

**OPINION 6**  
NUANCED SHIFT IN  
PARLIAMENTARY CONDUCT**WORLD 8**  
ISRAEL CONDUCTS MILITARY  
OPERATION IN WEST BANK**MONEY 10**  
NIFTY SCALES NEW  
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## Scrapping NEET-UG not rational: Centre to SC



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

**New Delhi:** The NEET-PG 2024 entrance examination will be held on August 11 in two shifts, the National Board of Examinations in Medical Sciences announced on Friday. The examination was earlier scheduled to be held on June 23.

"...It will now be held on August 11 in two shifts. The cut-off date for the purpose of eligibility to appear in the NEET-PG 2024 shall continue to be August 15, 2024," the Board said. **PNS**

The Union Education Ministry and the NTA filed separate affidavits opposing the pleas which have sought scrapping of the exam plagued by controversy, a re-test and court-monitored probe into entire gamut of issues involved.

The top court is scheduled to hear on July 8 a batch of pleas, including those alleging irregularities in the examination held on May 5 and seeking a direction that it be held afresh.

The National Testing Agency (NTA), which conducts the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test-Undergraduate (NEET-UG) for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses, and the

Union Education Ministry have been at the centre of media debates and protests by students and political parties over alleged large-scale malpractices ranging from question paper leak to impersonation in the test held on May 5.

In its affidavit, the Ministry said invalidating the exam would "seriously jeopardise" the efforts of lakhs of honest candidates who appeared in the exam. In the absence of proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in the examination, it argued that it would not be rational to take the step. This is the first time that the Centre is placing its stand on holding a retest of NEET-UG for all 24 lakh candidates on record.

The Ministry has only acknowledged that there were "instances of irregularities, cheating, impersonation, malpractices" during the conduct of NEET-UG. There is no mention of a paper leak.

It goes on to state further that "in the absence of any proof of any large-scale breach of confidentiality in a pan-India examination it would not be rational to scrap the entire examination".

## Rishi Sunak Exits 10 Downing Street

PTI ■ LONDON

Keir Starmer on Friday promised a phase of "national renewal" as Britain's Prime Minister-elect after he led the Labour Party to a landslide victory in a landmark UK general election with a gain of over 200 seats, as outgoing leader Rishi Sunak conceded defeat with his Conservative Party suffering its worst election defeat in history.

Starmer, 61, now stands poised to take charge at 10 Downing Street after his audience with King Charles III at Buckingham Palace, following Sunak's meeting with the British monarch.

As Labour crossed the halfway mark of 650 constituencies in the early hours of Friday to clinch the minimum 326 required for a majority in Parliament, Starmer stepped up to make his victory speech in London: "Change begins now. And it feels good, I have to be honest.

"A mandate like this comes with a great responsibility. Our task is nothing less than renewing the ideas that hold this country together. National renewal. Whoever you are, wherever you start in life, if you work hard, if you play by the rules, this country should give you a fair chance to get on. It should always respect your contribution and we have to restore that."

Meanwhile, the country's first



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

### Modi congratulates Starmer

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

Modi also praised outgoing British Prime Minister and

Conservative Party leader Rishi Sunak for his admirable leadership of the United Kingdom and his active contribution to deepen the ties between India and the UK during his term in office. "Best wishes to you and your family for the future," he said.

Congratulating him, Modi said, "Heartiest congratulations and best wishes to Keir Starmer on the remarkable victory in the UK general elections..."

British Indian Prime Minister comfortably held on to his own Richmond and Northallerton seat in northern

England with 23,059 votes but failed to turn things around for his party at a national level after 14 years in Government.



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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Commission for Women (NCW) has taken suo moto cognisance of the alleged derogatory remark made by TMC MP Mahua Moitra against its chairperson Rekha Sharma and sought an FIR against her.

This came a day after the TMC, commenting on a video posted on X showing the NCW chairperson's arrival at the site of a stampede that recently took place in Uttar Pradesh's Hathras, wrote, "She is too busy holding up her boss's pajamas".

Meanwhile, the Uttar Pradesh Government's Special Investigation Team probing the Hathras stampede has recorded statements of 90 people so far, SIT chief Anupam Kulshrestha said on Friday. Kulshrestha, also the Additional Director General of Police (Agra Zone), is leading the three-member SIT team.

## J&K Assembly elections likely after Amarnath Yatra



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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/JAMMU

The Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir are likely to be announced after the Amarnath Yatra, which will conclude on August 19.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah held a late night meeting with Jammu and Kashmir unit party leaders and directed them to be ready for the upcoming Assembly elections.

The two-hour long meeting was attended by BJP chief and Union Minister JP Nadda, MPs Ravinder Raina, Jitendra Singh and Jugal Kishore Sharma — and other top leaders.

