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MONEY 10 FMCG MAKERS EXPECT SINGLE DIGIT REVENUE GROWTH

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NETHERLANDS SAIL INTO EURO 2024 SEMIFINALS 12 SPORTS

Big blow to local ultras in Valley

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a major crackdown against the local terrorists active in Kashmir valley, a joint team of security forces eliminated at least six of them in two separate encounters in the South Kashmir district of Kulgam in the last 24 hours. Two soldiers of the Indian Army, including one para commando, were martyred in the anti-terrorist operations.

Both encounters broke out on Saturday when security forces launched CASO (Cordon & Search Operation) in the Modergam and Chinnigam villages following information about the presence of terrorists hiding in these two villages. The martyred soldiers have been identified as Lance Naik Pardeep Kumar, a para commando, and Sep Pravin Janjal Prabhakar. Senior administrative, police, and Army officers attended a sombre wreath-laying ceremony at BB Cantonment before the mortal remains of fallen soldiers were dispatched to their native places on Sunday.

In Srinagar, Director General of Police, RR Swain, on Sunday told reporters that encounters have happened on two different encounter sites in the Kulgam district. Six terrorists have been neutralised in the ongoing operations. DGP maintained this is a big milestone for the security forces and these successes matter in strengthening the security



Security personnel stand guard during an encounter with terrorists in Kulgam

environment... People are coming together to end terrorism and the operations are gaining momentum. The current operation is still underway and has not reached its conclusion... We have received news of the involvement of local terrorists as well...

The identities of the slain terrorists could not be ascertained immediately as the operation was still going on at one of the locations. So far the security forces have been claiming that the number of local terrorists active in the valley has come down and Pakistan was relying on foreign terrorists to

keep the terror pot boiling. However, unconfirmed reports indicated the local terrorists killed in the operation joined the ranks of a pro-Pakistan terrorist outfit after the Abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019. According to ground reports, the security forces blasted one of the hideouts to flush out the hiding terrorists in the Chinnigam village of Frisal while an encounter at another location of Modergam was still going on.

After the Jammu region witnessed a sudden upsurge in the string of terror attacks in June 2024 the security grid in the Kashmir valley

prevented large-scale terrorist violence by eliminating six terrorists in two back-to-back anti-terrorist operations. Of all the districts in the valley, the South Kashmir districts of Kulgam, Shopian, and Pulwama have witnessed the maximum number of incidents of terrorist violence this year.

Since January 1, 2024, Jammu and Kashmir has witnessed around two dozen incidents of terrorist violence in which 27 terrorists have been neutralised, 17 civilians lost their lives and 4 security personnel laid down their lives in the line of duty.

Continued on Page 8

Politician son driving BMW kills woman

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a brazen hit-and-run incident, a high-end BMW car allegedly driven by the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena's deputy leader Rajesh Shah's inebriated son Mihir Shah knocked down a two-wheeler, killing a woman and injuring her husband at Worli in south-central Mumbai in the early hours of Sunday.

The accused Mihir — who was behind the wheel at the time of the mishap — has gone absconding after the incident, while his father and driver Rajendra Singh Bijawat were detained by police for questioning immediately after the incident.

The mishap took place at 5.30 am between Atria Mall and Worli along the Mumbai Coastal Road, when a two-wheeler occupied by two fishmongers — Kaveri and Pradik Nakva — was rammed into by a speeding BMW allegedly driven by Mihir from behind.

Kaveri and Pradik were returning from the Sassoon Dock at Colaba in south Mumbai after purchasing fish stock at an auction, which they sell at a local market. After being hit by the speeding car, the two were thrown into the air and they crash-landed on the bonnet of the SUV.

However, the speeding car fled from the spot. Kaveri (45) was immediately taken to a nearby hospital where she was declared dead before



A damaged BMW car that was involved in a hit-and-run case, parked on the premises of Worli police station, in Mumbai, on Sunday

admission. Paradik sustained severe wounds. Police sources said Mihir consumed alcohol at a bar with some of his friends at Juhu in north-west Mumbai and later left for home. Enroute, he insisted that he would drive the vehicle and took over the wheel from the driver in a drunken state.

The Worli police have registered a case under the various provisions of the newly-introduced Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and Motor Vehicles Act. The Worli police are securing the CCTV footage of the bar where Mihir and his friends consumed liquor.

The police are also looking for the absconding Mihir. The investigators have, meanwhile, recovered the BMW car involved in the mishap from Bandra in north-west Mumbai.

On his part, Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shinde Sena chief Eknath Shinde has ordered a thorough probe into the incident. "What has happened is unfortunate, very sad... Law will take its own course, everyone is equal before the law. I have spoken to the police and strict action will be taken against those found guilty," he said.

In a related development, former Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) leader and party chief Uddhav Thackeray's son Aaditya Thackeray, who is an MLA from Worli, demanded immediate action against the accused.

Fisherman Pradik — who survived the mishap said, "It happened in front of me... the car rammed us. I saw him inside the car, driving... I asked him to stop, however, he fled the scene."



Judicial panel to grill godman in Hathras stampede

STAFF REPORTER ■ NOIDA

The judicial commission set up by the Uttar Pradesh Government will speak to anyone required for its enquiry into the July 2 Hathras stampede, a probe panel member said on Sunday when asked if self-styled godman Bhole Baba will also be questioned.

The commission will also issue a public notice soon, asking local people and witnesses of the tragic incident to share any evidence related to the stampede along with their statement, another member and chairperson of the panel retired Allahabad High Court judge Brijesh Kumar Shrivastava told reporters in Hathras.

"The commission will speak to anyone required for the Hathras stampede probe," former Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Bhavesh Kumar said when asked if the judicial panel will question the godman as well.

The three-member judicial commission, which includes former IAS officer Hemant Rao interacted on Sunday with locals in Hathras, besides officials and witnesses of the tragedy that claimed 121 lives.

Continued on Page 8

Killing fuels BSP-DMK tensions

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

Friday evening's gruesome murder of Tamil Nadu BSP president K Armstrong in front of his house by six motorcycle-gangsters is reminiscent of the 1980s' crime thrillers featuring underworld dons as characters. "This is a tit for tat murder as the slain leader himself had underworld links," said a senior intelligence bureau official monitoring the case.

Mayawati, the BSP supremo who flew down to Chennai on Sunday morning, said Dalits were not safe in Tamil Nadu. "There is no law and order worth its name in the State. The murder of Armstrong should be probed by the CBI as we do not trust the Tamil Nadu Police," said Mayawati after paying homage to Armstrong. She consoled the widow of Armstrong and was seen hugging and kissing the one-and-half-year-old daughter of the slain BSP leader. The girl had been named Savitri by Mayawati herself. Mayawati said those held by the police in connection with the murder are not the real culprits.



Slain Tamil Nadu BSP president K Armstrong (l) and BSP supremo Mayawati

"The murder of a hardworking and dedicated BSP leader and State party chief outside his residence has deeply hurt me and my entire family. Armstrong was associated with the philosophy of Ambedkar and was a follower of Buddha, so when he decided to work in politics, he chose BSP. He strove for the growth of the BSP in Tamil Nadu," said Mayawati after laying a big wreath on the mortal remains of Armstrong.

The Dalit activists in the State held the DMK Government responsible for the murder of Armstrong. It is an open secret that Armstrong never liked the DMK and that is

being seen as the reason behind Mayawati's refusal to forge an alliance with the Dravidian major. Armstrong was elected as a Councillor of Chennai Municipal Corporation in 2006 as an independent and joined the BSP in 2007. Impressed by his dedicated work, Mayawati appointed him as the State chief of the BSP in 2009 shunting out Selvaperunthagai, the then president. Selvaperunthagai crossed over to the Congress and was appointed as TNCC chief. In Tamil Nadu's politics, Dalit leaders do not see eye to eye even if they belong to the same party.

Continued on Page 8

Kolkata top cops face action for 'defaming' Guv

PNS ■ KOLKATA/NEW DELHI

Union Home Ministry has initiated disciplinary action against Kolkata Police Commissioner Vineet Goyal and a DCP for allegedly maligning the office of the West Bengal Governor by promoting and spreading canards, a Central Government official said.

The Union Ministry action came after Governor CV Ananda Bose submitted a report to it regarding Goyal and Kolkata Police Deputy Commissioner (DCP) Central Indra Mukherjee, alleging that they were "functioning in a manner which is completely unbecoming of a public servant", he said.

Bose's report, submitted to the Home Minister in late June, highlighted issues such as Kolkata Police officers preventing victims of post-poll violence from meeting the Governor despite his permission. Copies of the letter were sent to the State Government on July 4.

Continued on Page 8

RELIGIOUS FERVOUR



President Droupadi Murmu during the annual Rath Yatra in Puri on Sunday

PTI Photo

Mehsana's potato delicacies global foodies first choice

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ AHMEDABAD

Just about 50-kilometre ahead of Gujarat's prosperous city of Ahmedabad lies the sleepy town of Mehsana. For decades this agriculture district has supplied across India various produce like wheat, jowar, mustard cotton, fennel, cumin, etc. But one crop that has attracted global attention recently is Mehsana's potato. So much so that Mehsana is now referred to as "India's potato capital".

From global brands like Walmart, KFC, Taco Bell, Subway, McDonald's, Burger King, Pizza Hut, Domino's Pizza, Lulu Group, The Pizza Company, Tesco to Indian companies like ITC, Godrej and Mother Dairy — all are making a beeline to Mehsana to source various potato specialities like french fries, patties, hash browns, cheese poppers and potato flakes.

Potato-lovers across the world — be it US, Japan, Europe, Middle East, South East Asia — all are savouring potato specialities being exported from Mehsana. And one company that has turned the tables on global giants to make India net exporter of potato specialities is HyFun Foods; and this has happened in less than a decade.

Situated on the Ahmedabad-Mehsana highway, HyFun Foods is the brainchild of Hareesh Karamchandani, son of a potato-trader whose fascination with this staple food item of every Indian household began at a very early age.

In 1962, the first generation of entrepreneurs started Asandas & Sons who began the trading of potatoes and onions while the second generation further expanded the business. It was in 2015, the third generation, led by Hareesh Karamchandani,



Managing Director and Group CEO, set up HyFun to produce a variety of potato delicacies. "It was a small start where we challenged a big multinational which has started its plant nearby. But soon we won the

trust of big companies, in India and globally. And now here we are exporting our products to over 40 countries," Karamchandani told The Pioneer. Two things that led to

stupendous success of HyFun Foods is fast adoption of technology and strong partnership with farmers. "While we have set up state-of-the-art manufacturing plants, our strong partnership with

INDIA: FROM FRENCH FRIES IMPORTER TO EXPORTER

- INDIA IMPORTED 6,000 METRIC TONNES OF FRENCH FRIES IN 2007
- EXPORTED 5,000 METRIC TONNES OF FRENCH FRIES IN 2015
- FROZEN POTATOES EXPORT REACHED 67,770 METRIC TONNES IN FY 2022-23

up with an investment of over ₹1,000 crore will become operational soon. And our family of over 6,000 farmers is fast growing," he added.

"Mehsana is already on the global map for its high-quality potato-based products and this story is going to get bigger and better. Big investors are coming to Mehsana to support our journey. We have already signed an MoU with global logistics giant Maersk which is setting up a new cold chain facility exclusively for us with an investment of over ₹110 crore. More and more fast-food players from India and abroad are approaching us for contract manufacturing. And it is just the beginning," said Karamchandani.

The company is in process to launch new products — pizzas, kebabs, momos, processed vegetables etc — over the next few months. Since its inception in 2015,

HyFun Foods crossed ₹1,000 crore revenue in just seven years. Last fiscal it reported a turnover of ₹1,200 crore, 70 per cent of which came via exports, and it plans to cross ₹5,000 crore in next 3-4 years. By 2024 it also aims to have a network of 30,000 farmers spread across Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh with a focus on expanding potato procurement. Today the company procures around 3.5 lakh tonnes of potato every year, which is likely to cross 10 lakh tonnes by 2028.

The company follows 'seed-to-shelf' business model, which starts with contract farming for seed multiplication of processing varieties of potatoes and procurement of crops through a buyback agreement prior to commencement of sowing by farmers at the predetermined prices.

City waterlogged, road caves in after downpour



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Heavy rains lashed the city overnight and on Sunday morning, while also affecting several other districts of the state due to the northward movement of the monsoon trough line. According to the Met department, Lucknow received 75.1 mm of rain till 8:30 am on Sunday and an additional 2.2 mm from 8:30 am to 5:30 pm.

Senior scientist Mohammed Danish stated that Uttar Pradesh has received 36 percent surplus rainfall. The state recorded 193.7 mm of rain against an expected 142.7 mm since June. Lucknow received 122 mm of rain against the normal 123.8 mm. "The monsoon trough line moved from south to north, bringing heavy rains. However, the rain intensity will reduce on Monday as the trough line



moves back southwards, and only light rainfall is expected. After two days, another period of significant rainfall is anticipated," he said. Other districts that received substantial rainfall included Kaushambi, Prayagraj, Fatehpur, Pratapgarh, Mirzapur, Varanasi, Sant Ravidas Nagar, Jaunpur, Ghazipur, Azamgarh, Mau, Ballia, Deoria, Gorakhpur, Sant Kabir Nagar, Basti, Kushinagar, Maharajganj, Siddharth Nagar, Gonda,

Balrampur, and Shravasti. Rain accompanied by thunder and lightning occurred in Bahraich, Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur, Barabanki, Rae Bareilly, Amethi, Sultanpur, Ayodhya, Ambedkar Nagar, and surrounding areas. Heavy to very heavy rainfall was reported in Basti, Siddharth Nagar, Gonda, Balrampur, Shravasti, Bahraich, Lakhimpur Kheri, Sitapur, Bijnor, Amroha, Moradabad, Rampur, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Shahjahanpur, and sur-



rounding areas. Meanwhile, the road near the powerhouse crossing in Sector 08 of Vikas Nagar caved in after the heavy rains on Sunday morning. LMC officials said that the road belonged to the Public Works Department and the pit was caused by work being done by UP Jal Nigam under JNNURM. "A very deep pit formed on this road last year as well. Although the road belongs to the Public Works

Department, it has been damaged due to the work of Jal Nigam. Hence, in view of safety arrangements, the Lucknow Municipal Corporation has temporarily closed the road by placing barricades. The movement of people and vehicles has also been diverted temporarily. The Public Works Department, Jal Kal, and Jal Nigam have been asked to carry out repair work on a priority basis," an official added.

Woman alleges stalking, murder attempt by youth

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman accused a convicted youth of stalking her and attempting to choke her to force her into submission in the PGI police station area. The incident, which occurred on the night of July 5 but came to light on Sunday, involved a resident of Sector 12. The woman was on her way home when the accused, Ravi, intercepted her and forced her to stop. "He used abusive language for ignoring him and then attempted to kill me by choking my throat with a chain he was holding. I managed to free myself and retrieve my mobile phone, which he had tried to destroy," she said in her complaint.

The woman said that Ravi, who had recently completed a prison sentence, has a criminal history and continued to engage in criminal activities. "He stalks me wherever I go and has threatened both me and my brother for objecting to his behavior," she alleged. She added that she did not know when Ravi became infatuated with her, but his advances and criminal background made her life a living hell, causing fear for her and her brother's safety. The police have registered a case under relevant sections of the BNS and are investigating whether the victim had previously lodged any complaints. Meanwhile, a man accused his neighbour of demolishing his house in the Hasanganj police station area on the night of July 4. According to the complainant Siva Kumar Jaiswal, the accused, Rakesh Tripathi, along with about 15 aides, arrived at his house and tent shop around 1:30 am that night. "The accused damaged both the house and the tent shop, which are located in a lane in the Geb area. They carried out the demolition without any legal right or authorisation from me, using their

muscle power. This left me and my family without our business, causing us to starve," he alleged. Jaiswal stated that the two-story house was completely demolished. "Such an act would not be possible without the support of the police and local administration," he added, expressing concerns for his and his family's safety. The police have registered a case under relevant sections of the BNS.

DUPED
Associate professor and dean of State Ayurvedic College and Hospital Arvind Kumar Upadhyay was defrauded of Rs 3.5 lakh in a land deal and received life threats from the accused realtor. Upadhyay lodged a complaint with the Vibhuti Khand police. In his complaint, Upadhyay stated that he was seeking a plot of land and met realtor Sanjay Verma. Verma claimed to be developing a society in Gosainganj and asked Upadhyay to visit his office near Mantri Awas. Verma showed Upadhyay land in Gosainganj and promised to provide a plot once he developed the land he had purchased. After agreeing to the deal, Upadhyay paid Rs 3.5 lakh as an advance through RTGS. The deal was executed in 2020-2021, and Verma promised to register the land in Upadhyay's name soon but failed to do so for six months. As Upadhyay became increasingly concerned, Verma went into hiding. In 2024, Upadhyay encountered Verma by chance in the Vibhuti Khand police station area, demanding either a refund or land registration. "Verma threatened me with dire consequences and told me to forget about the money, as he would not refund it," Upadhyay said. He also mentioned that Verma had defrauded several other individuals in similar land deals.

Encroachment, e-rickshaws result in traffic quagmire at Chowk crossing

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

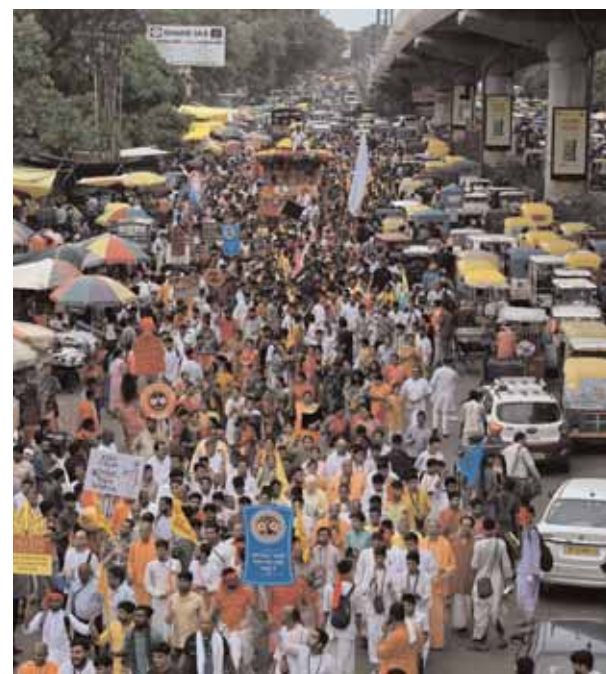
It's 10 am on Sunday as one moves down Rumi Darwaza road, leading to the Chowk crossing, which already has brisk traffic at this hour. The crossing features a large rotary that occupies most of the centre space. From the crossing, one road leads to Akbari Gate, another to Rumi Gate, the third to Balaganj, and the fourth to KGMU. The area is filled with e-rickshaws, two-wheelers, and tempos, yet there are no designated stands for autos and tempos. Chowk crossing is surrounded by well-known shops, and visitors often park their vehicles in front of these shops, contributing to congestion. Additionally, numerous fruit vendors encroach on the space, selling their goods. A traffic constable says that these vendors are not a significant issue and can be easily driven away, yet he makes no effort to do so himself. The Traffic department has created two 'one ways' around this area. Traffic is allowed to flow from Charak crossing towards Chowk crossing along the road where the Chowk police station is located. Conversely, traffic from Chowk crossing can head towards Charak crossing via an adjacent road. Fortunately though, buses coming from Hardoi are diverted from Koneshwar

point towards Rumi Darwaza. A resident of the old city laments that the area does not receive the necessary attention from the Traffic department, unlike the trans-Gomti area. "There has been no intervention to streamline the traffic here. There were talks of installing a statue at the rotary, but no suggestions to decrease the size of the rotary," he said. Mohammed Abdullah, a local resident, said that the crossing is very crowded and e-rickshaws are a significant problem. "Traffic snarls occur from the morning, and e-rickshaws are a big nuisance. Vendors, including those selling fruits, bread, and milk, also take up available space," he said. Adheesh Jain from the Sarafa market said that the police do not allow parking at the crossing, and the congestion is primarily due to the vendors. "Several times, issues have been raised in meetings with the administration about the traffic snarls in Chowk, but nothing changes even after assurances are given," he added. A traffic official stationed at the crossing said that the main problem is traders who park their vehicles on the road. "There is a multilevel parking facility near the mini stadium, but traders park their vehicles at the crossing, creating congestion. Additionally, we have created one-way routes, but people do not adhere to them, and we issue challans. The traffic snarls mostly occur in the evening when vehicles are parked at the crossing. If they are parked down the road leading to the crossing near Khun Khunji Girls' College, it would not create so much problem because the road is wider there," he explained. Regarding the lack of a stand for autos and tempos, he said that this was the responsibility of the nagar nigam.

Jagannath Yatra: Devotees pull chariot with reverence, devotion

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Rains failed to deter the enthusiasm of devotees who participated in the Jagannath Yatra in various parts of the city on Sunday. A grand Rath Yatra of Lord Jagannath was taken out from Shri Madhav Temple in Daliganj. Lord Jagannath, along with Balbhadra and Subhadra, was seated on the chariot. Devotees pulled the chariot's rope with reverence and devotion, cheering loudly. Lord Jagannath was seated on the chariot after being offered 'chhappan bhog'. BJP city president Anand Dwivedi, Lucknow North MLA Dr Neeraj Bora, and BJP senior leader Neeraj Singh pulled the chariot's rope and started the 'Sri Yatra'. Wherever the Rath Yatra went, devotees welcomed it with open hearts, showering flowers and spraying perfume. Bhajan singer Deepak Singh and his group walked in front of the chariot. Traders in Daliganj showered flowers to welcome the chariot at various locations. Prasad, including jamun, sweet rice, and bundi, was distributed to all the devotees. Bharat Bhushan Gupta said that this year, more than a thousand people watched the live broadcast of the Rath Yatra



Jagannath Yatra being taken out in Charbagh on Sunday

on Facebook. Mobile photographers captured memorable glimpses of the Jagannath Rath Yatra festival. Meanwhile, the Aminabad Jagannath Yatra, organised by the Swargiya Mahant Shatrughan Das Rath Yatra Samiti, which celebrated its 100th year, featured tableaux on Chandrayaan and Bharat Mata.

A group from Nasik playing dhols was a prominent part of the Yatra, along with eight chariots. The Yatra started from Marwari lane in Aminabad and went through Ganesh Ganj, Nakka crossing, Gurudwara road, Basmandi, Gautam Buddh Marg, Kaiserbagh, and Nazirabad, taking a round of the

Aminabad Hanuman Temple, Gadbajhala, and then back to Marwari lane. Throughout the Yatra, dry fruits, mangoes, and jamun were distributed. Nitin Maheshwari, one of the organisers, said that a plant bhandara and bhajan sandhya were organised in the days leading up to the Yatra. "A bhandara was organised on Sunday morning, and prasad, including kheer, puri, rice, and vegetables, was distributed to all. When the Yatra returned, a 'Maha Aarti' was also held, concluding the Yatra," he added. He noted that this was the first Rath Yatra in the city to complete a hundred years. Sri Mahavir Trust Naya Hanuman Mandir, where a 'Maha Aarti' was organised and prasad distributed. A Jagannath Yatra was also taken out from the 'Lete Huye Hanuman Temple'. The Yatra moved from Chaupatiya through Sarai Mali Khan, promoting the message of environmental conservation.

