision of electoral rolls will start in J&K on July 25 and culminate on August 20, according to the EC. "After the exercise is over, the EC may announce holding of assembly polls in the UT any time," a poll official said. The five LS seats in J&K — the first major electoral exercise post Article 370 abrogation — recorded voter turnout of 58.58 per cent, the highest in the last 35 years. **Continued on Page 2**

Jailed MPs Amritpal, Rashid on parole take oath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Jailed radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid, who were granted parole to take oath as members of the Lok Sabha, were sworn in as MPs on Friday, amid heavy deployment of security personnel in and around the Parliament complex. While Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, is in Delhi's Tihar jail in a terror-funding case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Singh is lodged in a prison in Assam's Dibrugarh district for offences under the National Security Act. They were brought to the Parliament complex by



Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid

security personnel Friday morning. The MPs-elect took oath in the chamber of the Lok Sabha Speaker after completing formalities, a source said. Singh, 31, and Rashid, 56, won the recent Lok Sabha elections from Khadoor Sahib in Punjab and Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir,

respectively, as Independents while being incarcerated. They could not take oath as members of the 18th Lok Sabha on June 24 and 25 along with the other winning candidates. For taking oath, Rashid was granted a two-hour custody parole, excluding the travel time from Tihar to Parliament,

and Singh a four-day custody parole, beginning July 5, in view of the travel from Assam to Delhi and back. Their parole orders stated that during their period of temporary release, they can neither speak to or address the media on any issue or make any statements. Their family members also cannot make a statement to the media. While Singh, a Khalistani sympathiser who heads the 'Waris Punjab De' outfit, has been allowed to meet his family in Delhi, Rashid's family had permission only to attend his oath taking. The parole for Rashid, who has been in jail since 2019 after his arrest in 2017, was granted by a court in Delhi and that of Singh by the district magistrate of

Amritsar from where he was arrested in April 2023 for barging into a police station in February and clashing with police personnel in a bid to free one of his aides from custody. Both Singh and Rashid are to be accompanied by security personnel at all times during their parole periods, the orders stated. The Delhi Police and Punjab Police were directed to coordinate with the Secretary General of the Lok Sabha for procedures inside the Parliament complex. The name of Rashid, a former MLA, cropped up during the investigation of Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Watali, whom the NIA had arrested for allegedly funding terrorist groups and separatists in the Kashmir valley. **Continued on Page 2**

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ THRISSUR (KERALA)

An outbreak of African Swine fever (ASF), a highly contagious and deadly disease affecting both farm-raised and wild boars, has been reported at a private farm in a village in Kerala's Thrissur district. In response, the State Government has ordered culling of 310 pigs at the farm in Madakkathara panchayat to prevent the spread of the disease. This incident follows a recent Nipah outbreak in Maruthonkara, Kozhikode

Pig culling ordered to contain African Swine fever in Thrissur

district, where ASF was confirmed in wild boars last year. ASF was first identified in India in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in 2020. ASF spreads rapidly through direct contact with bodily fluids from infected pigs and has no vaccines or treatment available. "The disease was confirmed in the pigs owned by Kuttalapurza Babu of



Veliyanthara in the 14th ward. The District Collector has directed the district animal husbandry officer to cull the pigs and bury them," according to an official from the State Government. A team consisting of doctors, livestock inspectors and attendants will conduct the culling process, and further primary disinfection measures will also be taken, it said. The area within a

one-kilometre radius of the affected farm has been declared a disease-affected area, and the area within the 10-kilometre radius has been declared a disease surveillance area. "The transportation of pork from the affected areas, and the movement of pigs, pork, and feed from the affected areas to other parts of the district, as well as the movement of these items from other areas into the affected area, have been prohibited until further orders," the release said. **Continued on Page 2**

Lord Krishna's favourite king of fruits to add flavour to Rath Yatra

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the much-revered grand Rath Yatra for Lord Jagannath commences in Puri in Odisha on Monday, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple at Dwarka in the national Capital will mark the occasion with a grand offering of approximately 5,100 kilograms of various mango varieties. The celebrations will begin a day ahead and continue into the following day, aligning with the Yatra in Puri. Devotees will offer a range of mangoes, including Safeda,

Dussehri, Langra, Malda, Chausa, Ramkela, Totapari, Bombay Green, and Mallika, as part of the rituals dedicated to Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra, and their sister Subhadra as part of the rituals. Mangoes, revered as the "king of fruits," hold significant cultural and religious value, particularly in Krishna Lila, symbolising the sweetness of devotion in the divine pastimes of Lord Krishna. The celebration will attract nearly 20,000 people from across the city. Preparations are in full swing at the temple. The temple altar will be adorned with an impressive



display of mangoes, allowing devotees to participate in the "mango service" by offering their fruits at the Vighraha Seva Department on the eve of the yatra. The festivities will also include a mango-eating competition. Golia, Sindoori, Gulabkhas, Neelam, Kesari, Gola, Lalbagh, Lambori, Ratul, and Alphonso like varieties will also be offered to the God. Sri Gaur Prabhu, vice-president of the temple, explained, "Mango, the king of fruits, is loved by both children and adults during the summer season. This is why we organise the mango

festival every year on the day of Jagannath Yatra. The offering of thousands of mangoes to the deities is beautiful to behold." Attendees can capture memories at designated selfie points and participate in community service. The significance of mangoes in Krishna Lila is profound. During the rasa dance, the gopis would offer mangoes to Krishna, symbolising the sweetness of their relationship. At another time, Krishna accepted mango pits from a poor Brahmana, valuing sincere devotion over material offerings. Mangoes also played a role in Krishna's

childhood at Vrindavan, where he and his mischievous friends would often steal the delicious fruits from orchards. Pritansu Priyadarshini Biswal from Bhubaneswar in Odisha was in praise for the ISKON temple's concept of offering mangoes to the Lord Jagannath. "This celebration at the ISKCON temple in the country's capital in Dwarka not only honours the divine but also brings together the community in a shared experience of devotion, cultural heritage, and the simple joy of enjoying mangoes," she said. **Continued on Page 2**

Cops rescue children, arrest kidnapper after 200 km hot chase

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi Police has arrested a 38-year-old man for kidnapping two children, including a 11-year-old girl and 3-year-old boy and demanding 50 lakh as ransom from East Delhi's Vikas Marg. According to the police on Friday, on the evening of June 28, a couple with their 11-year-old daughter and 3-year-old son came to Delhi from Faridabad in their Eco Sports car for a long drive and to enjoy street food before the academic year began for the kids. As the couple parked their car in front of a shop with the engine on mode, leaving their children in the car momentarily to buy sweets from a

shop, the accused identified as Prateek Shrivastava swiftly entered the vehicle, claiming to the daughter that her father had asked him to move the car. When the daughter of the couple protested, the accused brandished a meat chopper and threatened to harm her if she made any noise. The police deployed four teams to chase the kidnapper based on technical surveillance and other clues. "Immediately, the District Control Room was activated to coordinate with other districts regarding intercepting the vehicle at local pickets and active checkpoints. Night patrolling staff across Delhi was also alerted. Additional teams were sent to Sonapat Border for intercepting the



vehicle if it tries to cross the border," the DCP added. "After about seven to eight minutes, when the parents returned, they were shocked to find their car missing. The father called his daughter's phone, but it was answered by a kidnapper who demanded 50 lakhs for the safe return of the children. Immediately, the couple approached the nearest police station," DCP East Apoorva Gupta said, adding that a case under section 364A IPC was registered at police station Shakarpur. "During interrogation, the accused disclosed that he had observed instances where parents briefly left their children in cars with the engine running. This prompted him to

devise a plan to kidnap children along with the car, aiming to demand a significant ransom from their parents," the DCP added. During his time in Shakarpur, the accused noted the bustling evening hours near Heera Sweets on Vikas Marg, where parents would leave their cars running while quickly visiting the shop, due to the current high temperatures and humidity in Delhi. He meticulously planned the kidnapping at Heera Sweets, having conducted reconnaissance of the area a week and four days prior to the incident. "After an intense chase spanning around three hours and covering approximately 200 kilometers with about 20 police vehicles, when the kid-

napper couldn't find a way, he abandoned the vehicle and left the children unattended in the Samaypur Badli Area. Fortunately, both children were rescued safely and were reunited with their parents," the DCP stated. He added that the accused, who worked as an AC mechanic, had planned to collect the ransom using fast delivery app services like Porter, WeFast, or Borzo within an hour of booking the service in Delhi NCR. Further, he has studied up to class 10th and earlier used to work as a cab driver at Ola and Uber and he has also worked in Swiggy and Zomato, which made him well versed with the topography of Delhi.