Jammu and Kashmir is likely to see its first Assembly election in September this year, according to the timeline fixed by the Supreme

Court after the erstwhile State's special status was scrapped in 2019. The last Assembly election in the erstwhile State was held in 2014.

At the meeting, top leadership has made it clear that the party will not enter into a pre-poll alliance with any party in the State. It was also conveyed that the party would remain open to seat adjustments and "electoral understandings" with "like-minded parties."

Besides, it was also conveyed that the party will not project any face for the Chief Ministerial candidate in the run-up to the Assembly polls and there will not be any changes in leadership or organisational rejig in the State BJP unit, currently headed by Ravinder Raina.

In the coming days, key

Union Ministers and BJP national leaders are expected to visit the State. The party will also launch a mass contact programme with the people in the State. The Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir was dissolved in November 2018 ahead of the revocation of the State's Special Status in August 2019.

The BJP-led Government scrapped Article 370 in Jammu and Kashmir in August 2019 and bifurcated the State into two Union Territories. There have been demands from political parties for early Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir and restoration of Statehood.

Moreover, during a recent visit to Kashmir, the Prime Minister stated that preparations for elections had begun and that J&K would soon have its own Government.

The revision of electoral rolls will start in J&K on July 25 and culminate on August 20, according to the EC.

"After the exercise is over, the EC may announce holding of assembly polls in the UT any time," a poll official said.

The five LS seats in J&K — the first major electoral exercise post Article 370 abrogation — recorded voter turnout of 58.58 per cent, the highest in the last 35 years.

## Jailed MPs Amritpal, Rashid on parole take oath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Jailed radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid, who were granted parole to take oath as members of the Lok Sabha, were sworn in as MPs on Friday, amid heavy deployment of security personnel in and around the Parliament complex.

While Rashid, popularly known as Engineer Rashid, is in Delhi's Tihar jail in a terror-funding case registered under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, Singh is lodged in a prison in Assam's Dibrugarh district for offences under the National Security Act.

They were brought to the Parliament complex by



Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh and Kashmiri leader Sheikh Abdul Rashid

security personnel Friday morning. The MPs-elect took oath in the chamber of the Lok Sabha Speaker after completing formalities, a source said.

Singh, 31, and Rashid, 56, won the recent Lok Sabha elections from Khadoor Sahib in Punjab and Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir,

respectively, as Independents while being incarcerated. They could not take oath as members of the 18th Lok Sabha on June 24 and 25 along with the other winning candidates.

For taking oath, Rashid was granted a two-hour custody parole, excluding the travel time from Tihar to Parliament,

and Singh a four-day custody parole, beginning July 5, in view of the travel from Assam to Delhi and back.

Their parole orders stated that during their period of temporary release, they can neither speak to or address the media on any issue or make any statements. Their family members also cannot make a statement to the media.

While Singh, a Khalistani sympathiser who heads the 'Waris Punjab De' outfit, has been allowed to meet his family in Delhi, Rashid's family had permission only to attend his oath taking.

The parole for Rashid, who has been in jail since 2019 after his arrest in 2017, was granted by a court in Delhi and that of Singh by the district magistrate of

Amritsar from where he was arrested in April 2023 for barging into a police station in February and clashing with police personnel in a bid to free one of his aides from custody.

Both Singh and Rashid are to be accompanied by security personnel at all times during their parole periods, the orders stated.

The Delhi Police and Punjab Police were directed to coordinate with the Secretary General of the Lok Sabha for procedures inside the Parliament complex.

The name of Rashid, a former MLA, cropped up during the investigation of Kashmiri businessman Zahoor Watali, whom the NIA had arrested for allegedly funding terrorist groups and separatists in the Kashmir valley.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ THRISSUR (KERALA)

An outbreak of African Swine fever (ASF), a highly contagious and deadly disease affecting both farm-raised and wild boars, has been reported at a private farm in a village in Kerala's Thrissur district.

In response, the State Government has ordered culling of 310 pigs at the farm in Madakkathara panchayat to prevent the spread of the disease. This incident follows a recent Nipah outbreak in Maruthonkara, Kozhikode

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

district, where ASF was confirmed in wild boars last year.

ASF was first identified in India in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in 2020.

ASF spreads rapidly through direct contact with bodily fluids from infected pigs and has no vaccines or treatment available.

"The disease was confirmed in the pigs owned by Kuttalapuzha Babu of



Veliyanthara in the 14th ward. The District Collector has directed the district animal husbandry officer to cull the pigs and bury them," according to an official from the State Government.

A team consisting of doctors, livestock inspectors and attendants will conduct the culling process, and further primary disinfection measures will also be taken,

it said. The area within a one-kilometre radius of the affected farm has been declared a disease-affected area, and the area within the 10-kilometre radius has been declared a disease surveillance area.