CLASSIFIEDS
NOTICE

I have changed the name of my daughter Anshika Mishra to Anshika Anupam Mishra. In future, she should be known as Anshika Anupam Mishra-Anupam Mishra resident of G-602, Shalimar Gallant, Mahanagar, Lucknow.

NOTICE

I, SADDAM holding Indian Passport No: V4775751 issued at LUCKNOW on 06/01/2022. Permanent Resident of VILL AND POST JARA PS SONAULI MAHARAJGANJ PIN 273164 UP INDIA and presently residing at DUBAI UAE do hereby change my name from SADDAM to SADDAM (Given name) SHEIK (Surname) with immediate effect

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Curtains on La Martiniere Girls' Model United Nations

Lucknow (PNS): As the La Martiniere Girls' Model United Nations (LMGMUN) concluded, delegates from India and abroad gathered one last time in the Farida Abraham Memorial Auditorium, which was filled with enthusiasm and zeal for the closing ceremony. Mitali Nikore, founder of Nikore Associates and a senior consultant at the World Bank, an alumna of Delhi University and the London School of Economics, reminisced about her own first MUN experience. She highlighted the importance of MUNs in developing



great leaders, drawing from her role as a founding member of the Delhi MUN circuit during her time at DU. Shivani Kumar, executive direc-

tor of the Children in Need Centre for Women Leadership, who has devoted her life to challenging stereotypes about women, addressed the persis-

tent inequality in today's world and emphasised the importance of women empowerment. Principal A Dass, expressed gratitude to Ambili, the MUN coordinator, for her dedication to ensuring the smooth operation of the conference. She also commended the secretariat and organising committee for their efforts in managing the event. The prize distribution ceremony culminated in the announcement of Bishop Cotton College, Bengaluru, as the best delegation of LMGMUN's ninth edition.

Kanpur node leads investment in UP Defence Industrial Corridor

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the UP Defence Industrial Corridor (UP DIC) is rapidly progressing to enhance India's self-reliance in manufacturing of defence products. Spanning six nodes across the state, the Kanpur node is witnessing the highest investment. Giving this information here on Sunday, an official spokesman of the government claimed that the Kanpur node will manufacture products related to the defence sector on the largest scale, including small and large weapons, ammunition and state-of-the-art military attire for the nation's army. Additionally, equipment related to space science will also be manufactured here. Over 218 hectares of land in Narwal tehsil of Kanpur is being developed as part of the Defence Industrial Corridor. According to officials of Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA), 24 companies have expressed

The Kanpur node will manufacture products related to the defence sector on the largest scale, including small and large weapons, ammunition and state-of-the-art military attire for the nation's army

interest in making investments, with five already commencing operations. The largest name among them is the Adani Group, which started its factory in the Kanpur node in February, investing ₹1,500 crore. This project aims to manufacture a wide range of small, medium and large-caliber ammunition. Additionally, Modern Material and Sciences Private Limited has begun manufacturing advanced

clothing for soldiers with an investment of ₹38 crore. Furthermore, Netra Global Private Limited will produce artillery shells with an investment of ₹360 crore, and Anant Technologies will manufacture equipment related to LEO (low earth orbit) and GEO (geostationary) satellites with an investment of ₹3,500 crore. According to UPEIDA officials, more than 210 hectares of land has been allotted for the Kanpur node of the Defence Industrial Corridor. Expectations are high for creating over 18,000 jobs from the Kanpur node alone. So far, investments totaling more than ₹1,700 crore have been materialised, resulting in immediate employment for 2,500 youths. The Yogi government plans to spend over ₹62 crore on infrastructure development in the Kanpur node. Approximately ₹33 crore worth of projects have already been completed, while construction is underway for projects exceeding ₹16 crore. Tender processes are also underway for projects valued at over ₹13 crore.

इंडियन बैंक (एन एफ एल एन एल) **Indian Bank** (A Govt. of India Undertaking)

ALLAHABAD
Zonal Office: Tindwari Road, Near St. Mary's School, Banda, UP - 210001

Sale notice for sale of immovable properties [See proviso Rule 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower/s and Guarantor/s that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank), Zonal Office: Tindwari Road, Near St. Mary's School, Banda, Uttar Pradesh-210001 as Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is". "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 24.07.2024 for recovery of Bank's dues from Borrowers and Guarantors to the Secured Creditor. The details are described as below:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower/ Branch/Phone No	Name of Property owner/ Mortgagee	Bank's Dues	Details of Property	Reserve Price Earnest Money
1.	Borrower: M/s Nagendra Infrastructure, Address: Baghava, Kabrai, Mahoba -210421 Proprietor & Mortgagee: Smt. Kiran Tripathi W/o Sanjay Tripathi, R/o Bhagat Singh Nagar, Kabrai, Mahoba	Smt. Kiran Tripathi W/o Sanjay Tripathi, R/o Bhagat Singh Nagar, Kabrai, Mahoba	0/s as on 19.12.2023 Rs. 74,18,747.00 date of realization and costs, charges and expenses from 20.12.2023	All that part and parcel of the property situated at Arazi No. 92, Mauza - Baghva Kabrai, Tehsil & Distt. - Mahoba, Area:10800 Sq. Mtr. in the name of Smt. Kiran Tripathi W/o Sanjay Tripathi Boundaries: East: Gata No. 94, West: Chak Road, North: Chak Road, South: Gata No. 93 Property ID No. IDIB30079100603	Rs. 91,93,000 Lacs Rs. 9,19,500 Lacs

Date & Time of submission of process Compliance form & EMD - 22.07.2024 upto 11 A.M. at and Date & Time of e-auction 24.07.2024 from 10.00 AM - 4.00 P.M. with unlimited extension, with Bid Incremental Amount. Rs. 10000/-

For further details and Terms & Conditions Contact: Anurag Saxena (Auth. Officer) Mo. No. 9897785008 e-mail: zohamipur@indianbank.co.in

For downloading further details and Terms & Conditions, Please Visit:
1. www.indianbank.co.in
2. https://www.ibapi.in
3. https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auCTIONhome/ibapi

Bidders are advised to visit the website (www.mstcecommerce.com) of our e-auction service provider MSTC Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call MSTC HELPDESK No. 033-22901004 and other help line numbers available in service providers help desk. For Registration status with MSTC Ltd. please contact ibapiop@mstcecommerce.com and for EMD status please contact ibapiin@mstcecommerce.com.
For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and condition please visit: https://ibapi.in and for clarification related to this portal, please contact help line number '18001025026' and '011-41106131

Corporate Office: Avvai Shanmugam Salai Royalpettah, Chennai-600014

Date: 08.07.2024 Place: Mahoba Authorized Officer, Indian Bank

87 people trapped in floods in Shravasti, Kushinagar rescued

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has successfully rescued 87 people trapped in floods in Shravasti and Kushinagar caused by the sudden release of over five lakh cuses of water following heavy rains in Nepal.

Those rescued include 76 people in Kushinagar and 11 in Shravasti.

During this operation, 400 villagers stranded in 18 villages of Shravasti were moved to safer places while 20 cattle trapped in the Kushinagar floods were also rescued.

It is worth mentioning here that the administration sprang to action and carried out the relief and rescue operations following Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directive to expedite relief efforts in flood-affected areas and relocate victims to safer locations.

Chief Minister Yogi has instructed the district magistrates of the flood affected Shravasti and Kushinagar districts to conduct a survey of the damaged crops and submit a report to the government within 24 hours. He has also ordered government-level officials to provide immediate compensation upon receiving the survey report. While the situation in these districts is currently under control, crop damage has been reported in some areas.

Relief Commissioner GS Naveen reported that at around 8 pm on Saturday, the state-level emergency operations centre received information about 11 people, including three men, five women and three kids, being trapped in floods due to the sudden release of water from Nepal, in the villages of Mohanpur Bhartha and Kevtan Purva of

Rivers in spate, villages flooded

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

With the monsoon becoming fully active and causing heavy rain, water levels of several rivers have begun rising in many areas of Kushinagar, Balrampur and Shravasti districts, triggering floods and flood-like situations.

According to a report from the Relief Commissioner's Office, the water level of the Gandak river in Kushinagar crossed the danger mark, flooding 13 villages in the Khadda tehsil. The Rapti river also crossed the

Gajobhari gram panchayat in Jamunha tehsil of Shravasti district. He said, "Upon receiving this information, Shravasti District Magistrate Ajay Kumar Dwivedi was immediately informed and he promptly arrived with his team to oversee the rescue operation." He added, "The district administration and flood teams of Provincial Armed Constabulary conducted a joint rescue operation, working tirelessly for approximately eight hours to safely evacuate all the individuals. Following their rescue, a team of doctors provided first aid to everyone. The victims were then taken to the guest house located at Rapti Barrage."

Devipatan Divisional Commissioner Shashi Lal Bhushan Sushil stated, "All the victims were safely transported back to their village after

danger mark in Shravasti, affecting 18 villages. The Rapti river has crossed the danger mark in Balrampur as well, leading to floods. Teams of the State Disaster Response Force and the flood unit PAC are deployed for relief in the affected areas. Thirty-two medical teams have also been formed, the report said. Heavy rain is likely in Gorakhpur, Bahraich, Gonda, Basti, Sant Kabir Nagar, Maharajganj, Balrampur, Shravasti, Lakhimpur and other districts, the Met office has predicted.

receiving first aid and food. During the rescue operation, the following individuals were successfully rescued: Karika (10 years), Minnie (12 years), Rita (25 years), Sheru (8 years), Archana (17 years), Kamala Devi (40 years), Shanti Devi (50 years), Saktaram (18 years), Rekha Devi (28 years), Nandan (30 years), and Ram Ujagar (50 years)." The relief commissioner stated, "At around 8 pm on Saturday, the state level emergency operation centre received information that 5,71,850 cuses of water was being released from the Devghat Barrage due to heavy rains in Nepal. In response, Kushinagar District Magistrate Umesh Mishra was promptly notified about the potential release of three lakh cuses of water from the Balmiki Nagar Barrage, which could affect the villages in Khadda tehsil."

He added, "The Kushinagar district magistrate and his team promptly inspected the 13 affected villages in Khadda tehsil and urged villagers to vacate their homes and move to safer places. During the inspection, they learned that some people and cattle were stranded on an island in Narayanpur, Khadda tehsil."

"Consequently, the National Disaster Response Force and PAC teams initiated a rescue operation. After hours of effort, the rescue teams safely evacuated over 76 people and 20 cattle. The rescued people were moved to safer places where they are being offered nutritious food," he added.

On Sunday morning, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath spoke with the district magistrates of Shravasti and Kushinagar, the areas affected by the water released from Nepal, to get an update on the situation. The district magistrates informed him that 87 people and 20 cattle had been rescued.

In response, Chief Minister Yogi directed all district magistrates to survey the crops damaged by floodwaters within 24 hours and submit the report to the government. He also spoke with government officials, and ordered immediate disbursement of compensation once the crop damage reports were received. The chief minister asked officials in the affected districts to visit the area, monitor the relief efforts, and assist the affected people. He said the authorised relief amount should be promptly provided to families who suffered loss of life due to the disaster. He also stressed that those who suffered damage to their homes or loss of livestock should receive the permissible financial assistance immediately.

VRIKSHAROPAN JAN ABHIYAN-2024

UP govt to establish 'Mitra Van' in Nepal, border states

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a major initiative, the Yogi Adityanath government has announced the establishment of 'Mitra Van' under the Vriksharopan Jan Abhiyan-2024 along the borders of Uttar Pradesh and the neighbouring country of Nepal. Locations have been selected by 35 forest divisions for this purpose.

On the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Forest department is coordinating with the neighbouring country and states to enhance greenery through the plantation of 35 crore saplings. Additionally, alongside planting saplings on UP's land at the borders, the Forest department will also involve dignitaries from other states in this mega campaign.

Following the date set by Chief Minister Yogi (July 20), the Forest department is dedicated to ensuring the success of the Vriksharopan Jan Abhiyan-2024. Under this campaign,

extensive tree plantation programmes will be conducted in the border districts of UP. Robust preparations are being made in the 35 districts that border neighbouring states in this regard. Comprehensive tree plantation programmes are being planned in Saharanpur, Muzaffarnagar, Bijnor, Moradabad, Rampur, Bareilly, Pilibhit, Lakhimpur Kheri, Bahraich, Shravasti, Balrampur, Siddharthnagar, Maharajganj, Kushinagar, Deoria, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Prayagraj, Chitrakoot, Banda, Mahoba, Jhansi, Lalitpur, Jalaun, Etawah, Agra, Mathura, Aligarh, Noida, Ghaziabad, Baghpat and Shamli. The department is engaged in establishing the Yogi government's new initiative, 'Mitra Van'. For this, a Vriksharopan Maha Abhiyan will be conducted not only along the bordering states but also near the friendly nation of Nepal. In a recent programme, Chief

Minister Yogi had expressed concern over plantation near Nepal.

In response, the Forest department will establish 'Mitra Van' along the borders of districts adjoining Nepal, including Sonauli in Maharajganj, Lakhimpur Kheri, Shravasti, Bahraich and Pilibhit. During the plantation, coordination will be established not only with representatives from Uttar Pradesh but also with the neighbouring country and states to involve them in this programme.

Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and head of department, Sudhir Kumar Sharma, has directed 35 forest divisions to select the place for setting up 'Mitra Van' and mark the plant species for plantation to be done by the dignitaries of the neighbouring country Nepal and the border state.

He further instructed the coordination with Forest department officials from the neighbouring country and states to obtain their opinions on species

selection and ensure the availability of plants, and to provide this information to the command centre at the forest headquarters.

Along with 'Mitra Van', instructions have been given to establish special forests like 'Shakti Van', 'Yuva Van' and 'Bal Van' in each district under the Vriksharopan Jan Abhiyan-2024.

Additional Chief Conservator of Forests PP Singh stated that under the Vriksharopan Jan Abhiyan-2024, 'Mitra Van' will be set up around all states bordering UP, including Bihar, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Rajasthan. The department has completed all the preparations for this.

On Chief Minister Yogi's instructions, saplings have been prepared in nurseries for the plantation of 35 crore trees. Instructions have been issued to the divisional forest officers (DFOs) of the respective divisions to establish and enrich 'Mitra Van'.



A Muslim woman looking for tazia for Muharram in Old Lucknow on Sunday

Pioneer

Rahul seeks hike in compensation amount for Hathras victims

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Leader of opposition in Lok Sabha and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi wrote an emotional letter to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in which he once again urged him to increase the amount of compensation for the victims of the Hathras stampede and demanded strict punishment for the people responsible for this incident.

In the letter written to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Congress MP said that compensation should be given as soon as possible and proper treatment should be provided to the injured. A total of 121 people, mostly women, died in a stampede at the satsang of preacher Bhole Baba in Hathras last Tuesday. Rahul Gandhi met the victims' families on Friday morning.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had announced that the families of the deceased would be given Rs 2 lakh each and the injured Rs 50,000 each as compensation. In his letter to the UP chief minister on July 6, Rahul Gandhi said, "The compensation announced by the Uttar Pradesh government is inadequate. I urge that the compensation amount be increased and it be

given as soon as possible." The Congress leader said that the injured should be given proper treatment and proper compensation.

He said, "I am shocked by the news of the death of more than 120 people in the stampede incident in Hathras. I am writing this letter to you with pain in my heart and I know that you too must be feeling that pain."

Rahul Gandhi said that he met many victim families from Aligarh and Hathras districts and tried to share their pain. He wrote in the letter, "The accident is so tragic that while meeting the family, I fell short of words to console them. Whatever many families have lost in this accident is not possible to compensate in any way, but we can definitely try to reduce their pain by helping the victim families in every possible way." The Congress leader said, "The victims' families also shared with me that the negligence and insensitivity of the local administration is responsible for this entire incident. A proper and transparent investigation in this case will not only be a step towards preventing such incidents in future, but it will also re-establish the faith of these victim families in the justice system."

Efforts to save powerful persons in Hathras case on: CPI (ML)

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) alleged on Sunday that efforts were being made to save powerful persons responsible for the death of 121 people in a stampede at a satsang in Hathras. "Arrests are being made in the case but till now the self-proclaimed godman Bhole Baba is going scot free. Also no responsible officer of the administration has been taken to the task," the party alleged. CPI-ML state secretary Sudhakar Yadav said in a statement issued on Sunday that the Hathras district administration, which was itself under investigation, was trying to cover up the matter. "Efforts are being made to take the investigation in the wrong direction and spread confusion, so that the real cul-

prits can be saved. The district police chief has given a statement that some political parties may be behind the event whereas the basic issue is negligence and failure of the government and administration, due to which so many deaths occurred. The officials deliberately ignored the programme attended by lakhs of people. Neither crowd management measures were taken, nor arrangements were made for ambulances and doctors at the venue," he alleged.

Sudhakar Yadav said that the name of Bhole Baba was not even in the FIR. The CPI-ML leader expressed the hope that the judicial commission formed to investigate the Hathras stampede and deaths would take cognisance of these facts also so that such incident does not recur in future.

Multi-end reeling units to boost silk industry in UP districts

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to boost the silk industry in Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government has launched an initiative to establish multi-end reeling units in Maharajganj, Basti, Saharanpur and Auraiya. The Sericulture Development department has started the procurement process for 10 basin units within these reeling units.

This procurement process will be completed by a contractor agency appointed by the Sericulture Development department. The contractor agency will be required to deliver and install all these units in the designated districts

within 90 days of the allocation of work.

Additionally, the applications invited by the Sericulture department primarily prioritise companies registered with the Directorate of Industries and Enterprise Promotion and the National Small Industries Corporation to fulfill this task. In a multi-end reeling unit, various machinery components are included under the base units. Currently, the Sericulture department is in the process of procuring 10 basin units. These basin units will be equipped with a 50-kg capacity hot air dryer, cocoon sorting table, two pan tables for the brushing process, circular pressurised cocoon cooking and vacuum

pre-emission pre-treatment equipment.

Additionally, in each basin multi-end reeling machine (10 ends per basin), the window closed time re-reeling machine (5 ends per window), the small reel permeation centre, and electronic balance with a 600-gram capacity and 0.01-gram sensitivity will also be included. Furthermore, it will be equipped with a 7.5 KVA capacity generator, a 100 kg steam output per hour capacity IBR quality boiler, and a 100 kg resin capacity water softener. Through all these components, essential cocoon extraction, processing and reeling processes for silk production can be completed.

According to Chief Minister Yogi's vision, the procurement, installation and operation process for multi-end reeling units in Maharajganj, Basti, Saharanpur and Auraiya has been allocated a validity period of 180 days. The contractor agency must deliver and install all these units within a working period of 90 days after the assignment.

Notably, priority is being given to companies registered with the Directorate of Industries and Enterprise Promotion and the National Small Industries Corporation to complete this process as contractors. They are also being granted concessions in the earnest money deposit (EMD).

Cheque cloning gang busted; 10 held

PTI ■ NOIDA

In the 2002 hit Hollywood film "Catch Me If You Can", Leonardo DiCaprio plays the role of a conman in the late 1960s who makes millions of dollars by forging cheques. Cut to now and a 10-member gang in Uttar Pradesh used the same modus operandi to swindle people of crores of rupees, only its techniques being a bit more sophisticated than those used in the film by Frank Abagnale Jr, the character played by DiCaprio.

The gang's members were arrested on Saturday by the Bulandshahr district police for scamming people across the country of crores of rupees by "cloning cheques", Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Shlok Kumar told PTI. Explaining their modus operandi, he said they used to steal chequebooks ordered by customers before it reached them from banks. When a customer lodged a complaint, the bank cancelled the previous chequebook and issued a new one, Kumar said. The gang's members used to get the details of the new chequebook from their accomplices before it was delivered to a customer, the SSP



The seized mobile phones and documents after cyber cops of Uttar Pradesh Police busted a bank cheque cloning scam in Bulandshahr. PTI

said. After removing the details from the cheques of the cancelled chequebook using a chemical, the gang's members printed the details of the one delivered and received by the customer. They then put a forged signature of the customer on the cheques and withdrew money, the official said. SSP Kumar said an investigation was launched after a local lodged a complaint that Rs 15 lakh had been withdrawn from his account through a cheque not issued by him. "The complainant said he did not receive any message from the bank. The man got to know that Rs 15 lakh had been withdrawn when he updated his passbook," the official said. It was a well organised gang and its members worked in

teams, each having a name like in a company or an office, the SSP said.

To swindle people, its members first acquired the know your customer details of a person from banks and then "for getting the SIM cards, they would produce forged documents of the person on whose name a number is allotted and show him or her as dead", Kumar said. "After that, this number would be purchased in the name of a new person so that any call or message from the bank would be attended by the accused and while posing as the bank account holder, verify fund transfers illegally started by them," he added.

Giving details of the units the gang was divided into, Kumar said a "layering group" was

involved in transferring the money received fraudulently into different bank accounts so that it became difficult for law enforcement agencies to trace and recover it. "Then there was the 'asset creation group'. It was tasked with cleverly investing the ill-gotten money into making assets like purchasing land or property or other asset somewhere," he added.

Nitin Kashyap, Prem Shankar Vishwakarma, Awadhesh Kumar, Shah Alam, Urui Alam, Bhupendra Kumar, Kalicharan, Alok Kumar, Brijesh Kumar and Chatar Singh have been arrested, police said. Forty-two mobile-phones, 33 SIM cards, 12 chequebooks of various banks, 20 passbooks, 14 loose cheques have been seized from them, according to police. The police have also impounded a car and recovered a "Delhi Police cap" which was kept on its dashboard. This gave an impression that they were police personnel and helped them skip security checks, they said. "They used different phones to keep their identification concealed and evade police surveillance. They also carried walkie-talkies sets to communicate with each other," Kumar said.

Four kids drown in Agra

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a heart-wrenching incident in Agra, four children drowned in a pit located near Yamuna Expressway on Sunday morning.

According to information, four children, bathing in the water filled pit near Yamuna Expressway roundabout drowned. To save these children, six other people, including a woman jumped into the water but they also started drowning. On getting information of the incident, the villagers and police pulled out everyone from the water but by then four children died. The other people were sent to hospital for treatment.

Seven families of labourers from Kanpur and Auraiya are living in the area for the past few days by putting up tents at Khandauli Yamuna Expressway interchange. They go to nearby villages and sell goods. On Sunday morning, three children, Hina, Khushi

and Chandni, jumped into a water filled pit nearby to take bath and soon all three started drowning. On hearing their screams, the women of the family Nagina, Anuradha, Ragini, Prachi, Sunny and Riya jumped into the pit to save them. However, they also started drowning. On getting information, the police reached the spot and pulled out all of them. However, by then Hina, Khushi, Chandni and Riya had died.

In another incident in Rajapur village under Madiyahun police station of Jaunpur district, a man and his grandson were electrocuted to death on Sunday morning after coming in contact with the current in a pumping set room.

Shesh Narayan Dubey alias Ganga Prasad Dubey (65) had installed his own tube well 500 metres away from the house. On Sunday, he was working in the field near his tube well.

Meanwhile, his grandson Manish Dubey (15) reached there and went to keep some stuff in the pumping set room. There, he came in contact with the current flowing in the safety net inside the room. After some time, when he did not return, Ganga Prasad went inside the room to see Manish and found him lying on the safety net. As soon as he tried to lift Manish, he also came in contact with the current and was electrocuted.

