



OPINION 6 PANDEMONIUM IN PARLIAMENT

WORLD 9 UK ELECTION SET TO DELIVER MORE DIVERSE PARLIAMENT

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

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PARIS DIAMOND LEAGUE NOT ON MY CALENDAR: NEERAJ 11 SPORTS

## Modi silences critics on Manipur



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

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## 3-member judicial panel formed to probe Hathras case

PNS/PTI ■ HATHRAS/LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Wednesday announced a judicial probe into the Hathras tragedy while not ruling out the possibility of a "conspiracy" behind the stampede that killed 121 people here on Tuesday. The Commission will be headed by retired judge of Allahabad High Court, Justice Brijesh Kumar Srivastav. Retired IAS officers Hemant Rao and Bhavesh Kumar have been made the two members of the Commission, according to the information provided by the state government. The Commission has been tasked to complete the investigation within two months. He also said the "sevadars" (volunteers working for the 'satsang' organisers) should have taken the victims to the hospital. People were dying and the "sevadars" fled, he claimed. Adityanath met those injured in the incident at the venue of the religious congregation here and obtained information from the eyewitnesses about the course of events preceding the tragedy. Asserting the government will ensure that such incidents do not recur, the chief minister said a standard operating procedure might be put in place for religious congregations. Adityanath said the government had



formed a Special Investigation Team led by the additional director general (ADG) of police, Agra, which has given its preliminary report. "She (ADG, Agra, Anupam Kulshreshtha) has been asked to get to the bottom of this incident, he said. The chief minister said among the 121 killed in the stampede on Tuesday, six were from other states — four from Haryana and one each from Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Asked why religious preacher Saakar Vishwa Hari Bhole Baba has not been named in the FIR as an accused, Adityanath said, "Prima facie, the case has been filed against those who

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

RAJESH KUMAR ■ RANCHI/NEW DELHI

In a major development, minutes after Jharkhand Chief Minister Champai Soren resigned as the State's Chief Minister barely 152 days after taking oath, his predecessor and Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's chief, Hemant Soren who is out on bail in the money-laundering case by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) staked claim to form the next Government which he relinquished a few months ago before his arrest by the probe agency. This is for the third time that Hemant will become the Chief Minister of Jharkhand. He will be the 13th Chief Minister of the State, which was carved out of Bihar on November 15, 2000. "A few days ago, I was made the Chief Minister and I got the responsibility of the State. After Hemant Soren was back, our alliance took this decision and we chose Hemant Soren as our leader. I have resigned as per the decision of the JMM-led alliance. Our alliance is strong. All know what had happened with Hemant Soren... I was given the responsibility by the coalition partners. Now, the alliance has decided in favour of Hemant Soren", Champai said after coming out of Raj Bhawan. A request was also submitted to Governor C P Radhakrishnan by Hemant to form the Government. After meeting with the Governor, Hemant told the media that all formalities to form the Government are complete.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

## Seventh bridge collapse in 15 days alarms Bihar

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

Even as a high-level panel of the Bihar Government has launched a probe into the recent spate of bridge collapses across the State, yet another incident on Wednesday involving a bridge over the Gandak river in Siwan district of the State has raised serious concern about the quality of infrastructure and public safety. The latest bridge collapse marks the seventh such incident in a span of just 15 days in the State and second in Siwan district in the last 11 days. Mercifully, however, despite the severity of these collapses, there have been no casualties thus far. With the State's rivers swelling due to continuous heavy rain, the possibility of more such incidents occurring in the coming days cannot be discounted, members of the Bihar Engineering Services Association (BESA) have warned. The troubling series of incidents began on June 19 with the collapse of an under-construction bridge in Araria, followed by collapses in Siwan on June 22, East Champaran on June 23, and Kishanganj on June 24. The collapse of the bridge over the Gandak river in Deoria Block in Siwan district on



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

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

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

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

panchayats. This incident follows the collapse of an under-construction bridge in the Madhubani region on June 28 which was being built by the Rural Works Department of the Bihar government at a cost of ₹3 crore since 2021. Following the collapses, the blame game has already begun, intensifying concerns about accountability and oversight in Bihar's infrastructure management. Rajya Sabha Leader of Opposition and Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge took a swipe at the bridge cave-in in the State while Union Minister Jitan Ram Manjhi smelled a possible conspiracy behind the incidents, implying a deliberate attempt to defame the BJP-led State Government. "Why has the State suddenly started witnessing incidents of bridge collapse? Why is it happening after the Lok Sabha polls? Why were such incidents not taking place a month before? I suspect some conspiracy behind it. Authorities concerned must look into this aspect," Manjhi said. He also acknowledged the use of sub-standard materials by contractors as a contributing factor and assured that the State Government is taking action against those responsible.

Continued on Page 8

## Twitters of Koo set to fall silent

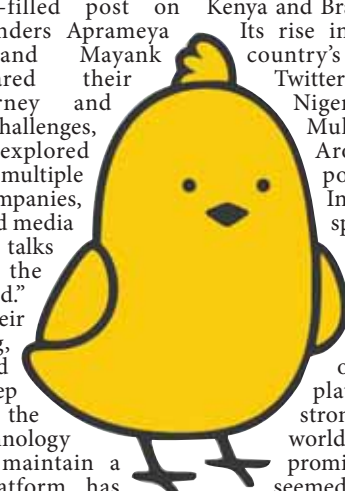
ASAD ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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



## Sensex breaches 80,000 mark for first time

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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



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

Continued on Page 8

Encroachments main cause of traffic snarls in Aminabad

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW It is 12 noon on Wednesday morning and entering Aminabad is itself becoming a tedious process. Right from the Kaiserbagh crossing through the Latouche road one has to face traffic snarls which become more acute as one reaches the Aminabad police station.

Haphazardly placed carts, wrongly parked vehicles and numerous vendors lined up in front of shops make the Aminabad roads look like clogged arteries. All the roads of Aminabad, whether it is the road in front of the Burma bakery, on the four sides of the Jhandewala Park, roads around

Hanuman temple, near Gadbadhala, Pratap market, the Sri Ram road, Prakash Kulfri road and the medicine market, face snarls during the peak hours. Two-wheelers, three-wheelers move at a snail's pace and pedestrians struggle through the same chaos despite barriers being placed at two points in the busy area for traffic regulation.