ED conducts searches in probe of STP scam in DJB

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday said it seized Rs 41 lakh in cash, "incriminating" documents and digital devices during searches conducted as part of a money laundering case linked to alleged corruption in the augmentation of some Sewage Treatment Plants by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB). The raids were launched on July 3 and covering multiple places in Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai and Hyderabad, the ED said in a statement. The money laundering investigation stems from an FIR of the Delhi government anti-corruption branch (ACB) against a company named Euroteck Environmental Pvt Ltd. And others alleging a scam in the DJB in the name of augmentation and upgradation of 10 Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) at Pappankala, Nilothi [Package 1], Najafgarh, Keshopur



[Package 2], Coronation Pillar, Narela, Rohini [Package 3] and Kondli [Package 4]. These four tenders, valued at Rs 1,943 crore, were awarded to various joint venture (JV) entities in October, 2022. The probe agency has filed Prosecution Complaint before the Special Court on 28-03-2024 against Jagdish Kumar Arora, the then Chief Engineer, Delhi Jal Board (DJB), Tejinder Pal Singh [close associate of Jagdish

According to the ED, the FIR registered by the ACB alleges that only three JV companies participated in the four tenders. "While two JVs got one tender each, one JV got two tenders. The three JVs participated in the four STP tenders mutually to ensure that each one got the tender," as per the ED. The FIR alleges that the tendering conditions were made "restrictive" including adoption of IFAS technology to ensure that select few entities could participate in the four bids, it said. "The cost estimates initially prepared was Rs 1,546 crore but was revised during the tender process to Rs 1,943 crore." It is further alleged that the contracts were awarded to the three JVs at inflated rates which caused a substantive loss to the exchequer," according to the central agency. The ED said its probe found that four tenders related to STPs valued at Rs 1,943 crore were awarded by the DJB to three JVs. In all the four tenders, two

JVs [out of three common JVs] participated in each tender and all the three JVs secured the tenders, the agency said. "The costs adopted by DJB for upgradation and augmentation were same though the cost of upgradation is lesser than the cost for augmentation. All the 3 JVs submitted the same experience certificate issued from a Taiwan Project to DJB for securing the tenders and the same was accepted without any verifications," it said. All the three JVs "sub-contracted" the work related to the four tenders to Euroteck Environment Pvt. Ltd., Hyderabad. The verification of the tender documents shows that the initial cost of four tenders was about Rs 1,546 crore which was revised to Rs 1,943 crore without following due process/project reports, according to the ED. "Cash of Rs 41 lakh, various incriminating documents and digital evidence were seized during the searches," it said.

HC seeks CBI's response to bail plea filed by Kejriwal

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The Delhi High Court on Friday issued a notice to the CBI, seeking the probe agency's response to a bail plea filed by Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the liquor policy case. Justice Neena Bansal Krishna sought the response of CBI and posted the case for further hearing on July 17. Initially, the high court agreed with the CBI's contention that Kejriwal should have approached a city court first. However, the bench later opted to consider the merits of Kejriwal's direct appeal to the high court during the arguments. Senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing Kejriwal, said the AAP leader is not a flight risk and not a terrorist, and the CBI arrested him after he got bail in the ED's money laundering case. He said Kejriwal has deep roots in society and added he was pressing

for an interim relief in the matter. Advocate DP Singh, appearing for the CBI, raised an objection over Kejriwal directly approaching the high court without first filing the bail plea before the trial court. The high court took note of the objection and said "the contention shall be considered at the time of arguments". "In how many cases the Supreme Court or the high courts have said that please go back, on propriety. On law, there is no quarrel. I am not on law. They also say don't clog the higher courts when alternate remedy is available. There should be a reason why this (court) is better. We also have the benefit of going through the trial court's decision," Justice Krishna said. The high court added that parties also have the benefit of first hearing before the sessions court and they may succeed there.

Senior advocate Vikram Chaudhari, also representing Kejriwal, said while remanding him in custody, the trial court had said the arrest was illegal and when that argument has been addressed, there is no point of sending it back and it will be a futile exercise. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener was arrested by the CBI on June 26 from Tihar Jail, where he is still lodged in judicial custody in a connected money laundering case filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED). He has already challenged his arrest in the CBI case and the plea is pending before the high court. The court had issued notice and asked the CBI to file its reply while listing it for arguments on July 17. Kejriwal, who was arrested by the ED on March 21, was granted bail by the trial court in the money laundering case on June 20. However, the trial court's order was stayed by the high court.

LG directs officials to ensure transparency in execution of projects

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena on Friday issued strict instructions to officials to ensure transparency in the execution of the project by putting a display board that mentions important information including name of the funding agency, executing agency, cost of the project among others. Saxena reviewed the status and progress of projects under the Delhi Development Authority's (DDA) "Dilli Gramodaya Abhiyan" on Thursday, issued strict instructions for ensuring transparency in the execution of the projects. The LG directed that every project should have a display board wherein name of the funding agency, name of the executing agency, name of the contractor and his phone number, cost of the project, tendered amount, timeline of the project including date of starting and completion and name and number of the District Magistrate for redressal of any of residents' grievances will be mentioned.



Further, he directed that on a portal meant for monitoring the projects under the "Delhi Gramodaya Abhiyan", in addition to the information points, the 'before and after' pictures of the location and project being undertaken will also be uploaded along with dates. "The portal will also have the tender document of the L-1 bidder and the work order issued to it. This information will be available for viewing by all," he said. The project is being implemented at a cost of more than 960 crore rupees, across the villages of Delhi, for improvements and augmentation of

City receives moderate rain, maximum temperature settles at 33.2 degrees C

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
The national Capital received light to moderate rains while the maximum temperature was recorded at 33.2 degrees celsius, 3.4 degrees below the normal. However, the humidity levels remained high making the weather muggy and uncomfortable. The humidity was 85 per cent at 8.30 am and 75 per cent at 5:30 pm. The feel like temperature or the heat index, which is affected by both humidity and wind, and conveys how warm or cold it feels stood was 41.6 degrees celsius. The minimum temperature was recorded at 27.1 degrees Celsius, a notch below normal. The IMD reported that 0.6 mm of rain was recorded at Safdarjung, the city's primary weather station, 0.6 mm at Lodhi Road, 2.1 mm at Aaya Nagar, and 0.2 mm at Palam, 0.5 mm at Jafarpur, 2.7 mm at Ridge and 2 mm at Salwan Public School between 8.30 am on July 4 and 8.30 am on July 5. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) had pre-



dicted a generally cloudy sky with light to moderate rain along with thunderstorms, lightning and gusty winds. The IMD has further predicted such weather till July 11. Jafarpur recorded 33.8 degrees celsius as maximum temperature, Najafgarh at 33.5 degrees, Aya nagar at 32.5 degrees, Lodi road at 32.2 degrees, Palam at 32.4 degrees, Ridge at 32.3 degrees, Pitampura at 34.5 degrees, Pusa at 32.1 degrees and Salwan Public School at 30.6 degrees. The Air Quality Index (AQI) of the national capital was in the "satisfactory" category with a reading of 77 at 4 pm, according to the Central Pollution Control Board.

Fake call centre busted in Gurugram

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM
Police have busted a fake call center in Gurugram that has been allegedly duping foreign nationals on the pretext of booking tickets of football matches, Rugby matches and music concert, officials said on Friday. A team of the Gurugram police conducted a raid on Friday after receiving inputs that a fake call centre is being run at house number 367, Sector-55 Gurugram and nabbed four people. Call centre operator Sonu, Aakash Chauhan aka Sky, Suraj Kumar Bharti and Seemant Raghav were arrested on Friday, they said. Police said they have recovered 4 laptops and 4 headphones from their possession.

Rai slams BJP for transfer orders issued to 5,000 teachers

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Slamming the BJP for the transfer orders issued to 5,000 teachers of Delhi government schools, Delhi minister Gopal Rai on Friday said the party was trying to destroy the education system developed by the Kejriwal government by pressuring officers. Rai, who is also the Aam Aadmi Party's Delhi unit convener, said the "Kam Roko Abhiyan" (stop work campaign) of the BJP to create hurdles in the AAP government's work has been going on for years and has now reached an extreme stage. The education system of Delhi, known not just in the country but all over the world, is getting paralysed, he said at a press conference on Friday. "The BJP under its 'Kam Roko Abhiyan' has decided to destroy the education system developed by the Kejriwal government in Delhi," he said. "Its biggest example is the mass transfer of teachers of Delhi government schools overnight. The Education department officers have issued an order that the teachers posted in a school for over 10 years should be trans-



ferred," he said. Rai said the teachers of government schools are the backbone of Delhi's education system that saw a turn around after the AAP came to power, he said. A circular was issued by the DoE on June 11, titled "Online requests for transfer of teaching staff of the Directorate of Education", wherein, vide Clause 16, it was directed that all teachers who have served for more than 10 years in the same school shall compulsorily apply for transfer, failing which they will be transferred to any school by the DoE. Delhi Education Minister Atishi has instructed the chief secretary to immediately stop the transfer of the teachers.

Govt sets up 24X7 flood control room: AAP

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi Ministers Atishi and Saurabh Bharadwaj announced on Friday that the government has set up a 24X7 flood control room that will monitor real time data from the Hathini Kund Barrage from where Yamuna water is released in Delhi. The announcement by the senior AAP leaders was made following a meeting of the apex committee on supervising, recommending and coordinating flood control measures in the National Capital Territory. Officers from the Irrigation and Flood Control Department, PWD, Urban Development, NCD, Delhi Jal Board, DDA, NDMC, Army, Navy, NDRF, Delhi Police, Home Guard, Health Department and other departments attended this meeting. In the meeting, the ministers reviewed the preparations of the departments to deal with



the flood. All the departments were instructed to take lessons from the flood situation in Delhi due to the rising water level of Yamuna last year and prepare themselves completely. The ministers said the flood control room will be manned by officials from different agencies including the Municipal Corporation of

Delhi, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC). "Last year, the Yamuna reached its highest levels in 70 years. The Delhi government is gearing up to tackle any possibility of floods. The control room is in touch with officials at Hathini Kund barrage from where Yamuna river discharge is received. After release of one lakh cusecs of water, relief and rescue machinery starts working," Atishi said. Bharadwaj claimed that the control room will monitor data in real time and will be entirely computerised. Atishi added that NDRF officials have also attended the meeting because it plays an important role along with the Revenue Department for relief and rescue operations during floods. "The details of all the machinery used in relief and rescue operations by all the concerned departments like motor boats, life jackets etc. were also placed before the Apex Committee. We hope that this time there is no flood situation in Delhi. But even if there is a flood, the Delhi government is fully prepared to deal with it," she added. Meanwhile, Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said, "Hearing Atishi's claims about the flood, the people of

Delhi are stunned to see how a government that made false promises of water supply in summer and cleaning drains during monsoon can serve another bowl of lies to the public for the third time." He said that the flood control claims of Delhi's Irrigation and Flood Control Department Minister Atishi seems 'laughable and hollow'. He also held Atishi responsible for making grand promises of uninterrupted water supply throughout the summer. "However, by June, he claims collapsed when Delhi faced a severe water crisis," he said. He also mentioned the rains on June 28 which created flood like situation in the country. "Following this, Atishi made grand claims about cleaning the drains and ensuring the sewage and water drainage system during the monsoon, which failed miserably with the first rain on June 28th," Sachdeva stated.