Meanwhile, in Gorakhpur district, a woman ended her life after learning on Sunday morning that her husband committed suicide on Saturday evening. The Cantonment police said that at around 8 am on Sunday, a woman committed suicide by jumping from the roof. The deceased was identified as Sanchita Sharan (28). Her husband Harish Bagesh had gone to Sarnath on July 6 and he committed suicide there.

14-year-old girl raped

PTI ■ BHADOHI

A 14-year-old girl was allegedly raped by a man in a village here, police said on Sunday. On Saturday evening, the victim, along with her younger sister, were picking up mangoes that had fallen on the ground when Vijay Shankar Prajapati (25), who works at a flour mill, reached there, said. He started misbehaving with the girls. The younger sister managed to escape but Prajapati raped the 14-year-old girl, he said. The younger sister informed the family members, on which they reached the spot but by that time Prajapati ran away, he said. The SHO said based on the complaint of the girl's father, a case was registered against Prajapati under section 64 (1) (rape) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act on Saturday night.

Rathyatra Mela begins in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Braving drizzling devotees thronged Rathyatra Mela when this three-day famous fair began with the installation of idols of Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra and sister Subhadra, on the traditional Rath (chariot) here on Sunday. The wooden chariot is based on 14 wheels which is placed near Rathyatra crossing. Lord Jagannath will stay on the Rath till the wee hours on Wednesday, prior to the return of idols to Jagannath temple at Assi. The idols were installed at the Rath amidst chanting of traditional mantras by the priests. The idols were decorated with yellow garments (Pitambar) and the entire chariot was decorated with flowers. The traditional dishes, including sweets and fruits, were offered. On the first day of Rathyatra fair, under the joint aegis of Namami Gange and Patanjali Yogpeeth, a grand aarti of Lord



Devotees offering prayers at Rathyatra Mela in Varanasi on Sunday.

Jagannath was performed. In coordination with Namami Gange district coordinator Shivam Agrahari, Lord Jagannath was offered sugar candy, nankhatai, panchmeva and tulsi and flower garlands. The participants performed 'kirtan.' They prayed for Ganga

purification and health, happiness and prosperity of the people by performing a grand aarti. Later, prasad was distributed among the devotees. City co-coordinator Ramprakash Jaiswal, Renu Jaiswal, Jai Vishwakarma, Arpana Jaiswal from Patanjali Yogpeeth, Neeta

Rastogi, Usha Sharma, Chaitali Chakraborty, Ranju Sinha, Poonam Yadav, Lalli Singh, Rakhi Singh Rama Yadav, Manisha etc were present in the programme. The rush of the people visiting the fair started increasing in the evening and it continued till midnight hours when the people were seen purchasing nankhatai, a hand-made biscuit and other items apart from offering prayers to Lord Jagannath. The children enjoyed the swings. Elaborate security arrangements were made in the entire fair areas. No vehicles were allowed to move to Rathyatra crossing from any of the corners including Bhelupur, Luxa, Mahmooorganj and Siga. The grandeur of this one of the 'lakha' melas (in which lakhs of people turn out) was seen during the fair. The history of this fair is old as since 1802 it has been celebrated here. In 1780, Pandit Nityanand, the chief priest and manager of

Jagannath temple in Puri visited this holy city and then set up a temple of Lord Jagannath near Assi. Earlier, Doli Yatra of Lord Jagannath was taken out amid traditional gaiety and religious fervour here on Saturday evening. After passing through its traditional routes, the procession reached the in-laws' place of Lord Jagannath at Beniram Ka Bagicha near Rathyatra on the occasion of Ashad Shukla Pratipada as per Hindu calendar. A good number of devotees thronged Lord Jagannath temple at Assi and offered prayers and 'parval ka kada' a day ago when after two weeks, the doors of Jagannath temple were re-opened. Lord Jagannath fell sick two weeks ago when the devotees offered jalabhishek with a huge quantity of Gangajal (sacred water of holy river Ganga) on the occasion of Jyestha Purnima. Since then the doors remained closed to help the ailing Almighty take full rest.

LLB student shot dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

An LLB student, Indrajit Patel (25), was shot dead in Achakwapur village of Abdalpur Khas in Soraon police station area here on Sunday. The police have arrested the accused Sarvesh (28), a resident of the same village. As soon as Indrajit came out of the house on Sunday morning, the attacker shot him in the head. Soraon police station in charge Satish Kumar said the accused has been arrested and interrogation is going on. The accused, Sarvesh, is his neighbour. The plice said that after the arrest, Sarvesh told the police that the elders of his family had donated land to Indrajit's family. Now we were demanding some of the land back, but Indrajit was not giving it. The family members of the deceased said that Indrajit had gone to the field next to the house at 6:30 am when Sarvesh arrived with a pistol. He shot Indrajit in the head. When the people present in the field raised an alarm, Sarvesh took

the pistol and chased them. After the incident, Sarvesh kept roaming in front of the house and threatening. DCP Ganganagar Abhishek Bharti said that the accused has been arrested. He is a security guard at an ATM in Phaphamau. His father is a farmer. Sarvesh is the eldest among three brothers. Both his brothers are vegetable traders. Two pistols have been recovered from him. He is being questioned. **CYBER THUGS NABBED:** The police on Sunday claimed to have nabbed three cyber thugs who had cheated retired CMO Dr Alok Verma of ₹1.26 crore here. The woman, along with her husband and brother, stalked the retired CMO for two months. Then, she sent him a message on Instagram and trapped him. Thereafter, she shared a link on WhatsApp. She got him to invest ₹1.26 crore in the app. As soon as he invested money the woman's friends sitting abroad transferred the money to their account. When the money was

withdrawn, the retired CMO came to know about the fraud and then complained to the police. The police arrested all three from Civil Line. The accused were identified as Shabina and her husband Mohd Suhail and her brother Syed Amiruddin, residents of Surat. DCP (Ganga Nagar) Abhishek Bharti said Shabina is originally from Kabutar Khana in Surat. Her network is spread in many countries. She has lived in many countries like Saudi Arabia and Africa. During interrogation she told the police that she had made agents in many states online. The agents used to roam around and collect details about bank accounts. The miscreants were identified while withdrawing money from the bank. After this, the accused were caught. Two laptops, MacBook, tablet, 10 mobile phones, eight cheque books, four passbooks, 15 ATM cards and three passports have been recovered from the accused.

Maurya: Mahakumbh to be more grand & spectacular



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya reached the house of rebel SP MLA Pooja Pal on Sunday and inaugurated the newly built Narmadaeswar Shiva temple got the installation of the idol completed. While talking to the media, he kept avoiding political questions. He said the upcoming Mahakumbh will be more grand and spectacular than the last Kumbh. It is estimated that about 50 crore devotees from all over the country and the world will reach here. Maurya had come to attend the inauguration programme of Narmadaeswar Shiva temple built in Umarganj Niva village by rebel Samajwadi Party MLA Pooja Pal. He also prayed to Narmadaeswar Lord Shiva for the welfare of all. Deputy CM Keshav refused to say anything on the allegations of Akhilesh Yadav showing false arrest and hushing up the matter regarding the Hathras incident. He said that "I have come to participate in a religious programme, there is no justification for political questions here". Keshav said that "I have come to Umarganj Niva village of Dhoomanganj after a long time". The inauguration and Pran Pratishtha programme of Narmadaeswar

Mahadev temple has taken place here. On the question of the displeasure of the local corporators regarding the works of Mahakumbh, Maurya said that no one has any displeasure. But if there is any displeasure, it will be resolved by sitting together. The rebel Samajwadi Party MLA Pooja Pal is an MLA from Chail assembly seat of Kaushambi district in 2022, but in the Rajya Sabha elections, she had cross-voted in favour of BJP. Since then she is constantly in touch with BJP leaders. MLA Pooja Pal has built a temple in Umarganj Niva village. **CANCELLATION OF TRAINS DUE TO NON-INTERLOCKING WORK:** Due to non-interlocking work in the yard of Khandwa station of Bhusaval division of Central Railway, the Railways are cancelling 59 trains on Prayagraj-Mumbai route on different dates. This cancellation will be effective from July 14 to July 23. North Central Railway (NCR) Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Himanshu Shekhar said that during this period, Banarasi Lokmanya Tilak will remain cancelled from July 16 to July 23 and Lokmanya Tilak-Banarasi from July 14 to July 21. Similarly, Sainagar Shirdi-Kalka will remain cancelled on July 16.

DM conducts inspection in flood-prone areas

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In view of the possible flood in the district, District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam conducted a surprise inspection of Primary School Saraiya, Deepthi Convent School Hukulganj and Primary School Dhelwariya on Sunday. All these sites are close to river Varuna which are badly affected when due to rise in water level of Ganga river, Varuna starts reverse flow. The DM gave necessary instructions to the officials present there. He especially instructed the officials to ensure that the local people do not face any kind of problem in case of flood. During the inspection, the DM took detailed information about the number of places in the villages affected by floods and other important points. He also took information from the officials and nearby people about the various actions taken in relation to relief and rescue work when flood waters came last year. Rajalingam said that when flood waters come, people of many families shift to

their relatives or other safe places instead of coming to the government shelters, and instructed the local corporators to provide an error-free list by mapping such people and the people residing in the shelters. He said distribution of cooked food to the people living in the shelters and dry ration to other flood affected people should be ensured and instructions were given to appoint one volunteer for 25 to 50 people. He also asked to prepare a daily menu for the food to be cooked. He directed the officials to instal good quality tents at the shelters. He also directed to put a written duty on the safai staff for cleaning toilets and other types of cleaning work. He directed the Health department to ensure the availability of doctors and medicines for the health of the people. He directed the officials present there to complete the work by coordinating with the officials of other departments related to flood. During the inspection, ADM (F/R), SDM (Sadar) along with other officials, corporators and nearby people were present.

Camps, chaupals from today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the chairmanship of District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam, camps and chaupals will be organised on different dates from July 8 to 31 in various villages of Varanasi parliamentary constituency, adopted by PM Narendra Modi under Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana. During the chaupals, the DM will review the progress of various beneficiary schemes run by the central and state governments for the deprived and poor. He will also review the progress of various schemes like clean toilets, Ujjwala connection,

Prime Minister/Chief Minister housing, ration card, Ayushman Card, Kanya Sumangala Yojana, MNREGA Job Card, old age pension, Divyang pension, widow pension, Kisan Samman Nidhi, KCC, land dispute Dharoni, inheritance, birth-death registration, labour registration etc. The DM has nominated the nodal officers and in-charge officers for the MP Adarsh Grams and directed the departmental officers that first of all, the departments will camp in the villages with their officers and verify all the schemes related to their respective departments.

Foreign powers tried hard to defeat BJP in polls: Trivedi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

National spokesperson of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Rajya Sabha MP Dr Sudhanshu Trivedi said that in the recently held parliamentary elections, foreign powers had tried hard to defeat BJP, a party for which its ideology is not election-based, but civilization-based. He was addressing as the chief guest in a seminar organised jointly by city and district units of Bharatiya Janata Party in the Gandhi Adhyayan Peeth Auditorium at Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapeeth (MGKV) here on Saturday evening on the birth anniversary of Jan Sangh founder Dr Syama Prasad Mukherjee. Dr Trivedi said Dr Mukherjee was a renowned thinker, philosopher, educationist and a great patriot who devoted his entire life to strengthening the nationalist ideology. "Dr Mukherjee had

opposed the Article 370 and the permit system to go to Jammu and Kashmir. BJP took his fight forward. Under the leadership of the country's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the central government abolished Article 370 on August 5 in 2019 and established the slogan of one flag, one Constitution and one leader", he said. "Sometimes there are some turning points in the history of the country when changes are seen in history in a decisive manner. For example, when we got independence, the issue of Kashmir was such that after independence all the princely states were merged except one. Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel was responsible for merging the princely states but Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had looked after only one princely state and the problem was stuck in that. It became a big challenge which remained till 2019", he said, adding that a decisive solution

was found during the tenure of PM Narendra Modi. "Despite being a strong nation, our neighbours kept harassing us and India went to the United Nations to plead for a ceasefire" he said. Dr Trivedi further said that the PM has said that the next 25 years are 'Amrit Kaal' and the past 10 years are 'Usha Kaal'. "This is the construction period of developed India. Those who used to ask for proof of Ram are today counting the defeats of Lord Ram who was also once trapped in Naag Paash", he said. "Two boys' had contested elections in Uttar Pradesh. The younger one performed well in Uttar Pradesh but could not even become the leader of opposition in the House as he was forced to sit behind the elder boy", he said. "In UP, SP's vote was transferred to Congress but Congress's vote was not transferred to SP. This

is the reason why Akhilesh won from his family seat by about 78,000 votes while Rahul won in Rae Bareilly by more than three lakh votes and the SP should understand it", he said. The programme was presided over by Prof Kripa Shankar Jaiswal while the guests were welcomed by district BJP president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma. The vote of thanks was proposed by Prof KK Singh and the programme was conducted by Dr Sunil Mishra. Uttar Pradesh Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal, Mayor Ashok Tiwari, Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, MLAs Neelkanth Tiwari, Saurabh Srivastava, MLC Dharmendra Rai, ex-MLA Surendra Narayan Singh Audde, state BJP secretary Shankar Giri, city BJP chief Vidyasagar Rai, regional spokesman Navratan Rath, co-media incharge Santosh Solapurkar and others were present.

Banarasi saree to feature in Ambani family wedding

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

World famous Banarasi saree is all set to feature at the Ambani family wedding, highlighting global recognition of this One District, One Product (ODOP) following awarding of the prestigious Geographical Identifications (GI) tag to the products. The granting of ODOP status to Banarasi saree by the Yogi government has propelled the craftsmanship of Kashi's artisans to an international level. With this new recognition, the Banarasi saree continues to rise in popularity. Whether it's the film industry or the world's largest industrial houses, the

Banarasi saree is widely adored by all. Nita Ambani has also selected these exquisite Banarasi sarees for her son's wedding. Nita Ambani, wife of Mukesh Ambani, arrived in Varanasi a few days ago to buy these sarees for her son's wedding. She went from the saree shops to the weaver's houses to watch the intricate craft. GI expert Padma Shri Dr Rajni Kant stated that the Banarasi saree is entirely handloom and silk. Nita Ambani admired it. Consequently, the Ambani family's appreciation of the Banarasi saree will enhance its global appeal. In addition to the traditional garments of

Banaras, the primary brand ambassadors for GI and ODOP products are Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, who have promoted these products worldwide. According to Dr Rajni Kant, the Banarasi saree with a GI tag is exclusively crafted using 100 per cent handloom silk, a feature appreciated by Nita Ambani. This endorsement from the Ambani family is expected to elevate the attraction of the Banarasi saree globally. Nita Ambani has ordered several Banarasi sarees for her son's wedding. Saree traders and exporters Praveen Agrawal explain that the inclusion of

Banarasi sarees in the GI and ODOP categories has breathed new life into this ancient art and its weavers. When Banarasi sarees are worn at the Ambani family's wedding, it will once again garner global attention. This will rejuvenate the market for Banarasi sarees internationally. Amit Shevaramani, owner of Suvidha Sarees and a young entrepreneur, stated that at Mukesh Ambani's son's wedding, Banarasi sarees will gain unprecedented recognition among top industrialists, celebrities and leaders from various fields worldwide, thereby creating renewed employment opportunities for skilled artisans.

'Kanpur Ek Khoj' event inspires students to cherish and preserve city's heritage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre (SPSEC) hosted a grand event to celebrate their annual theme, 'Kanpur Ek Khoj - Discovering Kanpur', which aligns with the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The event highlighted the school's remarkable journey in exploring and promoting Kanpur's rich cultural heritage. The evening commenced with a warm welcome to the esteemed guests, including the chief guest Pramila Pandey, Mayor of Kanpur, and the guest of honour Nilima Katiyar, MLA of Kalyanpur. Chairperson, Manorama Govind Hari Singhania, Vice-Chairman, Abhishek Singhania, Vice-Chairperson, Varsha Singhania, Vice-Chairman and Director Partho P Kar and Vedika Singhania besides Sushila Singhania were also present. The ceremony began with the traditional lighting of the lamp, invoking blessings for a successful event. Avika Singh, Abhi, Tanmay Shukla, Mukta Maitreya and Harshit Singh of class XII and Arindam Naha of class XI extended a heartfelt welcome to the dignitaries. A highlight of the event was the presentation of a monograph titled 'Kanpur Ek Khoj', which encapsulates

the rich history and cultural heritage of Kanpur. This monograph is a culmination of the student's exploration of various historical sites within the city, made possible through a Public-Private Partnership with the Kanpur administration. The monograph was officially presented to the dignitaries by the school's Chairperson, Manorama Govind Hari

explorations. She commended the students' enthusiasm and dedication, noting how their efforts have not only enriched their own learning but also benefited the wider community. Looking forward, she envisioned ongoing educational innovation and community engagement, aiming to inspire future generations to cherish and preserve their cultural

during the 'Kanpur Ek Khoj' initiative. He expressed gratitude towards the school for providing an opportunity to connect deeply with their city and its heritage. In a significant gesture of appreciation, a letter from Amit Gupta, Commissioner of Kanpur Division, was read aloud, commending SPSEC's outstanding contribution to the Kanpur Darshan campaign. He praised the school for its dedication to enhancing tourism and cultural awareness in Kanpur. Speeches by the chief guest, Pramila Pandey and guest of honour, Nilima Katiyar emphasised the cultural and educational significance of such initiatives. They lauded the school's efforts in fostering a deep connection between students and their heritage.



The event concluded with a vote of thanks expressing gratitude to all the dignitaries, participants, and organizers. The evening ended on a patriotic note with the national anthem. The 'Kanpur Ek Khoj' event not only celebrated the historical and cultural wealth of Kanpur but also inspired students to cherish and preserve their city's heritage. SPSEC continues to lead by example in promoting educational and cultural initiatives that enrich the community.

The students of SPSEC showcased their findings through a PPT presentation, 'Kanpur Darshan', revealing the city's vibrant landmarks, cultural sites, and historical gems. Student presenters Tanmay Shukla and Mukta Maitreya guided the audience through this visual tour, reflecting the deep sense of pride and curiosity that drove their explorations. Harshit Singh of class XII represented the student fraternity and shared their transformative experiences

Plantation drive organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A tree plantation drive was conducted on Sunday in the SHUATS campus under the campaign 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam'. The chief guest was Dr Manju Singh, OSD & SLO, Higher Education Department NSS Cell, Government of Uttar Pradesh and the special guest was Samardeep Saxena, Youth Officer, Regional NSS Directorate, Lucknow. Dr Deepak Kumar Bose, Coordinator, SHUATS welcomed the chief guest and the



special guest by presenting a bouquet and shawl. Dr Singh planted a tree and appealed to

One killed in road mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A youth died while his friend was seriously injured when their bike ramed into a stationery truck from behind in Purwa Kotwali police station area of Unnao late on Saturday evening. Both the injured were taken to the CHC where one of them was declared dead by the doctors. The accident took place when Keshav (26) and friend Manoj were returning from the collectorate late on Saturday evening.

Contest for Speaker's post sign of thriving democracy: Om Birla

PNS ■ NEW DELHI/KOTA/BUNDI

An indication of a "live and thriving democracy" is how Om Birla described the rare election to the post of Lok Sabha speaker, which he won in a voice vote against opposition candidate K Suresh. The opposition had pushed for the poll by nominating Congress' Suresh against BJP's Birla, even as it did not press for a division of votes. In an interview with PTI, Birla took a dim view of disruptions in the Lok Sabha during its first session after the formation of the new government and said there has to be a difference between debates in Parliament and those on streets. On radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and terror funding case accused Engineer Rashid being elected to the House as Independents from Punjab's Khadoor Sahib and J-K's Baramulla while in jail, the Lok Sabha speaker said the two members have been chosen by the people. "They have been chosen by the people and administered the oath as per the rules of procedure (of the Lok Sabha) and on orders of the courts," Birla told PTI while on a visit to his Kota parliamentary constituency in Rajasthan.



Asked about the rare election to the post of Lok Sabha speaker, Birla said, "These are signs of a live and thriving democracy." The previous election for the post took place in 1976. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha from June 24 to July 3 witnessed tumultuous scenes with opposition members trooping into the Well of the House and raising slogans throughout Prime Minister Narendra Modi's over two-hour reply to the debate on the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Opposition INDIA bloc parties attacked the BJP-led NDA over

the NEET-UG paper leak row and the situation in Manipur among other issues. Both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha saw multiple adjournments. Birla said that "agreements and disagreements are part of democracy." "Diverse views are there. These should be there. The churning that happens due to diversity of views also helps the government in a constructive way. The government also gets to know the views of everyone. The more the views, the better," he said. "But one thing is clear that the people of the country also expect some difference

between the discussion in Parliament and the debates on the streets," the speaker said. Birla is the first speaker in 25 years to be reelected as a Lok Sabha member for a second consecutive term. Congress' Balram Jakhar completed two consecutive terms as the presiding officer of the House after being elected from Firozpur (Punjab) and Sikar (Rajasthan). Birla said he has been re-elected from the same parliamentary constituency for three consecutive terms. He added that it has been his endeavour as speaker to ensure that MPs get an opportunity to put forth their views. The House also had a sitting till midnight, Birla said. The speaker said a stronger opposition in the House was an opportunity to articulate the views of the people in a structured manner. "These are not challenges but an opportunity. The people expect a strong opposition to articulate its views in a proper manner, and the entire House be unanimous on matters of national interests," Birla said to a question on an increased number of opposition members with Congress' Rahul Gandhi as the Leader of the Opposition.

Soon, get a satellite image of your backyard with the click of mouse

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Want a satellite picture of your backyard? It may soon be possible as Bengaluru-based space start-up Pixel plans to unveil an online software suite to browse through images of earth captured by its satellites and also order customised pictures. In an interaction with PTI editors here, Pixel Space Chief Executive Officer and co-founder Awais Ahmed said the start-up's earth observation studio 'Aurora' was part of efforts to make space-based data accessible to the common person for a small fee. Pixel's earth observation studio is expected to go live later this year and make the hyperspectral images of the earth taken by its satellites and data analysis accessible to everyone. "It would be as simple as using Google Earth but pictures and satellite imagery would be much more advanced," Ahmed, the 26-year-old CEO, who is among the handful of entrepreneurs who are making a mark in the space sector which was opened to private players about four years ago, said. Users of the Aurora suite can browse through the satellite images already available in the database or place a "tasking



order" for Pixel's satellites going around the earth in the lower earth orbit. "I want to order an image for say Chikmagalur in the next week or next two weeks, then it will go to our satellites and they will deliver it, as long as you can pay for it," Ahmed, who built the first satellite while still completing his masters in mathematics from BITS Pilani, said. Pixel has launched two satellites Shakuntala and Anand both capturing images of the earth in over 200 wavelengths and detecting minute changes taking place on the planet. "Come October or November of this year, anyone will be able to create an account online on

our website, Pixel.Space/Aurora to access images of the earth taken by our satellites," Ahmed said. The two satellites -- Shakuntala and Anand -- launched by Elon Musk's SpaceX and ISRO's PSLV respectively, were pathfinder spacecraft, demonstrating the company's capabilities to deliver on high quality hyper-spectral images. Pixel plans to launch six satellites -- Fireflies -- later this year, the company's first set of commercial spacecraft that will deliver earth images to its clients who range from the Ministry of Agriculture in India and the National Reconnaissance Organisation of the US. The start-up also has

plans to launch 18 more satellites next year, including a slightly heavier Honeybee spacecraft that will carry visible and shortwave infrared camera to increase the wavelength range of the satellite. "The sensors on these satellites are equipped to provide hyperspectral imagery of 250 plus bands in the 470-2500 nm range at a five-metre ground sampling distance," the company said. Ahmed said conventional satellites can capture images in visible and some infrared range. "Hyperspectral is taking all of this light coming in the visible and infrared range, and splitting them into continuous, very minute lengths," he said. "If, for example, I'm looking at a plant with a normal camera, I can tell that's a plant and there's a leaf there. But if a hyperspectral camera is capturing that, it has broken it into so many different wavelengths that I can now see if there are signs of pest infestation there, or if it's irrigated well enough and so on," Ahmed said. "So that's, in a basic sense, you're going from three wavelengths from human eyes to about 300 wavelengths in hyperspectral, which is just enabling us to see way beyond human sight," Ahmed said.