Nitin Maheshwari, a resident of Aminabad, says that it is a big illusion that the roads of Aminabad are narrow. "One should have a look at the roads at midnight or during a VIPs arrival and one would be able to estimate their correct width. The excessive number of encroachments give a wrong perception that the roads are

narrow. Both the residents and the traders have been dealing with this problem of encroachment for a long time. God forbid if there is a fire, the results will be disastrous. Several complaints have been made in this regard but there has been no permanent solution to the problem," he said. Sanjay Gupta, president of the Adarsh Vyapar Mandal, said that during his childhood days buses would easily run through Aminabad area and today the situation is such that one cannot even walk on foot through the market.

Crores of rupees are facing losses while those who have set shops on the footpath and do not pay any taxes are minting money. There is laxity on the part of the police, the administration and the nagar nigam because of which roads have been encroached upon completely," he said. Recalling old times, Gupta said that during his childhood days buses would easily run through Aminabad area and today the situation is such that one cannot even walk on foot through the market.

Another trader on conditions of anonymity while making allegations of connivance between local nagar nigam staff and the police said that encroachment was not possible without their tacit support. "Whenever a campaign is carried out these vendors disappear and return no sooner than the campaign ends. They have prior knowledge as to when the drive will occur," he said. He further pointed out that the Aminabad market, which was at one time called the first

choice of the city denizens, was fast becoming the last choice. "The residents of the city who would not shop from any other market except Aminabad now choose to visit the market if any product is not available in any other market of the city," he added. President of Lucknow Vyapar Mandal Amarnath Mishra said that for the last 30 years they have been raising the plea that if Aminabad was not a vending zone then the vendors should be removed from the area. "When the roads have not one or two but three layers of vendors then how will the traffic move through the roads. Until the nagar nigam creates a vending zone and rehabilitates the vendors, exercises carried out

Miscreant dupes cop's colleague

Lucknow (PNS): An unidentified miscreant demanded money from the colleagues and friends of a woman constable of the local intelligence unit while displaying her DP on her mobile phone number in Para police station area on Wednesday. The miscreant succeeded in duping a woman constable of Rs 10,000 by this trick. The victim, Poonam Yadav, filed a complaint at Para police station. As per complainant, her mobile phone stopped functioning around 5 am on June 29, and it switched off on its own. The mobile phone restarted after much effort. "As soon as the mobile phone was switched on, I got calls

from my friends and acquaintances who told me that someone had demanded money from them while using my mobile number displaying my photo as DP," she said. She further said a woman constable, Seema Pal, transferred Rs 10,000 to two UPI numbers provided by the caller. "Seema Pal told me the DP of the mobile number showed my photo in the police uniform," she said. Police registered a case in this connection. Meanwhile, unidentified miscreants stole ornaments from a house when the entire family was present at the house in Banthra. The owner of the house, Kaushal Kishore

Srivastava, filed a complaint against unidentified miscreants. Srivastava, in his own complaint, stated that his daughter-in-law found ornaments missing when she checked them on June 28. "She was looking for earrings which she had placed on the dressing table and searched for it in almirah in which she had put all her ornaments and Rs 45,000 in cash, thinking she may have put it among the other ornaments. To her surprise, she found all the ornaments and cash missing," he said. In another theft reported in Sadatganj, Shanshah Raza informed the police that thieves made off with all gold orna-

ments from his house when he was at his workplace and his wife and their daughter were in the market on July 1. The police registered a case. The Mohanlalganj police arrested two thieves on Wednesday and claimed to have solved several cases of theft reported in the area. Those arrested were identified as Angad Kumar Verma and Pawan Kumar, both of Barabanki district. Both work as labourer and used to conduct recce while working at construction sites in the area. ADACP South Shshank Singh said the miscreants had recently stolen a trolley and a solar panel. Both confessed to their crime.



Water accumulated outside Charbagh Railway Station after showers in Lucknow on Wednesday

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE My son's name has been recorded as Hardik Kumar (HARDIK KUMAR) in my service record which is wrong. Whereas my son's correct name Aayush Kumar (AAYUSH KUMAR) should be recorded in the military records. Vinod Kumar son of Ram Badan, Village = Kadiapur, Post = Basdevpur, Tehsil = Kasimabad, District = Ghazipur I am working on Army Rank Number 2804905N RANK -HAV.

सूचना में युग धवन S/o अजय कुमार धवन R/o D1/37 Sector H, Jankipuram Lucknow UP- दिनांक 02/07/2024 को राष्ट्रपति पत्र के माध्यम से घोषित करता हूँ कि मेरे पिता का नाम अजय कुमार धवन और अजय धवन दोनों एक ही व्यक्ति के नाम हैं। भविष्य में सभी उद्देश्यों हेतु अजय धवन के रूप में जाने जाएंगे।

NOTICE In my paasport my name is written as Farid Ahmad by mistake, which is wrong. Whereas correct spelling of my name is Fareed Ahmad, which is also written in all my documents, such as Aadhar and Pan card. Fareed Ahmad S/o Mohammad Naqil, R/o Deva Barabanki-225301.

