



OPINION 6  
NUANCED SHIFT IN  
PARLIAMENTARY CONDUCT

WORLD 9  
ISRAEL CONDUCTS MILITARY  
OPERATION IN WEST BANK

MONEY 10  
NIFTY SCALES NEW  
LIFETIME HIGH

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## Scrapping NEET-UG not rational: Centre to SC



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the growing clamour for cancellation of the controversy-ridden NEET-UG, 2024 exam over alleged malpractices, the Ministry of Education and the National Testing Agency told the Supreme Court on Friday that scrapping it would be "counter productive", not rational and "seriously jeopardise" lakhs of honest candidates in the absence of proof of large-scale breach of confidentiality. The Ministry and the NTA said there was no proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in the examination which was taken by over 23 lakh candidates at 4,750 centres in 571 cities.

### NEET-PG 2024 exam to be held on August 11

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

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

Union Education Ministry have been at the centre of media debates and protests by students and political parties over alleged large-scale malpractices ranging from question paper leak to impersonation in the test held on May 5. In its affidavit, the Ministry said invalidating the exam would "seriously jeopardise" the efforts of lakhs of honest candidates who appeared in the exam. In the absence of proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in the examination, it argued that it would not be rational to take the step. This is the first time that the Centre is placing its stand on holding a retest of NEET-UG for all 24 lakh candidates on record. The Ministry has only acknowledged that there were "instances of irregularities, cheating, impersonation, malpractices" during the conduct of NEET-UG. There is no mention of a paper leak. It goes on to state further that "in the absence of any proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in a pan-India examination it would not be rational to scrap the entire examination." Continued on Page 8

## Rishi Sunak Exits 10 Downing Street

PTI ■ LONDON

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



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

### Modi congratulates Starmer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Conservative Party leader Rishi Sunak for his admirable leadership of the United Kingdom and his active contribution to deepen the ties between India and the UK during his term in office. "Best wishes to you and your family for the future," he said. Congratulating him, Modi said, "Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Keir Starmer on the remarkable victory in the UK general elections..." Continued on Page 8



### Fresh trouble for Mahua over remarks against NCW chairperson

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken suo moto cognisance of the alleged derogatory remark made by TMC MP Mahua Moitra against its chairperson Rekha Sharma and sought an FIR against her. This came a day after the TMC, commenting on a video posted on X showing the NCW chairperson's arrival at the site of a stampede that recently took place in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, wrote, "She is too busy holding up her boss's pajamas". Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh Government's Special Investigation Team probing the Hathras stampede has recorded statements of 90 people so far. SIT chief Anupam Kulshrestha said on Friday, Kulshrestha, also the Additional Director General of Police (Agra Zone), is leading the three-member SIT team. Continued on Page 8

## J&K Assembly elections likely after Amarnath Yatra



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAMMU

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

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

Union Ministers and BJP national leaders are expected to visit the State. The party will also launch a mass contact programme with the people in the State. The Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was dissolved in November 2018 ahead of the revocation of the State's Special Status in August 2019. The BJP-led Government scrapped Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 and bifurcated the State into two Union Territories. There have been demands from political parties for early Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and restoration of Statehood. Moreover, during a recent visit to Kashmir, the Prime Minister stated that preparations for elections had begun and that J&K would soon have its own Government. The revision of electoral rolls will start in J&K on July 25 and culminate on August 20, according to the EC. "After the exercise is over, the EC may announce holding of assembly polls in the UT any time," a poll official said. The five LS seats in J&K — the first major electoral exercise post Article 370 abrogation — recorded voter turnout of 58.58 per cent, the highest in the last 35 years. Continued on Page 8

## Jailed MPs Amritpal, Rashid on parole take oath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid

security personnel Friday morning. The MPs-elect took oath in the chamber of the Lok Sabha Speaker after completing formalities, a source said. Singh, 31, and Rashid, 56, won the recent Lok Sabha elections from Khadoor Sahib in Punjab and Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir, respectively, as Independents while being incarcerated. They could not take oath as members of the 18th Lok Sabha on June 24 and 25 along with the other winning candidates. For taking oath, Rashid was granted a two-hour custody parole, excluding the travel time from Tihar to Parliament,

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

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ THRISSUR (KERALA)

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

## Pig culling ordered to contain African Swine fever in Thrissur

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



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

one-kilometre radius of the affected farm has been declared a disease-affected area, and the area within the 10-kilometre radius has been declared a disease surveillance area. "The transportation of pork from the affected areas, the operation of such farms, and the movement of pigs, pork, and feed from the affected areas to other parts of the district, as well as the movement of these items from other areas into the affected area, have been prohibited until further orders," the release said. Continued on Page 8

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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



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

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

childhood at Vrindavan, where he and his mischievous friends would often steal the delicious fruits from orchards. Pritansu Priyadarsini Biswal from Bhubaneswar in Odisha was in praise for the ISKCON temple's concept of offering mangoes to the Lord Jagannath. "This celebration at the ISKCON temple in Dwarka not only honours the divine but also brings together the community in a shared experience of devotion, cultural heritage, and the simple joy of enjoying mangoes," she said. Continued on Page 8

181ST BOARD MEETING

LDA expands jurisdiction, approves major projects



Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob presiding over LDA Board meeting on Friday

Pioneer

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob presided over the 181st meeting of Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) Board on Friday. LDA Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi, Municipal Commissioner Inderjeet Singh, and LDA Secretary Vivek Srivastava were also present. Forty proposals were tabled at the meeting and were passed by the members. The title of the LDA will remain unchanged

until further notice, but its jurisdiction has been expanded from 1,000 square kilometres to 2,500 square kilometres. The entire Lucknow district, along with certain tehsils and the suburbs of Barabanki district, will now be part of the development authority. The board resolved that submitting a layout plan for approval would now incur a higher cost. Applicants will need to pay 20% more than previously, although stamp duty will be reduced by 12%. Furthermore, the board has decided to permit individuals owning land measuring between 300 square metres and 2,000 square metres to construct small apartments up to three floors, with the ground floor reserved exclusively for parking. Several new development projects were approved, including the IT City and Wellness City on Sultanpur Road, Mohan

Road City Educational City, and Pradhanda Nagar Hi-Tech City. A policy will be formulated to ensure the decent resettlement of Akbarnagar residents and address their relocation issues. A dedicated team led by the LDA vice-chairman will oversee this initiative. Additionally, the board decided to revoke a private entrepreneur's licence for developing a 100-acre green belt. Prices of 385 flats in the Kanpur Road housing scheme and Jankipuram Extension will be reduced by 12%. Land will be allocated to Lucknow Electricity Supply Administration (LESA) for constructing a power house in Ashiyana (Sector G). The beautification of city ponds was also approved, along with reducing prices by Rs 4 lakh to 10 lakh for flats in Rashmilok, Anubhuti, and Srijan apartments in Ashiyana. He

Woman alleges stalking, harassment by doctor

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A doctor has been accused of stalking a young woman whom he coerced into marrying him, resorting to tactics to defame her in society after she refused. As per allegations, the accused used artificial intelligence and other modern gadgets to manipulate her photos, and threatened her father and brother with dire consequences if they intervened. The accused is reported to be employed at a prominent private hospital in the city. According to the victim's father, the accused initially befriended the girl and obtained her photos, documents, and family pictures. "He then resorted to harassment tactics. When I learned about this, I confronted him and asked him to stop. My son also objected to his father's actions and urged him to stop harassing the victim. However, he continued to use AI and other gadgets, including sending threatening voice messages to my son, warning of severe consequences. He threatened to sabotage the victim's marriage prospects," the father of the victim alleged. He further stated that the accused constantly monitored his daughter's activities and their family. "He gathered information through surveillance or spying whenever we discussed the victim's marriage, often sabotaging negotiations with false information about the girl. He demanded money to stop his harassment," he claimed. The complainant added that the accused had been stalking the victim for several months. "He has been pursuing her relentlessly for months. He

threatened to harm her appearance to the extent that she could not show her face in society," he alleged. The complainant said she attempted to seek relief from the accused's family, but they were uncooperative. "The accused boasted of his criminal intentions, his association with criminals, and his criminal history, claiming he had experience handling such cases and was confident of evading consequences if we filed a complaint," the complainant alleged. Police have registered a case under relevant sections of the Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita (Indian Penal Code) and initiated an investigation.

**YOUTH HELD FOR VANDALISING AMBEDKAR STATUE**  
An incident of vandalism involving the statue of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar surfaced in Gosainganj, causing outrage among the followers of the father of the Indian Constitution. Upon learning of the incident, villagers gathered at the site and condemned the actions of anti-social elements aimed at creating social disharmony in the area. They raised slogans against the perpetrators and their malicious intentions. In response to the escalating tension, police swiftly registered a case and apprehended the accused youth. Inspector Brajesh Tripathi said that Harishchandra, a resident of Mahurakala, alerted the police after discovering that a finger of the Ambedkar statue in the village had been broken on Thursday morning. The news quickly spread across the village, prompting several villagers to assemble at the

scene. Police officers arrived promptly, repaired the damaged statue, and proceeded to arrest Anuj Verma of the village in connection with the incident. As a precautionary measure, police forces have been deployed in the village. Meanwhile, thieves had a field day during the last 24 days, as eight incidents of theft took place in Nigohan police station area. The police have yet to crack any of the cases, making the villagers fume. The irate villagers accused the police of inadequate patrolling and formed groups themselves to guard the village. The villagers said that the cops did not do foot patrolling at night in the area, which emboldened the thieves. They added that a night vigil by the police might have prevented the thefts. On Tuesday night, thieves broke into the house of school manager Shail Vajpayee and farmer Sajjanlal in Barwalia village. On June 10 night, theft was committed in the houses of farmer Hardeh Kumar, mason Sunil alias Pappu Sharma, and kash trader Rampal Rawat of Kshumaur village. On June 30 night, theft took place in the houses of farmers Sonu Kashyap and Shyamal in Kshumaur. Jewellery and cash worth lakhs of rupees were stolen from the house of farmer Sunil Pandey in Vajpayee Kheda village. Assistant Commissioner of Police Radha Raman Singh said that surveillance and crime teams had been set up to work out all the cases. "Soon, the thieves will be caught. Patrolling has also been increased in rural areas, and villagers have also been urged to remain vigilant," he added.

Land fraud: First 'zero FIR' registered

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant development, the Hazratganj police registered a 'zero FIR' on Friday following a complaint by Sarla, the wife of a judge from Gwalior, regarding an alleged land fraud. 'Zero FIR' refers to an FIR registered irrespective of jurisdiction. It was the first of its kind in Lucknow. Sarla accused individuals associated with Preeti Nagar Housing Society in Bijnor of deceiving her into purchasing land that belongs to the state government. According to Sarla, she was contacted at her residence in Butler Palace and convinced by the sellers, including the society secretary, that they possessed legal rights to sell the land as part of their holdings. However, the land was later reclaimed by the state government, exposing the fraudulent transaction. Sarla filed a formal complaint

THE ACCUSED ALLEGED THAT INDIVIDUALS ASSOCIATED WITH PREETI NAGAR HOUSING SOCIETY IN BIJNOR DECEIVED HER INTO PURCHASING LAND THAT BELONGS TO THE STATE GOVT at Vishwavidhyalay police station in Gwalior, Madhya Pradesh. The named suspects in her complaint include Surya Pal (secretary of Preeti Nagar Housing Society), Naem Ansari aka Naem Ahmad, Ravesh Srivastava (advocate), Devendra Kumar Gupta from Husinganj, and Iftikhar Ali (draft writer). Currently, the police are actively investigating the case to ascertain the facts and legal implications surrounding the alleged land fraud.

**CLASSIFIEDS**

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Arshad Ahmad Khan to Arshad Ahmad S/o Irshad Ahmad R/o 205/188, Dargah road, Jajmau Kanpur Nagar -10. In future I would be known & recognise by this name only.

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NOTICE

**NOTICE**  
This is to inform that Original sale deed (chain deed) which was duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Nawabganj, Barabanki bearing document no. 1388, dated 06.05.1988 & document no. 1723, dated 29.06.1999, regarding the property Gata No. 688min, Situated at Village Obrai, Pargana & Tehsil Nawabganj, District Barabanki were lost with my client namely Jatin Infradevelopers Private Limited at C.P. 10, Vijayant Khand, Gomti Nagar, City Lucknow on 02.07.2024. If any person has any claim or objection over it, kindly inform within 15 days from the date of publication of this notice and after the completion of above time period, no claim of any kind will be considered. B.N. Tripathi Advocate, Res: C-15, Nehru Vihar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow, Mob: 9336127853

NOTICE

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
It is to inform to public at large that Sri Nishibhu Kumar Sharma son of Sri Hari Vishnu Dayal & Smt. Lata Sharma wife of Sri Nishibhu Kumar Sharma have purchased Plot No. 4372, measuring area 1888.42 Sq.ft., situated at Mohalla/Village-Saleh Nagar, Ward-Shareda Nagar, Lucknow from Smt. Gomma Yadav wife of Sri Nand Lal Singh Yadav and became owners of the said property. They had lost original sale deed dated 15-09-2005 executed by Sri Sudhiti Lal son of Late Ram Prasad in favour of Sri Mehndi Hasan son of Mohammad & original sale deed dated 25-07-2006 executed by Sri Mehndi Hasan son of Mohammad in favour of Sri Laxmi Dutt Bhatt son of Sri Ghanshyam Bhatt and original sale deed 02-04-2014 executed by Sri Laxmi Dutt Bhatt son of Sri Ghanshyam Bhatt in favour of Sri Dheeraj Shukla son of Sri Kaushal Kishore Shukla.  
The said owners have availed the loan facility from Indian Bank, Rajni Khand Branch, Lucknow against the mortgage of above mentioned property as security. Further, they had given a declaration to the bank that we have absolute right and interest over the said property and the same is free from all types of encumbrances & disputes, whatsoever. In view of the above any person or body claiming to have any right and interest over the above mentioned property is put to notice to inform the bank about the same within a period of 07 days from the date of publication of this notice otherwise the Bank shall not be liable for any loss, damages and injury to such a person or body. Branch Manager Mobile: 945247133

**CLASSIFIEDS**

NOTICE

I Army No. 21001508F Rank NK Name P. Shiva Shankar Unit 81 Field My Service Record by Mistake Mother Name Kuruvamma & D. O. B. 21-07-1977 which wrong in correct name Pujari Kuruvamma & D.O.B. 01-01-1977 in all purpose.

NOTICE

I Army No. 21001508F Rank NK Name P. Shiva Shankar Unit 81 Field My Service Record by Mistake Father Name Chinnani Ranjan which wrong in Correct Name Pujari Chinnai Ranjan in all Furture purpose.

NOTICE

informed to the general public I. Educational Record By mistake my Name EASHAN SRIVASTAVA & Date of Birth 03/04/2004 is Wrong. Correct Name ISHAN SRIVASTAVA & Date of Birth 03/04/2006. For all future purposes. It should be entered. ISHAN SRIVASTAVA S/o Sri SACHIN SRIVASTAVA R/o 171 Deviganj, Fatehpur (UP) 212601

NOTICE

In highschool marksheet of my daughter Riya Kanaujia, 2018 Enrollment No.5108619, my name has wrongly been mentioned as Rakesh Kumar Kanaujia. My correct name is Rakesh Kumar Kanaujia and I should be known and identified by this name in future. Rakesh Kumar Kanaujia, 125 D/2 Anand Nagar, Jagaiपुरwa, Kanpur Nagar.

NOTICE

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**  
**CHANGE OF NAME**  
I, Shweta Kumari D/o Bhuwaneshwar Tiwary R/o H.No-64A Bandhawa/8 Peernagar Shastrri-Nagar Ghazipur Uttar-Pradesh-233001 changed my name to Shweta Tiwary Mishra. PD(573)A

I, Shailesh Prasad S/o Keshav Prasad R/o E-53, Face-2 Prem Chandra-Nagar Colony Pandeypur Varanasi-Cantt Uttar Pradesh-221002 changed my name to Shailesh Rai. PD(574)A  
06-9X4 CLA-LKN

Kids shun begging, embrace education

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

No sooner does one step into the Murlipura primary school in Bakshi-Ka-Talab, a collective 'Good Morning, Ma'am' echoes in the air. The sight of students jumping up and down enthusiastically as they greet you makes it hard to believe that just a few months ago, they were begging on the streets. Now, they hold high aspirations for their future. These children have traded begging bowls for books and pencils and are now scripting their own success stories. Of the 99 students currently enrolled in the school, 35 come from the Nat (acrobats) community and the beggar community, brought to the school by social organisations and the efforts of the teachers to save them from the clutches of the begging profession. Eleven-year-old Mahendra, a student of Class III, introduces himself in fluent English. Though slightly nervous, he answers all questions properly and with confidence. "My

name is Mahendra," he says. Talking about his family, he explains that his father rears buffaloes while his mother begs on the streets. "I also used to beg at nearby crossings but no longer do so. I tell my mother not to beg, but she says that my father does not earn enough. My mother begs because she cannot find a job, but she always encourages us to go to school everyday," he says. He narrates how people from a particular organisation came to their house and told his family to send him to school, leading to his admission. "I find studies easy, and my favourite subject is mathematics. I enjoy playing at school and doing my homework at home. I aspire to be a policeman," he adds. Twelve-year-old Naina, a student of Class IV, admits that she used to beg before joining the school. "My father is disabled, and my mother is a housewife. After an organisation approached my mother, stressing the importance of my education, she got us admitted to this school," Naina explains.

She loves coming to school and responds with a big smile when asked what she wants to become when she grows up. "I want to be a dancer," she says with a dreamy look in her eyes. Eight-year-old Simran, who is in Class IV, promptly says "Yes, Ma'am" when asked if she used to beg on the streets. "My mother is a housewife, and my father is a rickshaw-puller. They used to tell me to beg, but now they don't force me. I love mathematics and enjoy my classes," she says. Aspiring to be a doctor, Simran loves the sights and sounds of the school. Nine-year-old Tauheen said that he did not like begging and now loves studying since gaining admission to a government school. "My father works in a private company while my mother still begs, but I aspire to be a doctor," he says. Renu Verma, the principal of the school, has high hopes for these children. She believes that if they continue studying diligently, they will achieve great heights. "Our school goes up to Class V, but we tell their parents to

get them admitted to government schools for Classes 6-8 where no fees are charged, and they will receive free books," she said. She added that there is no financial burden on these students if they attend school, and they also receive a midday meal, which is an added attraction. However, she admitted that hygiene is a big concern, and sometimes these children are told to bathe at school. "Additionally, with the admission of these students, some parents of children from better-off families disapprove, leading to withdrawals from the school," she said. However, there is also a darker side to the story. Sources from the Basic Education department said that many of the children from the beggar community enrolled in the class do not attend regularly. "This happens even after the parents receive a Direct Benefit Transfer of Rs 1,200 in their accounts. The parents want their children to continue begging and leave their smaller children at the school, using it as a crèche while they beg," one source explained.

CITYBRIEFS

**CM TO INAUGURATE MANGO FESTIVAL**  
District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar held a meeting regarding the Mango Festival-2024 on Friday. He said the festival, to be organised at Avadh Shilp Gram from July 12 to 14, would be inaugurated by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The district magistrate said that all arrangements should be ensured by the police for security of the premises and traffic and parking arrangements. The DM said that arrangements for tankers for drinking water should be ensured by Jal Nigam.

500 participants, each contributing to discussions on diplomacy and global issues.  
**LULU MALL SALE**  
Lulu Mall has started a unique sale called 'Lulu on Sale' where in flat 50% discount will be available on more than 300 brands. This sale, which started on July 4, will end by July 7. On July 6, customers will also be given extended shopping hours. There is up to 50% discount on national and international brands at the mall. Futura Lulu Connect, Lulu Fashion also has a lot to offer to customers. Lulu Mall GM Sameer Verma said the sale was aimed at giving customers the gift of special offers.

**MA PROGRAMME RECHRISTENED**  
The Institute of Women's Studies at Lucknow University has announced the renaming of its MA in Women Studies programme to MA in Women and Gender Studies. "This change reflects the evolving academic landscape and our commitment to inclusivity and comprehensive education. The aim is to provide students with a deeper understanding of gender relations, intersectionality, and the diverse experiences of individuals across the gender spectrum," LU spokesperson Durgesh Srivastava said.