Rahul vows to raise issue of loco pilots' rights in House

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi on Sunday flagged the plight of loco pilots and asserted that the INDIA bloc will raise its voice in Parliament to improve their rights and working conditions. His remarks on social media came as he posted a video of his recent interaction with loco pilots at the New Delhi Railway Station. "In Narendra Modi's government, the train of the life of loco pilots has been completely derailed," the former Congress chief said. He said loco pilots are forced to work 16 hours a day sitting in cabins boiling with heat. "The people on whom millions of lives depend have no confidence in their own lives. Deprived of even basic facilities like urinals, loco pilots have no limit on working hours and neither do they get leaves. Due to which they are getting physically and mentally broken and are falling ill," Rahul Gandhi said in his post in Hindi. In such a situation, making loco pilots drive trains is putting their lives and that of the passengers at risk, he said. The Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) will raise its



voice in Parliament to improve the rights and working conditions of loco pilots, Rahul asserted. "By watching this small discussion, you can also feel their pain," he said as he shared the video of the interaction. In the video, the loco pilots complain to Gandhi about lack of rest, no leaves and "inhuman working conditions". All India Loco Running Staff Association's South Zone president on Saturday had loco drivers handed a memorandum to Gandhi, blaming poor working conditions for recent train accidents. R Kumaresan, who played a crucial role in organising the interaction between the former Congress president and the loco pilots at the New Delhi Railway Station on Friday, said that they wanted to bring to Rahul Gandhi's attention "serious safety issues" faced by drivers and passengers in the

Railways. The train drivers' unions have also countered Railways' claim that Rahul Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from the Delhi Division and were brought from outside. On Friday, after the LoP visited the loco pilots' crew lobby at the New Delhi Railway Station, the chief public relation officer of Northern Railway under which the Delhi Division falls, said that it looked like Rahul Gandhi met loco pilots who were not from the crew lobby of the New Delhi Railway Station. The group of loco pilots, complained of "inadequate rest due to understaffing". Rahul had assured them that he would raise their issues in Parliament. He had met around 50 loco pilots from all over India at the New Delhi Railway Station and they explained to him their issues, party sources had said.

Experts for focus on dialogue in helping children understand risks of vaping

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Concerned over the increasing prevalence of vaping among youngsters, actor-director Nandita Das too has joined 'Mothers Against Vaping', a collective of mothers dedicated to combating the rising issue of vaping among children and youth. Alongside other influential figures like Baichung Bhutia, Deepa Malik, Dutee Chand, Neha Dhupia, and Kushboo Sundar, Das is lending her support to raise awareness about the dangers of modern tobacco devices. According to those who think that e-cigarettes are better than conventional smoking, a large US study has said that vaping at any point in life has been linked to a 19 per cent increase in the risk of heart failure. Expressing deep concern over the increasing prevalence of vaping among young people, Das highlighted the urgent need for collective action. "As a mother of a teenager, I worry for all children and hope that they don't fall prey to such harmful addictions. The issue demands our immediate personal and collective attention," she said. "Today's children are intelligent and exposed to a lot of information. They are also



vocal and rational. So we need to explain to them logically the dangers of such devices that may look attractive or 'cool'. They can see reason if we engage with them constructively and compassionately," Das said. Das stressed the role of constructive and compassionate dialogue in helping children understand the risks associated with vaping, leveraging their intelligence and access to information. Though the Government has been proactive in banning e-cigarettes and has taken decisive action by prohibiting e-cigarettes and similar new-age gateway devices through the Prohibition of Electronic Cigarette Act (PECA), 2019, there have been many cases of smuggling of these devices reported from several States.

Govt plans to double AB-PMJAY beneficiary base, insurance

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The government is actively considering doubling the beneficiary base under its flagship Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme over the next three years, with all those aged above 70 years to be brought under its ambit to begin with, and also increase the insurance coverage to Rs 10 lakh per year. The proposals, if given a go ahead, would entail an additional expenditure of Rs 12,076 crore per annum for the exchequer as per estimates prepared by the National Health Authority, official sources told PTI. Discussions are happening to double the beneficiary base under the AB-PMJAY over the next three years, which, if implemented, will cover more than two-third population of the country with health cover, the sources said while noting that medical expenditure is one of the biggest reasons that push families to indebtedness. "Deliberations are also underway over finalising a proposal to double the limit of the coverage amount from the existing Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh," they said. These proposals or some parts of it are expected to be announced in the Union



Budget to be presented later this month. In the interim Budget 2024, the government increased the allocation for the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), which provides health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation to 12 crore families, to Rs 7,200 crore while Rs 646 crore was assigned for the Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM). President Droupadi Murmu, in her address to the joint sitting of Parliament on June 27, had said all the elderly above 70 years of age will also be covered and get the benefit of free treatment under the Ayushman Bharat Yojana now. Those above 70 years of age add up to around 4-5 crore more beneficiaries being covered under the scheme, another source said. The limit of Rs 5 lakh for AB-PMJAY was fixed in 2018. Doubling the cover amount is aimed to cater for inflation and provide relief to families in case of high-cost treatments such as

transplants, cancer etc. The NITI Aayog, in its report titled 'Health Insurance for India's Missing Middle' published in October 2021, suggested extending the scheme. It had stated that about 30 per cent of the population is devoid of health insurance, highlighting the gaps in the health insurance coverage across the Indian population. The AB-PMJAY flagship scheme towards Universal Health Coverage, and state government extension schemes provides comprehensive hospitalisation cover to the bottom 50 per cent of the population. Around 20 per cent of the population is covered through social health insurance, and private voluntary health insurance primarily designed for high-income groups. The remaining 30 per cent of the population is devoid of health insurance, the actual uncovered population is higher due to existing coverage gaps in PMJAY and overlap between schemes. This uncovered population is termed as the missing middle, the report stated. The missing middle is not a monolith - it contains multiple groups across all expenditure quintiles.

Modi looks forward to discussing new cooperation avenues with Austria

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of his visit to Austria, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Sunday the shared values of democracy, freedom and the rule of law form the bedrock upon which the two countries will build an ever-closer partnership. Modi's remark came a day after Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer posted on X, "I very much look forward to welcoming Narendra Modi, the Prime Minister of India, the world's largest democracy, next week in Vienna." "This visit is a special honour as it marks the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister in over 40 years and a significant milestone as we celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations with India," he said. "We will have the opportunity to talk about further deepening our bilateral relationship and closer cooperation on the many geopolitical challenges," the Austrian chancellor said. Responding to Nehammer, Modi said, "Thank you, Chancellor Karl Nehammer. It is indeed an honour to visit Austria to mark this historic



occasion. I look forward to our discussions on strengthening the bonds between our nations and exploring new avenues of cooperation." "The shared values of democracy, freedom and rule of law form the bedrock upon which we will build an ever closer partnership," he said. Modi will be travelling to Austria for his first visit on July 9 and 10, after his Moscow visit on July 8 and 9 at the invitation of President Vladimir Putin to hold the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit.

Celebrating life through six seasons of India

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Kuntal Dutta, a graduate from the Academy of Fine Arts in Howrah, West Bengal, known for his expertise in Alpona—a traditional Bengali art often seen during auspicious occasions—brings vibrant depictions of Goddess Durga to life. Similarly, Manoranjan Chitrakar, from a lineage of Pattachitra artists in Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, uses natural hues to weave stories of individuals amidst nature, capturing scenes like harvesting honey amidst wildlife. The duo are among the over 150 visual artists from across India who have united under Union Culture Ministry's unique Project PARI (Public Art of India). The project has been particularly inspired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's deep appreciation for public art celebrating "Celebration of life through six seasons of India" at Pragati Maidan's 1.6 km long tunnel in New Delhi during its inauguration two years ago. The project aiming to showcase India's cultural legacy and the country's UNESCO heritage sites comes ahead of the 46th session of the World Heritage



Committee here to be held between 21-31 July. The initiative is being executed by Lalit Kala Akademi and National Gallery of Modern Art and aims to showcase India's cultural legacy and UNESCO heritage sites through diverse array of artworks including wall paintings, murals, sculptures, and installations themed around nature, ancient knowledge, and World Heritage Sites like Bimbetka. These artworks draw inspiration from rich cultural and traditional styles from across India such as Phad paintings from Rajasthan, Thangka from Sikkim and Ladakh, Pattachitra miniature painting from Himachal Pradesh, Gond art

from Madhya Pradesh, Tanjore paintings from Tamil Nadu, and more. For instance, Phad painting is the forte of Gopal Joshi from Bihlwar, Rajasthan. His family's generations-long dedication to Phad painting helps him brings his expertise to enrich public spaces with cultural depth and narrative richness. A traditional art form from the Northern State, the painting is appreciated for its intricate storytelling depicting the life and legends of Bhagwan Devnarayan on cloth canvases. Through Project PARI, Joshi's contributions help bring this rich artistic tradition to a broader audience, fostering a

deeper appreciation for Rajasthan's cultural tapestry and its enduring artistic expressions, said an official from the Culture Ministry. The sculptures being created encompass a wide range of themes paying tribute to nature, ideas from the Natyashastra, Mahatma Gandhi, traditional Indian toys, hospitality, ancient knowledge, Naad (Primeval Sound), Harmony of life, and the divine tree Kalpataru. The unique project seeks to bring forth public art that draws inspiration from millennia of artistic heritage (lok kala/lok sanskriti) while incorporating modern themes and techniques, the official said.

North India loses 450 cubic km of groundwater over two decades

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

About 450 cubic kilometres of groundwater was lost in northern India during 2002-2021 and climate change will further accelerate its depletion in the years to come, according to a new study. This is about 37 times the quantity of water the Indira Sagar dam -- India's largest reservoir -- can hold at full capacity, lead author Vimal Mishra, Vikram Sarabhai Chair Professor of Civil Engineering and Earth Sciences at IIT Gandhinagar, said. Using on-site observations, satellite data and models, researchers found that across north India, rainfall in the monsoon season (June to September) has reduced by 8.5 per cent during 1951-2021. Winters in the region have become warmer by 0.3 degrees Celsius over the same period, they found. The team, comprising researchers from the National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI) in Hyderabad, said lesser rainfall during the monsoons and warming of winters will increase irrigation water demand and reduce groundwater recharge, further stressing the already depleting groundwater resource in north India. While a drier monsoon



leads to more reliance on groundwater to sustain crops during rainfall-deficit periods, warmer winters result in relatively drier soils, again requiring more irrigation -- something the researchers observed during the unusually warm winter of 2022, the fifth warmest for India since the India Meteorological Department started records in 1901. "The accelerating trend of depleting groundwater is expected to continue as the planet warms because even though climate change causes more rainfall, most of it is projected to occur in the form of extreme events, which does not support groundwater replenishment," Mishra told PTI. The shortage of rainfall in the monsoons followed by warming winters, both driven by climate change, is projected to cause a "substantial decline" by about 6-12 per cent in groundwater recharge.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Liberals at the helm

With the Labour Party's victory in the UK, India can anticipate a more favourable stance and pro-India policies

After remaining out of power for more than a decade, the Labour Party led by Keir Starmer is back with a landslide victory in the recently held elections in the UK. Prime Minister Modi was among the first to congratulate Prime Minister Keir and both leaders agreed to work towards more vigour for FTA and strengthening the ties between the two countries. Indeed, it is a big shift in UK politics and many policies and initiatives would be at a stark departure from the previous dispensation. This shift holds great significance, given the Labour Party's decisive victory over the Conservatives in the recent general elections. This change in governance marks a new chapter in the UK's domestic and international policy. For countries like India, with deep historical, economic, and diplomatic ties to the UK, this transition could bring about notable changes. The evolving dynamics of UK-India relations under the new Liberal government could influence various sectors, including trade, education, technology, and immigration. The Labour Party's victory signifies a substantial shift in British politics. The Labour Party is known to be liberal, traditionally more progressive, inclusive and believes in sustainability and international cooperation. Their policies are expected to diverge from the Conservative approach, particularly in areas such as climate change, social justice, and economic reform.



Though Conservatives did not touch upon the UK's ties with India there can be a marked shift in the UK's policies in the months to come. The biggest change may come in the form of immigration laws. India has a sizable population in the UK and getting a Visa and residency status is always on the top agenda of the Indian community in the UK and back home. The next area where substantial change could be witnessed is the economic ties between the two countries. The Liberal Party's commitment to free trade and economic partnerships could enhance bilateral trade, potentially leading to a comprehensive UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA). It was the first thing that came up when Prime Minister Modi congratulated the new Prime Minister of the UK Keir Starmer. Indeed, for long, The UK and India have had robust trade relationship, with the UK being one of India's significant trading partners. Under the Conservative government, there were ongoing discussions about a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (FTA). The Labour Govt's more enthusiastic approach to global trade could accelerate these negotiations. A more collaborative and open approach to foreign policy may lead to deeper strategic ties, particularly in areas like defence, cybersecurity, and counter-terrorism. Greater involvement in global platforms like the Commonwealth, the United Nations, and climate forums, facilitating joint efforts on issues of mutual interest. Besides, India can look forward to the UK's support for India's aspirations for a greater role in international organisations, including a potential permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

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PICTALK



Locals cross a flooded area on a boat, in Balimuk village of Morigan district

Hinduism and the perception of violence



PRAFULL GORADIA

Each religion's cultural and ethical framework is distinct. Dietary habits and historical contexts have influenced perceptions of violence across different religions



To specifically associate violence—as was done on the floor of the Lok Sabha on July 1, 2024—with Hinduism, showed that not all our leaders have had time to intimately know and understand the Indian ethos. This is understandable if one remembers that Indians can be Hindu, Muslim, Christian (duly baptized) and others. An argument between the honourable Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the leader of the opposition reflected the differences, albeit in a rather acrimonious manner. As the Speaker explained, the Hindu goes to the extent of touching an elder's feet and not merely bending. On the other hand, Islam does not permit bending to anyone, except Allah the Merciful. A Christian is different and shakes hands to convey the warmth of his feelings. The scale of violence indulged in also varies from ethos to ethos. Christians are habituated to meat-eating, except on Fridays, when they do not go beyond a piece of fish. The Muslim also likes his meat without restrictions even on Fridays. This dietary preference might have been forced upon these communities because their origins began in the deserts of West Asia, where vegetation was (and continues to be) sparse. Even Europe, where Christianity flourished, could not easily grow crops during the winter. In the process, the world's consumption of animals is an estimated 100 million

killed a year, according to a database prepared by Poore and Nemecek in 2018. The Hindu, for the information of our leadership, largely grew up where vegetation has been plentiful. He could, therefore, choose to be anything from a strict vegetarian or an omnivore. However, he owes his vegetarianism to his belief in the transmigration of the soul, unlike the Christian who believes in a single life until Doomsday when God would send him to either heaven or hell depending on his performance on earth or even in the grave. The Hindu on the other hand believes that when his father, mother, relations, and near and dear ones depart from the world, it is only their bodies that perish; the soul is imperishable and enters new bodies to carry on with its respective new lives gained after rebirth. The Hindu would, therefore, be afraid that if he or she eats meat, it could be the product of the killing of some deceased relation, who might have been reborn as that particular animal or bird that was killed for his culinary pleasure. I too hesitate to eat meat whenever I imagine how I would feel if my progeny were to be killed for the pleasure of someone else's food. Pray, tell me, who is perpetrating more violence, the meat eater or the vegetarian?



THE HINDU WOULD, THEREFORE, BE AFRAID THAT IF HE OR SHE EATS MEAT, IT COULD BE THE PRODUCT OF THE KILLING OF SOME DECEASED RELATION, WHO MIGHT HAVE BEEN REBORN AS THAT PARTICULAR ANIMAL OR BIRD THAT WAS KILLED FOR HIS CULINARY PLEASURE

Incidentally, I am a Hindu. The diet or food habits of an individual, if given to the consumption of meat, may also transfer to his social as well as professional conduct and behaviour. This question is well answered by the history of Europe. This continent, throughout its history, has fought 896 recorded wars. Europeans were fighting and killing each other as tribes, much before the Greek and Roman Empires came into existence. The Athens-Sparta wars, the Peloponnesian War, the expansionist wars of the Roman Empire, etc., are part of Europe's history and need not be retold here. But it is Europe's obsession with war and killing from Achilles to Putin (or Zelensky) that needs to be emphasized and reiterated. From sticks to stone hammers, bronze and later iron and steel, armour and edged weapons like the dagger sword and spear, Europe kept developing and improving the tools of killing. The 19th and 20th centuries saw the explosion of technological development and innovations. The age of iron, steel, coal and steam came to the world. Railways steamships, the telegraph and then the radio, automobiles, machine guns, tanks, airplanes and the submarine came into being. All this enabled European

nation-states to muster, equip, arm, transport and command more men than ever before in their history, with deadlier firepower and killing capacity. In the past 75 years alone, the invention of the atomic bomb, guided missile, the internet and cyber warfare have changed war and its dimensions like nothing else has. Our contention that Europe has been the land of war, war and more war is easily proved by the sheer number of human beings who have perished because of European wars. Even if we were to leave aside all its ancient and medieval wars, the two World Wars (together) alone consumed 130 million lives. Even a relatively small power like Italy under its dictator Benito Mussolini was ready to jump into wars of aggrandizement owing to delusions about its armed might. Those delusions occurred as a result of the phenomenon of "armed suasion": for quite some time Italy was believed to be the most formidable air power in Europe. Be that as it may, there is no denying that Europe, a meat-eating continent has been the land of war. To accuse Hindus of violence, therefore, is nothing but a moral travesty. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A STUDY IN CONTRAST

Madam — The recent election results have highlighted a stark contrast between our Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the outgoing Prime Minister of the UK, Rishi Sunak. Modi's victory, despite being well-funded and supported by the media, felt hollow as his party, the BJP, suffered a significant setback, losing 63 seats compared to the last Lok Sabha elections. Despite this, Modi remained publicly unshaken and did not express any remorse or responsibility for the disappointing outcome. The BJP's third consecutive term was celebrated as if it were a gold medal, despite being more akin to a silver. In contrast, Rishi Sunak demonstrated remarkable candor and humility following his party's defeat to Labour. He openly acknowledged his responsibility for the loss, saying, "I take responsibility for the loss... I am sorry." This display of accountability and character stands in stark contrast to Modi's approach. As Bill Courtney wisely noted, "The measure of a man's character is not determined by how he handles his wins, but how he handles his failures." By this standard, Rishi Sunak has demonstrated commendable character, and Modi could benefit from following his example by acknowledging the conditional nature of his victory. Avinash Godbole | Dewas

SPECULATION OVER GOVT'S STABILITY

Madam — In a significant and serious assertion, Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) chief Lalu Prasad Yadav on Friday predicted the fall of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre by August, anticipating a split among its coalition partners and hinting that elections could be imminent. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP secured 240 seats, falling short of the 272 needed for a majority. Nevertheless, it formed the government with the support of allies such as the Bihar-based Janata Dal (U) and the Andhra Pradesh-based Telugu Desam Party, allowing Narendra Modi to begin his third consecutive term as Prime Minister. Notably, since the inception of

Give substantial compensation to victims



The victims of the Hathras tragedy, predominantly from impoverished backgrounds, have lost their loved ones, leaving them in profound grief and despair. They are in dire need of substantial compensation. Rahul Gandhi, the Leader of the Opposition, visited their homes and promised generous compensation, which has brought comfort to the bereaved families and gained the goodwill of the community. Such tragic incidents at religious gatherings have repeatedly occurred in the country, causing not only the loss of lives

but also devastating many families. The magnitude of their grief is immeasurable, and the aftermath ripples through entire communities, leaving them to grapple with both emotional and financial burdens.

To prevent future occurrences, these gatherings require essential improvements, including the deployment of security forces, police, ambulances, and the installation of CCTV cameras, to manage the situation effectively before any problems arise. The government must take proactive steps to implement stringent safety protocols and infrastructure enhancements to prevent such incidents from happening again. This is not merely a matter of compensation but of ensuring that the lives and well-being of our citizens are protected and that no family has to endure such unimaginable loss in the future.

Jakir Hussain | Kanpur

Modi's third term, several Opposition leaders have voiced concerns that the government may not endure beyond a few months. Lalu's recent statements have intensified such speculation, suggesting a potential political upheaval. Amidst this, there is a possibility that a strategic maneuver might be underway by Nitish Kumar and N. Chandrababu Naidu to destabilize the Modi government if their demands are not met. Both leaders, known for their political agility, may take drastic steps for their political survival, which could potentially lead to the government's collapse.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

JAILED MPS TAKE OATH

Madam — Jailed MPs Amritpal Singh and Engineer Rashid took their oaths as Lok Sabha members amidst stringent security measures by concerned authorities. Both MPs secured significant victories in their respective constituencies of Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir, marking a triumph of democracy in regions historically marred by unrest.

Under Article 101(4) of the Constitution, MPs must inform the Speaker in writing if unable to attend House proceedings post-oath, subject to scrutiny by the House Committee on Absence of Members. However, a Supreme Court ruling mandates immediate disqualification if an MP receives a prison sentence of two years or more, overturning prior provisions. The impact of Engineer Rashid's victory is pivotal in Kashmir's upcoming assembly elections, necessitating careful handling by the central government to maintain current peace, especially amidst ongoing Amarnath Yatra. Similarly, Amritpal Singh's electoral success in Punjab underscores the need for sensitive management amid recent incidents potentially affecting communal harmony. It is crucial for the central government to approach Punjab and Jammu & Kashmir with utmost delicacy and maturity in light of these developments. nent athletes and teams.

Yash Pal Ralhan | Jalandhar

The art of listening in a fast-paced world

Prejudices create barriers and divide people; our lives are so frenetic that we lack the time to observe and listen to other voices

We had organised a literature festival a few months back. Almost all the writers spoke about the stories all around us waiting to be put on paper. This set me thinking. If the life of each of us is a palette of stories of different hues, why is it that we do not hear more of these experiences? Does it have something to do with a life that is increasingly running at such a frantic pace that we have no time to observe and listen? Or is it the divides that we carry within us — social, class, caste, age, gender, religion, ideologies, and many more? I have met many people in my life. If I was asked to place them in two distinct categories, I would not hesitate to categorise them as extroverts and introverts. The outspoken are the ones who attract attention. It is the ones shy in expressing sentiments in public, who are a revelation to me. It only needs a nudge for their unexpressed and hence unheard stories to come out. Their life experiences are a myriad of emotions. I remember my first holidays in the mountains.