NOTICE I have changed my name from Sheikh Mohammad Yusuf S/o Mohammad Nafees R/o 40/100, Parade, Kanpur for all Future Purpose

NOTICE I have changed my name from FATMA ZIKRULLAH to FATIMA ZIKRULLAH. In future I Shall be known as FATIMA ZIKRULLAH. FATIMA ZIKRULLAH, D/o Zikrullah Ansari, 154/2B/131, Mak Town Karelalabagh GTB Nagar, Prayagraj

सूचना सूचित हो कि मेरे पति स्वर्गीय श्री राम सिंह (Ex Sub) के रिक्त ऑफिस (AMC) लखनऊ में मेरी पुत्री सुमनलला की जन्म तिथि 25/9/1962 दर्ज है। प्रमाणपत्र के अनुसार सही जन्मतिथि 25/9/1963 सभी अभिलेखों में दर्ज किया जाए। कृपया कुमारी C-2200, इंदिरानगर, लखनऊ।

NOTICE I have changed my name from Nazeen Khanam To Nazneen Khanam W/o Mohammad Shadab R/o 67/24, Pokharpu KDA Colony, Jajmau, Kanpur for all Future Purpose

NOTICE I have changed my name from Amit Jain to Amit Chand Jain. In future purpose, I should be known as Amit Chand Jain. Amit Chand Jain S/O Prem Chand Jain 7/182 Swaroop Nagar, Kanpur Nagar 208002

NOTICE I have changed my name from Anjuara To Anjum Ara W/o Subhanullah R/o L 17/18, KDA Colony, Ganga Vihar Jajmau, Kanpur for all Future Purpose

सूचना सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरा सही नाम सविता केसरवानी पत्नी श्याम बिहारी गुप्ता है जो मेरे शैक्षिक अभिलेख, पैन कार्ड नंबर CLJPK 8266 J एवं आधार नंबर 657 2918 43123 में अंकित है। वृत्तिवश एडोएफ फूड के शेरर सर्टिफिकेट नंबर 0018687 एवं फोर्सियो नंबर S001558/0220773/18680 में मेरा नाम सविता गुप्ता पत्नी श्याम बिहारी गुप्ता अंकित हो गया है। भविष्य में मुझे मेरे सही नाम सविता केसरवानी पत्नी श्याम बिहारी गुप्ता पता 212/1 शास्त्री नगर रसूलपुर प्रयागराज के नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाए सविता केसरवानी

NOTICE My name and date of birth in Aadhaar and PAN cards as ShaikKumari, 6th October 1946 have been corrected as Shaik Kumari, 2nd July 1946 as mentioned in Family Pension record of Soldiers' Board which should be read as correct. Shaik Kumari W/o Late Jagdish Singh Ex SPR 1443445, Village, Rahsupur, Post Shadipur, Distt. Fatehpur 212 665.

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NOTICE Be it known to all that due to Misconduct & misbehavior of my Son Tarang Rastogi, I evict him from all my properties from 01/07/2024. Now onwards I and my family will not be responsible for all his conducts. Father Kanahiya Lal Rastogi, S/o Late Ram Rastogi, R/o 215/78 D-2, Subhash Marg, Raja Bazar, Chowk, Lucknow

Youth drowns in Gomti

PNS ■ LUCKNOW A 17-year-old youth drowned in river Gomti when he was taking a bath along with his friends in Thakurganj on Wednesday afternoon. The divers fished out the body of the victim, identified as Faizan of Thakurganj. According to police, Faizan along with his friends Prince Gautam, Aman Qadir and Raj Sharma, all of his colony, went to Gau Ghat for an outing in the pleasant weather. Later the group planned to take a bath in the river. A police spokesman said all the four entered into the river holding each others' hands and started moving to the mid of the river. Faizan was leading the group and he was carried away by the strong current in the river. "His friends attempted to save Faizan but in vain. Later they came out of the river and called the police and other people present at the bank of the river. The divers were pressed into action to save Faizan but his body was recovered," he said. The police sent the body for autopsy and started an investigation. KILLED A mechanic was killed while two youths were seriously injured after a Roadways bus hit the scooty they were riding near the Jai Narayan College trisection under Hussainganj police station late on Tuesday

Eunuchs stage protest, demand action against attacker

Lucknow (PNS): Angry over the bashing of one member of their community, a group of eunuchs staged a protest inside the Mohanlalganj police station and later at the Lucknow-Rae Bareli highway on Wednesday evening. As per reports, the victim eunuch Priyanka reached near the house of one Anil aka Sonu Hari. Later both had a verbal spat and Sonu hit Priyanka on her head with a brick, causing a deep cut. Sonu later took to his heels while Priyanka was taken to a hospital by her colleagues. Later her colleagues reached the Mohanlalganj Kotwali to file a complaint against the miscreant and had a verbal spat with some cops, allegedly after they pressed for registering a case of murderous assault. The eunuchs were irked at the alleged apathy of police and they started protesting at the Mohanlalganj police station while accusing police of not hearing them sympathetically because of their gender. They then took to Lucknow-Rae Bareli highway where they started protesting to press their demand for registering a case of murderous assault. By the evening the police agreed to hear them and to register a case against the culprit. evening. The Lucknow police, in a statement, said that the bus driver was taken into custody. "The deceased was identified as Wahab, 42, son of Wahid, who ran a motorcycle repairing shop near Shubham Cinema, under Kaiserbagh police station," the police said. The police added that the injured were identified as Mohit Dhanuk, 18, of Bhedi Mandi and Lucky Kumar, 16 years, of Mahavir Puri. After the incident, scores of

Kushinagar on the way to development

PNS ■ LUCKNOW Uttar Pradesh is taking significant strides forward in tourism. Recognising the immense potential and importance of tourism in the uplift of the economy and social fabric of the region, the Uttar Pradesh Tourism department, with the support of the World Bank, has initiated the Pro-Poor Tourism Development Project. This project aims not only to enhance tourism infrastructure but also to uplift the economic and social status of the local residents by generating employment opportunities. As part of this endeavour, various infrastructural and tourism development projects are being undertaken in cities and areas of immense tourism importance. Kushinagar, being a significant destination for Buddhist pilgrims worldwide, holds a special place in this development project. It is here

that Lord Buddha achieved Mahaparinirvana, making it a sacred pilgrimage site for Buddhists. "The undertaken projects in Kushinagar include the renovation of Rahi Pathik Niwas, which encompasses a tourist information centre, the upgradation of food plaza and toilet blocks, the construction of a footbridge on the Hiranayavati river, and the rehabilitation of Vipassana Upvan. These projects, with a revised project cost of Rupees 1,786.81 lakh, are progressing swiftly," said a tourism official. Kushinagar's significance as the final resting place of Lord Buddha amplifies its importance in the Buddhist circuit. The Mahaparinirvana temple, Mahaparinirvana Stupa, Ramabhar Stupa, and Mathakaur Shrine are some of the key attractions for pilgrims visiting this holy site. "The government's efforts have

also significantly improved connectivity to Kushinagar. With the operational Kushinagar International Airport and Gorakhpur railway junction, travelling to this sacred land has become more accessible. Furthermore, the proposed Kushinagar-Sarnath Buddha Expressway aims to enhance connectivity between these two vital Buddhist pilgrimage sites, thereby facilitating seamless travel for pilgrims," he said. Uttar Pradesh Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh said, "Uttar Pradesh government and the Tourism department remain committed to the holistic development of tourism infrastructure, ensuring that visitors to Kushinagar have a wonderful, hassle-free, and comfortable experience, while also enhancing the livelihoods of the marginalised and underprivileged sections of society."