Minister for safe operation of buses during Shravan

**Lucknow (PNS):** Minister of State for Transport (Independent Charge) Daya Shankar Singh has directed officials of the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation (UPSRTC) to prepare for the safe operation of buses during the upcoming Kanwar Yatra in the month of Shravan beginning July 22. "During the Kanwar Yatra (from July 22 to August 19), a large number of devotees travel to offer prayers at the famous temples of Lord Shiva. Only clean and fit buses should be operated during this period. Special attention should be given to passenger facilities at bus stations, as well as cleanliness in the station premises and seating areas," he said. The minister specified that routes in Agra, Bareilly, Moradabad, Meerut, Ghaziabad, Aligarh, and Saharanpur areas should be prepared for operation, as these witness significant travel by Lord Shiva devotees. He also issued instructions for additional buses to be deployed from Lucknow, Ayodhya, and Gorakhpur to Varanasi and Prayagraj, considering the high number of pilgrims visiting these cities. "It is important to ensure there is no inconvenience to the movement of pilgrims," he added. Singh further directed

the establishment of a 24-hour functional control room at the regional headquarters level to assist the pilgrims. He stressed the implementation of breathalyser tests for bus drivers throughout the month of Shravan.

**King George's Medical University U.P., Lucknow-226003**  
Finance & Accounts Office  
Ph: 91-0522-2257540 Fax: 91-0522-2257539, Website: www.kgmu.org  
Notice No.: 952/PFO/0-tender/2024 Date: 05.07.2024  
**E-Tender Inviting Notice**  
Online bid are invited under two e-bid systems for rate contract of Primary & Secondary Antibiotics Kit for Dept of Pathology from the original manufacturers or their authorized Indian Agents on the terms & conditions as per tender document. Tender will be available on e-portal <https://etender.up.nic.in>.

**कार्यालय नगर निगम, देहरादून**  
(दस्तावेज-0135-2177074 फ़ोन-0135-2651060)  
website-www.nagarnigamdehradun.com, Email-nagarnigam.dnd@gmail.com  
पत्रांक-2073 / भूमि-2024/25 दिनांक 05.07.2024  
**सार्वजनिक निविदा सूचना**  
नगर निगम क्षेत्रान्तर्गत 100 बार्डों में स्थित विद्युत पोल जो जैसे हे जहाँ हे उसी स्थिति में पोल व्योरक के माध्यम से विज्ञापन प्रदर्शित करने हेतु अनुबन्ध की तिथि से कुल 2 वर्ष हेतु सार्वजनिक निविदा सूचना प्रकाशन की तिथि से दिनांक 23.07.2024 की अपरान्ह 2.00 बजे तक पोल व्योरक विज्ञापन की ई 0 निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती है-  
**पोल व्योरक स्थल का विवरण कुल पोल निगम द्वारा आरक्षित धनराशि**

निविदा प्रपत्र के अनुसार	35,000	2,61,20,500
निविदा के साथ निविदा सूचना प्रपत्र में अंकित निविदा धनराशि की 10 प्रतिशत धनराशि रु 26,12,050/- की सी०डी०आर०/एफ०डी०आर० के रूप में एवं निर्धारित निविदा फार्म शुल्क का डिमांड ड्राफ्ट जो नगर निगम देहरादून के नाम प्लेज होगी एवं निविदा फार्म में अंकित अन्य तकनीकी दस्तावेजों को दिनांक 22.07.2024 की सांय 4.00 बजे तक मूल में निगम कार्यालय में जमा कराना अनिवार्य होगा। दिनांक 22.07.2024 तक दस्तावेज मूल में निगम कार्यालय में जमा न किये जाने पर निविदादाता को असफल माना जायेगा। निविदादाता दिनांक 23.07.2024 को अपरान्ह 2.00 बजे तक ई०निविदा हेतु उत्तराखण्ड शासन की ई० टेंडर वेबसाईट <a href="http://www.uktender.gov.in">www.uktender.gov.in</a> पर अपलोड करना सुनिश्चित करें। निविदा दिनांक 23.07.2024 सांय 4.00 बजे गठित निविदा समिति के सम्मम खोली जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र एवं शर्तें नगर निगम देहरादून की वेबसाईट <a href="http://www.nagarnigamdehradun.com">www.nagarnigamdehradun.com</a> पर भी उपलब्ध है नगर आयुक्त, नगर निगम, देहरादून		

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**E.C. COM 9 OF 2023**  
IN THE HIGH COURT AT CALCUTTA  
ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION  
Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited -Versus- Petitioner/Award Holder  
GOPAL AND ORS Respondents/Judgment Debtors  
To  
1. Gopal, S/o. Vinod Kumar E-231 World Bank Colony Barra, Kanpur Nagar Uttar Pradesh-208027  
2. Anand Sachan S/o Vinod Sachan, 231 World Bank Colony, Priya Hospital, E Barra, Kanpur Nagar Uttar Pradesh-208027  
3. Kamal Jeet Sachan S/o Chotta Lal Sajeli, Kanpur Nagar, Uttar Pradesh-208001  
This is to put to your notice that an Execution application has been filed against the above named Addressees, wherein the award holder has sought for execution of an arbitral award dated 30th October 2020. In the said execution application the award holder has filed an application wherein the following prayers have been asked for in brief:  
a) Judgment debtors be directed to file their individual affidavit of assets in terms of Form 16A Appendix C of the Civil Procedure Code 1908  
b) Judgment debtors be orally examined  
c) Injunction restraining the Judgment-debtors whether by himself or by his men, servants, agents and assigns from in any manner dealing with, disposing of, alienating encumbering or transferring any of their assets or properties whether movable or immovable until full and final satisfaction of the said award as well as injunction on the hypothecated asset  
d) A fit and proper Receiver be appointed to take physical possession of the hypothecated Asset and cause sale of the same and to make over such sale proceeds to satisfy the arbitral award  
e) Judgment Debtors be detained in civil prison for disobedience of any order passed by the Court;  
f) Notice of show cause under Order XXII rule 40(1) of the CPC 1908, order of release only on payment of security  
Please note that the matter will appear on 29th July 2024 before Hon'ble Justice Sabyasachi Bhattacharyya when you should be present in Court or be duly represented by your respective advocates. Please note that in your absence appropriate orders will be passed  
**SINHA AND COMPANY ADVOCATES**  
5, KIRAN SHANKAR ROY ROAD KOLKATA-700001.  
CON: +9133-2210-1617/1625

**कार्यालय नगर निगम, देहरादून**  
**सार्वजनिक निविदा सूचना**  
नगर निगम क्षेत्रान्तर्गत नये सम्मिलित क्षेत्रों में युनिपोल / होडिंग के माध्यम से विज्ञापन प्रदर्शित करने हेतु अनुबन्ध की तिथि से कुल 02 वर्ष हेतु सार्वजनिक निविदा सूचना प्रकाशन की तिथि से दिनांक 26.7.24 की अपरान्ह 2.00 बजे तक ई० निविदायें आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्रम सं०	मार्ग का नाम	युनिपोल / होडिंग हेतु कुल साईट	निगम द्वारा विज्ञापन हेतु आरक्षित निविदा धनराशि
1	मसूरी डाईवर्जन्ग से डोम गांव सीमा तक 38 साईट, साई मन्दिर बगल से काठबगला होते हुए कुशाली चौक तक-03 साईट, सहस्त्रकारा रोड आई०टी०पार्क से पैसेफिक गोल्ट तक-06 साईट, रायपुर रोड डील फेवरी के आगे पुडियायार से महाराणा प्रताप चौक तक-02 साईट, एच. नैम्बर पुडिया से अभीवाला गुरुद्वारा-03 साईट, एच. नैम्बर पुडिया से रिंग रोड होते हुए रायपुर रोड-03 साईट, शिमला बाईपास चौक से सेन्ट्रल चौक से शिवालयिक कालेज जी०एम०एस०रोड एवं सेट ज्यूस चौक से नगर निगम सीमा आसन नदी पुल तक-04 साईट, चन्द्रवनी चौक से आषारोडी नगर निगम सीमा तक 14 साईट, शास्त्रीनगर डाल से कुआरवाडी नगर निगम सीमा तक 15 साईट, बल्लपुर चौक से पण्डितवाडी नगर निगम सीमा तक 12 साईट।	112	2,53,44,000/-

निविदा के साथ निविदा सूचना प्रपत्र में 10 प्रतिशत निर्धारित धनराशि रु-25,34,400/- की एफ०डी०आर०/सी०डी०आर० जो नगर निगम, देहरादून के नाम प्लेज होगी। निविदायें ई०निविदा के माध्यम से निर्धारित तिथि एवं समय उपलब्ध करायी जायेगी। निविदादाता को निविदा में अंकित समस्त तकनीकी दस्तावेजों एवं निर्धारित धनराशि की एफ०डी०आर०/सी०डी०आर० को मूल रूप में दिनांक 25.07.2024 की अपरान्ह 4.00 बजे तक निगम कार्यालय में जमा कराना अनिवार्य होगा। दिनांक 25.07.2024 तक दस्तावेज मूल में निगम कार्यालय में जमा न किये जाने पर निविदादाता को असफल माना जायेगा। तकनीकी निविदा का परीक्षण दिनांक 26.07.2024 की सांय 4.00 बजे गठित समिति के सम्मम किया जायेगा। तकनीकी निविदा के उपरान्त तकनीकी निविदा में सफल निविदादाताओं को विदेशी निविदा समिति द्वारा खोली जायेगी। निविदा प्रपत्र एवं शर्तें विज्ञापन प्रकाशन की तिथि से यू०के० टेंडर वेबसाईट [www.uktender.gov.in](http://www.uktender.gov.in) एवं नगर निगम वेबसाईट [www.nagarnigamdehradun.com](http://www.nagarnigamdehradun.com) से भी डाउनलोड की जा सकती है। निविदा ई० निविदा के माध्यम से [www.uktender.gov.in](http://www.uktender.gov.in) पर उपलब्ध करायी जायेगी।  
पत्रांक:-2074 / भूमि-2024-25 दिनांक:- 05.07.2024  
नगर आयुक्त नगर निगम, देहरादून

# Urban local bodies in UP to be fortified, made self-reliant

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
The Yogi Adityanath government strives to make local bodies self-reliant and enhance their income. The government aims to fortify all urban local bodies (ULBs) by making substantial investments in their infrastructure and services, transforming them into significant sources of revenue and enabling them to contribute effectively to the goal of a 1-trillion-dollar economy. This initiative will boost the income of municipal corporations, municipalities, and nagar panchayats. The proposed investments will focus on administrative and utility infrastructure, including office buildings, urban kiosks, mechanised and other types of

parking, and road junctions. The plan also includes livelihood centres and economic infrastructure such as co-working spaces, urban fairs, food street hubs and digital streets. Heritage and cultural infrastructure will encompass heritage streets, conservation projects, museums, exhibition spaces, galleries, urban art decor, and statues. Social amenities such as urban community centres, marriage halls, retirement homes, senior care centers, hostels for working women and men, auditoriums, and urban cafes will be integrated. Public health infrastructure investments will cover pet clinics, parks, open gyms and multipurpose sports facilities. Furthermore, environmental

upgrades will feature urban wetlands, forests, nurseries and horticulture projects. Funds for infrastructure investment will be allocated in proportion to the tax revenue collected by the urban local body and its contribution. The selection of infrastructure projects will adhere to the criteria outlined in the guidelines, with the size of the urban local body being a significant factor in the decision-making process. Projects with the potential for public-private partnership (PPP) proposals will receive priority. The urban local body will provide the land required to construct these infrastructure projects. Funds for infrastructure investment will be sourced from the revenues of urban local bodies

or through public-private partnerships (PPP). Additionally, budget allocations will be made under state and Central schemes, as well as from SFC and CFC funds. Infrastructure investments can also be made from MPs' and MLAs' funds, while CSOs and international bodies can contribute through their CSR funds. Regarding fund distribution, one option proposes allocating 40 per cent to municipal corporations, 40 per cent to municipal councils and 20 per cent to nagar panchayats. Alternatively, a second option suggests distributing 50 per cent to municipal corporations, 25 per cent to municipal councils and 25 per cent to nagar panchayats.

# CM Yogi reviews development projects, welfare schemes

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reached Basti on Friday morning where he was greeted by public representatives and senior officials at the police lines helipad. Chief Minister Yogi began his visit by meeting with ministers, MPs, MLAs and block pramukhs at the Circuit House. He then participated in the Van Mahotsav-2024 tree plantation campaign by planting a Parijat sapling at the divisional commissioner's office premises. The chief minister then held a review meeting with public representatives and senior officials from Sant Kabir Nagar and Siddharthnagar districts via video-conferencing. During the meeting, the chief minister reviewed the ambitious development projects and public welfare schemes underway in the division, providing necessary guidelines. While reviewing the School Chalo Abhiyan, the chief minister instructed the basic shiksha adhikaris (BSAs) to ensure timely enrollment of children. He also emphasised the importance of teachers' punctuality and directed officers to conduct surprise inspections of schools. Additionally, he directed that the uniforms, notebooks and books of the children should be made available on time. During the review of the special communicable disease control/Dastak campaign, the chief minister directed all chief medical officers to maintain proper cleanliness in hospitals. He said if there was a shortage of doctors, qualified doctors should be appointed locally through the district magistrate. He also stressed the need to ensure the availability of medicines. During the flood prevention review, the chief minister directed district offi-



cial to monitor sensitive and highly sensitive embankments rigorously. He emphasised the urgency of completing all preparations before the flood season, stressing zero tolerance for any delays. The chief minister also underscored the importance of engaging public representatives in the distribution of relief materials. Furthermore, he emphasised the need for immediate treatment of snakebite victims in emergency situations. Regarding the tree plantation campaign, the chief minister instructed that saplings should be planted in each district according to the set targets. He also emphasised that saplings should be distributed to responsible individuals capable of caring for them after planting. He encouraged the adoption of saplings to promote public participation. Furthermore, he suggested that each planting should be marked with a plaque bearing the planter's name, accompanied by a pledge to nurture the sapling. The chief minister, while reviewing the settlement of revenue disputes, litigation, and 'paimaish' (land measurement), directed that cases pending for one to three years,

three to five years, and over five years must be resolved promptly based on merit. He emphasised zero tolerance for any delays in this process. He also instructed that an action plan be devised immediately in anticipation of upcoming festivals. Emphasising a strict prohibition on arms and ammunition during Muharram, the chief minister stated, "During Muharram, maintain strict vigilance over processions and obtain written permission." He stressed the importance of preserving existing traditions and cautioned against initiating any new ones. Regarding the Kanwar yatra, he specified that the volume of DJ music should adhere to standard regulations. The chief minister instructed officials from the police department to take stringent action against criminals, ensuring that FIRs are promptly registered on behalf of victims. He emphasised the deployment of police, both in uniform and plain clothes, at crowded locations to enhance women's safety. Additionally, he directed continuous patrolling as part of these measures. During the review of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, the chief minister

directed that farmers should receive regular training sessions. He also reviewed initiatives like Nivesh Mitra, One District One Product, and Vishwakarma Shram Samman. He emphasised the need to identify eligible entrepreneurs for loan distribution and suggested involving public representatives in meetings with banks. While reviewing the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme, the chief minister emphasised the importance of high-quality work. He directed that pits dug for laying pipes alongside roads should be promptly filled with soil after completion. He also called for the removal of encroachments from roads and prohibited illegal taxi stands from collecting money. In addition, he instructed Public Works Department officials to ensure roads are free of potholes. The chief minister instructed the divisional commissioner and district magistrates of all three districts to address complaints during Janata Darshan diligently. During the meeting, the chief minister addressed the complaints raised by public representatives and issued necessary instructions to the concerned officers for their resolution.

# Extensive preparations to deal with floods

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
In anticipation of potential floods, the Yogi Adityanath government has undertaken extensive preparations across the state. Under the directives of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, 612 flood posts have been established in 24 highly sensitive and 16 sensitive areas, where National Disaster Response Force, State Disaster Response Force and Provincial Armed Constabulary troops have been deployed. These posts aim to manage flood situations effectively and minimise casualties and property damage. In addition to this, the tender process for food grains has been successfully completed in 39 out of 40 districts to aid residents in flood-affected regions. Recently, Chief Minister Yogi gave crucial instructions to officials in a high-level meeting on preemptive flood measures. Following these directives, officials executed preparations in a mission mode within a remarkably short span of four to five days. Principal Secretary (Revenue) P Guru Prasad said that Chief Minister Yogi had instructed the officials to remain alert in flood-affected areas and strengthen the preparations. In accordance with this directive, 612 flood posts have been set up in the state's highly sensitive and sensitive areas. Additional flood posts are also being established in these areas. A total of seven teams of NDRF, 18 teams of SDRF and 17 teams of PAC have been deployed in these flood posts. Along with this, Aapda Mitras have also been deployed.

He further informed that boats have been identified and sailors have been deployed in all the flood-affected districts. A total of 4,700 Rahat Chaupals were organised in flood affected areas in a year wherein people were informed about how to protect themselves and their cattle during floods. As part of pre-flood preparedness, mock drills have been conducted by the SDRF, NDRF, and PAC in 25 districts. Relief Commissioner GS Naveen mentioned that an amount of ₹10 crore has been released for flood-affected districts. With this funding, various essential purchases have been completed in these districts. He informed that the tender process for food packets has been completed in 39 out of 40 flood-affected districts. Meanwhile, the tender for food packets in Ghazipur will be completed in a day or two. He further said that two types of food packets would be distributed in flood-affected areas. The first packet will contain two packets of 2.5 kg each of puffed rice, 2 kg roasted gram, 1 kg jaggery in a plastic packet, 10 packets of biscuits, one packet of matchsticks and candles, two pieces of bathing soap, a 20-litre jerry can, one tarpaulin of 12x10 square feet with thickness GSM of not less than 110, among other items will be distributed to each family. Similarly, the second packet includes 10 kilograms of wheat flour, 10 kilograms of rice, 2 kilograms of tur dal, 10 kilograms of potatoes, 200 grams of turmeric, 100 grams of chili powder, 200 grams of vegetable masala, one litre mustard oil, and one kilogram of salt for each person.

# Ram temple trust plans to install 25 new statues

**PNS ■ AYODHYA**  
The Ram Janmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust has announced plans to install 25 new statues in the compound of Ram temple in Ayodhya. These statues will include representations of Shri Ram Darbar, Saptarishi, Sheshavatar and other gods and goddesses, all of which will be placed on the temple's first floor. Additionally, a large statue of Goshwami Tulsidas will be installed, though its exact location is yet to be determined. Champat Rai, general secretary of the trust, shared these details on Friday. He said, "The Ram temple will be 221 feet high, with the main peak reaching 161 feet. A 50-metre-high flagpole, brought from Gujarat three months ago, will be installed atop the temple. We aim to complete the temple by December 2024, with the entire complex completed by the end of 2025." He said the construction of the Ram temple was progressing rapidly. So far, three lakh cubic feet of stones have been used, with an additional one and a quarter lakh cubic feet to be added. The building construction committee is currently discussing how to manage potential rain-related delays and the number of labourers needed to maintain the construction pace. When asked about the placement of the remaining two idols of Ram Lalla, Rai responded, "The location will be

decided by the trust officials in an upcoming meeting, and the media will be informed accordingly." These two idols were initially made for the sanctum sanctorum, but the final selection favoured the idol crafted by Arun Yogiraj from Mysore, Karnataka. Dr Anil Mishra, a member of the temple trust, said that the construction was proceeding on schedule and with high quality. "We ensure that devotees face no difficulties. The progress is reviewed daily," he said. The ground floor of the Ram temple is now 90 per cent complete, while the second floor is 70 per cent complete, with 60 out of 74 pillars installed. The construction of the pilgrim facility centre, which can accommodate 25,000 devotees, has also been completed. Since its inauguration on January 22 this year, the Ram temple has welcomed approximately 1.9 crore devotees, with daily attendance ranging from 70,000 to one lakh devotees.