BJP chief accuses Kejriwal of approving tree felling near Chattarpur

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva on Friday accused the Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal for approving tree felling near Chhatarpur and making binding remarks to the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena. In a press conference by the Delhi BJP, Sachdeva showed the documents related to the felling of tree signed by the Kejriwal himself on January 24 and said that the whole AAP stands exposed. "The Chief Minister not only approved the tree felling but



also made a binding remark that the Lieutenant Governor is bound by the advice of the Chief Minister and cabinet in this matter," Sachdeva alleged.

He added that Kejriwal left no space for Saxena to deny approval to the felling of trees. Delhi BJP chief stated that senior AAP leaders and Delhi Ministers, who have been holding press conferences in the matter and accusing Lt Governor of approving the tree felling, always knew of the matter. "For the last two weeks Delhi Ministers Saurabh Bharadwaj, Gopal Rai and other leaders of AAP had been constantly raising in the media through press conferences that the DDA allowed Tree felling under the pressure of the Lt. Governor.

DTC CLARIFICATION

Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) has clarified that it was a cluster bus which was stuck in a caved in section of a road in Mehrauli on June 26. The Pioneer has inadvertently mentioned it as a DTC bus. The error is regretted.

India's defence production hits record ₹1.27 lakh cr in 2023-24

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's annual defence production has hit a record high of approximately Rs 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, with the Make in India programme crossing new milestones, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday. The value of defence production in FY 2022-23 was Rs 1,08,684 crore.



high of approximately Rs 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, it said. "As per the data received from all Defence Public Sector undertakings (DPSUs), other PSUs manufacturing defence items and private companies, the value of defence production in the country has gone up to a record-high figure, i.e., Rs 1,26,887 crore, reflecting a growth of 16.7 per cent over the defence production of the previous financial year," the statement said.



BRS member's resignation from RS accepted

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh vacancy was created in the Rajya Sabha on Friday with House chairperson Jagdeep Dhankar accepting the resignation of K Keshava Rao who had quit his membership as a BRS MP after joining the Congress.

Cong slams Centre for delay in printing Class VI textbooks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday criticised the Centre over the delay in publishing new Class 6 textbooks, alleging the Education Ministry is "sabotaging" the education of children after doing the same with the examination process through the "incompetent" National Testing Authority.



The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) had earlier announced that new textbooks for Classes 3 and 6 will be introduced from the 2024-25 academic session. "For the academic year 2024-25, new and engaging textbooks will be introduced in Classes 3 and 6. The textbook development work is in the final phase and nine textbooks for Grades 3 and 6 are already available.

Foreigners must comply with organ transplant rules

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With India emerging as a preferred destination for organ transplants among foreign nationals, the Union Health Ministry has urged the Ministries of External Affairs and Home Affairs to educate these visitors about the country's regulatory guidelines.

emphasising transparency and ethical standards in medical tourism practices. In a letter addressed to Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Union Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Chandra highlighted the necessity for sensitising foreign nationals about these regulations.



Chandra outlined measures including the preparation of scroll messages and creatives to be displayed at airports, on Bureau of Immigration portals, and on Ministry of External Affairs websites and embassies abroad.

donor or recipient is a foreign national, then prior approval of the authorization committee shall be required before removing or transplanting human organs or tissue or both. A senior official of the embassy of the country of origin in India is required to certify the relationship between the donor and the recipient as per form 21, the message states.

SC to review same-sex marriage verdict on July 10

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider on July 10 a batch of pleas seeking review of its last year's judgement which refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage. According to the cause list of July 10 uploaded on the apex court website, a five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud would consider in chambers the pleas seeking review of the October 17 last year verdict.

BJP retains most of its office bearers in States

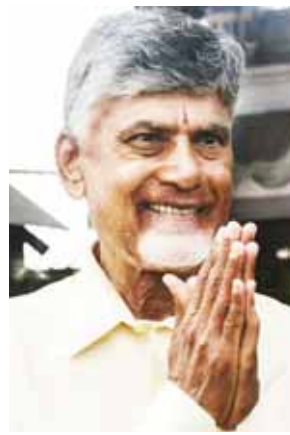
PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday appointed its in-charges and co-incharges for states, retaining the incumbent office-bearers in most places. Its national general secretaries Vinod Tawde, Tarun Chugh and Radha Mohan Das Agarwal will continue to steer the party's organisational affairs in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and Karnataka respectively, while Prakash Javadekar and Satish Poonia will be the respective in-charges of Kerala and Haryana.

Naidu presses for more Central funds ahead of Union Budget

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, pressing for enhanced financial support to the debt-burdened state. The meeting came ahead of union budget presentation. Sources said Naidu, during the meeting in North Block, highlighted various ongoing projects in Andhra Pradesh that require urgent central assistance.



increased from 31.02 per cent of the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) in 2019-20 to 33.32 per cent in 2023-24 fiscal, indicating deterioration in the fiscal health of the state in the last five years. Key among Naidu's demands were funds for the Polavaram irrigation project, special assistance for backward regions, and support for the development of the new capital, Amaravati.

SRF LIMITED advertisement containing a table with columns for SI No., Folio No., Name of the Share Holder / Legal Heir (Claimant), Cert-No., Dist-No., and Lost Shares. It lists various shareholders and their respective share details.

Indian Bank Demand Notice (ANNEXURE-I) regarding the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002. It details loan information, interest charges, and legal notices to the borrower and guarantor.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Momentous meeting

The meeting of PM Modi with President Putin would solidify India's role as a key player in the emerging global order

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin. It was a meeting for which preparation was underway for a long but was delayed due to the elections. Indian Russian ties are historic but have become more important in the evolving multipolar world order. This will be Modi's first visit to Russia since the onset of the Ukraine war in February 2022. Despite the West's increasing isolation of Russia due to the Ukraine conflict, India has maintained a neutral stance. India has called for dialogue and diplomacy to resolve the dispute but has refrained from condemning Russia outright. This approach aligns with India's historical policy of non-alignment and strategic autonomy. India continues to buy Russian oil despite Western sanctions. India and Russia share a long-standing relationship dating back to the Cold War era. The two countries have traditionally enjoyed strong defence and economic ties, with Russia being a major supplier of military hardware to India. This relationship has persisted through various political changes and has been marked by cooperation in multiple areas, including nuclear energy, space exploration, and trade. Indeed, the Ukraine war has had far-reaching implications for global politics, economics, and security. The conflict has disrupted global energy markets and supply chains, contributing to inflationary pressures worldwide. India nonetheless did not snap ties with Russia despite its good relations with the US and the Western pressure. While maintaining its stance of neutrality, it has continued its trade relations with Russia, including increased imports of discounted Russian oil.



In this backdrop the meeting of Modi with Putin is significant. It is expected to cover a broad range of topics, reflecting the multifaceted nature of India-Russia relations. PM Modi may seek to secure long-term energy supplies from Russia to ensure stability in its energy markets. Both leaders may discuss ongoing and future defence projects, including the delivery of military hardware and the joint development of defence technologies. India's defence modernization plans, which include acquiring advanced weaponry and upgrading its military capabilities, are likely to be a focal point of discussion. Modi and Putin are expected to discuss the evolving international order and regional security issues. India's position as a rising global power and its role in regional stability will likely be a major point of discussion. The conversation may also touch upon India's vision for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region, where it seeks to counterbalance China's influence. Bilateral trade has seen growth despite sanctions on Russia, and both countries may seek to expand this further by identifying new areas of cooperation. Though it may not augur well for the US which may frown but then for every country its interests are paramount. This balancing act could position India as a crucial player in mediating global conflicts and fostering international cooperation, enhancing its role on the world stage.