The adjoining room was occupied by an old couple, who at that time may have been our grandparents' age. One morning, as we sat outside, my parents sipping their tea, the couple also came out. My father asked us to fetch the chairs placed nearby, respecting their old age, and slightly bent backs. Our efforts were brushed aside. "We can still carry our own chairs." Habits inculcated at a young age are difficult to break. I still get up to offer my seat to an older person. My paternal grandfather was hard of hearing. We children had to shout to make him understand. I did not realise that I had started screaming at anybody old, till the time I was told by my maternal

grandmother, "Why do you shout at us. Our hearing is perfectly normal." I now make a conscious effort not to speak loudly to an older person unless asked. My maternal grandfather was paralyzed on one side when he may have been 50. He was extremely slow, but insisted on wearing his clothes without anyone's help, also brushing aside my grandmother's efforts to do so, even if there was a time constraint when going out for a movie show. It is not that only the old want the young to respect their wish to be heard and treated with dignity and respect. I remember a cab driver who only needed a gentle query to tell me that he chose to drive a cab after he retired

to keep himself active and for the opportunity to talk to willing passengers, overriding the objections of his children who were now much better placed than he ever was. Or yet another cab driver, who was bursting to proudly tell anyone willing to listen to him that his daughter had cleared her CA examinations in the first attempt and had been offered a job with one of the Big 4. There are many more who only need a gentle prod to express their unheard stories if only there is someone around to give them time without being judgemental. Their silence is a plea to be encouraged to narrate a life story that many might deem to be common but is no less extraordinary than that of the most successful celebrity. It is also important to be a story-listener! In Bryant H McGill's words, "One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say." (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA



FIRST COLUMN

PASSION IS THE CATALYST FOR A FULFILLING LIFE

By prioritising passion, individuals can infuse their lives with purpose and excitement



RACHNA LAKHPATRI

Passion is the powerful force that propels individuals towards their desired objectives, igniting ambition and providing unwavering determination in the face of life's challenges and uncertainties. When someone discovers a pursuit they are truly passionate about, they experience a distinct and unstoppable energy that drives them towards it and motivates them to achieve success. Many individuals find themselves trapped in monotonous routines that weigh them down.

Rise and shine, head to the office, wrap up your tasks, and return to the comfort of your home, only to repeat the routine the following day. Engaging in the same routine day after day can lead to feelings of sadness and discontentment when there is a lack of enthusiasm for one's daily activities. Why bother doing something if it doesn't ignite your passion? I understand that not everyone has the opportunity to pursue their dream career.

Many individuals work tirelessly to establish stability in their lives, with some solely focused on providing for their basic needs. Even in such cases, it is important to prioritise and make time for activities that bring joy and fulfilment. Passion evokes a sense of joy, happiness, and deep satisfaction that emanates from within. Consider my acquaintance, for example. She's immersed in the corporate world, tackling one of those challenging jobs that will provide financial stability but won't ignite her passion. After a long day of work



and on weekends, she dedicates her time to what truly brings her joy: baking.

She radiates enthusiasm as she describes the new recipes she's experimenting with or the joy she feels when she witnesses someone savouring the results of her hard work. It gives her a unique sense of thrill and personal fulfilment that her corporate job fails to deliver. Her unwavering passion keeps her spirits high and provides her with a daily source of motivation, even during the most challenging moments at work.

There's no need to leave your job and venture into uncharted territory abruptly. It's something so small that it can fit into your current routine. Perhaps dedicating a few hours each week to your hobby, taking learning classes, or developing a side hustle could be beneficial. Even though these endeavours may seem modest, they can have a significant impact on your overall health and happiness.

Passion is essential for everyone to lead a fulfilling life, not just a select few. The sense of purpose and the excitement it brings are necessary for keeping our minds and hearts youthful and vibrant. So, if you have a strong passion for something, prioritise and dedicate time to it. You will achieve success by wholeheartedly embracing your pursuits. Indeed, the lengthy voyage can be quite exhausting. The rewards, however, of living a life fueled by passion are immeasurable. Ultimately, it all boils down to passion. Develop it, nourish it, and believe that it will guide you to a happy and prosperous life.

(The writer is a motivator; views are personal)

Kenyan uproar against IMF-backed Ruto tax bill



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

Amid calls for his resignation, Kenyan President Ruto faces mounting pressure to address the root causes of economic instability and social unrest

Kenya's President William Ruto has finally withdrawn the Finance Bill 2024 following widespread protests triggered by 'Bloody Tuesday', when police fatally shot numerous austerity protesters in Nairobi this week. According to media reports, the bill, influenced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), proposed significant tax increases amidst soaring food and fuel prices, high unemployment, and perceived governmental corruption and extravagance. The World Bank and IMF are sending conflicting messages to Kenya regarding taxation. While the World Bank cautions that Kenya's unpredictable tax policies are deterring Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), the IMF has praised the government's proposed tax increases in the Finance Bill 2024, suggesting they will significantly expand the tax base.

Last year, the IMF and the World Bank convened their annual joint meeting in Marrakech, marking their return to African soil after nearly five decades. The last occasion these two Bretton Woods institutions convened on African soil was in 1973, during the IMF-World Bank meeting in Nairobi, Kenya. At that time, Kenya's President Jomo Kenyatta (1897-1978) implored the attendees to swiftly address the 'monetary sickness of inflation and instability that has plagued the world.' In recent years, the tragic and grim situation has worsened significantly, with an increase in conflicts reported across the continent. Long-time exploiters like France, along with their alliances, are now confronting significant and formidable challenges. Amid critiques from organisations like Oxfam, who denounced these neo-liberal financial institutions' persistent austerity measures and debt policies, the meeting accentuated the enduring economic challenges facing developing countries. Despite promises of social spending safeguards, exemplified in recent IMF agreements with countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka, critics argue that these measures perpetuate cycles of dependency and inequality. Amidst global protests demanding alternatives to neoliberal orthodoxy, as Vijay Prashad asserted, the meeting in Morocco underscored a deepening disillusionment with the IMF and World Bank's capacity to address the fundamental economic disparities they perpetuate. It is crucial to remember that these financial institutions are neither charitable nor humanitarian; they operate with the primary goal of profit and the consolidation of their political agendas. Kenya serves as yet another glaring example.

During my conversation with Tom Jalio, a journalist working for The Star, a daily newspaper in Kenya, he said, "President Ruto inherited a highly indebted country, and his attempts to curb borrowing with internal solutions have been seen as overly aggressive. Using his parliamentary majority to push through contentious tax bills for two consecutive years, President Ruto now faces mounting public opposition. Despite heavy security measures, the public outcry against these policies erupted in what President Ruto labelled as treasonous acts—a response that fails to acknowledge the genuine patriotism underlying the protests. As Kenyan literature might suggest, when the detachment of President Ruto affects an entire nation, dismissing dissent as criminality falls



short of addressing the root concerns."

However, protests initially aimed at the Finance Bill have evolved into a broader uprising challenging not just Ruto's administration but the entire 60-year-old post-independence establishment supported by US and NATO powers. Millions nationwide, spanning 37 counties and crossing tribal lines, participated in demonstrations led largely by youth demanding rejection of the bill and Ruto's resignation. The protests culminated tragically with reports of 53 deaths and hundreds injured, with 30 fatalities occurring in Githurai and 23 more across Nairobi and other regions, all due to police use of live ammunition as documented by the Police Reforms Working Group.

Recent events in Kenya have witnessed severe repression reminiscent of historical atrocities. Tuesday's violence, where security forces under President William Ruto's command fired on protesters, echoes the brutal 1969 Kisumu massacre ordered by President Jomo Kenyatta, highlighting a pattern of state violence against dissent. Ruto's swift shift from threatening violence against protesters to withdrawing the Finance Bill 2024 reflects intense public outcry and tragic losses during demonstrations, initially labelled as treasonous. Despite withdrawing the bill, economic pressures persist.

The proposed austerity measures, influenced by the IMF, aim to tackle fiscal challenges but face widespread opposition due to potential impacts on healthcare, education, and social services. Ruto's manoeuvres to navigate these challenges, including dialogue with youth and stakeholders, stress Kenya's complex political and economic terrain. Opposition led by figures like Raila Odinga, supported by

unions, engages in political manoeuvring amid broader socioeconomic tensions, reflecting ongoing struggles over economic policies and governance.

According to Onyango K'Onyango, a journalist working for one of Kenya's top newspapers, The Nation, he told this writer, "Our Constitution allows for the right to picket and assemble. As one of the most progressive Constitutions in Africa and perhaps the world at large, freedom of expression and association is guaranteed. It was an ill-advised move for the police to use live bullets on peaceful protesters. Whatever happened is unfortunate, but I blame the police for using excessive force and the government for failing to listen to issues raised by our Gen-Z." A chest-thumping government and Parliament is dangerous to a progressive democracy like ours. Arrogance exhibited by pro-government lawmakers and those who surround the president is the cause of all this mayhem. This is the time to embrace a reconciliatory tone, and the President should firmly deal with corruption in his administration. He should order a lifestyle audit and lead by example. The controversial bill should be returned to Parliament accompanied by a memorandum. This is what Kenyans want to hear, not rushing to term their peaceful protest as treasonous and deploying the military."

In Nairobi, escalating tensions between the youth and the government, exacerbated by recent violent incidents, reflect deep-seated bitterness. In my conversation with a freelance journalist, Andrew Mutungwa highlights key grievances: outrage over fatal shootings during protests, President Ruto's divisive portrayal of protesters as criminals undermining their right to assemble peacefully, and a perceived arro-

gance from leadership intensifying feelings of neglect among youth. Mutungwa urges the president to address these issues promptly, calling for action against corruption, criticising wasteful governance practices, and highlighting economic hardships as drivers of widespread discontent and ongoing protests. He warns of potential political instability if grievances are not addressed and acknowledges external influences supporting youth activism, advocating for dialogue and reforms to resolve Kenya's underlying issues. Meanwhile, Erick Gangu, a human rights activist, provides a nuanced perspective on the unfolding events in Kenya. He asserts that the current unrest is primarily an internal affair without external financial or other support, contrary to speculations about foreign influence.

Gangu criticises President Ruto's recent statement as emotionally charged and inappropriate for a figure expected to embody national unity, emphasising that declarations of treason fall under the jurisdiction of the judiciary, not the executive branch. He highlights concerns about pre-demonstration arrests, including doctors and journalists, and condemns these actions as unconstitutional. Despite early attempts in 1993 to establish a dedicated anti-corruption squad within the police, its impact was short-lived as the unit disbanded. The milestone formation of the Kenya Anti-Corruption Authority (KACA) in 1997 was cut short by a 2000 High Court ruling deeming its statutory framework unconstitutional, leading to dissolution. Kenya's ongoing struggle against corruption necessitates sustained institutional reforms and public vigilance for effective resolution.

(The writer is a journalist and author. Views are personal)

RECENT EVENTS IN KENYA HAVE WITNESSED SEVERE REPRESSION REMINISCENT OF HISTORICAL ATROCITIES. TUESDAY'S VIOLENCE, WHERE SECURITY FORCES UNDER PRESIDENT WILLIAM RUTO'S COMMAND FIRED ON PROTESTERS, ECHOES THE BRUTAL 1969 KISUMU MASSACRE

Gold ETFs: The modern, convenient safe haven for young investors

Gold Exchange-Traded Funds provide gold's stability without the hassles of physical ownership, while offering the flexibility of stocks

Gold has always been a traditional safe haven particularly in uncertain situations of geo-political tensions, financial and economic turmoil. Many generations have taken advantage of investing in the security of gold. However, even this traditional investment has witnessed considerable changes with the advent of financial innovation.

The newer generation can now take benefit of security provided by gold which is more convenient, cost effective and eliminates the hassles of physical ownership by investing in Gold Exchange-Traded Funds (ETFs). An ETF is an exchange traded passive fund that tracks any index, or a commodity. In this case, a Gold ETF invests in gold bul-



HIMA BINDU KOTA

lion and tracks the physical gold price. One Gold ETF unit is equal to 1 gram of gold and is backed by physical gold of highest purity, making it a dematerialised form of physical gold.

This gives Gold ETFs twin advantage of security of gold investment in combination with flexibility of the stock market, as they are traded on stock exchanges like stocks of any listed companies and can

be traded continuously at market prices. Upon redemption of a Gold ETF, investors receive cash equivalent instead of possession of physical gold.

To take maximum advantage of flexibility and security that a Gold ETF has to offer, it is advisable to take some safeguards to achieve maximum returns. The first lookout for an investor is to choose a Gold ETF with lower expense ratio. Expense ratio is the yearly management fee charged by the fund houses, which is usually a percentage of the fund's assets under management (AUM) and is used by the fund house to cover their administrative, advertising and various other operational costs. A lower expense ratio is significant as it would eat less into the

investor's returns and result in higher net returns for them, maintaining the cost-advantage of Gold ETFs when compared to storage costs and making charges of physical gold. The second precaution for investors is to examine the tracking error.

Tracking error measures how closely the fund mirrors the underlying index or the commodity and how different is its performance from that of the benchmark. A low tracking error signifies how effectively the fund reflects the performance of the underlying asset and a high tracking error indicates a higher deviation. Tracking error is an extremely critical performance metric for investors due to a number of reasons. Firstly, it displays consistency of performance. A



lower tracking error guarantees reliable tracking of the actual price changes of physical gold. Secondly, low tracking error resonates the efficiency of the fund management. This metric can be used by investors to identify the Gold ETFs that have better performance and provide higher returns. Thirdly, lower tracking errors indicate lower costs incurred by the fund managers, thereby leaving higher returns for investors to enjoy.

Having many benefits, one cannot stress enough on the importance of tracking error. It is known that higher expense ratio and management fees can lead to deviation of the performance of Gold ETFs from the underlying assets, i.e., physical gold. In addition, investors should also be aware of the cash holdings of a Gold ETF. Higher cash holdings again lead to deviation in their performances.

Since ETFs are similar to stocks, liquidity is an important metric. Higher the liquidity of a Gold ETF, lower is the performance deviation. Regular rebalancing the portfolios is an important aspect of any fund, and in doing so Gold ETFs incur costs associated with sales/purchase of physical gold. This again contributes

to tracking error. Thirdly, like stocks and commodities, Gold ETFs are subject to market volatility. Since the underlying asset – physical gold – can be volatile due to geo-political conditions, economic and financial factors. Finally, while buying Gold ETFs, one should not forget to factor in the capital gains tax. Long-term capital gains, if held for more than 3 years, are taxed at 20 percent.

The investors, however can take the benefit of indexation. Short-term capital gains as usual are added to income and taxed at applicable tax slab rate. So, it would be prudent to understand the implications of taxation before investing in Gold ETFs. For young and modern investors, investing in Gold ETFs is a modern and

efficient way to invest in gold. For them, Gold ETFs provide a winning combination of traditional security of gold with the benefits of stock market investing. Using an approach of regular and disciplined investing through systematic investment plans (SIPs), young investors can take the advantage of rupee cost averaging and alleviate the impact of market volatility. With varied benefits and much needed flexibility, Gold ETFs can definitely substitute physical gold investment in one's portfolio. Young generation should take advantage of this modern approach to gold investing with a long-term perspective.

(The writer is Associate Professor at Amity University, Noida. The views expressed are personal)

All Budget schemes permanent: Shinde

CM responds to Uddhav's will wind up in 2-3 months jibe

PTI ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR/NAGPUR,



Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Sunday said all schemes announced in the recent state budget, including provision of three free gas cylinders and monthly aid to women, are permanent as "provisions have been made for them". His comment came after Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray accused the state government of luring women voters with the Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana ahead of assembly polls and asserted the initiative will stop in two to three months. "The scheme to provide Rs 1,500 every month and Rs 18,000 annually to women, plus the three cylinder free is a Raksha Bandhan gift to sisters. The scheme to waive electricity bills of farmers is also permanent. All (monetary) provisions have been made. This is a long-lasting scheme," Shinde told reporters in Nagpur.

announced sops ahead of state polls, which are likely to be held in October-November. Pawar announced Mukhyamantri Annapoorna Yojana (aimed at giving three free cylinders to women), Mukhyamantri Yuva Karyaprashikshan Yojana, Mukhyamantri Krishi Pump Yojana as well as Mukhyamantri Majhi Ladki Bahin Yojana (in which eligible women in the 21-60 age group will get a monthly allowance of Rs 1,500) and a scheme to provide free education to women. Addressing party workers in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Thackeray said, "Many schemes are being launched.

This is a ploy to lure women voters before the polls. The schemes are only for two-three months. Their (the ruling alliance) government will not return and even if it returns, the schemes will be wrapped up after that," he added. "Schemes are being announced but there is a drought when it comes to their implementation. The government is trying to hide its sins with these schemes," Thackeray alleged. He also renewed his demand to waive farm loans in line with the government's announcement of a scheme to write off electricity bills of farmers. Thackeray accused the BJP of driving a wedge

between castes in Maharashtra. The Shiv Sena (UBT) leader demanded that the Centre increase the cap of 50 per cent reservation by passing a law in Parliament to facilitate quota for Marathas and other communities without hurting the interests of Other Backward Classes. Speaking about the recent Lok Sabha polls, Thackeray said the defeat of his party candidates in Aurangabad, Raigad and Ratnagiri-Sindhudurg hit him hard. He urged his workers to ask voters the reason behind party candidate Chandrakant Khaire's loss from Aurangabad. Thackeray said Shiv Sena leader Sandipan Bhumre's win in Aurangabad was achieved by stealing his party's name and symbol. The former CM acknowledged the 'burning torch' symbol of the Shiv Sena (UBT), which it got post the split, could not effectively reach people in the Lok Sabha polls. Hitting back, Shinde said Thackeray should stop "whining" as people voted for the Shiv Sena since the latter had abandoned the ideals of founder Bal Thackeray. "For how long will you whine?

People voted for us because he (Thackeray) abandoned the ideals of Balasaheb. We fought 13 seats against them and won seven. Their (Shiv Sena UBT) strike is 42 per cent and ours is 47 per cent," Shinde said. The Shiv Sena (UBT) contested 21 Lok Sabha seats in Maharashtra and won nine, while the Shinde-led Sena contested 15 seats and emerged victorious on seven. In direct fights between the two parties on 13 seats, the Shiv Sena won seven. Shinde asserted the Lok Sabha results had showed people voted from his party, adding "the assembly polls will make it more evident whose party is the real Shiv Sena". Speaking in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar, Thackeray had said the assembly polls, likely to be held in October-November, will be fought on Maharashtra's self-respect. The Shiv Sena split in June 2022 after Shinde rebelled against then CM Thackeray and brought down the Maha Vikas Aghadi government. Shinde then formed government with the support of the BJP. His faction was later given the party name and 'bow and arrow' symbol.

Three killed, eight hurt in Deoghar building collapse



PTI ■ DEOGHAR

At least three persons were killed and eight others were injured after being buried under the debris of a two-storey building that collapsed in Jharkhand's Deoghar district on Sunday, officials said. The rescue operation that began at 6 am concluded around 4 pm, they said. Deoghar Deputy Commissioner (DC) Vishal Sagar said 11 people were trapped under the rubble after the building collapsed in the town early this morning. "Four children were rescued by the local people. We immediately deployed a National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) team which retrieved seven people from

under the debris," Sagar told PTI. All the seven people were taken to the Deoghar Sadar Hospital, and "three of them were declared dead" by doctors of the health facility, he said. The families of the injured and the deceased people will be provided compensation as per the government norms, the DC said. "Of the seven people taken to the hospital, two were declared brought dead and a woman succumbed to her injuries. The treatment of the four others, including a child, is underway," Deoghar Civil Surgeon Ranjan Sinha told PTI. NDRF Inspector Randhir Kumar said the 10-hour-long rescue operation ended around 4.10 pm.

TDP will regain past glory in Telangana soon: Naidu

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Thanking the people for protesting against his arrest in September last year, Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu on Sunday said the Telugu Desam Party will soon regain its past glory in Telangana also. Addressing TDP workers here, Naidu said the party was born in Telangana (four decades ago) and soon it will be restructured. TDP did not contest the Assembly polls in November 2023 and the Lok Sabha polls this year in Telangana for a variety of reasons. The party is currently headless after Kasani Ganeswar resigned as the state president before the Assembly polls last year. "TDP which was born for Telugu people should be in Telangana. I am asking you whether the party which was born on the land of Telangana should function or not (in the state)? There were several people who worked for the party. We will restructure the party very soon (in Telangana)," Naidu said amidst cheers by the party cadre. Asserting that he would work to bring the past glory to the party in Telangana, he said TDP will encourage youth and the educated in the state. On the meeting with his Telangana counterpart A Revanth Reddy on Saturday, Naidu said though different parties are in power in AP and here, when it comes to the interests of Telugu people, there is a need to work together. Chandrababu Naidu and Revanth Reddy met here on Saturday and decided to constitute committees of ministers and officials to address pending issues related to bifurcation of undivided Andhra in 2014. "Yesterday, we held discussions with the Telangana government. I am hoping that they will be taken forward in future also," he said. Recalling his contribution as a Chief Minister to the development of Hyderabad city two decades ago, the TDP supreme said now Telangana enjoys the top slot as far as per capita income is concerned and the gap between it and Andhra Pradesh was 33 per cent in 2014. He said he was able to reduce the gap to 27 per cent during his tenure as CM between 2014 and 2019. However, it again went up to 44 per cent during the YSR Congress regime.

Govt committed to strong drainage system, claims Haryana Chief Secretary

STAFF REPORTER ■ GURUGRAM



Haryana Chief Secretary, TVSN Prasad said that the state government is committed to ensuring cleanliness and a strong drainage system in Gurugram city. Besides this, the number of sanitation vehicles will be increased for door-to-door garbage collection, assured by Prasad while holding meeting with eminent citizens of Gurugram city on Sunday. Prasad directed the formation of a three-member committee in the meeting, which will set standards for sanitation vehicles to collect door-to-door garbage. Subsequently, Gurugram Municipal Corporation (MCG) will issue a public advertisement. Under this, any agency, RWA, institution, or any individual provides a vehicle of prescribed capacity along with a driver to the municipal corporation for door-to-door garbage collection, it will be paid on a monthly basis as per

the rate fixed by the committee. The Chief Secretary said that these vehicles must have GPS installed so that their location can be continuously tracked, with their link made available in the public domain for citizens' information. The minimum service period for vehicles used in this work in the city will be set for at least three years. The number of vehicles collecting indoor-to-door garbage in Gurugram city should be up to one thousand, said Prasad. The Chief Secretary also took note of the problem of waterlogging during the rains in Gurugram city and obtained information from officers regarding

arrangements for drainage and cleaning of drains. He said that if any agency mishandles drainage cleaning work, action will be taken against it. In the meeting, Deputy Commissioner Nishant Kumar Yadav informed that 112 critical points prone to waterlogging have been identified in the district, and IAS, HCS, and other senior officials have been assigned duty to monitor these locations. Municipal Commissioner, Dr Narhari Singh Bangar stated that in Gurugram city, four major and nearly 600 kilometres of smaller drains are used for drainage work. Tenders have already been issued for cleaning all drains, and cleaning work is underway. In this regard, the Chief Secretary directed to assign an SDO or other officer on duty every 10 to 20 kilometres of drain length, who will report on the daily progress of cleaning work. Action will be taken against any agency found mishandling this work.