# Hathras stampede: Rahul Gandhi meets bereaved families

**PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW**  
Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, met the bereaved families of the Hathras stampede on Friday. He expressed concern over administrative deficiencies and urged Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to provide generous compensation to the affected families. He said there were lapses on the part of the administration in the Hathras stampede incident that killed over 100 people, but he did not want to make it "political". "It is a matter of grief that so many families have suffered, so many people lost their lives," he added. Rahul Gandhi said, "The compensation should be right. I request the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh to give compensation generously. Compensation should be given as soon as possible. I have talked to the family members." He also targeted the local administration and claimed that their failure was also evidence as they did not take any measures despite sanctioning the permission to the self-styled godman to give sermons. The grieving families of the satang stampede victims who met Rahul Gandhi in Hathras and Aligarh on Friday said the Congress leader had assured them that he would make efforts to get their compensation enhanced. Subhash Chandra, son of Muni Devi who lost her life in the stampede, said that Rahul Gandhi talked to them, consoled the entire family and tried to understand the whole incident. He said that Bhole Baba was responsible for the whole incident and there was a lack of a system there. "Baba ran away. He should have helped the people instead of running away. Now my family will never go to his satang," Chandra said. He also alleged lack of medical facilities which led to so many deaths. He said Rahul Gandhi had assured them that he would raise the matter in Parliament and support them. A girl who lost her mother in



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi meets families of the victims of Hathras stampede incident at Green Park in Hathras on Friday. PTI

# Visits politically motivated, says Baby Rani Maurya

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
The tragic stampede in Hathras has sparked a political uproar, with the opposition criticising the Bharatiya Janata Party government and the ruling party accusing the opposition of exploiting the tragedy for political gain. Minister in the Yogi Adityanath government, Baby Rani Maurya, commented on Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's visit to Hathras, alleging that his visit to Hathras and Aligarh was politically motivated. "The chief minister has constituted a committee (commission) under the chairmanship of a retired judge of the high court. Legal action will be taken based on the committee's report," Maurya said and added: "He (Rahul Gandhi) went there only for his politics." She emphasised the need for careful consideration before granting permission for large events, suggesting that such gatherings should be avoided if there is a risk to life and property. "The political parties should show maturity and avoid indulging in politics over these sensitive issues," the minister said. The tragedy broke down before Rahul Gandhi. The Congress leader hugged her and consoled her, promising that they would take full care of her. Congress Member of Parliament Rahul Gandhi on Friday reached the homes of the victims who lost their lives in the Hathras stampede. He sat on the floor and met the

bereaved families of the deceased and consoled them. Rahul Gandhi reached Pilkhana in Aligarh early in the morning by road from Delhi. He consoled the bereaved family members of Manju who died in the Hathras stampede, her six-year-old son Pankaj and Shanti Devi and Premvati of another family. Later he left for Hathras and met other bereaved families at Green Park locality. Hari Mohan, a resident of Nalka Nagla locality in Hathras, lost his paternal aunt Omvati, 55, in the stampede. "Rahul Gandhi interacted with us, extended his sympathies. He said he would make an effort to get the compensation amount for victims enhanced," Mohan said. Mrityunjay Bharti, 22, lost her maternal grandmother Asha Devi, around 55, in the tragedy. Bharti, who lives in Aligarh, is in Hathras to be with her relatives who live in the city's Navipur area. "He (Gandhi) spoke to us and tried to understand our issues. He said he would raise the issue in Parliament so that such incidents do not happen in future," Bharti said. Khusboo, who lost her mother, said she was assured of help during the interaction with the former Congress president. Another woman, who lost her sister-in-law in the stampede, told reporters, "He (Rahul Gandhi) told us that the (Congress) party will help us, and assured us help. He also inquired from us how it (the incident) took place."

# Saints accuse Rahul of insulting Hindus

**PNS ■ AYODHYA**  
Saints in Ayodhya have expressed strong disapproval of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's statement in the Lok Sabha where he suggested that Hindus are violent by nature. The saints warned that if Hindus indeed become violent, Rahul Gandhi might have to leave the country. They also called for a united opposition against the Congress party, accusing Rahul Gandhi of insulting Hindus in the temple of democracy. Mahant Swami Awadhesh Kumar Das of Bada Bhaktmal

said that the residents of Ayodhya were deeply hurt by Rahul Gandhi's comments and predicted widespread opposition across India. "Ayodhya's only king is Lord Ram, and no one else can claim that title," he said. Dr Ramanand Das, mahant of Shri Ram Katha Kunj, criticised Rahul Gandhi's statement as a reflection of his immature mindset, labeling him unfit to be the leader of the opposition. He claimed that no one in the opposition was capable of standing against Narendra Modi, and the entire saint community was distressed by

Gandhi's remarks. Mahant Vaidehi Vallabh Sharan of Bawan temple said that Hindus were inherently non-violent, advocating for unity in the community. He asserted that the Hindu society would never forgive Rahul Gandhi and that he does not deserve to live in India. Jagadguru Ramanujacharya Swami Raghavacharya accused Rahul Gandhi of insulting the Hindu community and declared that those who speak for Hindu interests will rule the country. He proposed a resolution condemning Rahul Gandhi's statement. Mahant

Ramsharan Das of Rangmahal Peeth described Rahul Gandhi's comments as an affront to Lord Ram, Indian culture and the nation, suggesting that he be banned from entering temples. Mahant Janmejaya Sharan of Rasik Peeth stated that the entire saint community supports the resolution condemning Rahul Gandhi, demanding that he apologise to the Hindu community. Mayor Girishpati Tripathi called for efforts to overcome this crisis, asserting that Ayodhya can guide the world. He downplayed Rahul Gandhi's statement as a minor issue.

# 2024 LS poll mandate revenge of Muslims against BJP: Madani

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**  
Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind chief Maulana Arshad Madani has said that the 2024 mandate was revenge of Muslims against the Bharatiya Janata Party. He said the results of Lok Sabha elections were the outcome of strategic voting by Muslims, aimed at defeating the BJP. He asserted that the general election results rejected the politics of "hatred and communalism" and attributed the outcome to the "wise voting" by the Muslim community. "Had the voters not voted wisely, the results could have been different," he said. Madani emphasised that the parties, particularly the Congress, have the moral duty to "protect the Constitution and democracy" while "fighting for the rights of the oppressed minorities". The Jamiat Ulema-e-Hind chief also lauded Congress leader Rahul Gandhi

and Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav for their "secular stance". He claimed that it was their so-called secular stance that garnered trust and support from the "secular-minded" voters. He also claimed that Muslims are "patriots" and they love the country more than their lives. Madani said there has been a systematic effort to render the Muslim votes ineffective in the elections and marginalise the community altogether. However, the recent elections saw Muslims voting en-masse to "uphold secularism, democracy and the Constitution," he said. He highlighted the need for "secular parties" to continue their struggle for the rights of the Muslim community both inside and outside Parliament. Madani pointed out that there is a declining trend of Muslim representation in Parliament and legislative assemblies. He claimed

that it could be attributed partly to the "strategic" reservation of Muslim-majority constituencies for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In stark contrast to the recent statements by Madani, he had praised the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its chief Mohan Bhagwat in 2021. At that time, he had welcomed Bhagwat's comments on the shared ancestry of Hindus and Muslims in India and suggested that the RSS was moving towards a more inclusive ideology. Madani said he likes the statement made by Mohan Bhagwat. He said that in India, there were Gurjar, Rajputs and Jats, for example, amongst Hindus and Muslims both, therefore, there was nothing wrong in saying that Hindus and Muslims in India shared the same ancestry. He had also said that the RSS was "changing its old ideology and is now on the right track".

# Three killed in separate road accidents

**Lucknow (PNS):** Two persons, including a child, were killed and 12 others were injured after their van collided with a stranded truck on the Delhi-Dehradun national highway in Muzaffarnagar on Friday. The accident occurred in the Purkazi police station area when the victims were on

their way to Haridwar from Delhi, police said. The deceased were identified as Jai Prakash (42) and Aman (4). In Etawah, a man was killed and two others were injured after collision of two motorcycles on Friday, police said. Meanwhile, at least 18 people, including the driver, were

injured when their loader pickup truck enroute to Sheelta Mata temple in the Kada Dham police station area of Kaushambi overturned, police said on Friday. Of the injured, six are in critical condition and undergoing treatment at the district hospital, they said.

# MLA inaugurates 75-day ward stay programme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The 75-day ward stay programme was started on Friday in the Varanasi City South assembly constituency, which is called the 'heart of Kashi'. Former UP Minister and MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari inaugurated the programme by staying in Suryakund ward. A cleanliness campaign was carried out with the party workers in the locality adjacent to Sanatan Dharma Inter College.



MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari launching cleanliness drive in Suryakund ward in Varanasi on Friday.

The local residents of ward also participated in it. After the campaign, the local people felicitated the MLA and took the oath of cleanliness. Then the MLA did public relations in the area and organised a chaupal. Dr Neelkanth Tiwari said that prior to the 74th birthday of Prime Minister Narendra

Modi which is on September 17, a 75-day ward stay programme has been started. The

MLA will stay in one ward of his assembly every day where he will run a cleanliness cam-

paign with the party workers and work will be done to set up public relations and chaupal. Tree plantation will be done every day under the 'Ek Vriksha Maa Ke Naam' campaign. He appealed to local residents to participate in this programme in maximum numbers. He said during the last 10 years, people have become very aware about cleanliness. He said that today people throw garbage only in dustbins. After the cleanliness campaign, the MLA planted a sapling. Thereafter he interacted with the local people through public contact and held a meeting and discussed various topics. On the occasion Mandal president Gopal Ji Gupta, corporators Anantraj Gupta and Sanjay Keshari, Indresh Singh, Rajiv Singh, Ankur Mehrotra etc were also present.

# Tempo stand operator shot dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A tempo stand operator was shot dead at point-blank range near Naubasta Chauraha on Friday morning. He was immediately taken to a hospital where the doctors declared him dead. After the incident which took place around 9.15 am, panic prevailed in the locality. Naubasta police, DCP (South) along with force rushed to the spot and carried out probe in the matter. A dispute between the parking stand operator and a van driver came to the fore as the reason for the incident. According to a report, Hari Karan Singh (55) of Hanumant Vihar used to operate a tempo stand near Naubasta Chauraha. People informed that Karan Singh had a debate with a van driver on Friday morning. This led to ire of the van driver who allegedly shot Hari Karan Singh from point-blank range at his temple and escaped. The doctors at the hospital declared

Hari Karan Singh as brought dead. The police rushed to the spot and after quizzing people sent the body for an autopsy. The police came to know about a debate between the deceased and the accused and launched raids to nail the latter. DCP (South) Ravindra Kumar said CCTV footages are being examined to ascertain location of the absconding accused. He claimed that he would be arrested soon. The kin of the deceased had been informed who would be handed over the body after autopsy, he said. **CONSTABLE INJURED:** A constable was seriously injured when a drunk father-son duo allegedly threw him from the rooftop in Gauri Kalan village under Asivan police station area of Unnao on Thursday night. When the drunk father-son were involved in argument people informed the police on Dial 112. When the police tried to pacify the matter the duo pelted stones at the police party and threw a con-

stable from the rooftop. The seriously injured constable was admitted to the district hospital. The police have arrested the father-son duo and lodged a first information report (FIR) against them. Reports received here said that Sarwan (57) and his son Manish (21) of Gaura Kalan village, started abusing after consuming liquor on Thursday night. The villagers informed the police and PRV 3236 rushed to the spot. On seeing the force the drunken father-son started pelting stones on police party from the rooftop. When a constable Krishna Deo also went up to catch the drunken father-son, the latter threw the former from the rooftop. As a result the constable sustained serious injury on his head and limb. His colleagues took him to the community health centre (CHC) from where the constable was referred to the district hospital. The police then arrested Sarwan and Manish and lodged an FIR against them. In another incident following a

debate with wife over a petty issue, a man allegedly strangled her in Purwa Kotwali police area of Unnao on Thursday night. When children tried to rescue their mother, he locked them in a room and strangled her in the verandah with her dupatta and then fled from the spot. On Friday morning when children were found missing in the house a neighbour went there and found them locked in a room. He also found the woman dead in the verandah. The police sent the body of the deceased for an autopsy. Kotwali incharge Kunwar Bahadur Singh along with forensic team and sniffer dog squad rushed to spot and carried out a probe. **BATTERED TO DEATH:** A youth was battered to death in Marag Maitha under Sheoli Kotwali police area of Kanpur Dehat on Thursday night. After he fell unconscious, kin took him to Sheoli community health centre (CHC) where he was declared dead by the doctors.

# Cong workers demand ROB, submit memo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Congress workers demanded the construction of a railway over bridge (ROB) at level crossing gate number 5 on the road coming from Kotwa to Lahartara. In this direction a Congress delegation consisting of former vice-chairman of Cantonment Board Shalendra Singh, acting president of Auto Rickshaw Drivers' Union Bhagwan Singh, Sanjay Yadav, Brijesh Singh etc gave a memorandum to Shivsharan Pathak, office incharge at the Parliamentary Office of Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Friday. They said that the connectivity facilities for the outer

urban areas towards the west of Varanasi city and the rural areas of the district are not satisfactory. They said that they had run a long movement to reopen the closed Kariyappa Marg going from Lahartara to Kacheri via Cantonment area. According to them, though the road was not opened, but as a result a new alternative Lahartara-Kacheri road was built, which provided convenience to the city dwellers and the people of the vast rural areas coming to the city from that direction and brought some relief to the traffic within the city. They further said in their memorandum that they want to draw the PM's attention to the huge problem faced by people commuting through

Lahartara-Kotwa road but in absence of ROB at railway gate number 5, the local people faced a lot of inconvenience. They said that thousands of people regularly travel on the route from Kotwa to Lahartara as it not only connects the city with Kotwa and nearby villages and the western outer urban areas of district but it also connects hundreds of villages of Shivpur, Rohania and Sevapuri assembly constituencies to the city. According to them, as this level crossing gate on the route keeps getting closed frequently due to heavy rail transport, it often sees traffic jams. Due to severe traffic jams at the crossing, rail operations are also affected sometimes.

# Adolescent centre achieves milestone

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In a significant stride towards combating cervical cancer, the Centre of Excellence for Adolescent Health & Development (Adolescent Health Centre), Sir Sunderlal Hospital, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU) has achieved a milestone in its HPV vaccination campaign. Under the guidance of Prof Sangeeta Rai, the centre has successfully administered 100 HPV vaccinations to adolescents within six months. This initiative marks a crucial step

in the ongoing fight against cervical cancer in India. Human Papillomavirus (HPV) is a group of viruses, some of which are known to cause cervical cancer, one of the leading causes of cancer deaths among women globally. "In India, cervical cancer remains a major public health challenge, with approximately 77,300 new cases and 42,000 deaths annually," said Prof Sangeeta, adding that HPV vaccination is a proven preventive measure, significantly reducing the risk of developing cervical cancer by protecting against the high-risk strains of the virus.

# Rain paralyses life in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Good rain with high intensity paralysed normal life badly, especially in the evening hours on Friday leaving many areas waterlogged in the city areas. But it brought happiness among paddy growers and farmers of other Kharif crops. Though it had been raining at intervals throughout the day since early morning but it was with high intensity during evening causing great inconvenience to the office-goers as waterlogging occurred at many places while returning home. According to the report of Middle Ganga Division-III of Central Water Commission (CWC) by 8 am, the city

received just 12.6 mm rain, mainly in wee hours. The rain also lashed out some adjoining districts, as Ghazipur received 51.2 mm, Mau 41.8 mm, Rihand in Sonbhadra 38 mm, Jaunpur 29.6 mm, Azamgarh 11.2 mm, Mirzapur 10.4 mm and Ballia 7.6 mm. The rain brought down temperature sharply. The rain also brought good news for environment lovers as the Ganga river which was declining alarmingly in the recent days recorded rising trend second time in Varanasi increasing the water level by 20 mm per hour. However, the river was still constant upstream in Prayagraj and downstream Ghazipur and

Ballia. In Varanasi, the river was away from ghats at many places but for first time it was flowing above 58 metres as its level was at 58.17 metres, which is far below the warning level of 70.262 metres. The Gomti river was also rising at Maighat but steady at upstream Jaunpur. However, the rain left several localities, including Andhrapul, Teliabagh, Nagwa, Samnaghat, Dashashwamedh, Godowlia, Luxa, Nai Sarak and the roads of many other markets and colonies waterlogged. Power supply in some parts of the city was disrupted badly while it also affected the flight services, especially during the evening hours.

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# AU revises law syllabus

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Allahabad University (AU) has also revised the law syllabus as per the new laws. The Board of Studies has approved it. The law students taking admission in the new session 2024-25 will now study the revised syllabus. In AU, BA LLB, LLB and LLM courses are conducted. At the same time, law courses are also being conducted in its constituent colleges - CMP Degree College, Allahabad Degree College, Ishwar Sharan Degree College and SS Khanna Women's College. The students of the university and constituent colleges will now also study the new laws. The revised syllabus has been approved in the Board of Studies meeting held recently

in AU. Dean of Law Faculty Prof Aadesh Kumar said that changes have been made in IPC, CrPC and Evidence Act in the new laws. The syllabus has been revised keeping these changes in mind. The students who will take admission in these courses in the session 2024-25 will be taught the revised syllabus according to the new laws. Apart from this, for those students who are already studying in BA LLB, LLB and LLM and have to study IPC, CrPC and Evidence Act in any subject, the Board of Studies has approved the revised syllabus. For example, there is an optional paper of Criminal Group in LLM, in which IPC, CrPC and Evidence Act are taught, so this syllabus has been revised as per the new laws. Similarly, amendments have been made in other papers as well. After the new laws came into force from July 1 across the country, Dr. Rajendra Prasad National Law University here has also implemented the revised syllabus of BA LLB. Vice-Chancellor Prof Usha Tandon said that the revised syllabus has been approved by the Academic Council. All the 60 students taking admission in BA LLB in the current session (first batch) will study the revised syllabus as per the new laws.

started from the session 2023-24. Also, BA LLB and LLB courses are already being conducted in many constituent colleges of the university. Its Vice-Chancellor Prof Akhilesh Kumar Singh said a meeting of the Board of Studies is proposed. Soon the revised curriculum will be approved according to the new law. Students taking admission in the session 2024-25 will study the revised curriculum of law according to the new laws. Many seminars will also be organised by the university for a year, in which law experts will be invited, so that the law students can be provided in-depth information about the new laws. **SUICIDE:** A 25-year-old youth committed suicide by hanging himself from a ceiling fan inside the house in Maheva Gram Sabha of Karchana police station area here. Sanjay Kumar Yadav of the said village was living out of city for the past several years. He returned home on July 1. He left home to play cricket. After returning late in the evening, he ate food and went to the room to sleep as usual. In the morning the youth did not come out for a long time. The family members went to call him, but failed to get any response from his side. Then they peeped through the window and saw him hanging on a noose with the help of a fan. On getting information, outpost in charge Bhirpur Amit Kumar Singh reached the spot. The body was sent for post-mortem examination.

# 'Multimodal model patient care approach crucial to improving prostate cancer care'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

"Prostate cancer will become a significant health issue for men by 2040. According to a recent report from The Lancet Commission on Prostate Cancer, global cases of prostate cancer are expected to more than double, with deaths increasing by 85 per cent between 2020 and 2040," said senior consultant, Urology, at Regency Health, Dr Sidharth Singh, "As prostate cancer is generally predominant in advanced aged population and patients usually have other comorbid conditions like diabetes mellitus (DM) and heart disease, early diagnosis programmes should focus not just on prostate cancer but on men's health more broadly. We

need to improve awareness about the symptoms and risks of prostate cancer and ensure access to timely and effective treatment. Multimodal model patient care approach is also crucial to improving prostate cancer care," he added. The report highlights that low-middle-income countries (LMICs) will bear the "overwhelming brunt" of this surge due to late diagnosis and missed opportunities for data collection. The number of new prostate cancer cases annually is projected to rise from 1.4 million in 2020 to 2.9 million by 2040. The projected rise in prostate cancer cases cannot be prevented by lifestyle changes or public health interventions, the experts emphasised. This is due to the nature of prostate

cancer, which predominantly affects older men. As the nation's population's age and life expectancy improves, the incidence of prostate cancer is expected to rise significantly. To address this looming health crisis, experts are calling for evidence-based interventions, including early detection and diagnosis, along with education and awareness programs. These measures are essential to mitigate the impact of prostate cancer in India. The experts underscored the need for comprehensive educational campaigns to improve the poor levels of awareness in India about the dangers and symptoms of metastatic prostate cancer. Improving early diagnostic capacity and scaling up the availability and access to treat-

ments for advanced disease are critical steps in this direction. Dr Singh added, "We know this surge in cases is coming, so we need to start planning and take action now. Early detection and diagnosis are paramount. Public education campaigns and awareness programs must be implemented to inform men about the risks and symptoms of prostate cancer. Equipping healthcare systems with the necessary resources and expertise is essential to combat the future rise in prostate cancer cases effectively." Addressing the future prostate cancer surge requires immediate, coordinated efforts focused on early detection, improved access to care and widespread education and awareness initiatives.

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# Workshop organised at BLW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the guidance of General Manager and Chairman of Nagar Rajbhasha Implementation Committee Abhay Bakre, a special workshop on the questionnaire of the Parliamentary Rajbhasha Committee was organised on Friday at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW). The representatives of the city's central government offices and undertakings participated in the workshop in large numbers. Committee chairman Abhay Bakre said in his message that the inspection of the Parliamentary Rajbhasha Committee is a serious and extensive subject, so necessary action should be taken on all its items. In the workshop, Senior Rajbhasha Officer Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh discussed in detail the questionnaire of the Parliamentary Committee and told about the maintenance of

data. Vinod Kumar Srivastava, Vijay Pratap Singh, Amlsh Kumar Srivastava, S Guru Rajan, Alok Kumar Pandey, Arvind Pratap Singh etc were also present. Earlier, as per the instructions of Railway Board, under the aegis of Rajbhasha department, Hindi essay, speech and note and draft writing competition was organised in BLW. A large number of officers and employees participated in the competition. The topic of the essay competition was 'Contribution of BLW in environment and water conservation' or 'Importance of books in personality building' and the topic of speech competition was 'Increasing materialism, decreasing human values' or 'Effect of social media on children's life'. The jury of the speech competition included Deputy Chief Personnel Officer Shyam Babu and Deputy Chief Material Manager Vijay Kumar Mishra.