PICTALK



Locals move their belongings on a boat as they move to a safer place during floods, in Darrang district. PTI

Give freebies only when essential and unavoidable

While 'freebies' schemes are intended to offer immediate relief to the targeted groups, their effectiveness and necessity remain suspect

Delhi Government on 1st July 2024 buckled down for implementing the Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana, which aims to provide aid of Rs 1,000 to Delhi women above 18, barring the taxpayers, government employees and other government pension plan beneficiaries. An amount of Rs 2,000 crore has been set aside for this scheme. Several such schemes or freebies are provided by different state governments across the length and breadth of the country. Many times these freebies of diverse nature are strategically planned to precede elections and are highly poll-driven in a bid for electoral success. These freebies or Rewari culture as mentioned by PM Modi, have been defined by the Reserve Bank of India report as "a public welfare measure that is provided free of charge". They are generally aimed at benefiting the targeted population in the short term and are different from long-term welfare schemes which are categorized as public/merit goods

and are a way of promoting social justice, equity, and human development. Some examples of welfare schemes are the Public Distribution System, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), the mid-day meal scheme, etc. While freebies are frequently used by political parties to build public trust, it is worthwhile to analyse them as a necessity or waste. < Such schemes stimulate economic growth by incentivising and increasing the productive capacity of the workforce along with providing necessities and social welfare to the poor and marginalized sections of society. For example, freebies such as uniforms, textbooks, bicycles or health insurance can improve the literacy, mobility, health, and quality of life of the needy and vulnerable groups. By increasing the disposable income of the

poor, freebies can stimulate demand for goods and services, thereby boosting economic activity. Besides, if rationally devised, they can also reduce income inequality. For example, loan waivers, or cash transfers can empower the weaker and indebted households by giving them access to assets, credit, or income support. However, freebies are like a double-edged sword, with heavy economic and social costs. Foremost, large-scale public expenditure comes with a huge and permanent fiscal burden and macroeconomic distortions. It leads to an immediate increase in demand, disrupting inflation; diverting funds from repaying governments' previous obligations causing accumulation of public debt; and diverting funds from more productive and essential sectors such as infrastructure, agriculture, industry, etc. leading to resource misallocation. Besides the freebies in the form of free water, electricity, or fuel can lead to the deterioration of the environment, by encouraging their

overuse and wastage of natural resources. Freebies can also lead to negative externality by creating a dependency culture and loss of productivity, reducing the incentive for individuals to seek employment or improve their economic situation through their efforts. Additionally, cash vs. kind grants are always debatable and in general cash benefits generally lead to misuse of funds such as gambling, liquor consumption, adultery, etc. which leads to deviation from the desired benefits. In conclusion, freebies can play a crucial role in addressing immediate social and economic challenges, they must be implemented with careful consideration of their long-term impact and sustainability. A rational policy framework is needed foremost, to define the targeted section and then design the nature and amount of benefit to minimize inappropriate utilization of resources (The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



KAJLEEN KAUR



Nuanced shift in parliamentary conduct

As parliamentarians navigate new complexities, the emphasis remains on upholding the dignity, decorum, and effectiveness of legislative processes



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The 18th Lok Sabha has been ushered in with customary procedural formalities on the 25th of June, 2024. Certain rituals convert the reality of Lok Sabha into the sanctified existence of a group of people meant to lead this country through such vicissitudes as it may face. This is, as it should be, an extraordinary phenomenon. The nation can be legitimately proud of this event. Yet in certain ways, it's different from some of the preceding Lok Sabhas because this time there was no consensus on the identification of a Speaker for the Lok Sabha. It is not as if in each of the preceding Lok Sabhas, the selection of the speaker was unanimous. There were instances when the Speaker was chosen by ballot and the Lok Sabha still, functioned with a fair degree of cohesiveness. The unique situation in the 18th Lok Sabha included a demand by the opposition to promise it a Deputy Speaker's position. In the preceding Lok Sabhas, it did not seem to matter to many people. An assurance here and 'now' seemed to be the demand. The matter seems to have would have been settled. The crux of the situation seems to be putting up the Deputy Speaker's position as a factor in negotiation. In the preceding Lok Sabhas, a consensus was built around these issues, which this time around did not seem to bother many people. This is a settled and yet important proposition about the style of conduct of affairs. An illustration may help to establish the point with better clarity. In one of the preceding Lok Sabhas, at a time when Jawahar Lal Nehru dominated the scene in Indian politics, there was a bye-election schedule from Muzaffarpur Constituency in Bihar. Then socialist parties sought to put up Acharya Narendra Dev as their candidate for election from this constituency. Jawahar Lal Nehru, who was one of the tallest figures in the political scene, seized this situation to make a point. He felt that even if Acharya Narendra Dev was a candidate for the opposition, yet there was



no bitterness that Congress as a party had towards him. Ordinarily, Congress was expected to win this election of the parliamentary seat to the Lok Sabha, yet Jawahar Lal Nehru felt that the Lok Sabha should have more different types of people, and therefore Congress would not contest for the Lok Sabha seat from Muzaffarpur against Narendra Dev. Those times were different. There was a predominantly universal sentiment for merit and goodwill, and Narendra Dev sailed home well on that argument. As stated, with the main opposition and Congress working together for Narendra Dev, it was not difficult for him to get elected to the Lok Sabha. Those times were different, and those times still resonate with many people as to what good traditions in the parliamentary system are all about. It's remarkable that during the arguments for Deputy Speakership, no one in public even recalled this episode from the perspective of parliamentary history. It is indeed a case for a two-tiered split on which way the parliamentary traditions could be heading. One can only hope that over time, the good sense and goodwill of parliamentar-



PARLIAMENTARY TRADITIONS ARE IMPORTANT, AND IT MAY WELL BE THAT THE 18TH LOK SABHA WILL HAVE SOME DARING CHALLENGES TO ITS METHOD OF WORK, TO WHICH BOTH THE RULING PARTY AND THE OPPOSITION, LED BY SOME OLD VETERANS, WILL NEED TO ADAPT AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

ians will prevail and matters take their course in a more enlightened way. Be that as it may, one is not quite sure what the adamancy of a prior commitment about the Deputy Speaker's position being given to the opposition has been all about. In any case, the convention has been for the Deputy Speaker's position to be given to the opposition, so ultimately, the contention was only about the timing of the formalization of this kind of prior agreement. It is indeed a small matter, but if the loftiness of parliamentary traditions were to be seen in its due weightage in the conduct of affairs, it is important. Running a parliament cannot and should not be solely about positions, it has also to be about patterns, graces, decency, and above all, dignified conduct in electoral and consensual politics. The people show their class through their representatives, behaviours, and the way arguments are made or not made. This becomes the algorithm for the conduct of public affairs. Every parliament loses at least 20 to 40% of its members who fail to return for various reasons or who

may only serve for one term. Therefore, being a member of parliament, especially the Lok Sabha, carries a huge moral weight that goes beyond simple political votes. Parliamentary traditions are important, and it may well be that the 18th Lok Sabha will have some daring challenges to its method of work, to which both the ruling party and the opposition, led by some old veterans, will need to adapt and take responsibility. < This is a simplified version of what happens, as the method of working is nearly as critical as the methods of resolving differences. All said and done, even parliament has to operate within the bandwidth of rules, regulations, bylaws, practices, and more. It is best done through goodwill and grace. Senior members in the Lok Sabha need to conduct affairs with statesmanship and dignity. The Prime Minister has done well to emphasize that for a nation to work well, all must work together, not just the majority. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

NEW BUILDING NORMS

Madam — This letter refers to the news titled "Haryana Permits Stilt plus Four-Floor Construction" published on July 3. In Haryana, the government led by Nayab Singh Saini has given approval for the construction of Stilt plus Four floors for homeowners, builders, and property dealers. This decision has sparked a mixed response from both society and the construction industry. There is a requirement to obtain permission from neighboring plot holders before commencing Stilt plus Four construction. However, many Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) across the state have expressed opposition to the government's decision through various channels. The government's intention seems to be to increase the income of those involved in the construction sector, despite some technical and legal challenges. It is crucial, however, to strike a balance between the structural changes, such as the reconstruction of sewage systems, public facilities, and the concerns of the public. For residents of builder floors, the use of parking spaces will be significantly improved. Nevertheless, the construction of Stilt plus Four buildings will present both opportunities and challenges. Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

MAKE QR CODE PAYMENTS UNIVERSAL

Madam — There is a recurring problem with currency change across various services, including both government and private sectors such as transportation (RTC buses, metro trains), and e-seva centers. To address this issue, it is crucial to provide the option of QR code-based online payments everywhere. Additionally, offering a choice between partial cash payment and partial online payment would be beneficial. QR code payments are a secure, contactless method that reduces the risk of account hacking compared to credit or debit card payments. It would also be

Vigilance urged for Zika virus



Among Pregnant Women Dear Editor, The Union Health Ministry has called on states to maintain constant vigilance by screening pregnant women for Zika virus infection

and monitoring the development of fetuses in those who test positive. Each health facility and hospital has been assigned a nodal officer responsible for ensuring that the premises remain free from Aedes mosquitoes, the carriers of the Zika virus. States have also been directed to enhance their entomological surveillance and intensify vector control efforts in residential areas, workplaces, schools, construction sites, institutions, and health facilities. The spread of Zika has been reported in Pune, where two more cases have recently emerged, bringing the total to six, with both new cases involving pregnant women from Erandwane. The rising number of cases poses a significant health risk, and it is imperative that the government takes appropriate action to curb the spread of the virus across the country. Shanthi Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

advantageous to install ticket vending machines inside metro coaches for last-minute passengers. This would enhance convenience for both employees and customers, reducing arguments, stress, and conflicts, ultimately leading to a more harmonious and healthy lifestyle. In any case the digital payment is the future so why not embrace it wholeheartedly. PVS Sreelekha | Secunderabad

PM ON MANIPUR

Madam — Prime Minister's Response to Manipur Crisis Questioned Dear Editor, Regarding the news "Modi Silences Critics on Manipur" published on July 4, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, facing criticism from the opposition over the handling of the ethnic conflict in Manipur, broke his silence on July 3, claiming that violence in the state has been declining. This statement is characteristic of Modi's tendency to address issues long after they have escalated, often offering little more than empty promises. Despite

both central and state governments being under BJP control, there has been minimal action to address the crisis effectively. Kuki residents have been unable to use Imphal airport since May 3, 2023, and essential supplies have to be transported through Mizoram. Modi's recent comments seem insincere and detached from the reality on the ground. The Prime Minister, who has ample time for inaugurating projects and foreign visits, has not visited Manipur, which has been plagued by violence for the past 14 months. The Supreme Court has expressed its distrust in the Manipur government, reflecting the sentiment of the people towards Modi's assurances. Even as Manipur starts to stabilize, it is imperative for the Prime Minister to prioritize visiting the state and addressing the issues directly, rather than focusing on his image and political importance. Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad



FIRST COLUMN

A TALE OF DECEIT, DESIRE AND DEVASTATION

Buddha once reflected, those captivated by lust fall into the cyclical suffering of existence



RAVI VALLURI

Those who are lust-infatuated fall back into the swirling current (of samsara) like a spider on its self-spun web," said Buddha. Aeons ago lived an old farmer whose wife was young and alluring. The prepossessing woman was not satisfied physically by her aged husband and fantasized about young men. She hardly attended to the household chores and was perpetually looking for the company of youngsters to fulfil her carnal desires.