City transport bus catches fire

Lucknow (PNS): A Lucknow City Transport Services bus (UP 32 CZ 6689) of Dubagga depot which operates on Mall-Ghantaghar route caught fire on Wednesday afternoon. There was no loss of life as no passenger was in the bus. The incident occurred near Balaganj. A senior official of the Lucknow

City Bus Services said that because of sudden smoke and flames, the bus was brought to the side of the road. He said after stopping the bus, fire extinguishers were immediately used in an attempt to douse the flames. "An attempt was made to extinguish the fire with the help of the fire extinguisher but the

flames became very high. The driver and conductor informed the Fire department," he said. The fire-tenders that rushed to the spot brought the fire under control. "The fire broke out when the propeller shaft under the bus broke and rubbed against the road. Some seats at of the bus were destroyed," he said.

Tomato prices soar in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW Come rainy season and the prices of tomatoes skyrocket. The price of tomatoes have touched Rs 100 per kg in the city and spoil the budget of the common householders. Director Horticulture VB Diwedi said that because of the rains the arrival of tomato from Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra had been impacted bringing an escalation in the prices. "Once the rains slacken and the supply is restored the prices are expected to get stable," he said. Meanwhile housewives have already set aside tomatoes from their kitchen ingredients. Renu Sahai a housewife from Gontminagar said that at Rs 100 per kg the tomato was even more expensive than mango. "I will not be using tomatoes in my daily meals and will opt for a puree. Rainy season brings an escalation in the prices of vegetables and tomatoes is one vegetable which always becomes pricey," she said. Alpina, another housewife, said she had already planned that her salads will be without tomatoes. "The tangy tomato



will not be on my table unless it gets humble," she said. It may be noted that last year the prices of tomatoes had

gone as high as Rs 200 per kg forcing a popular burger chain to forgo tomatoes in their burgers.

Table with 6 columns: Sr No, Property Address, Village, Pargana, Tehsil, Distt. It lists property addresses in Bhaupukur and Benti villages, Bijnore Pargana, Sarojini Nagar Tehsil, Lucknow Distt.

# Acid attack on BBA girl student, medico cousin

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a chilling reminder of incidents of acid attacks that had forced previous state governments to bring stringent laws to ban the sale of acid in the open market and speedy trials of such cases, a 21-year-old girl pursuing her BBA from a private college was attacked with acid by a youth when she was going along with her younger cousin near Lohia Park (Chowk Stadium) in the Chowk police station area on Wednesday morning. As her cousin attempted to save her by covering her from acid, he also suffered injuries on his back.

Both have been admitted to King George's Medical University, where their condition is said to be stable. A relative of the girl said she suffered burns on her entire face, while her cousin suffered burns on his back. He said the name of a youth had surfaced in connection with the attack and police were hunting for him. The relative thanked Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's son Neeraj for helping them in their hard times.

According to ADCP, West Zone, Vishwajeet Srivastava, the BBA student and her younger male cousin, a medical student, were walking towards KGMU. As they neared the Chowk Stadium, an unidentified man confronted them. He left and then returned minutes later and threw acid on them before fleeing the scene. Onlookers quickly alerted the police, and the victims were initially taken to SPM (Civil) Hospital from where they were referred to the KGMU Trauma Centre. Senior police officers are working to apprehend the attacker and determine the motive behind the acid attack. The father of the 21-year-old victim, a member of the city's trade union, told newsmen that his daughter was in a critical condition and hoped for her speedy recovery. He also mentioned that the condition of his daughter's cousin was serious, as he suffered more severe burns. The police suspect the accused attacker was stalking the girl. "In cases of acid attacks, it has been seen commonly that the attacker has developed a fancy for the victim and launched the

attack on being spurned by her. The KGMU Trauma Centre doctors said the victims were being given treatment and were under the constant watch of a team of doctors. They said they were also taking the opinion of the doctors of the plastic surgery department. Meanwhile, a video grab of the suspect youth shows him in a black T-shirt and he is carrying a bag in which he had put a bottle filled with acid. The father of the victim alleged in a video statement that one Abhay Verma had been making calls to his daughter for the last two days and she had blocked his mobile phone number. "The accused had introduced himself as Abhay Verma. He kept making calls from another mobile phone number after being blocked several times and snubbed. Every time he expressed his liking for her, and even threatened her with dire consequences. The accused had made the call the previous night also," the victim's father alleged. He said the police were helping him in the difficult times, and he hoped the miscreant would be brought to justice. He gave

a description of the face and complexion of the accused, saying the middle-statured, dusky youth was scolded by his nephew when he first approached the girl for a dialogue and shooed him away. The accused moved away and came back again, and this time he launched the acid attack. On the other hand, the police said more than one person could be involved in the crime. "It is possible the prime accused was helped by his aide to flee the scene on a two-wheeler," sources in the police said. According to doctors, the girl has sustained 5 per cent burns on her face. "We are currently assessing the extent of the damage. Depending on our findings, we will determine if reconstructive surgery is necessary," a doctor said. The boy, who suffered more severe injuries, has burns covering 10 per cent of his back. "The burns on the boy's back are being treated with specialised dressings," a doctor said. Both victims are being treated in the plastic surgery department under the supervision of Dr Ravi Kumar Singh and Prof Brijesh Mishra.