# Award distribution programme held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Best Employee and Best Section Award Distribution Programme for the month of June-July was organised at North Central Railway (NCR), Personnel Department, headquarters here on Friday. The chief guest was Principal Chief Personnel Officer (PCPO), Anurag Tripathi. In the award ceremony, the award for the best employee of the month of June-July was given to Ajay Kumar Singh, Office Superintendent/MPP & TADK, Personnel department, head office for his commendable work. The work of giving attendants in place of TADK to a total of 143 officers working in North Central Railway by June 30, 2024 was completed expeditiously. Apart from this, work related to transfer/posting of 33 TADK (Telephone Attendant cum Dak Khalasis) was done.



The cases of single window cell are being completed by them continuously week after week. The work of MPP (manpower planning) Cell was completed on time with full responsibility. The award for the best section of the month of June-July was given to the Confidential (non-gazetted) section, Personnel department, Headquarters. This award was given to the chief staff and welfare inspector of this section, Ajay Kumar Sinha and his col-

leagues for excellent execution of all works while doing various works with great efficiency in the past. The departmental selection and non-selection examinations of non-gazetted employees are being conducted on time by this section. The confidential (non-gazetted) section is successfully conducting objective based multiple choice written examination under the guidelines issued by the Railway Board. Along with this, written exam-

inations for compassionate appointment are also conducted and results are issued on time after getting approval from the head of department. In compliance with the letter issued by the Railway Board regarding computer-based test (CBT) departmental examination, the Personnel department has contributed in preparing the syllabus of the posts related to the Personnel department to start the selection process. The programme was organised with the aim of increasing the confidence, creativity and curiosity of all the employees of the Personnel department, Headquarters. All the officers and employees of the Personnel department, Headquarters were present. **MISHAP DEATH:** A 30-year-old property dealer was killed after he was hit by a car near Teliyaganj intersection on Thursday night.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India's annual defence production has hit a record high of approximately Rs 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, with the Make in India programme crossing new milestones, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday. The value of defence production in FY 2022-23 was Rs 1,08,684 crore. Welcoming the "encouraging development", Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Compliments to all those who have contributed to this feat. We are fully committed to nurturing a supportive environment to further enhance our capabilities and establish India as a leading global defence manufacturing hub". He also said, "This will enhance our security apparatus and make us Aatmanirbhar" in a social media post. Rajnath said the Government is committed to creating a more conducive regime for developing India as a leading global defence manufacturing hub. "The Ministry of Defence has achieved the highest-ever growth in indigenous defence production in value terms during financial year (FY) 2023-24, on the back of successful implementation of the policies and initiatives of the government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, focussing on achieving 'Aatmanirbharta', the defence ministry said in a statement. The annual defence production has hit a record



high of approximately Rs 1.27 lakh crore in 2023-24, it said. "As per the data received from all Defence Public Sector undertakings (DPSUs), other PSUs manufacturing defence items and private companies, the value of defence production in the country has gone up to a record-high figure, i.e., Rs 1,26,887 crore, reflecting a growth of 16.7 per cent over the defence production of the previous financial year," the statement said. The defence minister congratulated the Indian industry, including defence public sector undertakings and other public sector undertakings manufacturing defence items, and the private industry for the feat. "The Make in India programme is crossing new milestones, year after year, under the leadership of PM Shri

@narendramodi," he said. "India has registered the highest ever growth in the value of defence production in 2023-24. The value of production has reached to Rs. 1,26,887 crore in 2023-24 which is 16.8 per cent higher than the value of production of previous financial year," he wrote on X. "The defence ministry said that of the total value of production (VoP) in 2023-24, about 79.2 per cent has been contributed by DPSUs/other PSUs and 20.8 per cent by the private sector". The data shows that in terms of absolute value, both DPSUs/PSUs and private sector have recorded a steady growth in defence production, the statement said. The feat has been achieved due to the policy reforms and initiatives and ease of doing business brought in by the govern-

ment in the last 10 years with focus on attaining self-reliance, the ministry said. "The indigenisation efforts have been pursued aggressively on a sustained basis, that resulted in the highest ever VoP. Moreover, the spiralling defence exports have contributed tremendously to the overall growth in the indigenous defence production," the statement said. Defence exports touched a record-high of Rs 21,083 crore in FY 2023-24, reflecting a growth of 32.5 per cent over the last fiscal when the figure was Rs 15,920 crore, it added. In the last five years (since 2019-20), the value of defence production has been increasing steadily, and grown by over 60 per cent, the statement said and also shared year-wise data in this period.

## BRS member's resignation from RS accepted



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh vacancy was created in the Rajya Sabha on Friday with House chairperson Jagdeep Thakkar accepting the resignation of K Keshava Rao who had quit his membership as a BRS MP after joining the Congress. As of now, 16 seats in the Upper House are vacant. Rao was a Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) member of the Rajya Sabha from Telangana since 2020. He joined the Congress on Wednesday and resigned from his membership of the Upper House of Parliament on Thursday. On Friday, Thakkar accepted his resignation, following which his seat in the Rajya Sabha became vacant, official sources said. With Rao's resignation, as many as 16 seats in the House are vacant. Before this, 15 seats -- four from Jammu and Kashmir, three from Maharashtra, two each from Assam and Bihar, and one each from Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Tripura were vacant in the Rajya Sabha, according to the latest tally.

## Cong slams Centre for delay in printing Class VI textbooks

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Congress on Friday criticised the Centre over the delay in publishing new Class 6 textbooks, alleging the Education Ministry is "sabotaging" the education of children after doing the same with the examination process through the "incompetent" National Testing Authority. Congress general secretary Jai Ramesh hit out at the government over the issue, saying that either the "rot runs deep", or the incompetence scales new heights everyday. In a social media post, he said, "After sabotaging the examination process through the incompetent National Testing Authority, the non-biological PM's Education Ministry is sabotaging the education of our children." "Even as the school year has begun, the NCERT - the National Council for Educational Research and Training - has failed to publish new textbooks for Science, Mathematics, and Social Sciences for Class 6 students," Ramesh said. The textbooks themselves have not been finalised by the National Syllabus and Teaching Learning Material Committee (NSTC), he said. Ramesh pointed out that printing will take another 10 to 15 days. Officials expect a delay of two months before they can make new books available to students, he claimed. "Either the rot runs deep, or the

incompetence scales new heights everyday!" Ramesh said. Later, Ramesh shared a media report which said the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is working on a proposal to recreate 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' in a virtual format via a web platform. "They cannot ensure leak-proof Parikshas, and they cannot ensure schoolchildren get their textbooks on time -- but this is what the Ministry of Education is spending its time on. The blame for these warped priorities lies entirely on the non-biological Pradhan Mantri," Ramesh said. His remarks come a day after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan reviewed the development of school textbooks in accordance with the New Curriculum Framework (NCF) at a meeting here. The meeting came in the backdrop of a delay in the publication of Class 6 textbooks that were supposed to be taught from April and are yet to hit the

market. The National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) had earlier announced that new textbooks for Classes 3 and 6 will be introduced from the 2024-25 academic session. "For the academic year 2024-25, new and engaging textbooks will be introduced in Classes 3 and 6. The textbook development work is in the final phase and nine textbooks for Grades 3 and 6 are already available. The remaining eight will be available very soon," a senior Ministry of Education (MoE) official said. The NCERT had an initial aim of releasing the new textbooks based on the NCF 2023 only for Classes 3 and 6 this year. While the textbooks for Class 3 are available in the market, those for Class 6 have been delayed. It was only this week that the NCERT released new English and Hindi textbooks for Class 6 in the middle of the academic session.

## BJP retains most of its office bearers in States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday appointed its in-charges and co-incharges for states, retaining the incumbent office-bearers in most places. Its national general secretaries Vinod Tawde, Tarun Chugh and Radha Mohan Das Agarwal will continue to steer the party's organisational affairs in Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and Karnataka respectively, while Prakash Javadekar and Satish Poonia will be the respective in-charges of Kerala and Haryana. Bihar MLA Nitin Nabin will be in-charge of Chhattisgarh, Ashish Sood of Goa, Shrikant Sharma of Himachal Pradesh, Laxmikant Bajpai of Jharkhand, Mahendra Singh of Madhya Pradesh and Vijaypal Singh Tomar of Odisha. Former Gujarat chief minister Vijay Rupani and party's national general secretary Dushyant Kumar Gautam will continue to be in-charge of Punjab and Uttarakhand respectively. BJP MP Sambit Patra has also been retained as the coordinator for the north-eastern states. The party had appointed a co-incharge for most of the states.

## Foreigners must comply with organ transplant rules

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With India emerging as a preferred destination for organ transplants among foreign nationals, the Union Health Ministry has urged the Ministries of External Affairs and Home Affairs to educate these visitors about the country's regulatory guidelines. The move aims to ensure compliance with legal requirements governing organ transplant procedures in India, emphasising transparency and ethical standards in medical tourism practices. In a letter addressed to Union Home Secretary Ajay Kumar Bhalla and Union Foreign Secretary Vinay Mohan Kwatra, Chandra highlighted the necessity for sensitising foreign nationals about these regulations. The initiative aims to ensure transparency and compliance with regulations, especially in light of concerns over potential commercial dealings in organs involving foreign citizens. Chandra outlined measures including the preparation of scroll messages and creatives to be displayed at airports, on Bureau of Immigration portals, and on Ministry of External Affairs' websites and embassies abroad.



"I shall be grateful if you could kindly look into the matter personally and direct the concerned authorities to ensure that the enclosed messages may be circulated extensively through immigration for wide reach," the letter said. The scroll messages stated that when the donor or recipient is a foreign national, then prior approval of the authorization committee shall be required before removing or transplanting human organs or tissue or both. A senior official of the embassy of the country of origin in India is required to certify the relationship between the donor and the recipient as per form 21, the message states. In case a country does not have an Embassy in India, the cer-

tificate of relationship, in the same format, shall be issued by the government of that country. Foreign patients needing organ(s) from a deceased donor for transplant, can also seek registration in India through their treating hospital after which their name will be included in the waiting list registry. However, such cases would be considered for allocation of organs only when there is no Indian patient available to take that organ. Dr. Atul Goel, Director General of Health Services (DGHS), had earlier urged States and Union Territories to monitor and report all transplant cases, emphasising the need for strict action against any illegal activities, including suspension of hospital registrations.

## SC to review same-sex marriage verdict on July 10

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to consider on July 10 a batch of pleas seeking review of its last year's judgement which refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage. According to the cause list of July 10 uploaded on the apex court website, a five-judge bench headed by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud would consider in chambers the pleas seeking review of the October 17 last year verdict. As per the practice, the review pleas are considered in chambers by judges. Besides the CJI, the other members of the bench will be Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Hima Kohli, B V Nagarathna and P S Narasimha. In a setback to gay rights activists, the apex court had on October 17 last year refused to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage, saying there was "no unqualified right" to marriage with the exception of those that are recognised by law. The apex court, however, had made a strong pitch for the rights of queer people so they don't face discrimination in accessing goods and services that are available to others, safe hous-



es known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble. Holding that transgender people in heterosexual relationships have the freedom and entitlement to marry under the existing statutory provisions, the top court had said an entitlement to legal recognition of the right to union, akin to marriage or civil union, or conferring legal status to the relationship "can be only done through 'enacted law'". A five-judge constitution bench headed by CJI Chandrachud had delivered four separate verdicts on a batch of 21 petitions seeking legal sanction for same-sex marriages. All the five judges were unan-

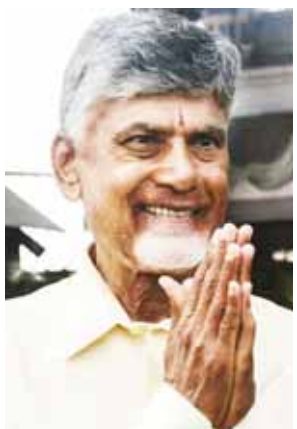
imous in refusing to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act and had observed it was within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union. While the CJI had written a separate 247-page verdict, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (since retired) had penned a 17-page judgement in which he broadly agreed with Justice Chandrachud's views. Justice S Ravindra Bhat (since retired), who authored an 89-page judgement for himself and Justice Hima Kohli, had disagreed with certain conclusions arrived at by the CJI including on applicability of adoption rules for queer couples. Justice PS Narasimha had said in his 13-page verdict that he was in complete agreement with the reasoning given and

conclusions arrived at by Justice Bhat. The judges were unanimous in holding that queerness is a natural phenomenon and not "urban or elite" occurrence. In his judgement, the CJI had recorded the assurance by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Centre will constitute a committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for the purpose of defining and elucidating the scope of entitlements of queer couples who are in union. The LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in the Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption, enrolment as parents in schools, opening of bank accounts and availing succession and insurance benefits. Some of the petitioners had urged the apex court to use its plenary power, "prestige and moral authority" to push the society to acknowledge such a union which would ensure LGBTQIA++ lead a "dignified" life like heterosexuals. LGBTQIA++ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual and allied persons.

## Naidu presses for more Central funds ahead of Union Budget

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Friday met Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, pressing for enhanced financial support to the debt-burdened state. The meeting came ahead of union budget presentation. Sources said Naidu, during the meeting in North Block, highlighted various ongoing projects in Andhra Pradesh that require urgent central assistance. "The CM presented a detailed memorandum outlining the state's financial requirements and the rationale behind the demand for increased allocation," the sources added. TDP ministers in the Centre were present during the meeting. Naidu also met Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Health Minister J P Nadda. According to the state government data, the public debt of Andhra Pradesh has



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

ital, Amaravati. The chief minister also sought resolution of pending issues stemming from the bifurcation of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh. The meeting assumes significance as it comes just weeks before the presentation of the Union Budget 2024-25. The sources indicated that Sitharaman gave a patient hearing to Naidu's concerns and gave an assurance that she will look into Andhra Pradesh's demands within the broader fiscal constraints. Naidu has been vocal about the state's financial distress and sought increased central support to tide over the fiscal challenges, when he met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and several Union Ministers on Thursday. The Naidu-led Telugu Desam Party is a crucial partner of the NDA with its 16 Lok Sabha MPs supporting the Narendra Modi-led government.

## India-DRC Secretary-level meeting aims to boost bilateral defence ties

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a boost to bilateral defence ties, the first Secretary-level meeting between the Defence Ministries of India and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was held here on Friday, Defence Ministry said. The Indian delegation was led by Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane and included senior officers of Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs and the Armed Forces. The Congolese delegation was led by Permanent Secretary of Defence, Ministry of Defence, DRC Major General Lukwikila Metikwiza Marcel and included the senior officers from the Ministry and a representative of Embassy of DRC in India. The meeting was aimed at identifying areas for collaboration to fulfill the potential of defence cooperation between

the two countries. Detailed discussions were held to promote cooperation in training and defence industry. The Indian delegation highlighted the significant progress India has made in defence manufacturing capability. The DRC side shared the need for modernisation of their Armed Forces. They expressed confidence in the capability of the India defence industry and suggested areas of co-production and co-development. Earlier, the visiting delegation called on Army Chief General Upenendra Dwivedi. India enjoys cordial and friendly relations with the DRC. India was among the first countries to establish a diplomatic mission in Kinshasa in 1962. The visit is expected to open up new avenues for defence cooperation between the two countries.

## CJI calls for participation in special Lok Adalat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud on Friday urged citizens, who have pending cases before the Supreme Court, to take part in the special Lok Adalat from July 29 to August 3 to get their disputes resolved amicably and speedily. In a bid to lessen the pendency of cases in the top court, the special Lok Adalat will be organised in the 75th year of the establishment of the apex court, which came into existence on January 26, 1950 with the coming into force of the Constitution. In a video message uploaded on the apex court's website, the CJI said, "From the 29th of July to the 3rd of August 2024, the Supreme Court is organising a special Lok Adalat. This is part of a series of activities, which the Supreme Court is observing to commemorate the 75th year since the establishment of the Supreme Court." He said most significantly, the judges, who are dedicated to the institution of justice, are

concerned about the large backlog of cases. "The Lok Adalat represents a very informal technology based solution to resolve cases involving our citizens to their satisfaction in a purely voluntary, consensual mode. "Therefore, on behalf of all my colleagues, and the staff of the Supreme Court, I would appeal to all citizens who have cases before the Supreme Court, or lawyers, advocates on record, to take the advantage and benefit of this opportunity in an attempt to resolve the cases speedily in a manner which is acceptable to every contesting party," Justice Chandrachud said. Earlier, the top court had

said Lok Adalats are an integral component of the judicial system in the country, enhancing alternative dispute resolution as a means of expediting and fostering amicable settlements. It had said organising of the Lok Adalat was pursuant to the commitment to accessible and efficient justice delivery for all sections of the society. It had said cases having elements of settlement, including those relating to matrimonial disputes, property disputes, motor accident claims, land acquisition, compensation, service and labour which are pending before the apex court, would be taken up to facilitate speedy disposal.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Momentous meeting

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

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



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

### PICTALK



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

## Give freebies only when essential and unavoidable

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

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

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



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

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



KAJLEEN KAUR

# Nuanced shift in parliamentary conduct

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



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

The 18th Lok Sabha has been ushered in with customary procedural formalities on the 25th of June, 2024. Certain rituals convert the reality of Lok Sabha into the sanctified existence of a group of people meant to lead this country through such vicissitudes as it may face. This is, as it should be, an extraordinary phenomenon. The nation can be legitimately proud of this event. Yet in certain ways, it's different from some of the preceding Lok Sabhas because this time there was no consensus on the identification of a Speaker for the Lok Sabha.

It is not as if in each of the preceding Lok Sabhas, the selection of the speaker was unanimous. There were instances when the Speaker was chosen by ballot and the Lok Sabha still, functioned with a fair degree of cohesiveness. The unique situation in the 18th Lok Sabha included a demand by the opposition to promise it a Deputy Speaker's position. In the preceding Lok Sabhas, it did not seem to matter to many people. An assurance here and now 'seemed to be the demand. The matter seems to have would have been settled. The crux of the situation seems to be putting up the Deputy Speaker's position as a factor in negotiation. In the preceding Lok Sabhas, a consensus was built around these issues, which this time around did not seem to bother many people. This is a settled and yet important proposition about the style of conduct of affairs. An illustration may help to establish the point with better clarity. In one of the preceding Lok Sabhas, at a time when Jawahar Lal Nehru dominated the scene in Indian politics, there was a bye-election schedule from Muzaffarpur Constituency in Bihar. Then socialist parties sought to put up Acharya Narendra Dev as their candidate for election from this constituency. Jawahar Lal Nehru, who was one of the tallest figures in the political scene, seized this situation to make a point. He felt that even if Acharya Narendra Dev was a candidate for the opposition, yet there was



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

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

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

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### NEW BUILDING NORMS

Madam — This letter refers to the news titled "Haryana Permits Stilt plus Four-Floor Construction" published on July 3. In Haryana, the government led by Nayab Singh Saini has given approval for the construction of Stilt plus Four floors for homeowners, builders, and property dealers.

This decision has sparked a mixed response from both society and the construction industry. There is a requirement to obtain permission from neighboring plot holders before commencing Stilt plus Four construction. However, many Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) across the state have expressed opposition to the government's decision through various channels. The government's intention seems to be to increase the income of those involved in the construction sector, despite some technical and legal challenges. It is crucial, however, to strike a balance between the structural changes, such as the reconstruction of sewage systems, public facilities, and the concerns of the public.

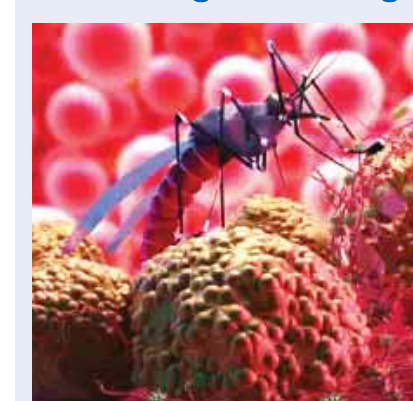
For residents of builder floors, the use of parking spaces will be significantly improved. Nevertheless, the construction of Stilt plus Four buildings will present both opportunities and challenges.

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

### MAKE QR CODE PAYMENTS UNIVERSAL

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

### Vigilance urged for Zika virus



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

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

Shanthi Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

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

### PM ON MANIPUR

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

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

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



## FIRST COLUMN

### A TALE OF DECEIT, DESIRE AND DEVASTATION

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



RAVI VALLURI

Those who are lust-infatuated fall back into the swirling current (of samsara) like a spider on its self-spun web," said Buddha. Aeon ago lived an old farmer whose wife was young and alluring. The prepossessing woman was not satisfied physically by her aged husband and fantasized about young men. She hardly attended to the household chores and was perpetually looking for the company of youngsters to fulfil her carnal desires. A trickster came to know about the quandary of the winsome one and seeing her alone went up to her uttering, "I am a widower. The moment I saw you I was ensnared by your voluptuous body. I beseech you to give me the pleasure of your company. However, I have very little wealth at my disposal." Delighted at the offer, the woman blurted, "O handsome one, my husband has plenty of lucre. He is old and infirm. I will embezzle the mammon and jewellery at our house and let us scoot from this place to some far away place where we can spend rest of our lives."