A trickster came to know about the quandary of the winsome one and seeing her alone went up to her uttering, "I am a widower. The moment I saw you I was ensnared by your voluptuous body. I beseech you to give me the pleasure of your company. However, I have very little wealth at my disposal." Delighted at the offer, the woman blurted, "O handsome one, my husband has plenty of lucre. He is old and infirm. I will embezzle the mammon and jewellery at our house and let us scot from this place to some far away place where we can spend rest of our lives."

The strapping trickster possessing a chiselled frame became excited and asked the damsel to bring the loot and gold to a place where he would be waiting for her. "We will then leave the place as it darkens," he informed her. The farmer's wife waited till it was dark and when her husband fell asleep robbed the money and gold and left the house in the cover of darkness to meet her lover. The mountebank took the



bag full of money and gold on the pretext that he would carry it and they began their journey. After travelling some distance, they halted as there was a river to cross. The hoodwinker pondered, "What do I do with this libidinous woman? If someone were to set his eyes on her, he would perforce have to protect her. Let me scot with the loot," he decided. His mind was cannonaded with all these thoughts, "Look, my dear, it would be arduous to cross the river. Let me first ferry the money bag to the other side of the river. I will come back and we can swim across to the other bank."

The ludicrous woman gave the bag to the young charlatan. He requested her to give up her apparel as the clothes could hinder swift swimming. The naïve lewd woman agreed to the proposal. The youthful trickster was now left with the bag and her clothes. Covering her naked body with her hands, the woman began waiting restlessly for the deluder to return. Suddenly a jackal with a piece of meat in his mouth happened to pass by. The jackal happened to see a fish that emerged from the water and in attempting to grab it dropped the piece of meat and ran towards it. However, the fish, seeing the rushing jackal, jumped back into the water.

Disappointed, the jackal went back to pick up the piece of meat. Unexpectedly a kite swooped and took it away before the jackal could reach it. The naked woman laughed at the jackal that had lost the fish and also the piece of meat. Hurt by the woman's behaviour, the jackal said, "You may be twice as intelligent as I am. But what is the use? You have lost your husband, your lover and your wealth too. The distraught woman realized her folly and entered a temple to pray for her sins as the priest draped her nudity and uttered, "Cover your nudity with the cloak of purity. Lust is ephemeral, Godliness is permanent."

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views expressed are personal)

Paper leak: Call for fair and a political resolution



GOURAV VALLABH

Paper leaks are not merely procedural failures; they erode trust in the examination system. This matter transcends political divides and requires a systemic reform



The recent NEET paper leak has caused a stir in the nation. Paper leaks are a serious issue that must be addressed sensitively and apolitically. No government can condone such malpractices, and addressing them must prioritize fairness over political gain. This issue needs to be handled sensitively and free from political agendas. Addressing the root causes and implementing robust measures are essential to ensure the integrity of the examination process and restore trust among students and their families. Paper leaks aren't new and have happened before. It's crucial to take this issue seriously and work on solutions. Understanding why parents and students are influenced by leaked papers and addressing these root causes will help maintain exam integrity and ensure a fair process. Instances of paper leaks have undermined trust in the examination system, leading to the temptation for guaranteed selection through illicit means. It is essential to stop this practice, implement stringent security measures, enforce strict penalties for malpractices, and ensure transparent and fair examination processes to restore trust and uphold the principle of merit-based success. We must remember that the National Testing Agency (NTA) was established as a premier, specialist, autonomous, and self-sustained testing organization for higher educational institutions.

The NTA is governed by a body consisting of esteemed members such as former UPSC Chairmen, Directors of IITs, NITs, IIMs, and Vice Chancellors of JNU and IGNOU, whose integrity should not be doubted. However, the issues lie at both the policy and execution levels, and solutions are needed at both levels. Here are some proposed solutions: For examinations with over 500,000 students, a two-tier filtering system should be



THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND INVESTIGATIVE AGENCIES LIKE THE CBI IS ESSENTIAL IN ADDRESSING SUCH MALPRACTICES AND RESTORING TRUST IN THE EXAMINATION SYSTEM

used, including preliminary and main exams. If the number of candidates exceeds 2,000,000, a more rigorous three-tier system should be adopted: preliminary, main stage 1, and main stage 2 exams. The final merit list should be based on the average marks obtained in main stage 1 and stage 2.

This approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation process, maintaining fairness and integrity by filtering candidates through multiple stages. Implementing this system would address the challenges of managing large numbers of candidates and reduce the malpractice risk, leading to a more reliable and credible examination process. It is important to designate certain cities or centres as sensitive or extremely sensitive, similar to how polling booths are identified by the Election Commission. These centres should be under constant CCTV surveillance to maintain the integrity of the examination process, deter malpractice, and ensure fairness and transparency.

This proactive approach will help restore confidence in the examination system and mitigate the risk of irregularities. The distinction between the Examination of Selection and the Examination of Rejection must be clearly defined and resolved. High-stakes exams like NEET and JEE are designed to be rejection-based, aiming to filter out unqualified candidates. This means the primary goal is to eliminate those not meeting the necessary standards. To achieve this, paper setters need specialized training to craft exams that effectively serve this purpose.

Each question should act as a hurdle designed to bifurcate and challenge candidates and comprehensively test their knowledge and skills. This approach ensures that only the most capable and prepared students succeed. A strong question bank, online testing, and AI-based proctoring can enhance the credibility of exams. Involving all teachers in contributing to the question bank and testing items for difficulty promotes participation.

Implementing global standard cybersecurity protocols is essential to maintain the integrity of the examination process. Implementing biometric verification for handling question papers can prevent incidents like the NEET 2024 leak. Technological measures like constant surveillance, digital encryption, and secure transmission methods are crucial for ensuring fairness and security. The recent government notification of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act on June 21 is a significant move to ensure the integrity of India's examination system. This Act introduces stringent penalties, including jail sentences of up to 10 years and fines of up to Rs 1 crore, for those involved in organized paper leaks and exam malpractices. It aims to combat examination fraud and restore public confidence in the examination process, clearly conveying that cheating and corruption will not be tolerated. This legislation deserves widespread support as it seeks to protect honest students' hard work and aspirations, ensuring a fair and transparent system for all. The grace marks system

should be eliminated as it relies on subjective measures like answering speed and accuracy, leading to inconsistency and unfair advantage. Examination bodies should avoid awarding grace marks to ensure a level playing field for all candidates, maintaining the credibility and fairness of the examination system.

The government's prompt action in conducting NEET again for 1,563 students in seven centres is commendable. Recently, the CBI was appointed to investigate NEET irregularities and has been rigorously probing the entire examination fraud, leading to the arrest of numerous brokers, teachers, principals, and others involved in the wrongdoing.

This swift response demonstrates the government's commitment to maintaining the integrity of the examination process and ensuring a fair opportunity for all students. The collaborative effort between the government and investigative agencies like the CBI is essential in addressing such malpractices and restoring trust in the examination system. Focusing on creating and enforcing fair exam policies is essential rather than engaging in political finger-pointing. Opposition parties should provide helpful solutions for issues such as exam leaks and fraud, and we need to come together to solve these problems proactively. We must prioritize students' well-being and create a secure, transparent exam environment to support their academic and career goals, positively impacting the country's future.

(The writer is a professor and a BJP leader; views are personal)

How Assange redefined the political terrain for modern whistleblowers

Julian Assange has become a symbol of the complex battle for press freedom and the protection of whistleblowers worldwide

In recent years, the narrative surrounding whistleblowers and their impact on press freedom has garnered significant global attention. Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, remains a prominent figure in this ongoing discussion. His latest legal and personal developments provide a lens through which we can examine the broader issues of press freedom, whistleblower protection, and the intricate dynamics of state power. Julian Assange is best known for founding WikiLeaks in 2006, a platform designed to publish classified, censored, or otherwise restricted information of political, ethical, diplomatic, or historical significance. WikiLeaks gained international notoriety in 2010 when it released a cache of U.S.