# 'Bhole Baba' has a criminal past, went to jail in sexual exploitation case



Police personnel outside the Bhole Baba's Ashram in Bichhwa of Mainpuri district on Wednesday

PTI

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Suraj Pal aliaa Sakar Narayan Hari alias Sakar Vishwa Hari 'Bhole Baba', who is known for his controversial 'satsangs', has a history of legal troubles, including allegations of sexual assault. Despite multiple cases filed against him in various jurisdictions including Agra, Etawah, Kasganj, Farrukhabad and Rajasthan, he continues to command a considerable following, drawn to his promises of spiritual enlightenment and blessings. Born in Bahadur Nagar, Kasganj, Suraj Pal had a stint in the police department before facing legal troubles in 1997 related to allegations of sexual assault, for which he served time in prison. Upon his release, he reinvented himself as 'Saakar Vishwa Hari Baba', attracting devotees to his ashram in his ancestral village. He completed his journey from a common man to a self-proclaimed baba in a very short

time. Baba completed his studies in the village itself. 'Bhole Baba' has three brothers; the eldest brother has died, the second brother's name is Suraj Pal while the third brother is a leader in Bahujan Samaj Party and has also been the pradhan of Bahadur Nagar village 15 years ago. Bhole Baba's name is Suraj Pal. Before becoming a baba, he was a head constable in LIU. He left the job in 1999. After becoming a baba, white suit has been his identity. His wife's name is Prem Bati. Allegations have been made that many 'agents' are working for 'Bhole Baba'. He gives money to the agents to mislead people. To confuse the public, the agents say that a chakra is visible on Baba's finger. Saakar Narayan has also been accused of illegally occupying the land of the village and building an ashram. The ashram has been built by illegally occupying the inhabited

land of the village. It has also been alleged that beautiful girls live in his ashram. Apart from the girls, only special people are allowed to enter his room. Other people are not allowed to enter Bhole Baba's room. No outsider is allowed to enter his room at all. Bhole Baba has many expensive luxury cars. However, none of the luxury cars used by the Baba are registered in his name. All the cars are registered in the names of other people, especially devotees. 'Bhole Baba' has not registered anything in his name. It is said that he has also gone to jail once, but Baba's popularity has been increasing continuously for some time. Last year, former UP chief minister and Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav also visited Baba's court. Pictures of Akhilesh visiting Baba's court are going viral on social media. The main ashram of Suraj Pal, who does satsang in the name

of Bhole Baba, is in Bahadurnagar village of Pataliyali in Kasganj district, but he has many ashrams in other cities as well. One such ashram or say a house is also in Agra. He has a house in D Block of Kedar Nagar Colony of Shahganj in the Agra city in which he earlier used to live. A few years ago, a huge crowd of his devotees used to gather to see Baba, now it is just locked. Despite this, even today his disciples pass by this closed house and bow down. Meanwhile, retired DGP Vikram Singh said that many cases were already registered against the Bhole Baba who was holding the satsang. This includes a case of sexual exploitation. He said that the local administration should take action against these babas who talk about miracles as this is a legal crime. Action should be taken against these babas under the Magic Remedies Act, he added.

# UP Roadways to ensure smooth transportation to Kumbh Mela

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As part of the Yogi Adityanath government's ongoing extensive preparations for the grand Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, the UP State Road Transport Corporation is implementing a comprehensive plan to ensure smooth transportation of devotees during the mega event. This initiative includes deploying new buses, shuttle bus services, as well as constructing both permanent and temporary bus stations in order to facilitate the seamless arrival and departure of pilgrims from the Kumbh City. According to the Kumbh Mela administration, over 3.50 crore

devotees are expected to arrive in Prayagraj by UP Roadways buses during this Kumbh Mela. UP Roadways Regional Manager MK Trivedi disclosed that to transport these devotees to and from Kumbh city, roadways will operate 7,550 buses. These buses will be operated from 75 district headquarters of 112 depots in 19 roadways regions of the state. To prevent congestion within the city and ensure smooth bus operations despite the crowds, nine temporary bus stations are being constructed in the city. These temporary bus stations will be located at Nehru Park, Rajarshi Tandon Residential Complex, Saraswati Hi-Tech City, Andh Vidyalaya, Leprosy

Chauraha, Saraswati Gate, Katka, Jhusi and Durjanpur. He further added that the land acquisition process for their construction has already begun. In addition to the temporary bus stations, land is being acquired at three locations to set up charging points for 200 electric buses for urban transport service. The three chosen locations for this purpose are Phaphamau, Trivenipuram gate and Nehru Park. To facilitate the transportation of devotees and tourists arriving for the Maha Kumbh 2025, the Roadways is making arrangements both inside and outside the fair area. UP Roadways Regional

Manager M.K. Trivedi mentions that 550 shuttle buses will also operate within the Kumbh Mela area, serving the city and the fair area. These buses will be operated from 18 locations within the city. If any issues arise with these buses operating within the fair area, a bikers group will be deployed for their maintenance. Additionally, these bikers will be present in the fair area with their smart bikes. If any shuttle bus encounters a problem, the bikers group will attend to it on-site and resolve the issue. Initially, seven biker groups will be formed within the fair area, each consisting of two roadways personnel equipped with maintenance instruments.

# Lalitpur Bulk Drug Pharma Park to be equipped with world-class CIF

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bid to attract investments and promote industrial growth, the Uttar Pradesh government has initiated plans to equip the Bulk Drug Pharma Park in Lalitpur in Bundelkhand region with world-class common infrastructure facilities (CIF). The Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) has commenced preparations for the park's development. In this sequence, the UPSIDA has issued a Global Expression of Interest (EOI) for the development of the park. This strategic move aims to establish the park as a hub for manufacturing crucial components like key starting materials (KSM) and active pharmaceutical ingredi-

ents (API), pivotal for the pharmaceutical sector's advancement. The pharma park will be based on PPP (public-private participation) model and spread in 1,120 acres. The objective of the project is to develop the area to meet the needs of the country's pharma sector. The goal is to produce high-quality, affordable medicines and increase India's self-reliance in bulk drug production. To achieve this, the development of the Bulk Drug Park in Lalitpur is being promoted. According to the action plan prepared for the park's development, the path will be paved for the development of large-scale industrial townships, sectoral specific industrial parks and other industrial areas. As per