Mango Fest displays over 500 varieties

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI



Like every year, the Tourism Department of the Delhi Government organised the Mango Festival in the national capital. This was the 33rd Mango Festival organised by the Delhi Government held at Delhi Haat Janakpuri from July 5 to 7. More than 500 varieties of mangoes were displayed at the expo. The Mango Festival was inaugurated by Minister of Tourism Department Saurabh Bharadwaj. Like every year, this year also mango cultivating farmers from every corner of the country reached the Mango Festival to display the variety of their mangoes. More than 500 varieties of mangoes were displayed in this Mango Festival and thoroughly enjoyed by thousands of people. Along with the exhibition of mangoes, cultural programs were also arranged in the Mango Festival. This festival started every day from 12 noon and continued till 9:00 pm. After the inauguration

on Friday, Bharadwaj visited the exhibition of more than 500 varieties of mangoes put up at the Mango Festival. He talked to the farmers present at the exhibition and got information about the different types of mangoes. A farmer from Malihabad, Uttar Pradesh, which is famous for mangoes, told the minister that this time he is displaying more than 300 varieties of mangoes at the Mango Festival. He informed Bharadwaj about different mangoes and made him taste some of the varieties. A farmer from West Bengal

present at the exhibition said this time he has brought about 60 to 70 varieties of mangoes to this exhibition. That farmer showed Saurabh Bharadwaj some varieties of mangoes from his most special mangoes. It was a surprising moment when the farmer showed a mango of the size of a grape to the minister. Along with this, the farmer also showed a mango weighing about 1 kg to the minister. The festival boasted a wide range of mangoes on display, from mangoes as small as grapes to mangoes weighing

up to 1 kilogram. Along with Malihabad, farmers from Sitapur in UP and West Bengal also informed Saurabh Bharadwaj about the importance of the mangoes displayed in their exhibition. Saurabh Bharadwaj encouraged all the farmers and wished everyone. The Mango Festival saw varieties such as Ram Kela, Kesar Chausa, Ratol, Husnara, Amrapali, Fazli, Gulab Jamun, Langra, Totapuri, and Dussehari, among others. To make the festival more attractive, many types of competitions were also organised by the Delhi Tourism Department. The Mango Festival was a centre of attraction for the public. People from Delhi and the surrounding areas arrived in large numbers to enjoy the Mango Festival. Not only was an exhibition of mangoes set up in the Mango Festival, but the facility to buy mangoes was also available there. People coming to the Mango Festival could be seen buying mangoes in large quantities.

Key accused in J&K narco-terror nexus case arrested

PTI ■ NEW DELHI



The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Sunday arrested a key accused, who had been absconding since June 2020, in a narco-terror nexus case of Jammu and Kashmir linked with Pakistan-based terrorist outfits Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen. Syed Saleem Jahangir Andrabi alias Saleem Andrabi, a resident of Kupwara district, was carrying a reward for his arrest, the NIA said in a statement. After his arrest, Andrabi was subsequently charge sheeted under various sections of NDPS Act, IPC and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, it said. His arrest marks a major success in NIA's efforts to destroy the narco-terror nexus and dismantle the ecosystem created in India by terrorist organisations based across the border, the statement said. The NIA had taken over the investigation in the case on June 16, 2020 from the local police. The agency had, during investigation, found that Andrabi was part of a deep-rooted conspiracy for procuring and selling narcotic drugs and generating funds in Jammu and Kashmir and other parts of India. The conspiracy was hatched by drug smugglers in close

association with operatives of banned terrorist outfits, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen, based across the border in Pakistan. Funds generated through the narcotics racket were pumped into Jammu and Kashmir by a network of overground workers (OGW) for promoting terrorist violence, the NIA's investigations revealed. The case was originally registered at Handwara police station following the arrest of one Abdul Momin Peer, after his Hyundai Creta vehicle was intercepted by police and Rs 20,01,000 cash and two kg of heroin were seized. On questioning, Peer had led police to the recovery of another 15 kg of heroin and Rs 1.15 crore cash. The NIA has so far charge sheeted a total of 15 accused, through various charge sheets filed between December 2020 and February 2023, in the case, in which investigations are continuing, the statement said.

Kolkata top cops face...

From Page 1 The Governor also accused other police officers, posted at the Raj Bhavan, of promoting and encouraging concocted allegations by a woman employee during April-May 2024, the official added. "These IPS officers through their acts have not only tarnished the office of the Governor but also functioned in a manner which is completely unbecoming of a public servant. They have conveniently chosen to ignore the Conduct Rules," he added. In his report, Bose mentioned Kolkata Police's alleged new practice of issuing identity cards to Raj Bhavan staff and frisking them upon entry and exit, despite objections from the Governor's office. "Preventing a delegation of victims of violence from various parts of West Bengal, accompanied by Leader of Opposition Suvendu Adhikari, from meeting Bose and subsequently detaining them is an affront to the Constitutional authority of the Governor," the official said. The official noted that it was troubling that the victims had to move court to meet the Governor. Referring to the Kolkata Police's "total silence" on Bose's June 13 directive to remove the police contingent from Raj Bhavan, the official said, "it was seen as defying orders". "Since mid-June, Kolkata Police posted at Raj Bhavan unilaterally set up a 'security mechanism' without the

Governor's knowledge and consent, effectively placing the entire establishment under 'arrest' and 'watch'," he said. Bose's report also mentioned that a preliminary internal inquiry found allegations of sexual molestation against him by a former Raj Bhavan employee to be part of a "pre-written script". Police Commissioner and Indira Mukherjee formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) with unusual speed and continued media briefings to create a false impression that the Governor could face criminal proceedings," the report said. The report also alleged that Goyal and Mukherjee were instrumental in promoting another 'complaint' from January 2023. "It was reported that Kolkata Police registered a 'zero FIR' at a local police station and transferred the case to New Delhi. On June 17, 2024, the alleged complainant publicly said she had nothing against the Governor and wanted to withdraw it. However, Kolkata Police did not allow her to do so," the official said. Bose had written to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee requesting action against Goyal and Mukherjee, but no steps were taken, nor was there any communication from her office. Bose also referred to his recent visit to Siliguri to meet victims of Chopra violence, questioning the conduct of some officials in the state.

Big blow to local ultras in Valley

From Page 1

The North Kashmir districts of Kupwara and Baramulla witnessed infiltration bids in which small groups of terrorists were neutralized along the line of control by the alert troops. The non-locals were targeted by the terrorists in the Srinagar, Shopian, and Bijnbehara areas of Anantnag district in the valley. On May 7, 2024, one of the most wanted terrorist commanders Basit Dar along with another terrorist was killed in a night-long anti-terror operation in the Kulgam district of south Kashmir. He was wanted in at least 18 cases of terrorist violence. He has been active in the area since April 2021. He was categorized as one of the most wanted terrorists by

J&K Police and the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on whom an award of Rs 10 lakh was announced. Ahead of the long tourist season in the valley, the security forces need to maintain a tight vigil as many tourists/pilgrims are visiting Kashmir valley to perform pilgrimage and enjoy the cool climates in picturesque locations. More than 1.70 lakh pilgrims have performed Amarnath pilgrimage this year. The maiden Assembly polls are also scheduled to take place any time after the culmination of the Amarnath yatra on August 19. The Election Commission is expected to take stock of the prevailing security situation before announcing the poll schedule.

Killing fuels BSP-DMK tensions

From Page 1

"When Arcot Suresh, a gangster, was murdered in August 2023, there were reports linking Armstrong to the murder. All these leaders were notorious for the Kangaroo courts held by them. Armstrong was one of the prominent faces of Kangaroo Courts," said the intelligence official. According to Gauthaman Ramakrishnan, editor of Sri TV, the arrest of Ponnai Baalu late Friday night speaks a lot about the murder of Armstrong. "Baaluu is the brother of Arcot Suresh and his involvement in the case is curious," said Gauthaman. He said that one cannot

swallow the claim by BSP leaders and activists that Armstrong's was a political murder. "If you go through past instances, it could be proved that there was more than politics in such murders," said Gauthaman. He pointed out that Armstrong's gang had encroached many poromboke land on the pretext of building Viharas (Buddha Temples). Armstrong had consecrated a Vihara in a lake adjacent to Cooum river which could not store the surplus water from the river. The Chennai flood of 2018 was a result of this illegal construction, said Gauthaman.

Judicial panel to grill godman in Hathras...

From Page 1

The panel reached Hathras on Saturday after reviewing the incident site. Hathras District Magistrate Ashish Kumar and Superintendent of Police Nipun Agarwal accompanied the team. So far, nine people, including key accused Devprakash Madhukar, have been arrested in connection with the stampede. On Saturday, Hathras police said they are also probing the

suspected funding of the congregation by a political party and warned of the "strictest possible" action against it. Madhukar was the main organiser and fundraiser of the July 2 'satsang' of self-styled godman Surajpal alias Narayan Sakar Hari alias Bhole Baba where over 2.50 lakh people had gathered, much beyond the permitted limit of 80,000, according to

officials. The godman was not named as accused in the FIR lodged at the local Sikandra Rao police station on July 2. Separately, a Special Investigation Team (SIT) formed by the Uttar Pradesh Government is also probing the episode. The SIT is led by the Additional Director General of Police (Agra Zone) Anupam Kulshrestha.

France's polls may push Macron to cooperate with far right

AP ■ PARIS

Voting is underway in mainland France on Sunday in pivotal runoff elections that could hand a historic victory to Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally and its inward-looking, anti-immigrant vision — or produce a hung parliament and political deadlock. French President Emmanuel Macron took a huge gamble in dissolving parliament and calling for the elections after his centrists were trounced in European elections on June 9. The snap elections in this nuclear-armed nation will influence the war in Ukraine, global diplomacy and Europe's economic stability, and they're almost certain to undercut Macron for the remaining three years of his presidency. The first round on June 30 saw the largest gains ever for the anti-immigration, nationalist

National Rally, led by Marine Le Pen. A bit over 49 million people are registered to vote in the elections, which will determine which party controls the 577-member National Assembly, France's influential lower house of parliament, and who will be prime minister. If support is further eroded for Macron's weak centrist majority, he will be forced to share power with parties opposed to most of his pro-business, pro-European Union policies. Voters at a Paris polling station were acutely aware of the far-reaching consequences for France and beyond. "The individual freedoms, tolerance and respect for others is what is at stake today," said Thomas Bertrand, a 45-year-old voter who works in advertising. Racism and antisemitism have marred the electoral campaign, along with Russian cybercam-

paigns, and more than 50 candidates reported being physically attacked — highly unusual for France. The government is deploying 30,000 police on voting day. The heightened tensions come while France is celebrating a very special summer: Paris is about to host exceptionally ambitious Olympic Games, the national soccer team reached the semifinals of the Euro 2024 championship, and the Tour de France is racing around the country alongside the Olympic torch. As of noon local time, turnout was at 26.63 per cent, according to France's Interior Ministry, slightly higher than the 25.90 per cent reported at the same time during the first round last Sunday. During the first round, the nearly 67 per cent turnout was the highest since 1997, ending nearly three decades of deepening voter apathy for legislative

elections and, for a growing number of French people, politics in general. Macron cast his ballot in the seaside resort town of La Touquet, along with his wife Brigitte. Prime Minister Gabriel Attal voted earlier in the Paris suburb of Vanves. Le Pen is not voting, because her district in northern France is not holding a second round after she won the seat outright last week. Across France, 76 other candidates secured seats in the first round, including 39 from her National Rally and 32 from the leftist New Popular Front alliance. Two candidates from Macron's centrist list also won their seats in the first round. The elections wrap up Sunday at 8 pm (1800 GMT) in mainland France and on the island of Corsica. Initial polling projections are expected Sunday night, with early official results expected late Sunday and early Monday.

UK PM heads to Scotland, Ireland, Wales as 're-set' with 4 nations

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer is heading off Sunday to the four corners of the UK as part of an "immediate reset" with governments in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Starmer, who said he has a "mandate to do politics differently" after his party's landslide victory, will meet Scottish First Minister John Swinney in Edinburgh in an effort to "turn disagreement into cooperation". "That begins today with an immediate reset of my government's approach to working with the first and deputy first ministers," he said. "Meaningful co-operation centered on respect will be key to delivering change across our United Kingdom." While each of the devolved nations in the UK elects members to the House of Commons in London, they

also have their own regional parliaments. Starmer's Labour Party trounced Swinney's Scottish National Party for seats in Parliament. But the SNP, which has pushed for Scottish independence, still holds a majority at Holyrood, the Scottish parliament. The trip to build better working relations across the UK is part of Starmer's broader mission to work toward serving people as he tackles of mountain of problems. The Labour government inherited a wobbly economy that left Britons struggling to pay bills after global economic woes and fiscal missteps. It also faces a public that is disenchanted after 14 years of chaotic Conservative rule and fiscal austerity that hollowed out public services, including the revered National Health Service, which Starmer declared broken.

Starmer said he wants to transfer power from the bureaucratic halls of government in London to leaders who know what's best for their communities. After his brief tour, he'll return to England, where he plans to meet with regional mayors, saying in his first news conference on Saturday that he would engage with politicians regardless of their party. "There's no monopoly on good ideas," he said "I'm not a tribal political." On Tuesday, Starmer will jet off to Washington for a NATO meeting. Meanwhile, his top diplomat, Foreign Secretary David Lammy, was due in Poland and Sweden Sunday after visiting Germany on Saturday for his first trip abroad to strengthen ties with European partners. German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said on the social media plat-

form X that the UK was an indispensable part of Europe and they were working with the British government to see how it could move closer to the European Union. Lammy reiterated Starmer's pledge not to rejoin the EU single market after British voters in 2016 voted to break from the political and economic union. "Let us put the Brexit years behind us," Lammy told The Observer. "We are not going to rejoin the single market and the customs union but there is much that we can do together." Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds said Sunday on Sky News that the UK should look for ways to improve trade with the EU and that removing some trade barriers was sensible. But he said the Labour government was not open to the free movement of people that was required as a member of the union.

Israeli protesters block highways as war marks 9 months

AP ■ TEL AVIV

Marking nine months since the war in Gaza started, Israeli protesters blocked highways across the country Sunday, calling on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down and pushing for a ceasefire that could bring back the hostages held by Hamas.



Palestinians look at the aftermath of the Israeli airstrike on a U.N.-run school that killed dozens of people in the Nusseirat refugee camp in the Gaza Strip on Saturday. AP/PTI

The demonstrations come as international mediators have renewed efforts to broker a deal. Hamas over the weekend appeared to have dropped a key demand for an Israeli commitment to end the war, according to Egyptian and Hamas officials who spoke to The Associated Press. The war, triggered by the Palestinian militant group following a cross-border attack on October 7, saw 1,200 people killed and 250 others taken hostage. A retaliatory Israeli air and ground offensive has killed over 38,000 Palestinians, according to the territory's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians in its count. Sunday's "Day of Disruption"

started at 6:29 AM, the moment that Hamas militants launched the first rockets toward Israel in October. Protesters blocked main roads and demonstrated outside of the homes of members of Israel's parliament.

Near the border with Gaza, Israeli protesters released 1,500 black and yellow balloons to symbolize those who were killed and abducted. Hannah Golan said she came to protest the "devastating aban-

donment of our communities by our government." She added: "It's nine months today, to this black day, and still nobody in our government takes responsibility." About 120 hostages remain captive after more than 100 hostages were released as part of a November cease-fire deal. Israel has already concluded that more than 40 of the remaining hostages are dead, and fears spread the number may grow as the war drags on. The Israeli prime minister had previously said while he was open to pausing the war as part of a hostage deal, Israel would press on until it reached its goals of destroying Hamas' military and governing capabilities and bringing home all those held captive by Hamas. Meanwhile, fighting in Gaza continued, with nine Palestinians reported dead from Israeli strikes overnight and into the early hours of Sunday. Six Palestinians were killed in central Gaza after a strike hit a house in the town of Zawaida, according to the al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital. Another Israeli airstrike early Sunday hit

a house west of Gaza City, killing another 3 people, the strip's Hamas-linked civil defense said. The Gaza Health Ministry said Saturday an Israeli airstrike killed at least 16 people and wounded at least 50 others in a school-turned-shelter in the Nuseirat refugee camp. The Israeli military said they were targeting Hamas militants and had taken "numerous steps" to reduce civilian casualties. Also Sunday morning, the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah said it launched dozens of projectiles toward northern Israel in the north, targeting areas more than 30 kilometers (20 miles) from the border, deeper than most launches. A 28-year-old Israeli man was seriously wounded in Kfar Zeitim, a small town near the city of Tiberias, Israel's national rescue service reported. The barrage came after the Israeli military said in a statement an airstrike targeted a car and killed an engineer in Hezbollah's air defense unit Saturday. Hezbollah confirmed

al-Attar's death but did not give information on his position. Near-daily clashes between Hezbollah and Israeli forces over the past nine months have threatened to turn into an all-out regional war and have catastrophic consequences for people on both sides of the border. Mediators from the United States, Egypt and Qatar have intensified their efforts in the past week to reach an agreement. The compromise on Saturday by Hamas could deliver the first pause in fighting since November and set the stage for further talks, though all sides still warned that a deal is not yet guaranteed. Washington's phased deal would start with a "full and complete" six-week cease-fire during which older, sick and female hostages would be released in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. During those 42 days, Israeli forces would withdraw from densely populated areas of Gaza and allow the return of displaced people to their homes in northern Gaza, the officials said.

Shehbaz: New era of Pakistan-China coop has dawned

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has said a new era of Pakistan-China cooperation in the information technology (IT), communication, mining, and energy sectors has dawned and will lead to economic development and deepening of the time-tested bilateral relationship. Sharif's remarks came as he chaired a review meeting in Islamabad on Saturday on the implementation of agreements and MOUs reached during his recent visit to China, Radio Pakistan reported. The prime minister said that the promotion of Pakistan-China cooperation in these fields will lead to economic development, strengthening of regional ties, and deepening of the relations between the two countries. Referring to the time-tested Pak-China friendship, he said that China has always supported Pakistan in difficult times. "China has emerged as the strongest economic power and Pakistan can emulate its development," he added. The 72-year-old Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader said that no disruption will be tolerated in the implementation of agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed during his visit to China, announcing to personally monitor the implementation of these agreements and MoUs. The prime minister was also briefed about a delegation of Chinese shoemaking companies recently visiting Pakistan to shift their manufacturing units to the cash-strapped country and that the Chinese companies have the potential to invest USD 5-8 billion in this sector. Regarding the agriculture sector, he was apprised that 12 leading companies of China will participate in the Food and Agri Expo to be held in Pakistan this year. Sharif also reviewed the progress regarding sending 1,000 students from Pakistan to China on government scholarships for advanced training in the agriculture sector.

He directed that students from all four provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), should be sent to China on the basis of merit, while students from backward areas of Balochistan should be given special priority in the programme. Sharif instructed to start sending students for modern agricultural training in China from the next academic semester. Besides, the meeting was told that over 100 Chinese companies are in contact with Pakistani companies for business and investment. The meeting was also briefed about the progress on the technical training of 3,00,000 students by Huawei, a one-stop operation to facilitate business, smart governance and smart city. The prime minister was also apprised of the progress made by China on various communication, infrastructure, and electricity projects in Gwadar. Sharif advised expediting measures for the development of Gwadar Seaport, Gwadar Airport, and Gwadar Industrial Zone to make Gwadar the hub of trade corridor in the region. He also instructed to speed up the negotiations with Chinese solar panels and equipment manufacturing companies to move their factories to Pakistan. The 72-year-old leader embarked on his first visit to China after he took over as prime minister for the second term after his PML-N party-led coalition government assumed power in March. Addressing the Pakistan-China Business Forum last month, Sharif assured all-out facilitation to Chinese investors and the security of Chinese individuals, projects, and investments in Pakistan. He said his government had taken various measures to ensure fool-proof security to protect the lives of Chinese workers in Pakistan. Five Chinese nationals and a Pakistan driver were killed in a suicide attack in Dasu in March. Pakistan paid USD 2.58 million as compensation to the families of those killed in the attack.

Sojan Joseph: Nurse from Kerala & now UK's new MP

London (PTI): Sojan Joseph, a mental health nurse in the National Health Service (NHS) who migrated from Kerala 22 years ago, is among the new crop of Labour members of Parliament elected to the House of Commons in the UK general election.

Joseph, 49, connected with the voters at the doorstep with his pledge to ensure more mental health services in his constituency and succeeded in making a dent in the Conservative stronghold of Ashford in Kent, south-eastern England. In defeating Tory stalwart and former minister Damian Green, Joseph also dealt a blow to the anti-immigration rhetoric of the right-wing candidates in a seat where the far-right Reform UK came in third place after the Tories. "I am humbled with the trust you all placed in me and fully aware of the responsibilities that come with it. I will work hard for everyone in Ashford, Hawkinge and villages," said Joseph in his acceptance speech on Friday. Being a local councillor and a BAME (black, Asian and minority ethnic) Officer would have prepared the medical professional for this new parliamentary challenge. But it is his over two decades' long NHS career as a mental health nurse that he feels gives him the empathy required for his new job in Parliament. Also, his connect with the local communities of Ashford, where he has been living with his wife and three children for over 15 years, is his additional motivation. "I take great pride in calling Ashford, and Wilsborough, my home. I have taken part in a number of fundraising activities over the years, including running marathons for various charities and a dragon boat race for the local hospital charity," said Joseph, who has undertaken several international marathons for charity. "I firmly believe in an inclusive society that works towards achieving the full potential for every individual in the community," he adds.

'Prachanda should resign immediately'

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's embattled Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' should resign immediately and pave the way for formation of a national consensus government, former coalition partner Communist Party of Nepal-United Marxist Leninist (CPN-UML) said on Sunday. The CPN-UML demand came as Prime Minister Prachanda is preparing to face a vote of confidence in the Parliament on July 12 in view of the withdrawal of support by some allies. Prachanda, 69, has announced that he would not quit after the resignation of eight Cabinet ministers belonging to the CPN-UML and instead face a vote of confidence in Parliament. A parliamentary party meeting of the CPN-UML led by chairman KP Sharma Oli at the Federal Parliament building on Sunday asked Prime Minister Prachanda to resign promptly

and facilitate the formation of a new government, the Kathmandu Post newspaper reported. "The government finds itself in a clear minority after various parties, including the UML, withdrew their support," said UML's Chief Whip Mahesh Bartaula. "However, he has not stepped down, which is seen as unfair. Therefore, the meeting has requested that the prime minister resign immediately and pave the way for forming a national consensus government," he was quoted as saying by the newspaper. The CPN-UML, the largest party in the ruling coalition, withdrew support to Prachanda-led government last week after inking a power-sharing deal with the largest party - Nepali Congress - to oust the former guerrilla leader. Days later, three ministers from another ally - Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP) - on Friday withdrew support to 'Prachanda'.