SANTOSH MATHEW

military documents and diplomatic cables, revealing controversial actions and policies of the U.S. government. This move cemented Assange's reputation as a champion of transparency and press freedom but also made him a target of intense legal and political scrutiny. As of mid-2024, Assange remains detained in the United Kingdom's Belmarsh Prison, fighting extradition to the United

States, where he faces charges under the Espionage Act. His legal team argues that extraditing Assange would set a dangerous precedent for journalists worldwide, potentially criminalizing the publication of classified information in the public interest. His health has been a significant concern, with reports indicating deteriorating physical and mental well-being. Human rights organizations have repeatedly called for his release, citing the harsh conditions of his detention and the potential impact on global press freedom. In addition to his legal battles over WikiLeaks, Assange has faced rape allegations in Sweden. In 2010, Swedish authorities issued an arrest warrant for Assange on charges of sexual

misconduct, including rape. Assange denied the allegations, claiming they were part of a political smear campaign. He sought asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in 2012, where he remained for seven years until his asylum was revoked in 2019, leading to his arrest by British authorities. In 2019, Swedish prosecutors dropped the investigation, but the allegations continue to cast a shadow over Assange's public image. Julian Assange's influence on global journalism and transparency cannot be overstated. Named Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 2010, Assange's work through WikiLeaks has inspired a new era of investigative journalism. By leveraging technology to

expose hidden truths, Assange has empowered journalists and activists worldwide to challenge powerful institutions and demand accountability. Julian Assange's plight is part of a larger narrative that includes other notable whistleblowers like Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning. Snowden, a former NSA contractor, leaked classified information in 2013, revealing extensive global surveillance programs conducted by the NSA and its allies. Currently residing in Russia, Snowden continues to be an advocate for privacy and government transparency. Chelsea Manning, a former U.S. Army intelligence analyst, leaked classified military and diplomatic documents to

WikiLeaks in 2010. Her disclosures included the infamous "Collateral Murder" video, showing U.S. helicopter gunship attacks that killed civilians in Baghdad. Manning was convicted in 2013 and sentenced to 35 years in prison, but her sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama in 2017 after seven years in custody. India, with its complex socio-political landscape, has its own history of whistleblowing and press freedom challenges. Cases like those of Sanjiv Chaturvedi, an Indian Forest Service officer who exposed corruption in the Haryana Forest Department, highlight the risks faced by whistleblowers in India. Despite the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, which aims to pro-

tect individuals exposing corruption or wrongdoing, whistleblowers in India often face retaliation, including harassment, legal action, and even physical harm. The cases of Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning illustrate the critical intersection of press freedom and whistleblower protection. While their actions have undeniably contributed to public awareness and accountability, they have also faced severe repercussions. These cases underscore the need for robust legal protections for whistleblowers and journalists to ensure that the pursuit of truth does not come at the cost of personal freedom and safety. In India and globally, the fight for press freedom and the

protection of whistleblowers is far from over. As governments continue to navigate the balance between national security and the public's right to know, the outcomes of these high-profile cases will undoubtedly influence future policies and the broader discourse on transparency and accountability. In the context of the Emergency period's media compliance, L.K. Advani's comment, "You were asked to bend, but you began to crawl," remains relevant today as a stark reminder of the dangers of compromised press freedom and the importance of journalistic integrity in holding power to account.

(The writer is an associate professor; views expressed are personal)

Hungary PM Orbán meets Putin for talks in Moscow

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to Moscow on Friday for a rare meeting with a European leader to discuss peace proposals for Ukraine.

European Union leaders, has routinely blocked, delayed or watered down EU efforts to assist Ukraine and impose sanctions on Moscow for its actions in Ukraine.



Commission spokesperson Eric Mamer said, Hungary at the beginning of the month took over the six-month rotating presidency of the EU Council, a largely formal role that can be used to shape the bloc's policy agenda.

Josep Borrell, said in a statement that Orbán's visit to Moscow "takes place, exclusively, in the framework of the bilateral relations between Hungary and Russia."

Hungarian Prime Minister is thus not representing the EU in any form." He noted that Putin has been indicted by the International Criminal Court and an arrest warrant released for his role in relation to the forced deportation of children from Ukraine to Russia.

Lanka achieved \$8 billion relief through debt restructuring: Prez

Colombo (PTI):

President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Friday said Sri Lanka saved USD 8 billion through the past two years due to "effective economic management" and emphasised that the nation is now recovering from economic turmoil due to debt restructuring.

Prachanda to face floor test on July 12 after key ally's withdrawal of support

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's embattled Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who lost support from two major alliance partners earlier this week, is set to seek a vote of confidence from the House of Representatives on July 12, it was announced on Thursday.

belonging to the largest party and instead face a vote of confidence in Parliament. His announcement was prompted after Nepali Congress (NC) president Sher Bahadur Deuba and Communist Party of Nepal- Unified Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman K P Sharma Oli, both former premiers, inked a power-sharing deal on Monday night to form a new NC-UML alliance government.

Vatican declares US ex-envoy Viganò guilty of schism

AP ■ ROME

The Vatican has excommunicated its former ambassador to the US, Archbishop Carlo Maria Viganò, after finding him guilty of schism, an inevitable end for the firebrand conservative who became one of Pope Francis' most ardent critics.

Catholics who are subject to him. It is considered particularly dangerous to the faith because it threatens the unity of the church. And in fact, Viganò had created a following of like-minded conservatives and traditionalists over the years as he delved deeper and deeper into conspiracy theories about everything from the coronavirus pandemic, to what he called the "Great Reset" and other fringe ideas.

lica's awareness in 2012, during the first Vatican scandal, when Pope Benedict XVI's butler leaked the pontiff's private papers to an Italian journalist to try to draw attention to corruption in the Holy See.

Man who stabbed South Korea opp leader gets 15 years in prison

Seoul (AP):

A man who stabbed South Korea's opposition leader in the neck earlier this year was sentenced to 15 years in prison on Friday, court officials said. The knife-wielding man attacked Lee Jae-myung, head of the liberal Democratic Party, South Korea's biggest political party, in January after approaching him asking for his autograph at an event in the southeastern city of Busan.

the country's crucial parliamentary elections in April, which ended with Lee's Democratic Party and other opposition parties winning a massive victory against President Yoon Suk Yeol's conservative governing party.

Af wants to dust off postal service and modernise

AP ■ KABUL

In parts of Afghanistan where there are no street names or house numbers, utility companies and their customers have adopted a creative approach for connecting. They use mosques as drop points for bills and cash, a "pay and pray" system.

ies don't deliver even to the capital, Kabul. The changes mean Afghans will pay higher service fees, a challenge as more than half the population already relies on humanitarian aid to survive.

admission to higher education or overseas institutions. The main Kabul branch has dedicated counters for it along with VIP lanes and a women-only area.

Pope to preside over interfaith meeting in Indonesian mosque

Rome (AP):

Pope Francis will preside over an interfaith meeting in a mosque in the world's largest predominantly Muslim country during a four-nation Asian visit in September that will be the longest and most complicated foreign trip of his pontificate.

government, speeches to diplomats and meetings with clergy and public Masses in each location. In Jakarta, he'll preside over an interfaith meeting at the capital's Istiqlal Mosque.

Fierce fighting breaks out as militias launch new attacks

AP ■ BANGKOK

New fighting has broken out in northeastern Myanmar, bringing an end to a Chinese-brokered cease-fire and putting pressure on the military regime as it faces attacks from resistance forces on multiple fronts in the country's civil war.

gically important city of Lashio, headquarters of the regime's northeastern military command. This is the next phase of October's "1027" offensive, said Lway Yay Oo, spokesperson for the TNLA, which last week said the military provoked retaliation with artillery and airstrikes despite the cease-fire.

it off to prevent the military from sending reinforcements," said Morgan Michaels, a Singapore-based analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies who runs its Myanmar Conflict Map project. In Mandalay, the region west of Shan, a local People's Defense Force — one of many armed resistance groups that have sprung up in support of the underground National Unity Government, which views itself as Myanmar's legitimate administration — joined the TNLA's offensive.

xpenses of territory in the north and northeast, including multiple important border crossings with China and several major military bases. The alliance militias have close ties to China, and it's widely believed that the offensive had Beijing's tacit approval because of its growing dissatisfaction with the military regime's seeming indifference to the burgeoning drug trade along its border and the proliferation of centers in Myanmar at which cyberscams are run, with workers trafficked from China and elsewhere in the region.

media apps, particularly Facebook and X during Muharram, which eventually becomes a bone of contention between two sects instead of the two persons involved. "Dissemination of hate content creates bad blood and spoils the overall environment, particularly during Muharram," he said

Pak Punjab province to ban social media platforms for 6 days during Muharram

Lahore (PTI):

The government in Pakistan's Punjab province is now set to ban all social media platforms — YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok — for six days between July 13 and 18, citing the need to control "hate material" during the Islamic month of Muharram.

and added that shutting down social media apps was recommended before, during and a day after Muharram. Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir has already declared social media a "vicious weapon" and underscored the need to fight what he called "digital terrorism".

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Tender Enquiry No. 105/GHTP/MM-II/CS-49(X) Dated 04-07-2024 Dy. Chief Engineer / MM-II/ GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of "AMC for Repair, Laying & Joining of Conveyor Belts and Pulley Lagging of Conveyor System of CHP Stage-I & II at GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat as per detail in tender specifications.

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Sebi issues new guidelines to streamline operations of credit rating agencies

Markets regulator Sebi has issued new guidelines to streamline operations and enhance the ease of doing business for credit rating agencies.