the EOI issued by the UPSIDA, a developer agency will be determined to complete all these development works. It is worth mentioning that the Lalitpur Bulk Drug Pharma Park is being connected to world-class basic infrastructure and excellent connectivity through road and rail networks, which will ensure convenient logistics and smooth transportation. The Lalitpur Bulk Drug Pharma Park will serve as the state manufacturing powerhouse for pharmaceutical products. Additionally, it will serve as an incubator for emerging pharmaceutical and bulk drug manufacturing industries in Lalitpur. It will be equipped with several world-class facilities, including standard practices like zero liquid discharge for chemical dis-

charge management. The development of the Bulk Drug Pharma Park in Lalitpur will be based on global parameters. The park will be equipped with solid waste management and incinerator facilities, a stormwater drainage network, common solvent storage systems, and solvent recovery and distillation plants. It will include steam generation with inclusive cooling towers, common warehouses, dedicated power stations and distribution systems, and facilities for raw, portable and demineralised water. Additionally, an advanced laboratory testing centre, emergency response centre, hazardous operation audit centre and a Centre of Excellence will also be developed there.

# Govt, admn responsible for Hathras incident, says AKY

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav has blamed the negligence and "dereliction of duty" by the district administration of Hathras for the tragic incident in the district. The stampede during the religious congregation in Hathras killed over 120 people on Tuesday. "The Uttar Pradesh government and administration are fully responsible for this incident. Some injured persons died due to lack of proper treatment. Standard operating procedure for large gatherings should be made to ensure that such incidents do not occur again," Akhilesh Yadav said on Wednesday. He said that the district administration failed to assess the turnout of the people in the religious gathering and subse-



**He said the district administration failed to assess the turnout of the people in the religious gathering and subsequently made no arrangements for safety and security**

quently made no arrangements for safety and security and there was insignificant deployment of police. Blaming the government for the tragic incident, the SP chief asked if against the estimate of 50,000, the turnout was over one lakh people, then what was the response of the administration? Why measures like putting up barricades to control the crowd were not taken? He said despite the huge gathering additional force was not deployed to maintain the order. SP MP, R K Chowdhary alleged that the Uttar Pradesh govern-

# Over ₹78.31 cr given by govt to 3,749 patients in 26 days for treatment

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Immediately after the code of conduct was lifted, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held a Janata Darshan at his official residence in Lucknow on June 6. During the event, he directed that victims seeking financial assistance for medical treatment be promptly aided, ensuring that funds were released to hospitals within the stipulated time frame. As a result, within just 26 days, over ₹78.31 crore was sanctioned for the treatment of 3,749 patients. Funds were released to the victims on the basis of reports on the letters of public representatives. Between June 6 to

July 1, ₹78,31,54,134 was released to 3,749 affected individuals. The amount helped people from all walks of life receive treatment for serious illnesses like kidney issues, cancer, brain hemorrhages and surgeries. Notably, as per the chief minister's instructions, Janata Darshan is held daily from 9 am to 2 pm at his official residence. From time to time, he himself attends these in Lucknow and Gorakhpur. In June, he personally listened to people's problems and directed timely solutions at the Janata Darshan held on June 6, 8, 20 and 30 at his official residence in Lucknow.

# Attire colour of Ram temple priests changes from saffron to yellow, mobile banned

PTI ■ AYODHYA

The priests at the Ram temple here have changed their attire and have been banned from carrying mobile phones to the shrine, according to officials of the temple trust. Till now the priests in the sanctum sanctorum were seen in saffron clothes. They used to wear saffron turban, saffron kurta and dhoti. The priests have now started wearing yellow (pitambari) dhoti with a kurta and turban of the same colour. According to the temple officials, the new dress code has been made effective from July 1. The new priests have been given training to tie the yellow turbans. The 'chaubandi' kurta has no

**The new priests have been given training to tie the yellow turbans.**

buttons and a thread is used to tie it. The yellow 'dhoti', a piece of cotton cloth, is tied around the waist and covers the legs till the ankles. There is a chief priest along with four assistant priests in the temple. Now each assistant priest is also accompanied by five trainee priests. Each team of priests renders its services for five hours in shifts between 3.30 am and 11 pm. The priests have also been banned from carrying mobile phones to the temple.

# MAINPURI MUSEUM, CULTURAL CENTRE Slow construction of draws minister's ire

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh's Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh expressed dissatisfaction over the sluggish pace of construction of the museum and multipurpose cultural centre in Mainpuri district. He has directed the officials that all construction work must be completed by March 2025 without fail. The newly-constructed Natural Science Museum building needs installation of a gas suppression system by July 15 of this month, as instructed by the tourism minister. He highlighted that under the guidance of the Culture Directorate of Uttar Pradesh, construction projects are ongoing in various districts. A review meeting has fixed deadlines for completion of all construction works, ensuring timely delivery for public benefit. The responsible agencies have been directed to ensure quality completion of these

projects within stipulated timelines, emphasising adherence to high standards. Regarding the management of the State Buddhist Museum in Gorakhpur, the minister confirmed that all infrastructure facilities have been completed. He further directed the implementation of sound systems to ensure high-quality performance and provided guidelines for a five-year warranty. Additionally, in Balrampur district, efforts are underway to conserve Tharu tribal culture through a newly built museum in Emilia Koder or its vicinity. Instructions have been given for finalising internal embellishments and overseeing the handover process. Maintenance and restoration work for the open stage at Ramgarh Tal in Gorakhpur have also been successfully concluded, with directives issued for the submission of utilisation certificates and closure reports as per specified formats.

# JD(U) expresses grief over Hathras deaths

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

President of Uttar Pradesh unit of Janata Dal (United), Anoop Singh Patel, expressed deep grief over the death of hundreds of people, including women and children, in a stampede at the satsang of Bhole Baba in Phulrai village of Sikandrarao in Hathras district on Tuesday. Expressing condolences to the deceased, he demanded that the government make arrangements for the proper treatment of those injured in the stampede. Describing the incident as unfortunate, Patel said that the local administration was responsible for it. He demanded that the Uttar Pradesh government provide financial assistance of Rs 50 lakh to the families of the deceased and Rs 5 lakh to the injured and take strict action against those involved in the incident by conducting a thorough investigation. He said that a delegation of Janata Dal (United) Aligarh and Agra division leaders would visit the spot in Hathras district, meet the local people and submit a report to the state leadership.