Ukrainian drone triggers warehouse explosions

AP ■ KYIV

A village in western Russia's border region was evacuated on Sunday following a series of explosions after debris from a downed Ukrainian drone set fire to a nearby warehouse, local officials said. Social media footage appeared to show rising clouds of black smoke in the Voronezh region while loud explosions could be heard in succession. Governor Aleksandr Gusev said that falling wreckage triggered the "detonation of explosive objects." No casualties were reported, but residents of a nearby village in the Podgorensky district were evacuated, he said. Roads were also closed with emergency services, military and government officials working at the scene. Russia's Ministry of Defence

did not address the strike in their morning briefing, but said that air defence systems had destroyed a Ukrainian drone over the Belgorod region. Authorities in Russia's Krasnodar province on Saturday said a fire at an oil depot had also been caused by falling drone debris. Russia's emergency services said the blaze was extinguished Sunday morning. The strikes come after a Ukrainian military spokesperson told The Associated Press Thursday that Kyiv's troops had retreated from a neighbourhood on the outskirts of Chasiv Yar, a strategically important town in Ukraine's Donetsk region that has been reduced to rubble under a monthlong Russian assault. Russian forces have for

months tried to grind out gains in Ukraine's industrial east, in an apparent attempt to lock its defenders into a war of attrition. In a joint investigation published on Friday, independent Russian news outlets Meduza and Mediazona reported that Moscow's forces were losing between 200 and 250 soldiers in Ukraine each day. Military analysts say Chasiv Yar's fall could also compromise critical Ukrainian supply routes and put nearby cities in jeopardy, bringing Russia closer to its stated aim of seizing the entire Donetsk region. Russia sent overnight into Sunday two ballistic missiles and 13 Shahed drones, Ukrainian air force officials said. All were shot down but the officials did not elaborate on the impact of the missiles.

Tokyo's incumbent Governor Koike projected to win third term, exit poll results show

AP ■ TOKYO

Tokyo's incumbent governor, Yuriko Koike, is projected to win her reelection as head of Japan's influential capital for a third four-year term, according to exit poll results by Japan's NHK national television. The vote on Sunday was also seen as a test for Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's governing party, which supports the first woman to lead the Tokyo city government. Tokyo, a city of 13.5 million people with outsized political and cultural power and a budget equalling some nations, is one of Japan's most influential political posts. A record 55 candidates challenged Koike, and one of the top contenders was also a woman — a liberal-leaning former lawmaker who uses only her first name, Renho, and was backed by opposition parties. Minutes after the exit poll



projecting her victory, Koike showed up at her campaign headquarters in Tokyo and celebrated by thanking the voters who chose her. "I believe the voters gave me a mandate for my accomplishment in the past eight years," Koike said. She pledged to push for more reforms and support for Tokyo residents. "I'm fully aware of my heavy responsibility," she said. "I will tackle my third term with all my body and soul."

A win by Koike is a relief for Kishida's conservative governing party, which she has long been affiliated with. Kishida's Liberal Democratic Party and its junior coalition partner, Komeito, unofficially backed her campaign. Renho, running as an independent but supported by the main opposition Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan and the Japanese Communist Party, criticised Koike's connection with Kishida's party, which has been hit by a widespread slush fund scandal. A victory for Renho would have been a major setback for Kishida's chances in the party's leadership vote in September. While the two high-profile women gathered national attention, Shinji Ishimaru, a former mayor of Akitakata town in Hiroshima, was seen to have gained popularity among young voters.

The main issues in the campaign included measures for the economy, disaster resilience for Tokyo and low birth numbers. When Japan's national fertility rate fell to a record low 1.2 babies per woman last year, Tokyo's 0.99 rate was the lowest for the country. Koike's policies focused on providing subsidies for married parents expecting babies and those raising children. Renho called for increased support for young people to address their concerns about jobs and financial stability, arguing that would help improve prospects for marrying and having families. Another focus of attention was a controversial redevelopment of Tokyo's beloved park area, Jingu Gaien, which Koike approved but later faced criticism over its lack of transparency and suspected environmental impact.

Rafah in ruins: Ghost town 2 months after Israeli operation

AP ■ RAFAH

Two months ago, before Israeli troops invaded Rafah, the city sheltered most of Gaza's more than 2 million people. Today it is a dust-covered ghost town. Abandoned, bullet-ridden apartment buildings have blasted out walls and shattered windows. Bedrooms and kitchens are visible from roads dotted with rubble piles that tower over the Israeli military vehicles passing by. Very few civilians remain. Israel says it has nearly defeated Hamas forces in Rafah — an area identified earlier this year as the militant groups' last stronghold in Gaza. The Israeli military invited reporters into Rafah on Wednesday, the first time international media visited Gaza's southernmost city since it was invaded May 6.

Israel has barred international journalists from entering Gaza independently since the Hamas attack on October 7 that sparked the war. Before invading Rafah, Israel said Hamas' four remaining battalions had retreated there, an area of about 25 square miles (65 square kilometers) that borders Egypt. Israel says hundreds of militants have been killed in its Rafah offensive. Scores of women and children have also died from Israeli airstrikes and ground operations. The military says it has been necessary to operate with such intensity because Hamas turned civilian areas into treacherous traps. Eight soldiers were killed last month by a single blast. "Some of these tunnels are booby-trapped," the military's chief spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, said during Wednesday's tour as he stood

over a shaft that led underground. "Hamas built everything in a civilian neighbourhood among houses, among mosques, among the population, in order to create its terror ecosystem." An estimated 1.4 million Palestinians crammed into Rafah after fleeing fighting elsewhere in Gaza. The UN estimates that around 50,000 remain in Rafah, which had a pre-war population of about 275,000. Most have moved to a nearby Israel-declared "humanitarian area" where conditions are grave. Many are clustering in squalid tent camps along the beach with scant access to clean water, food, bathrooms and medical care. Efforts to bring aid into southern Gaza have stalled. Israel's incursion into Rafah closed down one of two major crossings into the south of Gaza.

India, UK to hold next round of talks on proposed trade agreement this month

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the new government taking charge in Britain, senior officials of India and the UK will hold the next round of talks this month for the proposed free trade agreement to resolve the pending issues and close the negotiations, an official said. The India-UK talks for the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) began in January 2022. The 14th round of talks stalled as the two nations stepped into their general election cycles. The official said the two sides are in touch, and the next round would start this month only. Britain's newly-elected Prime Minister Keir Starmer spoke to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday and said he stood ready to conclude an FTA that worked for both sides. The two leaders agreed to work towards the early conclusion of a mutually beneficial India-UK FTA. There are pending issues in both the goods and services sectors. The Indian industry is demanding greater access for



its skilled professionals from sectors like IT and healthcare in the UK market, besides market access for several goods at nil customs duty. On the other hand, the UK is seeking a significant cut in import duties on goods such as scotch whiskey, electric vehicles, lamb meat, chocolates and certain confectionary items. Britain is also looking for more opportunities for UK services in Indian markets in segments like telecommunications, legal and financial services (banking and insurance).

The two countries are also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty (BIT). There are 26 chapters in the agreement, which include goods, services, investments and intellectual property rights. The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24 from 20.36 billion in 2022-23. The Labour Party's election manifesto for the recent polls also committed to clinching the deal. The new Starmer-led government's new Foreign Secretary David Lammy is

also on the record saying that he wants to finish the job on the FTA and plans to visit India within the first month of being elected. According to the think tank GTRI (Global Trade Research Initiative), the agreement is nearly finalised and with a few minor adjustments like curtailing the number of visas for Indian professionals, the Labour Party is likely to give its approval. It has suggested that India should focus on two issues - Carbon Border Adjustment Measure (CBAM) and non-traditional subjects like labour, environment, gender, and intellectual property rights — in the pact. Historically, India has resisted incorporating these topics into FTAs as they often require domestic policy changes. The GTRI report has stated that even if the UK agrees to eliminate tariffs on sectors like textiles, Indian exports might still need to meet stringent UK sustainability requirements, and this could adversely affect Indian exports, especially in labour-intensive sectors.

FM wraps up consultations, FY25 Budget to be presented on July 23

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has concluded consultations with various stakeholders, including representatives of industry and social sectors, as part of the budget preparation exercise. Sitharaman will present her seventh Budget on July 23. This would be the first full budget of Modi 3.0 which is going to set the path for Vikshit Bharat (developed India) by 2047. Last month, President Droupadi Murmu, while delivering her address to the joint sitting of Parliament, had said that many historic steps and major economic decisions will be taken in the upcoming budget session. In her first address to the joint sitting of Parliament since the constitution of the 18th Lok Sabha, the President said, "This budget will be an effective document of the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision." "Along with major economic and social decisions, many historic steps will also be seen in this budget," she said. The Finance Ministry in a statement said the pre-budget consultations for Union



Budget 2024-25 that started from June 19 onward concluded on July 5, 2024. In the course of in-person consultations, more than 120 invitees across 10 stakeholder groups, including experts and representatives from farmer associations and agriculture economists; trade unions; education & health sector; employment & skilling; MSME; trade & services; industry; economists; financial sector & capital markets; as well as, infrastructure, energy and urban sector, participated in the meetings, it said. These meetings chaired by the Finance Minister witnessed the participation of

Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary; Finance Secretary and Secretary Expenditure, T V Somanathan; Economic Affairs Secretary, Ajay Seth, DIPAM Secretary, Tuhin K Pandey, Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi and Revenue Secretary, Sanjay Malhotra among others. In the course of the consultations, Sitharaman expressed gratitude to the participants for sharing valuable suggestions and assured experts and representatives that their suggestions would be carefully examined and considered while preparing the Union Budget 2024-25.

FPIs inject ₹7,900 cr in equities in first week of July

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign investors infused over Rs 7,900 crore in Indian equities in the first week of the month amid a healthy economic and earnings growth momentum. With this, total FPI investment in equities reached Rs 1.16 lakh crore so far this year, data with the depositories showed. Going forward, the Union Budget and Q1 FY25 earnings could determine the sustainability of FPI flows, experts said. According to the data, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have made a net inflow of Rs 7,962 crore in equities so far this month (till July 5). This came following an inflow of Rs 26,565 crore in equities in June, driven by political stability and a sharp rebound in markets. Before that, FPIs withdrew Rs 25,586 crore in May on poll jitters and over Rs 8,700 crore in April on concerns over a tweak in India's tax treaty with Mauritius and a sustained rise in US bond yields.

73 per cent Indians read ingredient lists, nutritional value of snacks: Report



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 73 per cent Indians prefer to read ingredient lists and nutritional value before purchasing any snack, reveals a new survey, highlighting the majority of Indians' growing inclination towards healthy snacking. Based on a survey of over 6,000 people across India, the Healthy Snacking Report 2024, released on Sunday, aims to examine the ever evolving consumption trends in India. "Seventy three per cent of those surveyed prefer to read labels for ingredient lists and nutritional value before making a purchase. Of this, 93 per cent expressed a desire to transition to healthier options, highlighting a correlation between label reading and conscious choices while pushing for transparency," read the report. The report was released against the backdrop of an increasing number of cases regarding food adulteration that have come to the fore, be it in spices, confectionaries or fast-moving goods. This, according to the report, has triggered a wave of conscious consumption, with shoppers checking food

packets for potentially harmful substances. So, with 9 out of 10 respondents looking to find healthier alternatives to traditional snacks, the report records how nearly 60 per cent of Indians are now opting for "natural, additive-free products with wholesome ingredients like nuts, seeds and whole grains". Makhanas (foxnuts) and dry fruits have emerged as stars in the healthy snacking segment, with 67 per cent of Indians reaching out for a bowl of these nutrient powerhouses. "In a true testament to the growing popularity of makhanas in India, 59 per cent millennials called it their trusted snack, followed by Gen Z (49 per cent) and Gen X (47 per cent), indicating its popularity across people of all ages. Additionally, over 70 per cent revealed that their favourite time to snack was with their evening cup of tea/coffee," it added. That said, the shift towards healthy snacking comes at a cost, which is why over 58 per cent of those surveyed highlighted "high retail costs" as a barrier to making the switch. The consumer insights study was conducted by snacking brand Farmley.

India's coal import rises 5 per cent to 52 MT in April-May

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's coal import rose 5.3 per cent to 52.29 million tonnes (MT) in the first two months of the ongoing fiscal as against the year-ago period. The country's coal import was 49.62 MT in April and May in FY24, according to data compiled by mjunction services ltd — a B2B e-commerce platform from a joint venture between Tata Steel and SAIL.

However, coal import in May dropped marginally to 26.19 MT, from 26.57 MT a year earlier. "Coal imports... Were down 1.43 per cent as against 26.57 MT imported in May 2023," it said. According to mjunction MD and CEO Vinaya Varma, the demand for imports is likely to remain subdued in the coming weeks due to the onset of monsoon while the production growth should stay healthy in the domestic



market. Also, coking coal prices are expected to move up in the seaborne market due to supply tightness and this may impact buyers' interest in the country. Of the total imports in May, non-coking coal imports stood at 17.53 MT, against 18.10 MT imported in May last year. Coking coal import volume was 5.03 MT, against 5.10 TMT imported in May 2023. Coal India accounts for over

80 per cent of domestic coal output. After taking charge as coal and mines minister, G Kishan Reddy had said India should increase domestic production of the fossil fuel and reduce coal imports. Reddy had said that 10 years ago there was coal shortage in the country which resulted in electricity shortage. But in the last 10 years there has been sufficient power availability, he said.

FMCG makers expect single-digit revenue growth

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fast-moving consumer goods companies expect single-digit volume growth along with expansion in margins during the April-June quarter of this fiscal, helped by a revival in rural demand and a stable urban market. Listed FMCG companies such as Dabur, Marico and Adani Wilmar in their latest quarterly updates have reported a "gradual improvement" in demand trends in the April-June quarter, which was on the expected lines. Home-grown FMCG maker Dabur expects to register mid to high single-digit growth in its consolidated revenue, supported by mid-single-digit volume growth in the domestic market. Marico said its consolidated revenue grew in high single digits in the June quarter, while the domestic business posted a "modest uptick in underlying volume growth" on a sequential basis. Adani Wilmar, which sells edible oils and has some play in the food products under Fortune brands, has also reported an overall 13 per



cent volume growth in the June quarter. Its food and FMCG business volumes grew by 23 per cent year-on-year, said Adani Wilmar. About margins, the makers expect expansion on a year-on-year basis helped by factors such as benign

commodity prices and cost-saving initiatives. "Commodity prices were stable during the quarter," said Dabur, adding, "Gross margins are likely to witness some expansion on account of rollover price increases and cost-saving initiatives." Marico, which owns brands

such as Saffola, Parachute, Hair & Care, Nihar and Livon, among others, also expects gross margin to expand on a year-on-year basis. Among key inputs, copra prices stayed firm in line with forecasts, while edible oil and crude oil derivatives remained range-bound. "Operating profit is expected to grow slightly ahead of revenue leading to a marginal inching up of operating margin on a year-on-year basis," it said. About rural market sales, Dabur said in the June quarter Dabur saw sequential improvement in demand trends with growth picking up from those regions. "With a forecast of a normal monsoon and continued focus by the government on macroeconomic growth, we expect the improvement to accelerate in the coming months," said Dabur which owns brands such as Dabur Chyawanprash, Dabur Honey, Dabur PudinaHara, Dabur Lal Tail, Dabur Amla, Dabur Red Paste, Real and Vatika. According to Abneesh Roy — Executive Director

(Research) at Nuvama Institutional Equities, volume growth is likely to be in low-to-mid-single-digit, largely due to heatwave, general elections and fewer marriage days. "Rural demand continues to see gradual but slight green shoots as real rural wages remain muted," he said. Both Dabur and Marico reported an increase in their international businesses. Mariwala family promoted Marico said its international business is expected to post a "strong growth" in constant currency terms. However, severe currency depreciation in Turkey and Egypt continued to have an impact on translated growth. Dabur said its international business "delivered double-digit constant currency growth", driven by a resilient and broad-based growth across markets. Last week, Crisil Ratings in a report projected a revenue growth of 7-9 per cent for FMCG players during this fiscal, supported by higher volume growth due to a revival in rural demand and a steady demand from urban areas.

Proposals invited on Quantum Standardisation, Testing Labs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of Telecom has invited research proposals on 'Quantum Standardisation and Testing Labs' from Indian academic institutions or research and development institutions, an official release said on Sunday. The goal is to drive research and development in quantum technologies, ensuring the interoperability, reliability, and security of quantum communication systems. These labs will serve as innovation hubs, uniting quantum technology developers, testing equipment manufacturers, and academic researchers to explore and harness the full potential of quantum technologies for the benefit of all citizens. "The initiative aligns with the Prime Minister's vision for 'Jai Anushandhan', aiming to support research and development in telecom products and technologies that directly enhance the lives of Indian citizens," the release said.

7 proposals on table for Sebi expert group for short-term measures to tame F&O frenzy

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The Sebi-appointed expert group on exchange-traded derivatives started discussions on seven proposals to address regulatory issues and protect small investors from risks in index and stock option trading, sources said. The panel members would recommend short-term strategies to bolster investor protection and improve risk metrics in this market segment, they said. "The expert group would deliberate in detail the pros and cons of each of the seven proposals to protect small investors engaged in futures and options (F&O) trading. We know that nine out of ten small investors lose money in F&O. The recommendations of this

group will be considered by the Secondary Market Advisory Committee for a final decision," a source close to the development told PTI. Options are financial contracts that give a holder a right, but not the obligation, to buy or sell an underlying asset at a specified price within a contract period. The proposals included rationalisation or limiting weekly options, rationalisation of strike prices of the underlying assets and removal of calendar spread benefits on the expiry day, according to the sources. The other four proposals were an upfront collection of option premiums from buyers of options, intra-day monitoring of position limits, an increase in lot sizes and a hike in margin



requirements near contract expiry. Both the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and the Reserve Bank have expressed concern over the risks associated with retail investors, amid market volatility.

Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch recently said the capital markets regulator has anecdotal evidence of people borrowing money to place speculative bets in the derivatives segment and

rued that household savings are going into such risky bets. The regulator has also noted that option volume surges near the expiry of the weekly contracts. Currently, all five working days of a week have at least one expiry of NSE or BSE indices. According to Sebi data, the overall derivative turnover was Rs 210 lakh crore in FY'18, which jumped to Rs 500 lakh crore in FY24, she said, adding that individual investors in index options jumped to 41 per cent in FY'24 from 2 per cent in FY'18. The rapid rise in F&O trade volumes in recent years could pose several challenges as retail investors who are not following proper risk management could be impacted by sudden market movements, a Reserve Bank

report stated. The equity derivatives segment has been witnessing growing participation from retail investors in recent years, increasing by 42.8 per cent from 65 lakh in 2022-23 to 95.7 lakh in 2023-24. Trading volumes in the derivatives segment have seen exponential growth over the years in notional terms, while the trading volumes measured by the premium turnover have witnessed a linear growth pattern, said the RBI's annual Financial Stability Report (FSR). The expert group will scrutinise the weekly options in detail as these are most attractive to retail investors who can participate with low capital, the sources said. Rationalisation of strike prices is another area of

interest to prevent small investors from incurring losses, they said. "Retail investors tend to buy options cheaply, hoping for very high returns, and go far from 'At the Money' options leading to losing their premium paid," one of the sources explained. 'At the Money' (ATM) describes a situation when the strike price of an option is equal to the underlying asset's current market price. The expert group will also look into options for increasing lot sizes, the sources said. The lot sizes of index F&O were reduced by the National Stock Exchange after BSE relaunched its derivative products a year back. NSE, the world's largest derivative exchange in terms of contracts traded, had

reduced Nifty lot sizes to 25 from 50 and BankNifty to 15 from 25. Bharat Chamber of Commerce senior vice president and SKP Securities Ltd MD Naresh Pachisia said, "SEBI's intent is in the right direction because when retail participation in options goes unprotected, it shifts from the useful wealth creation to additive speculation, which is harmful to their financial health. Therefore, the regulator taking steps to prevent this is useful." He also added, "However, at the same time, they need to ensure that long-term investors' ability to hedge their portfolios, using options, is not affected. An impactful investor education awareness campaign could be useful."



HEALTH ROUNDUP

Every 3rd Indian has fatty liver, metabolic disorders: Dr Jitendra



Dr Jitendra Singh launches Indo-French Liver And Metabolic Disease Network (InFLiMeN) at ILBS recently Photo: PIB

There is an urgent need to develop simple, low-cost diagnostic tests for the detection of different stages of fatty liver and their progression to severe, full-blown diseases. The approaches and algorithms should suit the Indian context, low-priced, and have a point of care, said Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh who is himself a Diabetologist. Every third Indian has fatty liver, which predates Type 2 Diabetes and other metabolic disorders, said Dr Singh after launching an Indo-French Liver and Metabolic Disease Network (InFLiMeN) a virtual node to prevent and cure metabolic liver diseases at Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences (ILBS) in Delhi recently.

First Indian guidelines for managing dyslipidemia released

The Cardiological Society of India (CSI) has unveiled the country's inaugural guidelines for managing dyslipidemia, a significant risk factor for cardiovascular and peripheral artery diseases. Dyslipidemia, marked by high total cholesterol, elevated LDL-cholesterol (bad cholesterol), high triglycerides, and low HDL-cholesterol (good cholesterol), poses unique challenges in India due to genetic factors such as familial hypercholesterolemia. Dr. Ashwani Mehta, Senior Consultant Cardiologist at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital, Delhi, and co-author of the guidelines, stressed aggressive targets for high-risk patients: "Patients with a history of heart attacks, strokes, or chronic kidney disease should aim for LDL-C levels below 55 mg/dL or non-HDL levels below 85 mg/dL." The guidelines also underscore lifestyle modifications as foundational in dyslipidemia management. Dr. Sawhney further recommended dietary changes and regular exercise: "Reducing sugar and carbohydrate intake is crucial in India, where dietary habits contribute significantly to blockages. Yoga and regular exercise also offer cardioprotective benefits and are culturally relevant." These guidelines aim to standardize and optimize dyslipidemia management in India, addressing both the genetic predispositions and lifestyle factors that impact cardiovascular health, said the doctors.

Navigating a serious health diagnosis, like cancer, is emotionally demanding. Talking with your doctor or a counselor and reaching out support groups is essential to overcome the complexities of the cancer journey. ARCHANA JYOTI speaks with doctors to tell you more

For many individuals facing cancer, the emotional toll can be as daunting as the physical aspects of the disease. From the moment of diagnosis, feelings of fear, anxiety, and uncertainty often dominate one's thoughts. Concerns about treatment outcomes, potential side effects, and the impact on daily life can intensify these emotions.

Dr. Aggarwal also underscores the importance of mental well-being alongside physical health in the context of cancer care. She points out that a cancer diagnosis brings with it a multitude of challenges, including uncertainty, loss of control, disruption of daily life, and emotional turmoil. Patients may experience anger, altered body image, and conflicts in relationships, which often remain unaddressed as medical treatment takes precedence. "Each individual's experience is unique, but with comprehensive support and compassionate care, navigating emotional well-being through cancer becomes a journey of healing, strength, and renewed purpose," chips in Dr Rahul Bhargava, Director of Haematology, Paediatric Haematology Oncology and Bone Marrow Transplant at Fortis Gurgaon.

centers should consider introducing this integrated model since unplanned medical care is more costly to both patients and health systems. Another area where health care should focus is on patient's commonly experiencing changes in mood during or after cancer treatment, says Dr Bhargava. Says Dr. Arijit Bishnu, Associate Consultant, Hemato-Oncology and BMT,HCG EKO Cancer Centre, Kolkata, "Receiving a cancer diagnosis can be profoundly overwhelming, stirring fear of the unknown, apprehension about treatment and its side effects, and anxiety about the future. This emotional strain can be as taxing as the physical challenges posed by cancer itself. Conditions such as depression and anxiety not only degrade quality-of-life, they are associated with decreased rates of survival, possibly by impacting a patient's ability to follow through with treatment. Elaborating on strategies for

navigating emotional well-being, Dr Bishnu adds, "Joining support groups allows patients to connect with others going through similar experiences. Sharing stories, tips, and encouragement can reduce feelings of isolation and provide emotional support." Practices such as meditation, yoga, and deep-breathing exercises can help manage stress and anxiety. These techniques promote relaxation and improve overall mental well-being, he asserts. "Exercise can release endorphins, which are natural mood lifters."