CRAs (Credit Rating Agencies), it has been decided to provide specific timelines for dealing with appeals made by the issuer in respect of rating actions carried out pursuant to periodic surveillance of ratings.

three working days to request a review or appeal of the rating decision, and the dissemination of the press release on the CRA's website and intimation of the same to the stock exchange or debenture trustee must occur within 7 working days of the rating committee meeting.

Sebi has also outlined specific timelines for certain types of disclosures, such as a list of non-cooperative issuers that should be updated daily, ensuring that stakeholders are promptly informed about issuers who fail to cooperate with rating agencies.

Nifty scales new lifetime high

Sensex retreats from record to slip below 80K



The broader NSE benchmark Nifty advanced further to settle at an all-time high for the third straight session on Friday, while the BSE gauge Sensex retreated from the record to slip below the 80k level.

India, Power Grid, ITC, JSW Steel and Sun Pharmaceuticals were the major gainers. On the other hand, HDFC Bank, Titan, Mahindra & Mahindra, IndusInd Bank, UltraTech Cement, Tata Motors, HCL Technologies and Asian Paints were among the laggards.

all-time high," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. Asian markets were closed on a mixed note on Thursday. The US markets were closed on Thursday for Independence Day.

Passenger vehicle retail sales dip as heatwave curtails showroom visits

Passenger vehicle retail sales in India witnessed a 7 per cent on-year decline in June as severe heatwave conditions resulted in 15 per cent less showroom walk-ins, industry body FADA said on Friday.

customer inquiries and postponed purchase decisions, he added. Singhanian also highlighted that inventory levels of passenger vehicles have reached an all-time high, ranging from 62 to 67 days.



Factors such as extreme heat resulted in 13 per cent less walk-ins by probable customers in showrooms, Singhanian said. Stalled monsoon and

Commercial vehicle sales dropped 5 per cent to 72,747 units last month, from 76,364 units in June 2023. "The industry continues to face de-growth, impacted by high temperatures affecting the agricultural sector and infrastructural project slowdowns," Singhanian stated.

constraints and regional market variations remain. In the passenger vehicle segment, high inventory levels and ongoing low market sentiment necessitate cautious management, the industry body said.

Only 7 per cent of MSME credit to women: RBI ED

Reserve Bank's executive director Neeraj Nigam on Friday said low labour force participation among women is a barrier to financial inclusion efforts and also to broader economic growth.

Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), he said, adding that this is very low when compared to nearly a fifth of the MSMEs being women-led.

Startups to showcase cybersecurity innovations in mega summit

Prominent founders, global cybersecurity experts and chief information security officers (CISOs) of large enterprises as well as tech unicorns will gather at the Accel Cybersecurity Summit scheduled to be held in Bengaluru on July 25.



According to a report by the Data Security Council of India, the market reached approximately USD 6 billion in 2023, clocking a CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) of over 30 per cent from 2019 to 2023.

tracks tailored to the varied interests of participants, and a pavilion where startups and data security teams can showcase their products. The 'application security' track will cover topics like setting up a high-quality AppSec programme, which involves practices and tools to protect applications from threats and vulnerabilities during development and deployment, and automating tasks across the AppSec stack.

skilled at combating increasing threat surfaces," said Prayank Swaroop, partner at Accel. Swaroop said Accel has funded over 50 cybersecurity companies globally, many of which have Indian-origin founders.

Veg thali gets dearer by 10 per cent in June on onion, tomato price jump: Crisil

The average cost of a vegetarian thali became dearer by 10 per cent in June due to the jump in onion, potato, and tomato prices, a report said on Friday. However, a decline in the broiler price contributed to a decrease in the cost of a non-vegetarian meal, as per Crisil Market Intelligence and Analysis' monthly 'Roti Rice Rate' report.



On the surge in tomato prices, it said virus infestation in the summer crop due to high temperatures in key growing regions of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh reduced tomato arrivals by 35 per cent year-on-year.

Training for interns held



National Institute of Food Technology Entrepreneurship and Management, Kundli (NIFTEM-K) under the Ministry of Food Processing Industries (MoFPI) has launched its second training-cum-internship programme on food technology entrepreneurship development starting from today.

Govt makes ISI mark must for stainless steel, aluminium utensils

The government has made it mandatory for stainless steel and aluminium kitchen utensils to conform to national quality standards, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) said on Friday, in a move aimed at enhancing consumer safety and product quality.

Indian Standards Institution (ISI) mark is developed by BIS, assuring of product quality and safety. According to BIS, the order prohibits the manufacture, import, sale, distribution, storage, or exhibition for sale of any stainless steel or aluminium utensils that do not bear the BIS standard mark.

JSW Energy plans ₹15K crore capex in FY25

JSW Energy Chairman & Managing Director Sajjan Jindal on Friday said the company has planned a capital expenditure of Rs 15,000 crore during the current fiscal year. In his address to shareholders at the annual general meeting, he said, the company intends to spend around Rs 1,15,000 crore to reach the goal of 20 GW generation and 40 GW storage under 'Strategy 2.0'.

production, it said. The growth capital secured through the recently completed QIP (qualified institutional placement) strategically positions the company to accelerate the execution of returns accretive growth plans, he noted.

कार्यालय नगर निगम, देहरादून

Table with 4 columns: क्रम सं०, मार्ग का नाम, युनिपोल/होर्डिंग हेतु कुल साईट, निगम द्वारा विज्ञापन हेतु आरक्षित निविदा घनराशि

YOUR INPUTS WILL HELP 2036 BID: PM ASKS ATHLETES TO SHARE OBSERVATIONS ON CONDUCT OF OLYMPICS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Confident that India's bid to host the 2036 Olympics will be successful, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged athletes bound for this month's Paris Games to share their views on the arrangements in the French capital to help his government's ambitious plan to bring the quadrennial showpiece here. In an interaction with Paris-bound athletes, conducted both in person and online on Thursday, Modi said those travelling to the French capital would do the country a huge service by providing inputs from their experience. "We are hoping to host the Olympics in 2036, it will help in creating a sporting atmosphere (in the country). Work is in progress to prepare infrastructure for it," he said in the interaction, which was attended by the national men's hockey team, the shooting contingent, boxers and track-and-field stars such as Neeraj Chopra among others. The complete video of the PM's light-hearted conversation with the athletes was shared by his office on Friday. The meeting with the contingent was also attended by sports minister Mansukh Mandaviya and Indian Olympic Association (IAO)



Prime Minister Narendra Modi interacts with the athletes of the Indian contingent who are going to represent the country for the first time in the Paris Olympics, in New Delhi, Thursday, July 4, 2024

President P T Usha. "I won't ask you to do anything in the middle of your events but when you are free, I would urge you to observe the arrangements. Your inputs will help our bid for 2036. We will have an understanding on how to make sure that we are better-prepared," he added in his closing remarks to the athletes. The upcoming Games will be held from July 26 to August 11 and India would be hoping to better its best ever tally of seven medals, including Chopra's historic javelin throw gold, achieved in the Tokyo Games. Over 100 Indian sportspeople have qualified for the Games, including an unprecedented 21 shooters, who would be aiming to end the medal drought of last two editions. India has repeatedly asserted its desire to host the Games and found support from International Olympic Committee (IOC) chief Thomas Bach. However, it would be no walk in the park to secure the rights as several other strong contenders such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia are also expected to throw their hats in the ring. A decision on the 2036 Games host is not expected before next year's IOC elections where a new President is expected to take charge.



Abhay leads India's charge on first day of Asian doubles squash

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Asian Games medallist Abhay Singh led India's charge on the opening day of the Asian Doubles Squash Championships by registering comfortable wins in both his events along side his respective partners in Johor, Malaysia. The Indian contingent registered four wins in five outings on the opening day of the event on Thursday. Abhay and Velavan Senthilkumar beat David Pelino and Reymark Begornia of Philippines 2-0 (11-4 11-6) in the men's doubles group stage. Abhay then teamed up with experienced Joshna Chinappa in the mixed doubles, with the Indian pair starting with a bang, winning both their Pool C matches on Thursday. Abhay and Joshna first accounted for Philippines pair of Yvonne Dalida and Reymark Begornia 11-4 11-3 and then returned to the court to beat Naisha Singh and Anders Ong Wee Jun of Singapore 11-3 11-6. The women's doubles pair of Rathika Suthanthira Seelan and Pooja Arthi R won one and lost one.

INDIA'S RESULTS:
Men's doubles: Abhay/Velavan bt David Pelino/Reymark Begornia (PHI) 11-4 11-6.
Women's doubles: Rathika/Pooja bt Raifa Putri Yattaqi/Zalzabila (INA) 11-1 11-4, Rathika/Pooja lost Ho Tze Lok/Fung Ching Hei (HKG) 4-11 6-11.
Mixed doubles: Abhay/Joshna bt Yvonne Dalida/Reymark Begornia (PHI) 11-4 11-3, Abhay/Joshna bt Naisha Singh/Anders Ong Wee Jun (SGP) 11-3 11-6.