# Opp walkout during Modi reply a disgrace: Dhankhar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



Summing up the proceedings of the session, the chairman said while there was active participation from both the treasury as well as opposition benches, he was constrained to make some observations that "weighed heavily on my mind over the disruptions that marred the proceedings".

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

The 264th session of the Upper House began with President Droupadi Murmu's address to both houses of Parliament, which the chairman described as "an important tradition that set the tone and outlined the government's agenda". The House also witnessed Modi introducing his new council of ministers after he was sworn-in as the prime minister for the third consecutive term.

# Putin, envoys condole devotees' deaths in Hathras stampede

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday expressed condolences over the stampede at a religious congregation in Uttar Pradesh in which 121 people were killed. Several envoys here including Germany, China, France and Israel also mourned the deaths. "President of #Russia Vladimir Putin sent a condolence message to President of #India Droupadi Murmu & Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi over the tragic stampede in #UttarPradesh: Kindly accept the most sincere condolences over the tragic accident in Uttar Pradesh," the Russian Embassy in India said in a social media post.

The stampede took place on Tuesday at Phulrai village in Sikandra Rao area of the Hathras district of Uttar Pradesh. The victims were part of the crowd of thousands that had gathered near Phulrai village in the Sikandraru area for the 'satsang' by religious a preacher. Meanwhile, envoys of several countries, including Germany, France, China and Israel have mourned the loss of lives in a stampede in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras and extended condolences to the victims' families. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in a social media post on Tuesday had said he was deeply distressed by the tragic incident.



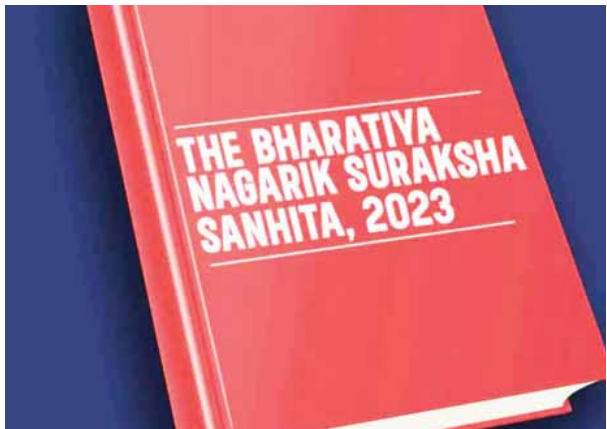
known as Jagat Guru Saakar Vishwahi's Bhole Baba. German envoy Philipp Ackermann in a post on Tuesday evening offered condolences to the bereaved families. Pray for the speedy recovery of the injured," he wrote on the social media platform. The stampede at a religious congregation killed 121 people as devotees suffocated to their deaths and bodies piled atop each other in the worst such tragedy in recent years. The incident took place as the devotees -- most of them women -- headed home after a 'satsang' in the Hathras district's Phulrai village. The 'satsang' was conducted by Baba Narayan Hari, who is also

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

# New law makes sexual offences gender neutral

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A police officer can detain a person who resists or disregards lawful directions to prevent a cognisable offence, according to the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) which came into effect on Monday. Also, the newly enacted Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, which replaces the British-era Indian Penal Code, has made sexual offences "gender neutral" for the victim and the perpetrator, according to official documents.



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

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

# BJP flays Opposition MPs for RS walkout

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Wednesday flayed the opposition members for staging a walkout during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech in the Rajya Sabha and said their intention was to only create ruckus in the House as they did not have the "strength" to hear the truth. The opposition parties' INDIA bloc, led by the Congress, staged a walkout of the Rajya Sabha after the Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge was not allowed to intervene during Prime Minister Modi's reply on the motion thanking President Droupadi Murmu for her address to the joint sitting of Parliament.



"The opposition is demoralised, aimless and anarchic due to its defeat (in the Lok Sabha polls) for the third time in a row. It is disrespecting our constitutional values and is busy in conspiracy to hide its defeat," BJP chief and Leader of the Rajya Sabha JP Nadda said in a social media post. "These negative efforts by them cannot hinder the NDA government's journey towards achieving its goal of building a 'developed India,'" he added. Nadda said that Prime Minister Modi paved the way for building a "developed India" in the

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

# India-Mongolia joint military exercise to defence boost ties

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



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

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

# Cabinet panels on security, economy, political affairs formed

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



# First Indian woman Naval officer scales Mt Kilimanjaro

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

# Congress predicts fall of Modi Govt any time

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Innocent lives lost

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

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



The incident exposes many disturbing facts, ranging from the negligence of the administration to the unchecked influence of godmen over innocent people. Bhole Baba is reportedly absconding. First of all, the number of attendees far exceeded the permitted limit. The chief sewadar (organizer) of Baba's program estimated an attendance of around 80,000 people, but the actual number was significantly higher. Indeed, this breach of the permitted

capacity likely exacerbated the situation, leading to overcrowding in a venue that was inadequate. Now, after this horrific incident, the government is in damage control mode. Compensation for the deceased has been announced, and the Chief Minister is expected to visit Hathras. Additionally, a team has been set up to investigate the cause of the incident. However, in all probability nothing will change and that this incident will soon be forgotten like many before. As we mourn the loss of 121 lives and support the injured and their families, it is imperative to learn from this tragedy and implement effective measures to prevent such incidents in the future. We must prioritise safety, preparedness, and responsible management to ensure the safety of the people. Moreover, shouldn't there be a check on the activities of mushrooming godmen who exploit people's faith and endanger their lives? Many such godmen become so powerful that they are able to dictate terms to the administration and have considerable political clout which gives them power. However, the lack of awareness among people and their sense of helplessness contribute to the proliferation of these godmen who thrive on the ignorance and innocence of the people.