CANCER CARE COMPASSION

The concept of "healing touch" goes beyond physical care and encompasses holistic support that addresses the emotional, psychological, and even spiritual needs of cancer patients. Here are some ways in which a healing touch can be beneficial for cancer patients:

Emotional Support: Dealing with cancer can evoke a range of emotions, including fear, sadness, anger, and confusion. Compassionate care providers, counselors, and support groups can offer a safe space for patients to express these emotions, helping them to cope effectively.

Psychological Counseling: Professional counseling can provide cancer patients with strategies to manage stress, anxiety, and depression. Therapists trained in oncology support can help patients navigate their emotions, improve their coping mechanisms, and enhance their overall mental well-being.

Spiritual Care: For many patients, their spiritual beliefs and practices play a significant role in their healing journey. Spiritual caregivers or chaplains can offer comfort, provide spiritual guidance, and help patients find meaning and purpose during their illness.

Complementary Therapies: Techniques such as massage therapy, acupuncture, and yoga can complement medical treatments by promoting relaxation, reducing pain and fatigue, and improving overall quality of life.

Supportive Relationships: Family members, friends, and caregivers play a crucial role in providing emotional support to cancer patients. Their presence, understanding, and encouragement can make a significant difference in the patient's emotional resilience.

Educational Support: Empowering patients with knowledge about their diagnosis, treatment options, and possible side effects can alleviate fears and anxieties.

Holistic Care: Integrating mental health services into oncology care ensures that patients receive comprehensive support tailored to their individual needs. This approach not only addresses physical symptoms but also prioritizes emotional and psychological well-being.

Needless to say, mental health plays a crucial role throughout the cancer journey. Research consistently shows that psychological well-being influences not only the quality of life but also the effectiveness of treatment and overall health outcomes. Support from family, friends, and healthcare providers is pivotal in managing these challenges.

"Counseling, therapy, and support groups offer safe spaces for individuals to express their emotions, address fears, and seek guidance on coping strategies. These interventions not only provide emotional support but also equip patients with tools to navigate the ups and downs of their cancer experience," assert oncologists and psychologists.

Infact, integrating mental health care into oncology settings is increasingly recognised as essential for comprehensive patient care. Studies show that when mental health services are embedded within cancer treatment teams, patients experience better outcomes. Integrated care ensures that mental health professionals collaborate closely with oncologists to address both physical and emotional needs, enhancing overall well-being and treatment adherence.

For survivors too, the journey continues beyond treatment completion. Adjusting to life after cancer involves navigating survivorship challenges, managing lingering emotional effects, and rebuilding physical and emotional strength. Support networks, survivorship programs, and ongoing mental health care play crucial roles in this phase, promoting long-term recovery and quality of life.

Dr Aditi Aggarwal, who serves as the Associate Director of Radiation Oncology at Max Institute of Cancer Care, highlights the increasing incidence of cancer globally. She acknowledges that scientific advances have significantly improved the effectiveness of cancer treatments, leading to higher cure rates. However,

He says matter-of-factly: "When you first learn that you have cancer, it's normal to feel as if your life is out of control. This could be because: you wonder if you're going to live. Your normal routine is disrupted by doctor visits and treatments. People use medical terms that you don't understand, you feel like you can't do the things you enjoy and you feel helpless and lonely."

A study from University of Pittsburgh researchers too finds that when mental health treatment is integrated into oncology care, patients are less likely to end up in the hospital. The study, published in "The Lancet," builds on previous research that shows a strong link between poor mental health and higher health care utilizations. The Pitt researchers had developed a treatment model in which cancer patients received mental health care from a therapist or social worker who was part of their oncology treatment team. This group was then compared to another set of patients who were referred out for therapy. Those who received the integrated mental health treatment were significantly less likely to visit the ER or be hospitalized.

The group that got integrated mental health treatment received cognitive behavioral therapy: they focused on relaxation techniques and changing core beliefs about themselves or their environments. This group reported lower rates of depression, fatigue, and pain when compared to patients who only received therapy referrals. Researcher Steel says cancer

COUNSELING, THERAPY, AND SUPPORT GROUPS OFFER SAFE SPACES FOR INDIVIDUALS TO EXPRESS THEIR EMOTIONS, ADDRESS FEARS, AND SEEK GUIDANCE ON COPING STRATEGIES. THESE INTERVENTIONS NOT ONLY PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SUPPORT BUT ALSO EQUIP PATIENTS WITH TOOLS TO NAVIGATE THE UPS AND DOWNS OF THEIR CANCER EXPERIENCE



Rare Medical Cases Highlight Doctors' Success

ARCHANA JYOTI talks about two rare medical cases from diverse corners of India: one in a private hospital and the other in a specialised government paediatric facility. Both were successfully managed by dedicated medical teams, driven by the profound hope of patients and families

CASE 1 Facial Nerve Schwannoma at Fortis Vasant Kunj, Delhi

At Fortis Hospital in Vasant Kunj in Delhi, a 39-year-old woman from Kenya arrived with troubling symptoms: complete paralysis on her right side, accompanied by severe hearing and vision loss. Diagnostic tests revealed an extremely rare facial nerve Schwannoma, a tennis ball-sized tumor nestled intricately within the delicate facial nerve.

Facial nerve schwannomas are rare, slow-growing tumours, accounting for less than 1% of all temporal bone tumours. They grow on the seventh cranial nerve, which is the facial nerve. These tumours are benign and grow slowly. According to doctors, they have afflicted fewer than 200,000 people worldwide and affect 1 in 50,000 people in India

vital facial functions. The procedure was meticulous, requiring careful navigation around sensitive nerve structures. Dr. Gupta highlighted the complexity and risks associated with the surgery, emphasising that timely



Dr Anurag Gupta (L) with the patient and her relative

intervention was critical to preventing further neurological deterioration. The successful outcome allowed the patient to be discharged after 12 days in stable condition, with improvements in vision, mobility, and overall health. Facial nerve schwannomas are

CASE 2 Neonatal Sclerosing Cholangitis (NISCH Syndrome) at PGICH Noida, UP

Meanwhile, around 50 km away at PGICH Noida in a starkly contrasting medical setting, a two-month-old infant from Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh presented with a puzzling combination of symptoms: severe skin ichthyosis and signs of liver involvement, a rare occurrence in medical literature. After thorough genetic testing, the medical team, led by Dr. Mayank Nilay and Dr. Rani Manisha, and Dr. Varun Venkatraghavan, specialists from Medical Genetics and Pediatric Gastro Medicine, diagnosed the child with an

extremely rare genetic disorder, Neonatal Ichthyosis-Sclerosing Cholangitis (NISCH Syndrome), caused by a genetic mutation. The syndrome is characterised by scalp hypotrichosis (sparse and coarse hair), scarring alopecia (inflammatory condition causing hair loss), ichthyosis (dry and itchy skin) and sclerosing cholangitis (inflammation of liver ducts). Treatment was multidisciplinary and



According to medicos, this is the first molecularly proven case from north India, meaning the diagnosis was confirmed at the genetic level. In India, there have been three such cases, and worldwide, there are around 20 cases, with at least five requiring liver transplants. The prognosis varies based on the extent of liver involvement.

intensive. The team focused on hydrating the infant's skin with specialized creams and oils while considering potential future liver transplantation due to the syndrome's progressive liver complications. "The course may vary with remission of

liver symptoms while some children may also require liver transplantation. Skin ichthyosis is managed by hydration of the skin (topical application of creams and emollient oils), retinoids and sunlight exposure," Dr Nilay said. Given the rarity of the condition, close monitoring and continuous care were pivotal in managing the child's complex medical needs. "The case underscores the need for greater awareness about rare genetic disorders in India. There are children with genetic disorders who remain undiagnosed or misdiagnosed due to lack of knowledge and resources. Any baby with multiple organ issues needs to be seen immediately," said Dr Nilay.

EXPECTING INDIA TO WIN BOTH CT AND WTC FINAL UNDER ROHIT'S CAPTAINCY: BCCI SECRETARY SHAH

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

T20 World Cup-winning skipper Rohit Sharma will continue to lead India in the ODI and Test formats BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Sunday, exuding confidence that the country will win next year's Champions Trophy and World Test Championship under his captaincy.

The 37-year-old Rohit, who became the third Indian captain after legendary Kapil Dev and Mahendra Singh Dhoni to win a global trophy, has announced his retirement from the T20 format.

"The next stage is the WTC final and the Champions Trophy. I have full faith in Rohit Sharma's captaincy, that we will be the champions in both these tournaments," secretary Shah said in a video message.

The Champions Trophy, scheduled in Pakistan next



year, will be held after eight years (since 2017 in UK), and even though the draft schedule has been submitted to the ICC, the BCCI hasn't yet given its green light to it.

It is understood BCCI will again push for the 'Hybrid Model' like 2023 ODI Asia Cup where India played all its matches, including the ones against Pakistan, in Sri Lanka. Shah's message, in a way, has put to rest speculations about whether Rohit would quit leadership role in other formats.

Till Rohit calls it quits, India will once again have split captaincy with Rohit leading in ODIs and Tests while Hardik Pandya is expected to take charge of the T20 outfit.

Rohit had also led India to the finals of the WTC and ODI World Cup last year, where India lost the summit clash after winning 10 straight games.

Shah dedicated India's T20

World Cup triumph to the three cricketers, who quit the format after the title victory and outgoing coach Rahul Dravid.

"I want to dedicate this victory to coach Rahul Dravid, captain Rohit Sharma, Virat Kohli and Ravindra Jadeja.

"This was our third final in the last year. We lost the WTC final in June, 2023. In November, 2023 we won hearts after 10 wins but couldn't win the Cup. I had said in Rajkot that we will win the heart and also the Cup on June 24 and install our national flag, and our captain installed the Indian flag," the secretary said.

Rohit, Kohli and Jadeja are expected to comeback for the ODI series against Sri Lanka slated for August.

India will play six ODIs - three against Sri Lanka in an away series and three at home against England in early February before the Champions Trophy.

Abhishek Sharma hits ton, India outplay Zimbabwe in 2nd T20

PTI ■ HARARE

Young Abhishek Sharma announced his arrival on the big stage with a breathtaking 46-ball century as India pummeled Zimbabwe by a whopping 100 runs in the second T20 to restore parity in a resounding fashion here Sunday.

This is India's biggest margin of victory in terms of runs against Zimbabwe in T20s.

The young Indian side didn't carry the baggage of a shock-13-run defeat in the series-opener as left-handed opener Abhishek blended power with grace for a scintillating 100-run knock that propelled India to a massive 234 for two on a track where batting wasn't exactly easy.

The ask was already stiff and Indian bowlers got breakthroughs at regular intervals to bowl out Zimbabwe for 134 in 18.4 overs to set the record straight.

Pacers Mukesh Kumar (3/37) and Avesh Khan (3/15) removed the top-order inside the Powerplay to kill the contest which became a formality after that.

The day certainly belonged to Abhishek, who mixed grace and power in equal measure in an innings, embellished with eight sixes and seven fours.

It made a normally stylish Rituraj Gaikwad (77 not out off 47 balls) look pale in comparison during their 137-run stand for the second wicket.

His innings would also increase the headache for skipper Shubman Gill and stand-in coach VVS Laxman, who would need to take a tough call when Yashasvi Jaiswal is available from the third game.

After his century, there is no way that the Sunrisers Hyderabad opener can be dropped from the playing XI.

Having endured the disappointment of a four-ball duck on debut, Abhishek never looked under pressure on a track which his senior partner and current CSK partner Gaikwad found "difficult to feel set".

The hallmark of his innings was fearlessness as he took calculated risks which paid off and allowed Gaikwad at the other end to get into the groove after playing and missing for the better part of his innings.

Abhishek got a reprieve on 27

when Wellington Masakadza dropped a regulation skier off Luke Jongwe. He never looked back after that.

Having started his international run account with a pulled six off-spinner Brian Bennett, who had got the better of him on Saturday.

His fifty came off another pulled six behind square off medium pacer Dion Myers, whose 28-run over actually opened the floodgates during the back-10 for the visitors.

The shot that was most pleasing to the eye was his inside out six off rival skipper Sikandar Raza, lofting his off-break with the turn over extra cover boundary.

If that was elegance personified, the manner in which he muscled left-arm spinner Masakadza into the orbit with back-to-back sixes was a testimony to his brute power.

He raised his milestone hundred when he guided a wayward full-toss on leg-stump behind the square for a maximum before being dismissed off the very next delivery.

The total was India's highest against Zimbabwe in T20 Internationals, surpassing previous best of 186, a fitting comeback after an inexplicable batting collapse in the opening game.

The Indian pacers despite the usage of long handle by No. 3 Bennett (26 off 9 balls) were on target as Mukesh cleaned up two batters with slightly back of the length off-cutters.

Avesh's nasty snorter was something that opposition skipper Sikandar Raza least expected while trying to fend being hit on the helmet.

Once Ravi Bishnoi (2/11 in 4 overs) and Washington Sundar (1/28 in 4 overs) came into operation, the Zimbabwe batters weren't able to hit them.

The difference certainly was extra bounce generated by off-spinner Washington and the pace at which Bishnoi consistently bowled his googlies.

With the series levelled at 1-1, it is expected that Sanju Samson will replace Dhruv Jurel behind the stumps, Shivam Dube with his all-round skills will come in place of Sai Sudharsan and Riyan Parag might have to sacrifice his place for Jaiswal in the match scheduled on July 10.

Uruguay beats Brazil 4-2 on penalties after scoreless draw

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

Marcelo Bielsa knew what the world's reaction would be after Uruguay and Brazil grinded, scrapped and shoved their way through a Copa America quarterfinal match with 41 fouls, four shots on target and no goals in open play.

Bielsa knows the beautiful game wasn't so attractive Saturday night, but the famously inventive coach now running Uruguay's bench only cared about the celebrations back home and in the Vegas stands when La Celeste picked up a landmark win.

Manuel Ugarte scored the decisive goal in the fifth round of the shootout and Uruguay advanced to the Copa America semifinals with a 4-2 penalty kick victory after the teams played to a scoreless draw.

Uruguay and Brazil played a bruising, choppy match with plenty of rough stuff, but little of the impressive soccer for which both South American powerhouses are known.

Uruguay's Nahitan Nández was sent off after a red card in the 74th minute for a dangerous tackle on Rodrigo, but Brazil still couldn't break through its 10-man opponent in the ensuing 21 minutes.

"I (prefer) offensive football, but in this match, we created more opportunities and we defended well," Bielsa said through an interpreter. "We did the things necessary to succeed at this level."

Uruguay led 3-1 after three rounds of the shootout when goalkeeper Sergio Rochet stopped Eder Militão and Douglas Luiz hit the post. Alisson Becker saved José María Giménez's shot in the fourth round to keep Brazil alive, but Ugarte banged home the clincher.

"If you ask me if I'm happy that we only created three goal-scoring opportunities, then no," Bielsa said. "But our opponent only had two goal-scoring opportunities. We had to work hard to create our opportunities ... But that was satisfactory to us."

After the third penalty shootout in four Copa

America quarterfinal matches, Uruguay advanced to face Colombia in the semifinals on Wednesday night in Charlotte, North Carolina. Colombia routed Panama 5-0 earlier Saturday, extending its unbeaten streak to 27 consecutive matches.

"We believe we're in good shape to play against any opponent," Bielsa said.

Defending champion Argentina faces Canada in the other semifinal Tuesday in East Rutherford, New Jersey. The final is July 14 in Miami Gardens.

Brazil played without Real Madrid star Vinicius Júnior, who watched from the stands under suspension after accumulating two yellow cards. The Seleção already are without Neymar, who hasn't played since tearing a knee ligament last fall during Brazil's loss to Uruguay in a World Cup qualifier.

That victory was Uruguay's first over Brazil in 13 meetings since 2001, but Bielsa's group has now beaten Brazil in back-to-back matches for the first time since 1992.



India's batsman Abhishek Sharma (left) celebrates after scoring 50 runs during the T20 cricket between Zimbabwe and India at Harare Sports club on Sunday. AP/PTI

Akanji enduring deep emptiness after penalty failure consigns Swiss to painful loss at Euro 2024

AP ■ DUSSELDORF

That was the instruction on England goalkeeper Jordan Pickford's water bottle as he prepared to face Manuel Akanji for Switzerland's first kick in the penalty shootout at the European Championship. Pickford dived left. And he saved the penalty.

Cue jubilation for England and agony for Akanji, with his being the only failure in the shootout as Switzerland missed another chance to advance to the semifinals of a major tournament for the first time.

After Switzerland's 5-3 loss in the shootout, a disconsolate Akanji was embraced by his Manchester City teammates John Stones and Phil Foden.

"No words of solace can help him," Switzerland coach Murat Yakin said. "Deep emptiness, deep sadness."

Switzerland midfielder Remo Freuler was in tears. So was goalkeeper Yann Sommer.

History had been in the grasp of the most talented Switzerland squad in a generation, perhaps ever.

Leading 1-0 after Breel Embolo's 75th-minute tap-in, the Swiss moved to within 10 minutes of beating England in regulation time and breaking through the quarterfinal ceiling that had proved beyond the country's class of 1954 at the World Cup and the team at the Euros in 2021.

Then, from England's first shot on goal, Bukayo Saka drove in a low, curling shot that flew



past many pairs of legs and into the bottom corner.

"That was the only chance," Yakin said. "Unfortunately there was one situation that led to us conceding one goal."

Then came the penalty shootout - or "a question of luck," as the Switzerland coach described it - which his team negotiated well except for Akanji's failure.

Three years ago at the Euros, Switzerland scored all five of its spot kicks to knock out Kylian Mbappe and France in the last 16, only to lose a shootout to Spain in the quarterfinals following misses by Akanji, Fabian Schar and Ruben Vargas.

The squad this year felt different, though, with leaders like Akanji and Bayer Leverkusen's Granit Xhaka, who just aren't used to losing. With Sommer now a Serie A

title winner with Inter Milan and previously a Bundesliga champion with Bayern Munich. With Schar a regular with Newcastle and with Embolo such a danger up front after regaining his fitness.

"It's hard to accept because I think we deserved to go to the semifinal with this team," Switzerland forward Dan Ndoye said. "We had the quality to go further. It hurts, it hurts to lose on penalties like that. It's cruel!"

Switzerland, a country better associated with winter sports, had no place competing with England deep in a major tournament, Yakin said.

"Even in this game, some said we were the favorites but we will never be the favorites," he said. "It can be in certain moments that we look like one, but the market value of other teams compared to us is massive."

Netherlands into Euro 2024 semifinals against England after beating Turkey

AP ■ BERLIN

The Netherlands dug deep to come from behind and beat Turkey 2-1 on Saturday and book its place in the European Championship semifinals.

An own goal from Mert Muldur in the 76th minute, only six after Stefan De Vrij canceled Samet Akaydin's first-half header for Turkey, was enough for the Dutch in the last of the quarterfinals.

"It was really a battle today," De Vrij said. "The Turkish team they have a big heart, a lot of quality. In the end we did well and we deserved the win."

The Netherlands turned the game around after a 1.97-meter-tall (6-foot-5) striker Wout Weghorst made his entrance for the second half.

"He's always fighting up front, helping the team. And we started to keep the ball, create chances," De Vrij said. "Then we scored two goals and the whole team fought until the end."

The Netherlands will face England in the second semifinal in Dortmund on Wednesday. Spain faces France in the first on Tuesday.

"The players showed tonight a big heart," Dutch coach Ronald Koeman said. "We had to suffer but finally it's a great success." Turkey was without defender Merih Demiral, who was suspended for two matches by UEFA for making a nationalistic hand gesture after scoring in Tuesday's 2-1 win over Austria. The gesture is used by Turkish nationalists and associated with an ultra-nationalist group. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was at the game after he changed his plans because of the diplomatic row with Germany over Demiral's gesture.

German interior minister Nancy Faeser had said Demiral used his celebration "as a platform for racism" and federal minister Cem Özdemir, a German politician of Turkish descent, said the gesture "stands



for terror, fascism." Many Turkish fans made the gesture on their way to Berlin's Olympiastadion, and again during Turkey's national anthem before the game.

The Dutch made a better start, but Turkey's defenders dug in to limit the impact of Cody Gakpo, Xavi Simons and Memphis Depay. Turkey lined up with five at the back without the ball, as it had in the win against Austria, and gradually improved.

Akaydin rewarded a period of Turkish pressure by scoring in the 35th. Arda Guler delivered a butter-soft cross for the defender to head in off the underside of the crossbar.

It set off wild celebrations among Turkey's coaching staff and fans. Guler was swamped in the coaching area with hugs, while fans in the west end of the stadium set off flares. Most stayed standing after the goal.

Turkish supporters greatly outnumbered their orange-clad counterparts in a city that's home to a large community of people with Turkish roots. Most are descendants of Turkish "guest workers"

who arrived in what was West Germany to help rebuild the post-war economy. Germany is home to some 3 million Turks or people with Turkish roots, making them the country's largest ethnic minority, and the team has enjoyed fervent support at Euro 2024.

Koeman, who won Euro '88 as a player with the Netherlands, reacted to his team's half time deficit by sending on big forward Weghorst, whose presence gave the Dutch wingers a target.

Guler hit the post with a free kick, but it was an isolated effort during a period of intense Dutch pressure that finally paid off in the 70th when De Vrij was left free to head in Depay's cross.

Suddenly the Dutch supporters could be heard again, and they were cheering again shortly afterward when Gakpo forced the own goal from Muldur by getting in front of the defender to Denzel Dumfries' low cross.

"We didn't start the second half very well and fell behind," Turkey captain Hakan Calhanoglu said. "After their second goal, we turned to long balls."



Rajawat loses in semifinals of Canada Open

PTI ■ CALGARY

India's campaign at the Canada Open Super 500 badminton tournament ended after Priyanshu Rajawat suffered a straight-game loss to France's Alex Lanier in the men's singles semifinals here.

World No. 39 Rajawat went down 17-21 10-21 to Lanier, ranked 37th, in 45 minutes at the Markin MacPhail Centre.

The Indian had defeated Lanier at the Madrid Spain Masters qualification round last year in their only meeting.

Rajawat, who had stunned Anders Antonsen of Denmark in the quarterfinals, made a positive start, opening up a 3-0 early lead but Lanier was quick to establish a 7-4 lead.

The two fought hard and Rajawat did grab the lead a few times but he couldn't sustain the pressure on his opponent, who reeled off five straight points at 15-16 to eventually close out the opening game.

Rajawat's game completely fell apart after the change of sides as Lanier zoomed to 8-2 and then 14-3, which proved decisive as the French shut the door on the Indian.