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



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

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

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

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

# Paper leak: Call for fair and a political resolution



GOURAV VALLABH

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



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

The NTA is governed by a body consisting of esteemed members such as former UPSC Chairmen, Directors of IITs, NITs, IIMs, and Vice Chancellors of JNU and IGNOU, whose integrity should not be doubted. However, the issues lie at both the policy and execution levels, and solutions are needed at both levels. Here are some proposed solutions: For examinations with over 500,000 students, a two-tier filtering system should be used, including preliminary and main exams. If the number of candidates exceeds 2,000,000, a more rigorous three-tier system should be adopted: preliminary, main stage 1, and main stage 2 exams. The final merit list should be based on the average marks obtained in main stage 1 and stage 2. This approach ensures a comprehensive evaluation process, maintaining fairness and integrity by filtering candidates through multiple stages. Implementing this system would address the challenges of managing large numbers of candidates and reduce the malpractice risk, leading to a more reliable and credible examination process. It is important to designate certain cities or centres as sensitive or extremely sensitive, similar to how polling booths are identified by the Election Commission. These centres should be under constant CCTV surveillance to maintain the integrity of the examination process, deter malpractice, and ensure fairness and transparency. This proactive approach will help restore confidence in the examination system and mitigate the risk of irregularities. The distinction between the Examination of Selection and the Examination of Rejection must be clearly defined and resolved. High-stakes exams like NEET and JEE are designed to be rejection-based, aiming to filter out unqualified candidates. This means the primary goal is to eliminate those not meeting the necessary standards. To achieve this, paper setters need specialized training to craft exams that effectively serve this purpose.



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

Each question should act as a hurdle designed to bifurcate and challenge candidates and comprehensively test their knowledge and skills. This approach ensures that only the most capable and prepared students succeed. A strong question bank, online testing, and AI-based proctoring can enhance the credibility of exams. Involving all teachers in contributing to the question bank and testing items for difficulty promotes participation. Implementing global standard cybersecurity protocols is essential to maintain the integrity of the examination process. Implementing biometric verification for handling question papers can prevent incidents like the NEET 2024 leak. Technological measures like constant surveillance, digital encryption, and secure transmission methods are crucial for ensuring fairness and security. The recent government notification of the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act on June 21 is a significant move to ensure the integrity of India's examination system. This Act introduces stringent penalties, including jail sentences of up to 10 years and fines of up to Rs 1 crore, for those involved in organized paper leaks and exam malpractices. It aims to combat examination fraud and restore public confidence in the examination process, clearly conveying that cheating and corruption will not be tolerated. This legislation deserves widespread support as it seeks to protect honest students' hard work and aspirations, ensuring a fair and transparent system for all. The grace marks system should be eliminated as it relies on subjective measures like answering speed and accuracy, leading to inconsistency and unfair advantage. Examination bodies should avoid awarding grace marks to ensure a level playing field for all candidates, maintaining the credibility and fairness of the examination system.

The government's prompt action in conducting NEET again for 1,563 students in seven centres is commendable. Recently, the CBI was appointed to investigate NEET irregularities and has been rigorously probing the entire examination fraud, leading to the arrest of numerous brokers, teachers, principals, and others involved in the wrongdoing. This swift response demonstrates the government's commitment to maintaining the integrity of the examination process and ensuring a fair opportunity for all students. The collaborative effort between the government and investigative agencies like the CBI is essential in addressing such malpractices and restoring trust in the examination system. Focusing on creating and enforcing fair exam policies is essential rather than engaging in political finger-pointing. Opposition parties should provide helpful solutions for issues such as exam leaks and fraud, and we need to come together to solve these problems proactively. We must prioritize students' well-being and create a secure, transparent exam environment to support their academic and career goals, positively impacting the country's future.

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

## How Assange redefined the political terrain for modern whistleblowers

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

In recent years, the narrative surrounding whistleblowers and their impact on press freedom has garnered significant global attention. Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks, remains a prominent figure in this ongoing discussion. His latest legal and personal developments provide a lens through which we can examine the broader issues of press freedom, whistleblower protection, and the intricate dynamics of state power.



SANTOSH MATHEW

Julian Assange is best known for founding WikiLeaks in 2006, a platform designed to publish classified, censored, or otherwise restricted information of political, ethical, diplomatic, or historical significance. WikiLeaks gained international notoriety in 2010 when it released a cache of U.S. military documents and diplomatic cables, revealing controversial actions and policies of the U.S. government. This move cemented Assange's reputation as a champion of transparency and press freedom but also made him a target of intense legal and political scrutiny. As of mid-2024, Assange remains detained in the United Kingdom's Belmarsh Prison, fighting extradition to the United States, where he faces charges under the Espionage Act. His legal team argues that extraditing Assange would set a dangerous precedent for journalists worldwide, potentially criminalizing the publication of classified information in the public interest. His health has been a significant concern, with reports indicating deteriorating physical and mental well-being. Human rights organizations have repeatedly called for his release, citing the harsh conditions of his detention and the potential impact on global press freedom. In addition to his legal battles over WikiLeaks, Assange has faced rape allegations in Sweden. In 2010, Swedish authorities issued an arrest warrant for Assange on charges of sexual misconduct, including rape. Assange denied the allegations, claiming they were part of a political smear campaign. He sought asylum in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London in 2012, where he remained for seven years until his asylum was revoked in 2019, leading to his arrest by British authorities. In 2019, Swedish prosecutors dropped the investigation, but the allegations continue to cast a shadow over Assange's public image. Julian Assange's influence on global journalism and transparency cannot be overstated. Named Time Magazine's Person of the Year in 2010, Assange's work through WikiLeaks has inspired a new era of investigative journalism. By leveraging technology to expose hidden truths, Assange has empowered journalists and activists worldwide to challenge powerful institutions and demand accountability.

Julian Assange's plight is part of a larger narrative that includes other notable whistleblowers like Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning. Snowden, a former NSA contractor, leaked classified information in 2013, revealing extensive global surveillance programs conducted by the NSA and its allies. Currently residing in Russia, Snowden continues to be an advocate for privacy and government transparency. Chelsea Manning, a former U.S. Army intelligence analyst, leaked classified military and diplomatic documents to WikiLeaks in 2010. Her disclosures included the infamous "Collateral Murder" video, showing U.S. helicopter gunship attacks that killed civilians in Baghdad. Manning was convicted in 2013 and sentenced to 35 years in prison, but her sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama in 2017 after seven years in custody. India, with its complex socio-political landscape, has its own history of whistleblowing and press freedom challenges. Cases like those of Sanjiv Chaturvedi, an Indian Forest Service officer who exposed corruption in the Haryana Forest Department, highlight the risks faced by whistleblowers in India. Despite the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, which aims to protect individuals exposing corruption or wrongdoing, whistleblowers in India often face retaliation, including harassment, legal action, and even physical harm. The cases of Julian Assange, Edward Snowden, and Chelsea Manning illustrate the critical intersection of press freedom and whistleblower protection. While their actions have undeniably contributed to public awareness and accountability, they have also faced severe repercussions. These cases underscore the need for robust legal protections for whistleblowers and journalists to ensure that the pursuit of truth does not come at the cost of personal freedom and safety. In India and globally, the fight for press freedom and the protection of whistleblowers is far from over. As governments continue to navigate the balance between national security and the public's right to know, the outcomes of these high-profile cases will undoubtedly influence future policies and the broader discourse on transparency and accountability. In the context of the Emergency period's media compliance, L.K. Advani's comment, "You were asked to bend, but you began to crawl," remains relevant today as a stark reminder of the dangers of compromised press freedom and the importance of journalistic integrity in holding power to account.

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

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# Illegal sand mining unabated in Telangana in violation of SC order

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Illegal sand mining of gargantuan magnitude is continuing unabated along the banks of the famous Manair River, a tributary of Godavari in Telangana. The illegal sand mining is happening despite Supreme Court order banning the same and the order by the National Green Tribunal asking the Telangana Government to get environmental clearance for the same from the concerned agencies.

Each village along the banks of River Manair is robbed off high quality sand worth Rs 100 crore per tender per year by a cartel of politicians, bureaucrats and contractors, according to Gottimukkula Suresh Reddy, a young engineer who is Telangana's widely respected whistle blower. A US-returned technocrat from the Peddapally village in Telangana, Suresh wanted to help the youth in his village



and surrounding areas to earn a reasonable income by getting them employment based on their skills and technical knowledge. "There are thousands of youth with driving licenses, and other professional skills in these villages. They could make use of their qualification and work as sand miners and transporters if the State Government gives licenses of sand mining to them," said Suresh.

But what he saw in the region was worse than what one comes across in commercial Tollywood movies. "The contractors who manage to get licenses for sand mining

Sediment Management," said Suresh.

The NGT after considering the petition filed by Suresh and others agreed with the petitioners' contention that the Telangana Government and Telangana Mineral Development Corporation have openly flouted the norms and there was no public hearing, a mandatory requirement under the rules. Peddapally district alone is looted of Rs 1200 crore every year by the sand mafia, according to Suresh. Since the looting is continuing despite the apex court order, Suresh Reddy has approached Telangana Governor (in-charge) C P Radhakrishnan seeking his intervention in the issue.

Even the permission granted for mining the sand is misused by the contractors who loot sand more than the officially allowed quantity. "Those who question the impropriety are issued death threats by the powerful contractor-police axis," said

Suresh.

Though the NGT issued an order asking for the stoppage of sand mining of any kind vide its verdict dated 21st May 2024, mining continues unabated in all the ten districts.

The Government appointed district level sand mining committees consisting of district collector as chairman, department of police, mining, irrigation and ground water departments besides local residents are forced to stand silently watching the illegal sandmining.

The Government of Telangana has its own reasons to justify the mining. It claims that all the 24 check dams built across the river have been washed away due to heavy rains. But only five dams have been built till date and out of these three have been washed away because of heavy rains and hence they are incapable to prevent the sand from running off," added Suresh who is a senior BJP leader in the State.

# Raise voice against anti-Bengal policies of Centre: Mamata to civil societies

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA



Branding the BJP Government anti-people Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has urged the State civil society to raise its voice against the Centre's policies that was hurting the people, more so the people of her state. Saying that she would not bow down before New Delhi's coercive policies and that she would continue to fight for the protection of Bengal's socio-cultural integrity and economic prosperity which had come under threat due to the policies being adopted by the saffron government. "It is for the intellectuals to raise their voices against the Centre's anti-people policies," Banerjee told a gathering of Bengali intelligentsia adding how "the Centre is obstructing the development of Bengal." She said, "the civil society should stand up and raise its voice against the Centre's anti-people policies" which were essentially hurting the interests of Bengal. "It is necessary to for us to preserve our identity," the Chief Minister who had a few days ago written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to postpone the implementation of the three new criminal laws said. A number of intellectuals including Bengali writers, poets,

dramatists and singers were present in the programme. "I want your support to intensify our protest against the Centre's anti-people policies," she said. The meeting took place at South Kolkata auditorium Soujanya on Thursday evening. The Chief Minister who has no love lost for the BJP Government has often protested its "anti-Bengal and anti-poor policies," the blockage of MNREGA and PMRY funds to begin with.

"The Centre has blocked thousands of rupees on account of the 100 days' works scheme... they are also not releasing the funds meant for Prime Minister Awaas Yojna which is not only illegal but also unethical," Banerjee earlier said.

"The fight against the Centre's anti-people policies particularly directed against the people of Bengal will continue," Bengal Minister Firdaus Hakim later said adding "the people of Bengal have rejected the BJP

and its policies... because culturally or otherwise BJP does not gel with Bengal and its culture."

The Trinamool Congress had extensively campaigned against the BJP and used the non-payment of central funds in the recently concluded general elections which saw the saffron party getting 12 seats against the TMC's 29.

Meanwhile in a parallel development the Bengal Government has announced a hike in the terminal benefits of the State government employees working on casual or contractual basis.

The benefit will include an increase from Rs 2-3 lakh to Rs 5 lakh State Education Minister Bratya Basu said.

Among the categories of workers who would be benefited through the upward revision of the amount are higher secondary contractual teachers, para teachers, SSKand MSK teachers, academic supervisors, ASHA workers, honorary health workers, Anganwari workers and helpers, civic volunteers, village police volunteers, home guard volunteers and auxiliary fire operators.

"The Chief Minister has been pleased to allow the increase in the terminal benefit of the workers which is very good news," Basu said.

## RPF of NFR apprehends 44 illegal immigrants

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Railway Protection Force (RPF) of Northeast Frontier Railway apprehended 44 Bangladeshi nationals and one Indian agent at Agartala and New Alipurduar railway Stations in different drives conducted during 16th to 30th June, 2024. Moreover, RPF rescued 29 minors and one woman from different stations over N. F. Railway during this period. RPF also apprehended one human trafficker.

In a recent incident of 30th June, 2024, RPF & GRP team of Agartala and SIB team of Badarpur, jointly conducted a routine check at Agartala railway station.

While checking, they detected sixteen Bangladeshi nationals. On interrogation they could not produce any valid documents and later confessed that they entered India illegally. Later, all sixteen were apprehended and brought to RPF/Post/Agartala and handed over to Officer In-charge/Government Railway Police/Agartala for further legal action.

In another incident on 18th June, 2024, RPF team of Dimapur conducted checks at Dimapur

## DTCP orders builders to carry out maintenance work in Gurugram residential societies

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM

A day after incidents of falling plaster came to the fore from two residential societies located in Sector-106 and 107 here in Gurugram, the Department of Town and Country Planning (DTCP) of the Haryana government on Friday issued direction to 32 builders of 38 residential societies to carry out maintenance and repair work to avoid any legal action.

"It is informed that as you are aware that monsoon season is approaching therefore, you are directed to carry out the survey of your existing licensed group housing societies as vis-à-vis falling of plaster from balconies and other parts of the building alongwith other maintenance issues like water supply, sewerage, storm water, road stagnation of water etc. within a period of 7 days and attend the deficiency/observations noticed during the survey by giving priority to the critical issues," the department directed.

"Any laps in this regard will be your personal responsibility and necessary legal action will be initiated against



you any case of any laps," read the directions. The department issued direction to builders which includes CHD Developers Ltd, NBCC India Ltd, Paras Buildtech India Pvt Ltd, Raheja Developers Pvt Ltd, Satya Developers Pvt Ltd, SVR Realtech Pvt Ltd, Ansal Housing Ltd, Vatika Ltd, Eros Group, ATS Infrastructure Ltd, Orris Developers Pvt Ltd, North Star Apartment Pvt Ltd, ABC Buildcon, Parsvanath Pvt Ltd, BPTP Ltd, SS Group, AEZ Developers, Vipul Ltd, Bestech Group, Dwarkadhish Buildwell Group, Brisk Infrastructure Pvt Ltd, Mapsko Paradise and Mapsko Royal, DLD Universal Ltd, M3M, Signature Global Pvt Ltd, Paras Buildtech India Pvt Ltd, Spaza Towers Pvt Ltd, Advance India Pvt Ltd, Central Park, Tulip Infratech Pvt Ltd and Mahindra Lifespaces Aura Pvt Ltd.

## 35,000 AK-203 rifles made under Indo-Russia joint venture delivered to Army

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The first 35,000 AK-203 rifles have been delivered to the Indian Army under an Indo-Russian joint venture in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh. Incidentally, this comes ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Russia on Monday next.

More than 700,000 rifles are to be manufactured in India as part of the joint venture, Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited, established between the Indian Ordnance Factory Board (OFB), Kalashnikov Concern, and Rosoboronexport — both subsidiaries of the Rostec State Corporation. Production in India-based unit started last year. Prime Minister Modi had inaugurated the factory in 2019.

Announcing the delivery, Rosoboronexport said it has "produced and transferred" the rifles to the defence ministry and with this the first phase of the project has been completed. A few of the AK-203, a version of the original AK-200 rifle chambered for the 7.62X39 mm cartridge, was bought off the shelf last year and handed to the Indian military, sources said. As per the roadmap, an

initial lot of 70,000 rifles are to be "Made in India" with less indigenous content. The first batch of 5,000 rifles had only 5 percent indigenous components, which will increase to 70 percent when the initial lot of 70,000 is completed in 32 months, sources said.

The idea is to have rifles made of 100 percent indigenous components over a period of 128 months.

"The AK-203s are manufactured in India in compliance with exclusive Russian technologies on certified equipment. This ensures high product quality and compliance with the states' characteristics," the Russian statement had said.

These rifles will replace the 5.56x45 mm INSAS (Indian Small Arms System), which has been in use for over two decades and outrun its utility. Compared to the AK-103, which was originally meant for joint production, the AK-203 comes with collapsible stock that can be adjusted to the shooter's height.

The rifles also come with a safety mechanism that enables a soldier not to lose contact with the grip when changing firing modes during operation.



President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with the recipients of the Gallantry Awards during the Defence Investiture Ceremony-2024 (Phase-I), at Rashtrapati Bhavan, in New Delhi on Friday

## Fresh trouble for Mahua over...

From Page 1

It has been tasked with preparing a detailed report on the July 2 stampede at a 'satsang' here that claimed 121 lives.

On the status of the police probe, the officer said the ambit of the investigation has been expanded as more evidence has emerged. "Definitely, the gathered evidence suggests culpability on the part of the event organisers," she said.

With the probe continuing in the case, the senior IPS officer insisted the "conspiracy angle" cannot be ruled out.

"Those culpable will definitely face legal

action," Kulshrestha said.

She said the Hathras police arrested six volunteers (members of the satsang organising committee) on Thursday and "more arrests are likely soon".

The ADG told PTI that more suspects whose role is under the scanner in the case are also being questioned.

"Searches are underway for the main accused (Devprakash Madhukar)," she added.

Meanwhile, in Lucknow, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has been apprised of the initial SIT report on the stampede.

## Pig culling ordered to contain...

From Page 1

Officials said the Animal Husbandry Department will investigate whether pigs were transported from the affected farm to other farms within the last two months.

The department will also conduct strict checks at checkpoints and other entry points in the district to prevent the illegal transportation of pigs and pork from Thrissur or other areas,

they said. Following the confirmation of the disease in Madakkathara panchayat, precautionary measures will be taken in other areas of the district as well, officials said. If the swine fever virus is detected in other areas, the municipal/government secretaries, village officers and rural development officials concerned should inform the relevant veterinary officer and then take the necessary

steps to control the spread of the virus, they said. According to the officials, African Swine Fever (ASF) is different from other types of fever.

Since it is a disease that affects only pigs, the possibility of transmission to other animals or humans is low, authorities have informed. According to a report, 2023 witnessed the highest number of ASF outbreaks for domestic pigs since 2014 in various countries.

## Lord Krishna's favourite...

From Page 1

Her Daughter Kunmun is equally excited as she says, "the temple in Puri will also be beautifully decorated with flowers, rangolis, and lights. I love the divine feeling that emanates from the entire procession." Delhi-based Itishri Mohanti who is originally from Jaipur town, around 80 km away from Bhubaneswar said that since they cannot travel to Puri to be the part of the sacred Yatra, the dose of the divine tradition will be a delight at the ISKON in the city.

She explained that Puri is the most sacred place as the heart of Shri Hari is believed to be present within the idol of Lord Jagannath. The annual Jagannath Rath Yatra is a significant spiritual event, drawing large crowds of devotees eager to witness the procession and participate in the festivities, she added.

During this festival, the three sacred chariots of these three deities will be carried out in a large procession. The chariots will be the centre of attraction because of their colours, designs and amazing decoration, said Mohanti, the mother of a girl child.

## J&K Assembly...

From Page 1

The political parties in Jammu and Kashmir have started gearing up in advance for the much-awaited Assembly polls in the coming months.

The Election Commission (EC) has already kicked off preparations for holding Assembly elections in Haryana, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Jammu and Kashmir by updating electoral rolls in these states. However, the final schedule of the Assembly polls is yet to be announced after taking stock of the prevailing security scenario in the region. Since last week both regional and national political parties have been holding brainstorming sessions to chalk out their poll strategies.

To begin with, the Congress party first summoned its

## Scrapping NEET-UG not...

From Page 1

This comes even as the Bihar Government, in its communication to the Education Ministry, had stated that its probe "clearly suggests a paper leak". The Ministry said in the affidavit it has already asked the Central Bureau of Investigation to conduct a comprehensive probe into entire gamut of alleged irregularities.