### PICTALK



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

# Pandemonium in Parliament

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



KALYANI SHANKAR

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### CYBERCRIME ON THE RISE

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

Ganpathi Bhat | Akola

### RAHUL GANDHI MUST INTROSPECT

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

### Tragedy strikes Hathras



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

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

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

### CONCERNS ON NEW CRIMINAL LAWS

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

A G Rajmohan | Anantapur  
Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

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



SRINIVASCHARY T

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



## FIRST COLUMN

## UNDERSTANDING THE DIVINE HAND

Recognise and reciprocate God's boundless efforts by embracing dharma



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

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

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

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



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

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

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



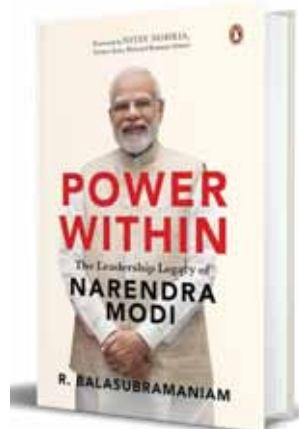
MADHU SEN

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## Wake-up call against rising plastic pollution



SRIRAJ KOTA

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



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



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

for 60 per cent of the planet's mismanaged plastic waste. With a population of more than 1.44 billion, India generates 26,000 tonnes of plastic waste every day. This is the equivalent of approximately 26,000 small cars.

Unfortunately, only 8 per cent of this plastic is recycled. The Swiss report also states that India is poised to release 391,879 tonnes of microplastic into water bodies by the end of 2024. Second only to China. With abysmal conditions such as these, India's grip on plastic pollution can at best be described as feeble. The efforts to rein in the runaway plastic pollution have to begin at the grassroots level.

The International Plastic Bag Free Day focuses on the same by increasing awareness about the harmful impact of plastic bag usage and pollution. Additionally, stress is also laid on encouraging individuals, businesses, and organisations to adopt sustainable alternatives for SUP products. The special day urges governments across the world to step up policy changes and introduce radical systemic solutions to reduce plastic use and waste.

The current statistics of plastic pollution in India demand serious and innovative solutions that look beyond the traditional answers such as simple unsorted recycling of plastic, landfilling or co-processing.

The need of the hour is ultra-innovative remedies that deliver scalable and sustainable results in

record time. While India continues to construct a circular economy that reduces plastic waste, the focus must now be firmly shifted to handling the plastic pollution problem on large scale basis. As a part of this India must set up large-scale waste sorting facilities that can use artificial intelligence-based algorithms to automatically sift through various types of plastic waste and identify the same.

This as compared to traditional recycling methods can speed up the process of recycling and therefore increase the quantum of plastic recycled at the facility in one shift. This in turn can ensure that the facility can sort and recycle an entire district's monthly plastic waste within a week. An example in this regard is Sweden's plastic waste sorting facility called Site Zero which can handle up to 200,000 tonnes of plastic packaging every year, more than any other facility in the world, and enough to deal with the whole country's household plastic packaging waste. Similarly, microplastic pollution in water is a major concern.

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

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

With the aid of science, and artificial intelligence (AI) software the possibilities of innovative plastic pollution combat options are endless. AI aided by satellite support for instance can help India clean up its seas on a large-scale manner, special software-driven clean-up technologies can dredge up decades of plastic and other pollutants thereby providing a chance of survival for the delicate marine life. Plastic is in our everyday life and diet as well.

A World Wildlife Fund study has revealed that an average human being ingests 5 gm of plastic every week. It is time to cut the growing footprint of this harmful substance to size in the interests of mankind and the environment. So next time we reach for that plastic bag, let us not.

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

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

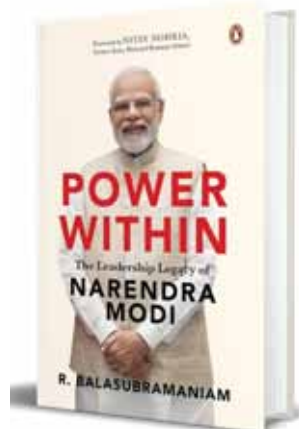
A new book, 'Power Within: The Leadership Legacy of Narendra Modi,' offers a profound examination of Modi's leadership journey

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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









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

PTI ■ SAARBRUCKEN, (GERMANY)

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



He was exempted from last week's National Inter-State Championships, which was a mandatory event for all Indian athletes, by the Athletics Federation Of India. The AFI said the relaxation was given to him due to the

short turnaround time between the domestic event and the Diamond League on July 7. "We have made it very clear that every athlete will compete in India at the Inter-State Championships," AFI president Adille Sumariwalla

had said, "But Paris Diamond League is clashing with the Inter-State Championships and we feel that Paris Diamond League will be very important for him (Neeraj) before the Olympic Games therefore he is the only guy who has been

given special permission to participate in the Federation Cup," he added. However, Chopra had indicated last month that his schedule will be decided according to the state of his body. "We had a discussion that I would play in the

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

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

AP ■ MUNICH



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

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

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

AP ■ SANTA CLARA (US)



### No Messi in Argentina's Olympic soccer squad

AP ■ BUENOS AIRES

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

AP ■ LEIPZIG (GERMANY)

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



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

goal, that was the last chance that we had," the German coach said. It was Gunok's fourth big save of the game, including a one-on-one situation against Marko Arnautovic. It meant Merih Demiral's two goals were enough to send Turkey through to a quarterfinal against the Netherlands in Berlin's Olympiastadion on Saturday.

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

PTI ■ BELLARY

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



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

their potential. "I am grateful to be a part of such a programme. Mizuho has been generous in their donations, which has allowed us to participate in various competitions globally, buy heating plant and other various training equipment for the pool," she said. Parth Jindal, Founder of IIS,

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

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

AP ■ LONDON

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

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



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

brackets within the first 30 hours of action at Wimbledon this year - although others did so without playing a point. Earlier Tuesday, Andy Murray pulled out of singles because he

decided he wasn't able to compete a little more than a week after having surgery to remove a cyst from his spine. His final appearance at Wimbledon, which he won in 2013 and 2016, will

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

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