Misfiring England faces in-form Switzerland for semifinal spot



AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)
England will play Switzerland in the quarterfinals of Euro 2024 on Saturday. England faced criticism from fans who thought the team underperformed in its extra-time win over Slovakia, while Switzerland exceeded expectations by knocking out defending champion Italy. The winner will play either the Netherlands or Turkey in the semifinals. Here's what to know about the match:
Match facts: England is playing its fourth quarterfinal game at a major tournament under manager Gareth Southgate and won two of the previous three. Southgate's cautious tactics have brought heavy criticism from England fans, some of whom threw plastic cups at him in the group stage.
■ Jude Bellingham's last-minute overhead kick to send England's last-16 game with Slovakia to extra time was one of the most dramatic moments of Euro 2024 so far. Defender John Stones said surviving that brush with elimination gave the team new confidence.
■ Switzerland coach Murat Yakin has won a reputation for smart tactics at Euro 2024, especially by outclassing an Italy team packed with more famous names in the round of 16.
■ England is playing two days after a general election ended 14 years of rule by the Conservative Party. It didn't make waves in the England camp, which Stones called a "politics-free zone."
Team news: Bellingham is under investigation by UEFA after seemingly making a gesture toward his crotch during England's last game. He has denied he was mocking Slovakia, saying it was an "inside joke gesture towards some close friends who were at the game."
■ England defender Marc Guehi is suspended after picking up a second booking



UEFA suspends Turkey player Merih Demiral for 2 games for making nationalistic gesture at Euro 2024

AP ■ BERLIN
The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) has suspended Turkey player Merih Demiral for two matches for making a controversial gesture at the European Championship. The governing body said Friday that it had banned the defender "for failing to comply with the general principles of conduct, for violating the basic rules of decent conduct, for using sports events for manifestations of a non-sporting nature and for bringing the sport of football into disrepute." Demiral scored both goals Tuesday in a 2-1 win over Austria to earn Turkey's place in the quarterfinals and celebrated with a hand sign associated with an ultranationalist group. After scoring the second goal he made a sign with each hand that is used by Turkish nationalists and associated with the Turkish ultranationalist organization Ulku Ocaklari, which is more widely known as the Gray Wolves. Demiral will miss Turkey's match with the Netherlands in Berlin on Saturday.

Jude Bellingham avoids immediate ban at Euro 2024 over offensive gesture

AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)
Jude Bellingham has avoided an immediate ban after the England midfielder appeared to make an offensive gesture in his team's win over Slovakia. Bellingham will be available for England's game against Switzerland on Saturday for a place in the semifinals after UEFA on Friday imposed a one-game ban but said it "is not immediately enforced and is subject to a probationary period" of a year. The Real Madrid midfielder will have to pay a fine of 30,000 euros (\$32,500). UEFA said the punishment was "for violating the basic rules of decent conduct" in the Slovakia game. Bellingham seemed to make a gesture with his hand toward his crotch after scoring an overhead kick to level the score Sunday as England went on to win 2-1 in extra time. Bellingham's goal with about 80 seconds left in the game saved England from a humiliating exit in the first knockout round. Bellingham previously denied suggestions he gestured toward the Slovakia bench. "An inside joke gesture towards some close friends who were at the game. Nothing but respect for how that Slovakia team played tonight," Bellingham wrote on X. UEFA also fined England a total of 11,000 euros (\$11,900) for crowd disturbances and the "lighting of fireworks" at the Slovakia game.

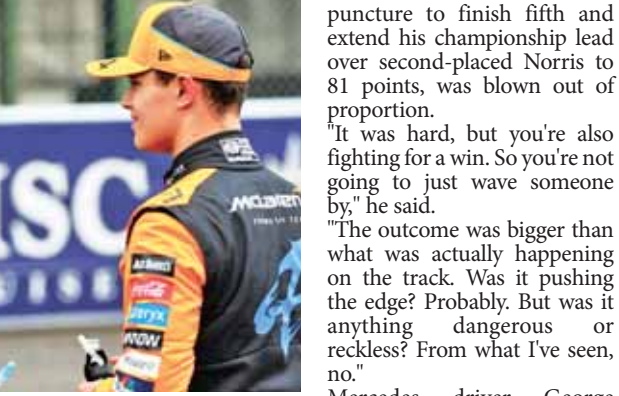


Andy Murray's Wimbledon farewell tour begins with a loss in doubles with his brother

AP ■ LONDON
There were tears from Andy Murray. Standing ovations from the Centre Court crowd. A video tribute replete with messages from Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Venus Williams. And, yes, a doubles match Murray played alongside his brother on Thursday, all part of the first stop on the two-time Wimbledon singles champion's farewell tour at a tournament that meant so much to him. The Murrays lost 7-6(6) 6-4 in the first round of men's doubles against Rinky Hijikata and John Peers - but the result was, truly, beside the point on this evening. "The match itself, it was tough, physically. It was hard for me. ... I was fortunate I was even able to get on the court to play," said Murray, who had surgery to remove a cyst from his spine less than two weeks ago, forcing him to withdraw from singles. "It was pretty emotional," Murray said about the postmatch tribute. "Watching the video was nice, but hard as well, for me. Because you know it's coming to the end of something that you absolutely loved doing for such a long time. So that was difficult." It was the first time a men's doubles first-round match was played in the event's main stadium in nearly 30 years, a fitting way for him to begin to say goodbye - and for his many fans to offer their thanks and well wishes, too. Murray, a 37-year-old from Scotland, has said he will head into retirement after playing at the All England Club, where he is also entered in mixed doubles with 2021 US Open winner Emma Raducanu, and the Paris Olympics, which begin later this month. "I'm ready to finish playing," Murray said, "because I can't play to the level I want to anymore." Murray occasionally fidgeted with his back and looked a tad uncomfortable while playing, but he also let out a celebratory scream after hitting a forehand return winner to go up a break at 2-0 in the second set, the type of shot that helped him reach No. 1 in the rankings. This was the first time the Murray siblings had played together at the All England Club. They bumped fists before the match began; they slapped palms between points. Their mother, Judy, who taught both boys tennis, was in a guest box, sitting with Andy's wife, Kim, and two of the couple's four children. "It was a fun experience for me to be out there and play with him," Jamie said. "It was sort of strange knowing what the background was." Jamie's younger brother became a superstar in these parts by winning Wimbledon in 2013, making him the first British man to triumph in singles at the All England Club in 77 years. He won the title again in 2016. His other Grand Slam trophy came at the US Open in 2012, the same year he won his first singles gold medal at the London Olympics at Centre Court - "One of my favourite days I've ever had, certainly as an athlete," he said on Thursday - and the next, at Rio de Janeiro in 2016, made him the only player with two in a row. There were some of his usual mannerisms, whether it was tugging on the brim of his white hat or leaning over to pull on the tongues of his shoes or clenching a fist while looking up at the stands. There wasn't as much of the fire and brimstone he was famous for, the cursing and muttering directed at his team or, just as frequently, himself. "Sometimes," Djokovic said during the four-minute video, "it looked like you against the world." Then it was Federer's turn to say: "But you were never alone. Because while you carried your own dreams, you also carried theirs," referring to Murray's many fans. After the ceremony, Murray was greeted by several current and former players, including Djokovic, Iga Swiatek, Lleyton Hewitt, Holger Rune, Cam Norrie, Martina Navratilova and John McEnroe.

Verstappen's emerging F1 rivalry with Norris goes another round at British GP

AP ■ SILVERSTONE (ENGLAND)
Max Verstappen's emerging rivalry with Lando Norris goes another round at the British Grand Prix this week and this time Norris has home fans behind him. Sunday's Formula 1 race follows their crash at last weekend's Austrian GP, the home race of Verstappen's Red Bull team. It cost both drivers a victory chance and ended Norris' hopes of a second win after the Miami GP. Norris retired his McLaren and felt let down by Verstappen, saying the Red Bull driver impeded him by moving under braking. Norris cleared the air with Verstappen when the friends spoke twice this week. "I don't think he should apologize. I thought it was good racing, at times very close to the edge, but we've spoken about it and we're both happy to go racing again," Norris said on Thursday. "Some of the things I said in the (TV) pen after the race were more just because I was frustrated at the time. A lot of adrenaline, a lot of emotions." Verstappen's main concern was protecting their friendship. "He's a great guy. Of course he loves racing, he's very passionate," Verstappen said. "You also have to realize he's fighting for his second win, I'm fighting for my 62nd. Naturally, your emotions are a little bit different." Verstappen also has 106 podium finishes compared to Norris' 19, and in pole positions leads him 40-2. Verstappen felt Norris may have panicked a bit. "I always said to Lando, when you go for moves up the inside, outside, you can trust me that I'm not there to try and crash you out," Verstappen said. "I felt everything that I did was nothing massively over the top." Another heated incident at Silverstone could change that and jog some memories. At the 2021 British GP, Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton collided heavily on Lap 1 at the high-speed Copse corner. Verstappen went to hospital for checks and Hamilton won. It sparked a bitter feud lasting until the last lap of the last race in Abu Dhabi, where Verstappen recovered from a



puncture to finish fifth and extend his championship lead over second-placed Norris to 81 points, was blown out of proportion. "It was hard, but you're also fighting for a win. So you're not going to just wave someone by," he said. "The outcome was bigger than what was actually happening on the track. Was it pushing the edge? Probably. But was it anything dangerous or reckless? From what I've seen, no." Mercedes driver George Russell, who benefited from the late crash to win in Austria, seemed to agree. "Max is one of the best and he's a hard racer," Russell said. "He'll push the rules to the limit, as all the top drivers do." British hopes Home fans could be in for a treat with three British drivers - Norris, Russell, Hamilton - possibly in contention. There is fresh hope in a season producing five different race winners in 11 races, compared to just three in 22 in 2023 with Verstappen winning a staggering 19. Verstappen has seven wins this year while Ferrari duo Carlos Sainz Jr. and Charles Leclerc have one win each. Although Hamilton has won Silverstone a record eight times, the 39-year-old British driver has not won anywhere since the penultimate race of the 2021 campaign.