The National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG), conducted on May 5 by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses, has caused a huge uproar across the country over alleged irregularities like question paper leak and led to mass protests, political slugfest and filing of multiple pleas in courts.

Responding to the pleas which have sought scrapping of the controversy-ridden exam, re-test and a court-monitored probe, the Union Ministry of Education said there was no proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in the examination which was taken by over 23 lakh candidates at 4,750 centres in 571 cities.

It said in any examination, there were competing rights, and interests of a large number of students who take it without adopting any unfair means must also not be jeopardised. "Scrapping the exam in entirety would seriously jeopardise the lakhs of honest candidates who attempted the question paper in 2024," the affidavit said. It said the Centre was committed to protecting the interests of lakhs of students who have attempted the question papers fairly and after years of hardwork, without trying to obtain any illegal advantage.

"Therefore, while genuine concerns based on proven facts must be addressed, other prayers merely based on conjectures and surmises, without any basis in fact, must be rejected so as not to cause unnecessary suffering and distress to honest examinees and their families," it said.

The affidavit said there have been some alleged instances of irregularities, cheating, impersonation and malpractices during the exam, and premier investigation agency CBI has been asked to conduct a comprehensive investigation into the entire gamut of alleged irregularities. "CBI has taken over the cases registered in different states after being transferred to it by the concerned state governments and is undertaking the investigation," the affidavit said.

It said the Ministry of Education has constituted a high-level committee of experts to suggest effective measures for conducting transparent, smooth and fair examinations by the National Testing Agency. The affidavit said the panel shall make recommendations on reforms in the mechanism of the examination process, improvement in data security protocols and structure, and functioning of the National Testing Agency.

## Rishi Sunak Exits 10 Downing Street

From Page 1

His Conservative Party suffered its worst election defeat in history losing 250 MPs in Thursday's general election.

A sombre-looking Sunak was joined by his wife Akshata Murty as his future as a member of Parliament was decided and chose to use his acceptance speech to also admit his party's defeat in winning another term in Government.

"The Labour Party has won this general election and I have called Keir Starmer to congratulate him on his victory," said Sunak, acknowledging the "sobering verdict" handed to his party and taking "responsibility for the loss".

He pledged to "continue to serve" his constituents for the "weeks, months and years ahead" and stressed that the transfer of power at Westminster will take place in a "peaceful and orderly manner with goodwill on all sides".

In his farewell speech, the

44-year-old was filled with emotion as he apologised to the voters who had delivered the party led by him a hammering at the ballot box. But he stressed that he had given the job everything and also apologised to his Tory colleagues who lost their seats overnight.

Sunak said he will step down as the leader of the Conservative Party, taking "responsibility" for its debacle in the general election.

With some of the most prominent ministers and MPs including Sunak's predecessor Liz Truss — whose disastrous mini-budget and short-lived premiership last year is being blamed for much of the Tory debacle. Other key Tory heavyweights to lose their seats on a dismal election night for the Conservatives included Grant Shapps, Penny Mordaunt and Jacob Rees Mogg losing the election, the results being dubbed a "bloodbath" for the

Conservatives.

However, among the new Tory MPs included British Indian candidate Shivani Raja who beat Labour's candidate, former deputy mayor of London Rajesh Agrawal, in the closely watched Leicester East constituency. Other British Indian Tories who managed to hold on to their seats included former ministers Priti Patel, Suella Braverman and Claire Coutinho.

On the Labour side, several Indian-origin MPs were re-elected including Preet Kaur Gill and Tan Dhesi and some newcomers made their mark such as Jas Athwal and Kanishka Narayan, who became the first British Indian to represent Wales in Parliament.

Earlier, Keir Starmer won his own seat of Holborn and St. Pancras in London with 18,884 votes and was mobbed by his supporters who could see he was on course to being named

Prime Minister.

"The change begins right here. Because this is your democracy, your community and your future. You have voted. It is now time for us to deliver," said Starmer, in his acceptance speech.

Another major trend that will dominate the discourse in the coming weeks and months will be in Nigel Farage finally being elected as an MP at his eighth attempt and leading his anti-immigration Reform UK to bagging four first-time seats in the Commons.

The Reform leader overturned a 25,000 Conservative majority to take Clacton in Essex by more than 8,000 votes, reflective of a wider trend of the party eating into the Tory votes.

Farage, a divisive figure in British politics, dubbed his win as "the first step of something that is going to stun all of you", describing it as the "beginning of the end" of the Conservative Party.



# Starmer vows to rebuild UK

PTI ■ LONDON

Keir Starmer in his first speech as the UK's new Prime Minister on Friday pledged to heal the "weariness in the heart" of Britain and rebuild the country after a landslide Labour victory in the general election. Addressing the nation after he officially became the prime minister, Starmer said: "Our work is urgent and we begin it today."

Starmer, 61, recognised the "extra effort" his predecessor Rishi Sunak made in becoming the country's first Asian prime minister.

Starmer became Britain's new Prime Minister and replaced Rishi Sunak after he led the Labour Party to a landslide victory in a landmark UK general election on Thursday with a gain of over 200 seats.

Starmer received the blessing of King Charles III to form a government in a ceremony known as the "kissing of hands."

Earlier, Rishi Sunak, 44, resigned as prime minister after meeting the monarch.

Starmer said the country voted "decisively for change, and a return of politics to public service."

"When the gap between the sacrifices made by people and the service they receive from politicians grows this big, it leads to a weariness in the heart of a nation, a draining away of the hope, the spirit, the belief in a better future, that we need to move forward together," Starmer said.

This wound, Starmer said, "can only be healed by action, not words." He said he intends to start work right away "with the simple acknowledgement that public service is a privilege and that this government should treat every single person in this country with respect."

Starmer promised to "rebuild" the country's "infrastructure of opportunity... brick by brick."

"You have given us a clear mandate and we will use it to deliver change... and unite our country," he said. Starmer said that "changing a country is not like flicking a switch" as he acknowledged the world "is more volatile". "It will take a while," he said.

Starmer told the crowd now that for too long, a blind eye has been turned as "millions slid into greater insecurity."

## Sunak reflects on Downing Street Diwalis; steps down as Tory leader

London (PTI): Outgoing British prime minister Rishi Sunak on Friday said he will step down as the leader of the Conservative Party, taking "responsibility" for its debacle in the general election, and reflected upon the Diwalis he was able to celebrate with his family on Downing Street as the country's first leader of Indian heritage.

In his farewell speech as prime minister after 20 months in office, the 44-year-old was filled with emotion as he apologised to the voters who had delivered the party led by him a hammering at the ballot box. But he stressed that he had given the job everything and also apologised to his Tory colleagues who lost their seats overnight. "I would like to say first and foremost, I am sorry. I have given this job my all, but you have sent a clear signal that the government of the United Kingdom must change," said Sunak, watched over by his wife Akshata Murty. "Yours is the only judgment that matters. I have heard your anger, your disappointment, and I take responsibility for this loss... Following this result, I will step down as party leader, not

immediately, but once the formal arrangements for selecting my successor are in place," he said.

The outgoing leader acknowledged the rebuilding work required within the Tories as it takes on the "crucial role" of the new Opposition in Parliament. Sunak also highlighted a few of his key achievements during his premiership, pointing to falling inflation and leaving the UK "safer, stronger and more secure".

He went on to welcome his successor to the "most demanding of jobs in an increasingly unstable world" at 10 Downing Street: "Whilst he has been my political opponent, Sir Keir Starmer will shortly become our prime minister. In this job, his successes will be all our successes, and I wish him and his family well.

"Whatever our disagreements in this campaign, he is a decent, public-spirited man, who I respect. He and his family deserve the very best of our understanding, as they make a huge transition to their new lives behind this door," he said.

## World leaders congratulate UK's next prime minister

London (PTI): Several world leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Friday congratulated Britain's new prime minister Keir Starmer after his Labour Party stormed to power after 14 years.

The Labour Party led by Starmer won the UK general election in a landslide. He became the new prime minister after meeting King Charles III who asked him to form the next government. The Conservative Party led by Rishi Sunak lost 250 seats, its worst-ever defeat.

Modi offered "heartiest congratulations and best wishes" to Starmer on his remarkable victory. "I look forward to our positive and constructive collaboration to further strengthen the India-UK Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in all areas, fostering mutual growth and prosperity," Modi said.

Modi also thanked outgoing PM Sunak for his "admirable leadership of the UK".

"Thank you @RishiSunak for your admirable leadership of the UK, and your active contribution to deepening the ties between India and the UK during your term in office. Best wishes to you and your family for the future," Modi said.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese also congratulated Starmer on his "resounding" election victory. Albanese added that he was looking forward to working constructively with the incoming Labour government.

Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni congratulated Starmer on his election victory. "The state of relations between Italy and the United Kingdom is excellent and I am sure that we will continue to cultivate a strong and reliable collaborative relationship between our great Nations, in the interests of our citizens and in line with common strategic objectives," she posted on X.

Prime Minister of Norway Jonas Gahr Store offered his congratulatory

ulations to Starmer and the Labour Party on the "historic election win". "I'm looking forward to continuing our close cooperation between the UK and Norway, including on the energy transition, our common security and trade," he said further.

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau posted a photo of himself and Starmer on X as he congratulated him on a "historic" election victory. "Lots of work ahead to build a more progressive, fair future for people on both sides of the Atlantic. Let's get to it, my friend," Trudeau wrote.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy congratulated Starmer and the Labour Party in a post on X. "Ukraine and the United Kingdom have been and will continue to be reliable allies through thick and thin. We will continue to defend and advance our common values of life, freedom, and a rules-based international order," he said.



Britain's outgoing Conservative Party Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murty walk from 10 Downing Street to a waiting car before going to see King Charles III to tender his resignation in London, Friday, July 5, 2024. Sunak and his Conservative Party lost the general election held July 4, to the Labour Party, whose leader Keir Starmer is set to become Prime Minister later Friday. AP/PTI

## Israel conducts military operation in West Bank city of Jenin, 7 Palestinians killed

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Palestinian authorities say seven people were killed Friday during an Israeli military operation in the area of the West Bank city of Jenin, where the Israeli military said it had been carrying out "counterterrorism activity" that included an airstrike.

The military said Israeli soldiers had "encircled a building where terrorists had barricaded themselves in" and the soldiers had exchanged fire with those inside, while an airstrike had "struck several armed terrorists" in the area.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said a total of seven people had been killed, but did not specify whether they died in the exchange of fire or the airstrike. The Islamic Jihad militant group named four of the dead as its members. The clashes in Jenin, a known militant stronghold where the army frequently operates, came a day after an Israeli anti-set-



tlement monitoring group said the government plans to build nearly 5,300 new homes in settlements in the occupied West Bank.

The construction plans revealed by the Peace Now group are part of the hard-line government's efforts to beef up settlements as part of a strategy of cementing Israel's control

over the West Bank to prevent a future Palestinian state. The Palestinians seek the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza — areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war — for an independent state.

Violence has spiralled in the West Bank since the start of Israel's war in Gaza, sparked by the October 7 raid into south-

ern Israel by Hamas militants who killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took more than 200 others as hostages. The Palestinian Health Ministry says over 500 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since the start of the war. Most have been killed during Israeli raids and violent protests. The dead also include bystanders and Palestinians killed in attacks by Jewish settlers.

In Gaza, the war has so far killed more than 38,000 Palestinians, Gaza's Health Ministry says. The ministry does not differentiate between combatants and civilians in its count, but it includes thousands of women and children.

Cease-fire talks appeared to be reviving after stalling for weeks. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said Thursday he was sending negotiators to resume the talks, a day after Hamas handed mediators its latest response to a US-backed proposal for a deal.

## Brazil's Bolsonaro indicted for alleged money laundering

AP ■ SAO PAULO

The indictment of former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro for money laundering and criminal association in connection with undeclared diamonds from Saudi Arabia marked the far-right leader's second formal accusation with more potentially in store. Two sources with knowledge of the case confirmed Thursday's indictment by Federal Police, which followed another formal accusation in May against Bolsonaro for allegedly falsifying his COVID-19 vaccination certificate. Both officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they weren't authorised to speak publicly.

Brazil's Supreme Court has yet to receive the police report with the latest indictment. Once it does, the country's prosecutor-general, Paulo Gonet, will analyse the document and decide whether to file charges and force Bolsonaro to stand trial.

The indictment dramatically raises the legal threats facing the divisive ex-leader that are applauded by his opponents but denounced as political persecution by his supporters.

Bolsonaro did not immediately comment, but he and his lawyers have previously denied any wrongdoing in both those cases, as well as other investigations into the former president. One is probing his possible involvement in inciting an uprising in capital Brasilia on January 8, 2023 that sought to oust his successor from power. Last year, Federal Police accused Bolsonaro of attempting to sneak in diamond jewellery reportedly worth USD 3 million and selling two luxury watches.

Police said in August that Bolsonaro received cash from the nearly USD 70,000 sale of two luxury watches he received as gifts from Saudi Arabia. Brazil requires its citizens arriving by plane from abroad to declare goods worth more than USD 1,000 and, for any amount

above that exemption, pay a tax equal to 50 per cent of their value.

The jewellery would have been exempt from tax had it been a gift from Saudi Arabia to Brazil, but not Bolsonaro's to keep for himself. Rather, it would have been added to the presidential collection. The investigation showed that Mauro Cid, Bolsonaro's former aide-de-camp who allegedly falsified his COVID-19 records, in June 2022 sold a Rolex watch and a Patek Philippe watch to a store in the US for a total USD 68,000. They were gifted by Saudi Arabia's government in 2019. Cid later signed a plea bargain with authorities and confirmed it all.

Flavio Bolsonaro, the former president's eldest son and a sitting senator, said on X after Thursday's indictment that persecution against his father was "blatant and shameful".

In addition to Bolsonaro, police indicted 10 others, including Cid and two of his lawyers, Frederick Wassef and Fábio

Wajngarten, according to one of the sources. Wassef said in a statement that he didn't have access to the final report of the investigation, and decried selective leaks to the press of an investigation that is supposed to be proceeding under seal. "I am going through all of this solely for practising law in defence of Jair Bolsonaro," he wrote.

On X, Wajngarten said police have found no evidence implicating him. "The Federal Police knows I did nothing related to what they are investigating, but they still want to punish me because I provide unwavering and permanent defence for former President Bolsonaro," he said.

Bolsonaro retains staunch allegiance among his political base, as shown by an outpouring of support in February, when an estimated 185,000 people clogged Sao Paulo's main boulevard to protest what the former president calls political persecution. His critics, particularly members of his rival President

Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's political party, have cheered every advance of investigations and repeatedly called for his arrest.

The 69-year-old former army captain started his political career as a staunch advocate of Brazil's military dictatorship, and was a lawmaker for nearly three decades. When he bid for the presidency for the first time, in 2018, he was widely dismissed as an outsider and too radically conservative. But he surprised analysts with a decisive victory, in no small part due to his self-portrayal as an upstanding citizen in the years following a sprawling corruption probe that ensnared hundreds of politicians and executives. Bolsonaro insulted adversaries since his earliest days in office while garnering critics with his divisive policies, attacks on the Supreme Court and efforts to undermine health restrictions during the pandemic. He lost his reelection bid in the closest finish since Brazil's return to democracy in 1985.

## Post-communist generation hoping for new era of democracy in Mongolia

AP ■ ULAANBATAR

Tsenguun Saruulsaikhan, a young and newly minted member of Mongolia's parliament, is unhappy with below-cost electricity rates that she says show her country has yet to fully shake off its socialist past. Most of Mongolia's power plants date from the Soviet era and outages are common in some areas. Heavy smog envelops the capital Ulaanbaatar in the winter because many people still burn coal to heat their homes.

"It's stuck in how it was like 40, 50 years ago," said Tsenguun, part of a rising generation of leaders who are puzzling out their country's future after three decades of democracy. "And that's the reason why we need to change it."

Democracy in Mongolia is in a transition phase, said Tsenguun, who at 27 is the youngest member of a new parliament sworn in this week.

"We are trying to figure out what democracy actually means," she said in a recent interview.

Discontented voters deliver a ruling party setback

Mongolia became a democracy in the early 1990s after six decades of one-party communist rule. Many Mongolians welcomed the end of repression and resulting freedoms but have since soured on the parliament and established political parties.

Lawmakers are widely seen as enriching themselves and their big business supporters from the nation's mineral wealth rather than using it to develop a country where poverty is widespread.

Voters delivered an election setback to the ruling Mongolian People's Party last week, leaving it still in charge but with a slim majority of 68 out of the 126 seats in parliament. Tsenguun was one of 42 winning candidates from the main

opposition Democratic Party, which made a major comeback after being reduced to a handful of seats in the 2016 and 2020 elections.

She articulates a vision for Mongolia that dovetails with small government Republicans in the United States. In her view, too many people think the government will take care of them, and the large budget just feeds corruption.

Government should be as invisible as possible, she said, and give people the freedom and responsibility to build their own lives.

"I don't think that (the) free market has developed yet because the people are not used to this mentality," she said. "People are afraid of competition." The detention of a couple of journalists in the past several months has fuelled worries that the government may be edging backward, eroding the freedoms that democracy brought.

## Beryl makes landfall on Mexico's Caribbean coast near Tulum

AP ■ TULUM

Hurricane Beryl made landfall on Mexico's coast near the resort of Tulum as a Category 2 storm early Friday, whipping trees and knocking out power as it came ashore after leaving a trail of destruction across the eastern Caribbean.

The US National Hurricane Centre said that Beryl is expected to rapidly weaken to a tropical storm as it crosses over the Yucatan Peninsula before it re-emerges into the Gulf of Mexico and likely regains hurricane strength.

Once in the warm waters of the Gulf, Beryl is forecast to head toward northern Mexico near the Texas border, an area had already been soaked by Tropical Storm Alberto just a couple of weeks ago.

Once the earliest storm to

develop into a Category 5 hurricane in the Atlantic, Beryl spread destruction in Jamaica, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Barbados in recent days. Shortly after landfall, Beryl's maximum windspeeds had decreased to 100 mph (160 kph), according to the US Hurricane Centre.

Mexican authorities had moved some tourists and residents out of low-lying areas around the Yucatan peninsula prior to landfall, but tens of thousands remained to tough out the 100 mph (160 kph) winds and expected storm surge. Much of the area around Tulum is just a few yards (metres) above sea level.

The city was plunged into darkness when the storm knocked out power as it came ashore. Screaming winds set off car alarms across the town. Once a sleepy, laid-back village,

in recent years Tulum has boomed with unrestrained development and now has about 50,000 permanent inhabitants and at least as many tourists on an average day. The resort now has its own international airport.

Early Friday, the storm's center was about 15 miles (25 kilometers) north-northwest of Tulum and was moving west-northwest at 15 mph (about 24 kph), the hurricane center said.

On Friday, Beryl was expected to weaken as it crossed over the Yucatan peninsula and re-emerge in the Gulf of Mexico, where the surprisingly resilient storm could once again become a hurricane and make a second landfall around Mexico's border with Texas next week.

As the wind began gusting over Tulum's beaches, four-wheelers with megaphones rolled along the sand telling

people to leave. Tourists snapped photos of the growing surf, but military personnel urged them to leave.

Authorities around the Yucatan peninsula have prepared shelters, evacuated some small outlying coastal communities and even moved sea turtle eggs off beaches threatened by storm surge.

In Tulum, authorities shut things down and evacuated beachside hotels.

Tourists were also taking precautions. Lara Marsters, 54, a therapist visiting Tulum from Boise, Idaho, said "this morning we woke up and just filled all of our empty water bottles with water from the tap and put it in the freezer... so we will have water to flush the toilet."

"We expect that the power will go out," Marsters said. "We're going to hunker down and stay safe."

## Fireworks light up skies across US as Americans celebrate July 4

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Millions of people in the US celebrated and suffered under heat warnings as they flocked to beaches and travelled in droves to toast their nation's birth with July 4 parades, cookouts and the always anticipated fiery splashes of colour in the evening sky.

In Washington, neon bursts of light illuminated the night above the National Mall. The Boston Pops performed a musical fireworks spectacular at that city's Hatch Memorial Shell. And at parades all across the country, revelers dressed up in red, white and blue and waved the Stars and Stripes in commemoration of Independence Day.

Travel records were projected to fall with people jamming airports and crowding highways to reach Thursday's Independence Day celebra-

tions, which will stretch into a long weekend for many.

On the East Coast, some would-be beachgoers in Connecticut were turned away as parking at state parks along the shore filled to capacity, including a 2-mile (3 kilometer) stretch at Hammonasset Beach State Park — the state's largest shoreline beach.

Across the West, meanwhile, residents dealt with stifling heat as the National Weather Service warned of a "significant and extremely dangerous" heat wave across much of the region. A heat advisory in Philadelphia that came with temperatures tipping into the 90s didn't stop crowds from gathering at historic sites in the city where the Declaration of Independence was adopted on July 4, 1776. Outside the National Constitution Centre, volunteer actors dressed in Revolutionary War-era cos-

tume made of heavy wool, despite the heat. Participants said it was worth it.

"It keeps you connected to your neighbourhood and where you live," said Adrian Mercado, who was donning a 6th Pennsylvania Regiment uniform. Evening fireworks were scheduled over the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, after a concert by Ne-Yo and Kesha. Fireworks crackled in backyard displays and an anticipated 16,000 professional shows were planned to light up the horizon from sea to shining sea. Millions of people were expected to watch the Macy's 4th of July Fireworks show in New York City, where cross rings, strobing comets, waterfalls and other effects can reach up to 1,000 feet (305 metres) in the air. Excited viewers crowded along both the New York and New Jersey sides of the Hudson River as

dusk turned to dark, and they hoped rain would stay away. "This is how we celebrate. It's the bombs bursting in air. It's the rockets' red glare. That's how people show their pride and patriotism," said Julie Heckman of the American Pyrotechnics Association.

All signs pointed to big celebrations: The Transportation Security Administration reported that a record of nearly 3 million people travelled through airports in a single day last week, a figure expected to be broken this week. AAA projected that 60.6 million people will travel by car during the holiday period. Part of the boost was attributed to easing inflation, though many Americans remain concerned about the economy. On much of the West Coast, residents were advised to take precautions to avoid overheating on the holiday.

# Sebi issues new guidelines to streamline operations of credit rating agencies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Markets regulator Sebi has issued new guidelines to streamline operations and enhance the ease of doing business for credit rating agencies. The circular introduces specific timelines for dealing with appeals made by companies regarding rating actions carried out during periodic surveillance of ratings. These modifications will be applicable, with effect from August 01, 2024, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) said in a circular on Thursday. "In order to promote ease of doing business and bring about uniformity in dealing with appeals, based on consultation with stakeholders, including



CRAs (Credit Rating Agencies), it has been decided to provide specific timelines for dealing with appeals made by the issuer in respect of rating actions carried out pursuant to periodic surveillance of ratings," it added. The changes mandate that CRAs communicate ratings to companies within one working day of the rating committee meeting, with an outer limit set to ensure promptness. Further, companies will have

three working days to request a review or appeal of the rating decision, and the dissemination of the press release on the CRA's website and intimation of the same to the stock exchange or debenture trustee must occur within 7 working days of the rating committee meeting. "CRAs shall continue to maintain records in respect of the said disclosures for a period of 10 years, which may be shared with debenture trustees upon request. "Further, disclosures in respect of the said aspects shall continue to be made available by the CRAs on their website under the issuer-specific press releases/ rating rationale section of the respective issuer, wherever applicable," the regulator said.

Sebi has also outlined specific timelines for certain types of disclosures, such as a list of non-cooperative issuers that should be updated daily, ensuring that stakeholders are promptly informed about issuers who fail to cooperate with rating agencies. For disclosures regarding ratings that have not been accepted by issuers, CRAs are required to maintain this information for 12 months. To ensure compliance, the circular will be monitored through the half-yearly internal audit for credit rating agencies, as mandated under the CRA norms, Sebi said. The process aims to uphold investor protection and foster the development and regulation of the securities market.

# Nifty scales new lifetime high

Sensex retreats from record to slip below 80K

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The broader NSE benchmark Nifty advanced further to settle at an all-time high for the third straight session on Friday, while the BSE gauge Sensex retreated from the record to slip below the 80k level. The broader NSE Nifty rose 21.70 points or 0.09 per cent to close at its lifetime high of 24,323.85. The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped 53.07 points or 0.07 per cent to settle at 79,996.60. Among the 30-share Sensex pack, State Bank of India, Reliance Industries, Hindustan Unilever, NTPC, Larsen & Toubro, Nestle



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

"The domestic market traded with a mixed bias, with the heavy-weight banking sector acting as a laggard. Adding to the worry are the top lending banks, which recorded a sequential decline in deposit growth in the June quarter. "Midcap and Small Cap outperformed, and the respective BSE indices hit an

all-time high," Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services, said. Asian markets were closed on a mixed note on Thursday. The US markets were closed on Thursday for Independence Day. On Thursday, the 30-share BSE Sensex scaled an intraday record high of 80,392.64 in early trade. Later, the Sensex closed 62.87 points or 0.08 per cent higher at 80,049.67, its all-time closing high. The broader Nifty also hit an intra-day record high of 24,401 in early trade before closing almost flat. The 50-issue index rose by 15.65 points or 0.06 per cent to settle at a record 24,302.15. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Thursday, as they purchased shares worth Rs 2,575.85 crore, according to exchange data.

# Passenger vehicle retail sales dip as heatwave curtails showroom visits

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Passenger vehicle retail sales in India witnessed a 7 per cent on-year decline in June as severe heatwave conditions resulted in 15 per cent less showroom walk-ins, industry body FADA said on Friday. Overall passenger vehicle registrations stood at 2,81,566 units last month, as compared to 3,02,000 units in June 2023. "Despite improved product availability and substantial discounts aimed at stimulating demand, market sentiment remains subdued due to extreme heat resulting in 15 per cent less walk-ins and delayed monsoons," the Federation of Automobile Dealers Associations (FADA) President Manish Raj Singhania said in a statement. Dealer feedback highlights challenges such as low

customer inquiries and postponed purchase decisions, he added. Singhania also highlighted that inventory levels of passenger vehicles have reached an all-time high, ranging from 62 to 67 days. With the festive season still some time away, it is crucial for passenger vehicle Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) to exercise caution, he stated. Effective inventory management strategies are essential to mitigate financial strain from high interest costs, Singhania stated. "FADA strongly urges passenger vehicle OEMs to implement prudent inventory control and engage proactively with the market," he added. Two-wheeler registrations rose 5 per cent year-on-year to 13,75,889 units in June.



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

election-related market slowdowns particularly affected rural sales, which fell from 59.8 per cent in May to 58.6 per cent in June, he added.

Commercial vehicle sales dropped 5 per cent to 72,747 units last month, from 76,364 units in June 2023. "The industry continues to face de-growth, impacted by high temperatures affecting the agricultural sector and infrastructural project slowdowns," Singhania stated. Tractor sales last month declined 28 per cent year-on-year to 71,029 units in June. While three-wheeler registrations rose 5 per cent to 94,321 units in June, as compared to 89,743 units in the year-ago month. Overall retail sales rose marginally year-on-year to 18,95,552 units in June. On the business outlook, FADA stated that for two-wheelers, the arrival of the monsoon is expected to provide a boost, although challenges such as agricultural cash flow

constraints and regional market variations remain. In the passenger vehicle segment, high inventory levels and ongoing low market sentiment necessitate cautious management, the industry body said. Meanwhile, the commercial vehicle sector looks forward to potential growth driven by renewed infrastructure projects and seasonal demands, despite current slowdowns, it said. "Based on current market conditions, the overall rating for July auto retail performance is cautiously optimistic with a moderate outlook," FADA, which represents over 30,000 dealership outlets, stated. It stated that vehicle registration data for the month was collated from 1,567 out of 1,700 RTOs across the country.

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



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Reserve Bank's executive director Neeraj Nigam on Friday said low labour force participation among women is a barrier to financial inclusion efforts and also to broader economic growth. He said there is also a need to up the credit supply to women, pointing out that only 7 per cent of the overall outstanding loans to micro, small and medium enterprises are to women-led businesses. "One significant barrier for financial inclusion and indeed to economic growth and development is more participation of females in economic activities," he said, pointing out that official data suggested female labour force participation at 32.8 per cent in FY22, as against over 77 per cent in men. Women constitute only 7 per cent of the outstanding credit to Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), he said, adding that this is very low when compared to nearly a fifth of the MSMEs being women-led. Speaking at the 'Financing Women Collaborative' conference organized by Niti Aayog and Transunion Cibil here, Nigam expressed satisfaction on the access to financial services front, pointing out that the Pradhan Mantri Jan-Dhan Yojana (PMJDY) scheme and social security transfers have helped.

With the challenges on supply taken care of, he said there are issues on the demand side which warrant attention. There are structural issues like low level of capital, labour participation, societal norms like restricting women from inheriting property that limit their ability to show collateral for lending and also lower access to education and training. Nigam also said that there is some "stereotyping" of women borrowers by financiers as well, like them being considered as higher risks which leads to higher interest rates, greater insistence on collateral or outright rejection of loan applications. The RBI ED also flagged some "behavioural issues" among women borrowers including them being more risk averse, less confident in negotiating loan terms and are less likely to apply for new loans because of the fear of rejections. He said the priority sector lending (PSL) mandate has emerged as a viable business model for banks and micro-lenders, and the "constraints" are on the demand side. After narrowing down on the challenges, the RBI has started initiatives on financial inclusion like opening 2,400 centres for financial literacy at the block level by partnering with nonprofits and also made it compulsory for lead banks to have a literacy centre in each district, he said.

# Startups to showcase cybersecurity innovations in mega summit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prominent founders, global cybersecurity experts and chief information security officers (CISOs) of large enterprises as well as tech unicorns will gather at the Accel Cybersecurity Summit scheduled to be held in Bengaluru on July 25. The mega summit will provide a platform for startups to showcase their cybersecurity innovations and pitch to a select group of CISOs from both big enterprises and tech unicorns, including PhonePe, Groww, Cred, and Flipkart, according to a release by Accel. "Accel is set to host India's largest Cybersecurity Summit on July 25, 2024, in Bengaluru," the global venture capital firm said. To evangelise the early-stage cybersecurity startup ecosystem in India, the event will bring together security operators, CISOs and notable founders from across the world. The summit comes at a time India's cybersecurity landscape is witnessing remarkable growth, and demand for products and



services is rising at a fast clip. According to a report by the Data Security Council of India, the market reached approximately USD 6 billion in 2023, clocking a CAGR (compounded annual growth rate) of over 30 per cent from 2019 to 2023. The products segment alone grew by more than 3.5X, reaching close to USD 3.7 billion in 2023 from USD 1 billion in 2019. "India's cybersecurity landscape is maturing quickly. With the exponential growth of large SaaS (software as a service) and consumer companies in India, security teams have become highly

skilled at combating increasing threat surfaces," said Prayank Swaroop, partner at Accel. Swaroop said Accel has funded over 50 cybersecurity companies globally, many of which have Indian-origin founders. "There are significant opportunities for the founders in India to build the next generation of global cybersecurity companies focusing on areas like AI (artificial intelligence) in cybersecurity, application security, and security operations," he added. The upcoming summit will have four distinct knowledge tracks tailored to the varied

interests of participants, and a pavilion where startups and data security teams can showcase their products. The 'application security' track will cover topics like setting up a high-quality AppSec programme, which involves practices and tools to protect applications from threats and vulnerabilities during development and deployment, and automating tasks across the AppSec stack. The 'security operations' track will look at how to leverage Security Information and Event Management (SIEM) and Security Orchestration, Automation, and Response (SOAR) for automating security operations and explore strategies for scaling security operations as organisations grow. 'AI in security' will explore the role of AI in enhancing the AppSec stack and large language model (LLM) security. And finally, the 'founders in security' track will offer deep insights into best practices for scaling go-to-market strategies and selling to security teams and CISOs.

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The average cost of a vegetarian thali became dearer by 10 per cent in June due to the jump in onion, potato, and tomato prices, a report said on Friday. However, a decline in the broiler price contributed to a decrease in the cost of a non-vegetarian meal, as per Crisil Market Intelligence and Analysis' monthly "Roti Rice Rate" report. The cost of veg thali, which comprises roti, vegetables (onions, tomatoes and potatoes), rice, dal, curd and salad, increased 10 per cent to Rs 29.4 per plate in June from Rs 26.7 in the year-ago period, and was higher when compared to Rs 27.8 in May 2024, it said. The overall hike in vegetarian thali prices is attributed to a 30 per cent increase in prices of tomato, 59 per cent in potato and 46 per cent in onion. In the case of onion, there were lower arrivals due to a significant drop in rabi acreage, while potato witnessed lower yields due to unseasonal rainfall in March, it said.



On the surge in tomato prices, it said virus infestation in the summer crop due to high temperatures in key growing regions of Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh reduced tomato arrivals by 35 per cent year-on-year. Additionally, there was a 13 per cent increase in rice prices due to a dip in acreage, resulting in subdued arrivals, while the pulse prices rose 22 per cent owing to a dry spell in key kharif months, the report said. In the case of non-vegetarian thali, which comprises all the same ingredients but dal gets replaced by chicken, the price declined to Rs 58 in June as compared to Rs 60.5 in the year-ago period, but was considerably higher when compared with the preceding May's price of Rs 55.9 per thali.

# Training for interns held



PNS ■ SONEPAT

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

# Govt makes ISI mark must for stainless steel, aluminium utensils

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has made it mandatory for stainless steel and aluminium kitchen utensils to conform to national quality standards, the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) said on Friday, in a move aimed at enhancing consumer safety and product quality. The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), under Ministry of Commerce and Industry, issued a Quality Control Order on March 14, making the ISI mark compulsory for these kitchen

utensils. Indian Standards Institution (ISI) mark is developed by BIS, assuring of product quality and safety. According to BIS, the order prohibits the manufacture, import, sale, distribution, storage, or exhibition for sale of any stainless steel or aluminium utensils that do not bear the BIS standard mark. Non-compliance with the order will attract penalties, underscoring the government's commitment to consumer safety and product integrity, it said in a statement.

# JSW Energy plans ₹15K crore capex in FY25

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Energy Chairman & Managing Director Sajjan Jindal on Friday said the company has planned a capital expenditure of Rs 15,000 crore during the current fiscal year. In his address to shareholders at the annual general meeting, he said, the company intends to spend around Rs 1,15,000 crore to reach the goal of 20 GW generation and 40 GWh storage under 'Strategy 2.0'. He further said the company's plan is to spend approximately Rs 15,000 crore in current fiscal year and it is also actively scouting for acquisition opportunities in the power sector. The company is on track to

commission ongoing projects for power generation, battery storage and green hydrogen production, it said. The growth capital secured through the recently completed QIP (qualified institutional placement) strategically positions the company to accelerate the execution of returns accretive growth plans, he noted. In April 2024, JSW Energy had raised Rs 5,000 crore of equity through a QIP issue to build a war chest for accelerating its growth ambitions. The issue was subscribed over 3.2X and met with an overwhelming response by high quality blue-chip global and domestic institutional investors, Jindal said. He told shareholders that



during fiscal 2024, the company achieved significant milestone by securing 3.4 GW of renewable energy projects

through competitive bidding. In the current year, the company added a pipeline of 600 MW, resulting in a total

locked-in capacity of 13.9 GW. This growth represents a 42 per cent increase in its locked-in capacity when compared to fiscal year 2023, he added. The pipeline includes aggregate solar projects of 2.4 GW — 700 MW each from SJVN, NTPC and SECI, and another 300 MW project from GUVNL. A wind project of 1 GW was awarded from SECI. The company also bagged 300 MW of wind-solar hybrid projects each from SECI and SJVN. Additionally, during fiscal 2024, the company achieved a significant milestone with the rapid synchronisation of Ind-Barath Unit 1, having a capacity of 350 MW and Unit 2 of similar capacity is expected to be synchronised in this quarter.

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Confident that India's bid to host the 2036 Olympics will be successful, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has urged athletes bound for this month's Paris Games to share their views on the arrangements in the French capital to help his government's ambitious plan to bring the quadrennial showpiece here.

In an interaction with Paris-bound athletes, conducted both in person and online on Thursday, Modi said those travelling to the French capital would do the country a huge service by providing inputs from their experience.

"We are hoping to host the Olympics in 2036, it will help in creating a sporting atmosphere (in the country). Work is in progress to prepare infrastructure for it," he said in the interaction, which was attended by the national men's hockey team, the shooting contingent, boxers and track-and-field stars such as Neeraj Chopra among others.

The complete video of the PM's light-hearted conversation with the athletes was shared by his office on Friday. The meeting with the contingent was also attended by sports minister Mansukh Mandaviva and Indian Olympic Association (IAO)



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

President P T Usha. "I won't ask you to do anything in the middle of your events but when you are free, I would urge you to observe the arrangements. Your inputs will help our bid for 2036. We will have an understanding on how to make sure that we are better-prepared," he added in his closing remarks to the athletes.

The upcoming Games will be held from July 26 to August 11 and India would be hoping to better its best ever tally of seven medals, including Chopra's historic javelin throw gold, achieved in the Tokyo Games.

Over 100 Indian sportspeople have qualified for the Games, including an unprecedented 21 shooters, who would be aiming to end the medal drought of last two editions.

India has repeatedly asserted its desire to host the Games and found support from International Olympic Committee (IOC) chief Thomas Bach.

However, it would be no walk in the park to secure the rights as several other strong contenders such as Qatar and Saudi Arabia are also expected to throw their hats in the ring. A decision on the 2036 Games host is not expected before next year's IOC elections where a new President is expected to take charge.



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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Abhay Singh led India's charge on the opening day of the Asian Doubles Squash Championships by registering comfortable wins in both his events along side his respective partners in Johor, Malaysia.

The Indian contingent registered four wins in five outings on the opening day of the event on Thursday.

Abhay and Velavan Senthilkumar beat David Pelino and Reymark Begornia of Philippines 2-0 (11-4 11-6) in the men's doubles group stage.

Abhay then teamed up with experienced Joshua Chinappa in the mixed doubles, with the Indian pair starting with a bang, winning both their Pool C matches on Thursday.

Abhay and Joshua first accounted for Philippines pair

of Yvonne Dalida and Reymark Begornia 11-4 11-3 and then returned to the court to beat Naisha Singh and Anders Ong Wee Jun of Singapore 11-3 11-6.

The women's doubles pair of Rathika Suthanthira Seelan and Pooja Arthi R won one and lost one.

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

## Misfiring England faces in-form Switzerland for semifinal spot



AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

England will play Switzerland in the quarterfinals of Euro 2024 on Saturday. England faced criticism from fans who thought the team underperformed in its extra-time win over Slovakia, while Switzerland exceeded expectations by knocking out defending champion Italy.

The winner will play either the Netherlands or Turkey in the semifinals. Here's what to know about the match:

**Match facts:** England is playing its fourth quarterfinal game at a major tournament under manager Gareth Southgate and won two of the previous three. Southgate's cautious tactics have brought hefty criticism from England fans, some of whom threw plastic cups at him in the group stage.

■ Jude Bellingham's last-minute overhead kick to send England's last-16 game with Slovakia to extra time was one of the most dramatic moments of Euro 2024 so far. Defender John Stones said surviving that brush with elimination gave the team new confidence.

■ Switzerland coach Murat Yakin has won a reputation for smart tactics at Euro 2024, especially by outclassing an Italy team packed with more famous names in the round of 16.

■ England is playing two days after a general election ended 14 years of rule by the Conservative Party. It didn't make waves in the England camp, which Stones called a "politics-free zone."

**Team news:** Bellingham is under investigation by UEFA after seemingly making a gesture towards his crotch during England's last game. He has denied he was mocking Slovakia, saying it was an "inside joke gesture towards some close friends who were at the game."

■ England defender Marc Guehi is suspended after picking up a second booking



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

AP ■ BERLIN

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) has suspended Turkey player Merih Demiral for two matches for making a controversial gesture at the European Championship.

The governing body said Friday that it had banned the defender "for failing to comply with the general principles of conduct, for violating the basic rules of decent conduct, for using sports events for manifestations of a non-sporting nature and for bringing the sport of football into disrepute."

Demiral scored both goals Tuesday in a 2-1 win over Austria to earn Turkey's place in the quarterfinals and celebrated with a hand sign associated with an ultra-nationalist group.

After scoring the second goal he made a sign with each hand that is used by Turkish nationalists and associated with the Turkish ultra-nationalist organization Ulku Ocaklari, which is more widely known as the Gray Wolves.

Demiral will miss Turkey's match with the Netherlands in Berlin on Saturday.

■ Stones wore heavy strapping on his right knee in training Wednesday but said Thursday he's fit to play.

■ Bellingham, forward Phil Foden and full back Kieran Trippier are among five England players who would miss the semifinals if booked against Switzerland. Captain Granit Xhaka is one of four Swiss players in the same situation.

**By the numbers:** Southgate is marking his 100th game in charge and it could be his last. His contract expires after the tournament.

■ Switzerland hasn't beaten England for 43 years. Harry Kane scored the winning goal when England had a comeback 2-1 win the last time they played in a 2022 friendly.

■ It's only the third time the Swiss team is playing in the quarterfinals of a major tournament. It has yet to reach a semifinal. A penalty-shootout loss to Spain in the quarterfinals of Euro 2020 was its best European Championship showing.

**What they're saying:** "The other night, I thought we were going home after 60 minutes of the game. To change the mindset of us all and keep that belief and faith, it's got a lot of power behind that for ourselves, other teams. Everyone watching at home knows that we're there to do it right until the last minute, literally. And, I think we should take great confidence from that." - England defender John Stones.

■ "Every team participating in the Euro wants to win, and so do we. But in the end, we are having both feet on the ground. We know who we are and where we're coming from. We know our basics. That is keeping us in the tournament until now."

## Jude Bellingham avoids immediate ban at Euro 2024 over offensive gesture

AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)

Jude Bellingham has avoided an immediate ban after the England midfielder appeared to make an offensive gesture in his team's win over Slovakia.

Bellingham will be available for England's game against Switzerland on Saturday for a place in the semifinals after UEFA on Friday imposed a one-game ban but said it "is not immediately enforced and is subject to a probationary period" of a year.

The Real Madrid midfielder will have to pay a fine of 30,000 euros (\$32,500).

UEFA said the punishment was "for violating the basic rules of decent conduct" in the Slovakia game.

Bellingham seemed to make a gesture with his hand toward his crotch after scoring an overhead kick to level the score Sunday as England went on to win 2-1 in extra time.

Bellingham's goal with about 80 seconds left in the game



saved England from a humiliating exit in the first knockout round.

Bellingham previously denied suggestions he gestured toward the Slovakia bench.

"An inside joke gesture towards some close friends who were at the game. Nothing but respect for how that Slovakia team played tonight," Bellingham wrote on X.

UEFA also fined England a total of 11,000 euros (\$11,900) for crowd disturbances and the "lighting of fireworks" at the Slovakia game.



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

AP ■ LONDON

There were tears from Andy Murray. Standing ovations from the Centre Court crowd. A video tribute replete with messages from Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Venus Williams.

And, yes, a doubles match Murray played alongside his brother on Thursday, all part of the first stop on the two-time Wimbledon singles champion's farewell tour at a tournament that meant so much to him.

The Murrays lost 7-6(6) 6-4 in the first round of men's doubles against Rinky Hijikata and John Peers - but the result was, truly, beside the point on this evening.

"The match itself, it was tough, physically. It was hard for me. ... I was fortunate I was even able to get on the court to play," said Murray, who had surgery to remove a cyst from his spine less than two weeks ago, forcing him to withdraw from singles. "It was pretty emotional," Murray said about the postmatch tribute.

"Watching the video was nice, but hard as well, for me. Because you know it's coming to the end of something that you absolutely loved doing for such a long time. So that was difficult."

It was the first time a men's doubles first-round match was played in the event's main stadium in nearly 30 years, a fitting way for him to begin to say goodbye - and for his many fans to offer their thanks and well wishes, too.

Murray, a 37-year-old from Scotland, has said he will head into retirement after playing at the All England Club, where he is also entered in mixed doubles with 2021 US Open winner Emma Raducanu, and the Paris Olympics, which begin later this month.

"I'm ready to finish playing," Murray said, "because I can't play to the level I want to anymore."

Murray occasionally fidgeted with his back and looked a tad uncomfortable while playing, but he also let out a celebratory scream after hitting a forehand return winner to go up a break

at 2-0 in the second set, the type of shot that helped him reach No. 1 in the rankings.

This was the first time the Murray siblings had played together at the All England Club. They bumped fists before the match began; they slapped palms between points.

Their mother, Judy, who taught both boys tennis, was in a guest box, sitting with Andy's wife, Kim, and two of the couple's four children.

"It was a fun experience for me to be out there and play with him," Jamie said.

"It was sort of strange knowing what the background was." Jamie's younger brother became a superstar in these parts by winning Wimbledon in 2013, making him the first British man to triumph in singles at the All England Club in 77 years. He won the title again in 2016.

His other Grand Slam trophy came at the US Open in 2012, the same year he won his first singles gold medal at the London Olympics at Centre Court - "One of my favourite days I've ever had, certainly as an athlete," he said on Thursday - and the next, at Rio de Janeiro in 2016, made him the only player with two in a row.

There were some of his usual mannerisms, whether it was tugging on the brim of his white hat or leaning over to pull on the tongues of his shoes or clenching a fist while looking up at the stands. There wasn't as much of the fire and brimstone he was famous for, the cursing and muttering directed at his team or, just as frequently, himself.

"Sometimes," Djokovic said during the four-minute video, "it looked like you against the world."

Then it was Federer's turn to say: "But you were never alone. Because while you carried your own dreams, you also carried theirs," referring to Murray's many fans.

After the ceremony, Murray was greeted by several current and former players, including Djokovic, Iga Swiatek, Lleyton Hewitt, Holger Rune, Cam Norrie, Martina Navratilova and John McEnroe.

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

AP ■ SILVERSTONE (ENGLAND)

Max Verstappen's emerging rivalry with Lando Norris goes another round at the British Grand Prix this week and this time Norris has home fans behind him.

Sunday's Formula 1 race follows their crash at last weekend's Austrian GP, the home race of Verstappen's Red Bull team. It cost both drivers a victory chance and ended Norris' hopes of a second win after the Miami GP.

Norris retired his McLaren and felt let down by Verstappen, saying the Red Bull driver impeded him by moving under braking. Norris cleared the air with Verstappen when the friends spoke twice this week.

"I don't think he should apologize. I thought it was good racing, at times very close to the edge, but we've spoken about it and we're both happy to go racing again," Norris said on Thursday.

"Some of the things I said in the (TV) pen after the race were more just because I was frustrated at the time. A lot of adrenaline, a lot of emotions." Verstappen's main concern was protecting their friendship.

"He's a great guy. Of course he loves racing, he's very passionate," Verstappen said. "You also have to realize he's fighting for his second win, I'm fighting for my 62nd. Naturally, your emotions are a



little bit different."

Verstappen also has 106 podium finishes compared to Norris' 19, and in pole positions leads him 40-2.

Verstappen felt Norris may have panicked a bit.

"I always said to Lando, when you go for moves up the inside, outside, you can trust me that I'm not there to try and crash you out," Verstappen said. "I felt everything that I did was nothing massively over the top."

Another heated incident at Silverstone could change that and jog some memories.

At the 2021 British GP, Verstappen and Lewis Hamilton collided heavily on Lap 1 at the high-speed Copse corner. Verstappen went to hospital for checks and Hamilton won.

It sparked a bitter feud lasting until the last lap of the last race in Abu Dhabi, where

Verstappen overtook Hamilton after a controversial restart to win his first world title and deny Hamilton a record-breaking eighth.

Observers have drawn comparisons between Silverstone 2021 and Austria 2024 with Verstappen coming in for some unfair criticism, according to his former Red Bull teammate Daniel Ricciardo.

"People are probably hammering Max a bit," said Ricciardo, who now races for the RB team.

He defended Verstappen as an "elbows out" and "tough" racer who imposes himself. He knows that given they raced together from 2016-18, the year they collided at the Azerbaijan GP and scored no points.

Ricciardo said the late incident at the Red Bull ring, where Verstappen recovered from a

# New look India start their journey without Virat, Rohit against Zimbabwe

PTI ■ HARARE

A new-look Indian T20 team would embark on a journey of self-discovery without their constant talismans, Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, hoping to unearth their mainstays for the future in a five-match series against Zimbabwe starting here on Saturday.

Even as the euphoria of T20 World Cup triumph sweeps through the length and breadth of India, Shubman Gill, who was a reserve in that squad, will hit a refresh button along with a bunch of IPL performers.

All the fresh faces are expected to make their international debut during the series scheduled to be played entirely in the Zimbabwean capital.

Two young men, who are lined for debut could be Punjab's Abhishek Sharma, who had a stupendous IPL for Sunrisers Hyderabad and the young Assamese lad Riyan Parag, who has given ample demonstration of his capabilities as a competent T20 batter. Both of them tick all the boxes for this format.

While over the past few years, Rohit and Kohli have skipped a lot of bilateral series, especially in the

shortest format, their international retirement from the format is bound to be felt more strongly.

The skills and quality that the two modern greats brought to the table will be hard to replicate but as it is the order of nature, the old guard has to make way for the new one.

Zimbabwe certainly isn't the most formidable opposition but in T20 format, the gulf between sides is comparatively lesser than the other two traditional forms of the game.

The hosts, led by the gutsy Sikandar Raza, who played for Punjab Kings in the IPL recently, could prove to be a handful on nippy afternoons at the Harare Sports Club where the ball will jag around during the afternoon starts.

Some solid performances in this series will keep these youngsters in contention for future when the first team players of the world champion side are back on national duty.

Shivam Dube, Sanju Samson, and Yashasvi Jaiswal will be available from the third match onwards and some of the young men would only get a couple of games to prove their mettle.

In future, the likes of T20 captain-in-waiting Hardik Pandya, his likely deputy Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Axar Patel, Arshdeep Singh, and Kuldeep Yadav will also be back



playing the format and there won't be too many vacancies in the playing eleven. From now till the 2026 T20 World Cup in India, the national team will play 34 games in the shortest format.

While skipper Gill is expected to open, one needs to see whether his best friend Abhishek gets his maiden India cap or the seasoned CSK skipper and captain of the Asian Games gold medal-winning team Rituraj Gaikwad ends up being the chosen one.

In case Abhishek opens, Gaikwad could come in at No.3 or swap positions with the Punjab southpaw. Parag's chances of a debut are brighter compared to Abhishek as he can bat at No. 4 in the first match, a slot he made his own for the Royals.

Rinku Singh, the designated finisher of the Indian T20 team for years to come, is expected to arrive at No. 5 in this new look line-up while one among Jitesh Sharma or Dhruv Jurel will bat at No. 6 while donning the big gloves.

If one looks at selection pattern, Jurel was the second keeper behind Sanju Samson for this series and Jitesh was a late entrant because of the unavailability of the World Cup squad members.

Hence Jurel, who made an

impressive Test debut against England is likely play in the first two games before Samson arrives.

In the bowling department, Avesh Khan and Khaleel Ahmed, the two standbys during the T20 World Cup are certainties and Mukesh Kumar, who is a very steady seamer bowler could be the third seamer pipping Harshit Rana, who is a better slogger with the willow.

Washington Sundar with his all-round abilities will hold his place till Dube arrives while leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi is expected to play all games.

**SQUADS**

**India (first 2 games):** Shubman Gill (c), Rituraj Gaikwad, Abhishek Sharma, Rinku Singh, Dhruv Jurel (wk), Riyan Parag, Washington Sundar, Ravi Bishnoi, Avesh Khan, Khaleel Ahmed, Mukesh Kumar, Tushar Deshpande, Sai Sudharsan, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Harshit Rana.

**Zimbabwe:** Sikandar Raza (captain), Faraz Akram, Brian Bennett, Johnathan Campbell, Tendai Chatara, Luke Jongwe, Innocent Kaia, Clive Madande, Wessly Madhevere, Tadiwanashe Marumani, Wellington Masakadza, Brandon Mavuta, Blessing Muzarabani, Dion Myers, Antum Nazari, Richard Ngarava, Milton Shumba.



## Inspirational, emotional: New-Gen India stars hail T20 WC triumph, eye their own glory

PTI ■ HARARE

India's emotional and epochal triumph in the just-concluded T20 World Cup found its resonance in Gen-Next stars such as Shubman Gill and Riyan Parag who termed it as an "inspiration" while vowing to bring more glory to the nation in future.

The new line of Indian players is here to play a five-match T20I series against Zimbabwe, which is starting from Saturday at the Harare Sports Club.

Gill, who is leading the contingent here, was a travelling reserve with Rohit Sharma's men before returning to India after the group stage of the T20 WC which was held in the USA.

The 24-year-old rated the victory as a "feather in the cap". "This must have been very special for all of them, and special for me. They have been working very hard for this. So, it's a feather in the cap," Gill told BCCI while sharing his feelings about India's thrilling seven-run win over South Africa in the title match at Barbados last week.

Abhishek Sharma, who had a stellar run for the Sunrisers Hyderabad in the IPL 2024, had a special companion while watching the final - multiple World Cup winner Yuvraj Singh.

"I was watching the match (T20 WC final) with the one and only Yuvraj paji (Yuvraj Singh). He got very emotional when India won the final. Watching that, I felt very good and got very inspired.

"It's a dream for all of us to win an ICC trophy, and he has won it for India many times," Sharma said.

"I will never forget that moment, and then we went outside and celebrated. I think this World Cup was very special and now I am really motivated to win a Cup for the country," he added.

Riyan Parag, who is set to make his T20I debut against Zimbabwe, called the victory an inspiration to all budding players in the country.

"It's an inspiration for all of us, the young players here in this squad to win a World Cup, to win something this big in stature. I think it's motivating for all of us, and the young cricketers in India," said Parag.

Wicketkeeper batter Dhruv Jurel used inverse logic while watching the final.

Jurel did not want to jinx India's chances of winning the match, hence he was telling everyone that South Africa would lift their maiden World Cup. "I was thinking that if I say India will win, then SA might win. So, I was saying SA will win, and eventually India won. I was celebrating like a kid after that," Jurel chuckled.

Rituraj Gaikwad was delighted to see three modern day giants in Virat Kohli, Rohit and Ravindra Jadeja, his teammate at the Chennai Super Kings, retiring from T20Is with a title win.

"To have a win of this kind, where we were almost in the jaws of defeat, and then to come back from there and win is a special moment. Obviously, a great end to the

T20I career of three legends (Kohli, Rohit and Jadeja)."

For pacers Mukesh Kumar and Tushar Deshpande, the victory was nothing short of a "miracle".

"As we say, the game is not over, till it's over. The final was the best example for it. We believe that miracles can happen," said Deshpande.

Mukesh joined him. "God! It was a different feeling seeing them winning."

Pacer Avesh Khan shared the big moment with local fans and now he wants to create his own piece of history.

"There is a place near my native - Rajwada - where people gather in a public space to watch big matches. I also went there to watch the match. I celebrated with everyone.

"I feel so proud to watch those videos and photos coming out in social media after our trophy win, and we will strive to maintain this standard of performance in future too," he noted.

Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi exploited the luxury of loneliness inside a hotel room to scream his lungs out, while all-rounder Washington Sundar said the win has created an emotional chord with the country.

"It was a great feeling that day. I was alone in the hotel and I was screaming all along inside the room," said Bishnoi.

"It's a huge thing for all of us. We saw it on TV as it was emotional for every one of them. It's a huge inspiration and huge congratulations to every one of them," said Washington.

## Kohli, Jadeja thank Mumbai Police for phenomenal job managing victory parade

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Floored by the grand reception and also the comprehensive police presence that ensured an orderly conduct of proceedings for most part, star India Virat Kohli on Friday thanked the Mumbai Police for doing a "phenomenal job" in crowd control during the victory parade of the T20 World Cup-winning Indian team here.

The side returned to a euphoric reception on Thursday after a 16-hour non-stop flight from Barbados.

It was hosted for breakfast by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi before heading to Mumbai for the victory parade which was attended by lakhs of fans.

It culminated into a felicitation

ceremony at the iconic Wankhede stadium where the players danced and took a victory lap after sharing their thoughts on the triumph that ended a trophy drought of 11 years.

"Deep respect and heartfelt thanks to all the officers and staff of @MumbaiPolice & @CPMumbaiPolice for doing a phenomenal job during Team India's Victory Parade. Your dedication and service is highly appreciated. Jai Hind," Kohli posted on 'X'.

The 35-year-old, who was adjudged player of the match in the seven-run final win over South Africa last Saturday, flew out to London early this morning after completing the engagements here.

He had announced T20 international retirement at the end of the final.



All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja also posted a similar note of thanks for the police force that was deployed to manage the sea of humanity that descended on Marine Drive to greet the players and be a part of the celebrations.

"Big thank you to Mumbai

Fans also thronged the complex to catch a glimpse of him and he duly obliged amid heavy police presence, waving and smiling at them.

"...This is for you," read his post, prefixed with the emoji of the national flag, on 'X'.

Senior off-spinner R Ashwin, who was not a part of the squad in the Americas, said he felt overwhelmed while watching the celebrations.

"Watching all the videos and pictures from the celebrations yesterday in Mumbai just fills my heart. This nation has given and continues to give so much to the sport. Once again so proud of the champions," he said.

At least 11 persons were rushed to hospitals for sustaining minor injuries or feeling dizzy during the massive fan gathering.

## I want Sikandar to lead from front: Zimbabwe coach Sammons

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sikandar Raza's vast experience of playing in various T20 leagues would certainly come in handy for an inexperienced Zimbabwe outfit, which would like to punch above its weight against a talented Indian side full of IPL performers, head coach Justin Sammons said ahead of five-match series, starting Saturday.

"I think we're very fortunate to have a player like Sikandar Raza leading the side. He brings great experience. We want him to lead from the front. He's been superb in the changing room and taking the players under his wing. We want his bat to do the talking. As well as his bowling," Sammons told PTI Videos in an exclusive interview from Harare.

Over the years, Indian selectors have always rested its top players during the summer months when the team tours the African nation where a five-match T20I series' broadcast rights helps in keeping the host country's cricket board in good health and best of spirits.

Even then three players from the T20 World Cup winning squad -- Shivam Dube, Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sanju Samson are expected to be available from the third game of the series and all four standbys, including skipper Shubman Gill are part of the set-up,



taking the count up to seven.

"This is an opportunity for this team to do that and to showcase their skills against the best and obviously to get an understanding of where they're at," said Sammons, who was South Africa's batting consultant between 2021 to 2023.

Sammons said that his focus is on the future and he wants to build a good team in next two years with players improving their game awareness and also honing their skills adequately for

the elite level.

"I don't want to dwell on what happened in the past, but what I want to do is obviously focus on the future. We've created a clear vision in terms of where this team wants to go within the next two or three years..."

"We're encouraging players to continually want to up-skill and improve. And they know they're going to be taken out of their comfort zone in doing that," he added.

Sammons waxed eloquent about young

India skipper Shubman Gill, praising his work ethic which translated into a golden period of 18-odd months across formats.

"Shubman is a superb cricketer, I remember first seeing Shubman, I think I was with the Proteas. We were playing that Test series against India. I think it was December 2021. He didn't get any game time there, but you could see his work ethic and how professional he was in the way he went about his business in the nets during that test series was something exciting to watch. And like I say, his record speaks for itself."

Talking about the swashbuckling southpaws Rinku Singh and Shivam Dube, the coach said, "They're exciting, they're dangerous. They have proven records against their names. It's an amazing opportunity for us...I think as a youngster growing up you always dream of playing against the best in the world."

The coach also heaped praises on newbie Riyan Parag.

"We can see how dangerous Riyan Parag is. He had a great IPL, showed his worth there. Again, another exciting prospect for India. Again, it's another opportunity for our guys to test themselves against the best," he concluded.

## Diksha rises to tied 4th in Aramco Series London, Tvesa makes cut

PTI ■ LONDON

Indian golfer Diksha Dagar shot an impressive bogey-free 5-under 68, best round of the second day, to rise 45 places to tied fourth spot at the Aramco Series London here.

Another Indian Tvesa Malik (73-77) was 4-over and T-41st, as top 60 and ties made the cut at the Par-73 Centurion Golf Club. Pranavi Urs, who had a disappointing 80 in the first round, retired with an injury.

Diksha, who was way down in T-49th place when the first round finally ended, made big amends in the second round as she carded 68 to get to 8-under for 36 holes to climb up the leaderboard.

Diksha, who started her second round late in the afternoon from the 10th tee, had two birdies on the back nine on 11th and 16th. She added three more birdies on the first, seventh and ninth. Another Indian making the cut

was Tvesa, runner-up at the Swiss Ladies Open last week. She was T-24 after the first round but fell dramatically on the back nine.

Even par for the first round, she parred the entire front nine but dropped shots on 10th and 11th. Then came a roller-coaster, as she birdied the Par-3 14th, but dropped a double bogey on Par-5 15th. Then she birdied Par-4 17th and dropped a second double bogey on Par-5 18th to close at



4-over 77 and was T-41st.

Diksha, winner of two Ladies European Tour titles and third last year at Hero Women's Indian Open, is five shots behind the leader, Leona Maguire of Ireland. Maguire shot 66-72 for 8-under and England's Georgia Hall (70-70) was second at 6-under.

Austrian Sarah Schober (67-75) was sole third while Diksha shared the fourth place with Welsh golfer Chloe Williams (69-74), Ines Laklalech of

Morocco (72-71) and Laura Fuenfstueck of Germany (70-73) at 3-under.

In team competition, Team Nadaud with France's Nastasia Nadaud, Czechia's Kristyna Napoleova, Spain's Mireia Prat and amateur George Brooksbank, set the early pace to reach 24-under.

They were joined by Team Hall, which had Georgia Hall, Hannah Burke alongside Morocco's Lina Belmati and amateur Shane Hart-Jones.

With both teams level on 24-under-par, they will feature in a play-off for victory at Centurion Club at the end of the third round on Saturday afternoon.

In the individual competition, Maguire holds a two-shot lead heading into the final round after carding a round of 72 (-1) to sit on eight-under-par.

The cut fell at +6 with 69 players making it through to the final day of the individual competition.

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