"The transportation of pork from the affected areas, the operation of such farms, and the movement of pigs, pork, and feed from the affected areas to other parts of the district, as well as the movement of these items from other areas into the affected area, have been prohibited until further orders," the release said.

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

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As the much-revered grand Rath Yatra for Lord Jagannath commences in Puri in Odisha on Monday, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple at Dwarka in the national Capital will mark the occasion with a grand offering of approximately 5,100 kilograms of various mango varieties.

The celebrations will begin a day ahead and continue into the following day, aligning with the Yatra in Puri. Devotees will offer a range of mangoes, including Safeda,

Dussehri, Langra, Malda, Chausa, Ramkela, Totapari, Bombay Green, and Mallika, as part of the rituals dedicated to Lord Jagannath, his brother Balabhadra, and their sister Subhadra as part of the rituals.

Mangoes, revered as the "king of fruits," hold significant cultural and religious value, particularly in Krishna Lila, symbolising the sweetness of devotion in the divine pastimes of Lord Krishna.

The celebration will attract nearly 20,000 people from across the city. Preparations are in full swing at the temple. The temple altar will be adorned with an impressive



display of mangoes, allowing devotees to participate in the "mango service" by offering their fruits at the Vighraha Seva Department on the eve of the yatra.

The festivities will also include a mango-eating competition. Golia, Sindoori, Gulabkhas, Neelam, Kesari, Gola, Lalbagh, Lambori, Ratul, and Alphonso like varieties will also be offered to the God.

Sri Gaur Prabhu, vice-president of the temple, explained, "Mango, the king of fruits, is loved by both children and adults during the summer season. This is why we organise the mango

festival every year on the day of Jagannath Yatra. The offering of thousands of mangoes to the deities is beautiful to behold."

Attendees can capture memories at designated selfie points and participate in community service. The significance of mangoes in Krishna Lila is profound.

During the rasa dance, the gopis would offer mangoes to Krishna, symbolising the sweetness of their relationship. At another time, Krishna accepted mango pits from a poor Brahmana, valuing sincere devotion over material offerings. Mangoes also

played a role in Krishna's childhood at Vrindavan, where he and his mischievous friends would often steal the delicious fruits from orchards.

Pritansu Priyadarshini Biswal from Bhubaneswar in Odisha was in praise for the ISKCON temple's concept of offering mangoes to the Lord Jagannath. "This celebration at the ISKCON temple in the country's capital in Dwarka not only honours the divine but also brings together the community in a shared experience of devotion, cultural heritage, and the simple joy of enjoying mangoes," she said.



# Poisonous gas kills nine in C'garh

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
JANJIR-CHAMPA/KORBA

Nine persons suffocated to death after inhaling suspected poisonous gas in wells in two separate incidents on Friday in Janjir-Champa and Korba districts of Chhattisgarh.

Ramchandra Jaiswal (60), Ramesh Patel (50), his two sons Rajendra (20) and Jitendra (25) and Tikeshwar Chandra (25) died in Kikirda village, Janjir-Champa. Additional Superintendent of Police Rajendra Kumar Jaiswal said.

Jaiswal entered the unused well in his house to retrieve some wooden planks which fell inside.

Jaiswal's wife shouted for help when he fainted. Then Patel and his sons entered the well one by one and fell unconscious.

Finally, Chandra too entered the well and lost consciousness.

Preliminary investigation suggests they died after inhaling poisonous gas but the exact reason behind the deaths will be known after the post-mortem.

In similar circumstances, four persons including an elderly man and his teenage daughter died in Korba district.

Jahru Patel (60), his daughter Safeena,



Shivcharan Patel (45) and Manbodh Patel (57) died in Jurali village, Korba Superintendent of Police Siddharth Tiwari said. The girl entered the water body to save her father who fell into the well. The two others followed her. All of them

became unconscious. The four died drowned after inhaling poisonous gas. Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai announced a financial aid of Rs 9 lakhs each to the kin of every deceased.

# Govt to expand health facilities across C'garh

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
BHILAI

Chhattisgarh Health Minister Shyam Bihari Jaiswal on Friday announced the establishment of super specialty hospitals in Bastar and Surguja as well as 700-bed hospitals in Raipur and Bilaspur.

He said this at the second round table conference on "Health Innovation Care in Chhattisgarh" at the IIT Bhilai. Officials from IIT, IIM, AIIMS, NIT and multinational companies were present.

The conference focused on how to improve access to medical services in remote areas.

Jaiswal assured all possible support from the government to institutions engaged in



developing new technologies to improve healthcare. He spoke about the medical drone delivery facility in Ambikapur and the introduction of robotic surgery in Dr. Bhimrao

Ambedkar Memorial Hospital in Raipur.

He urged youths to undergo medical screening before marriage to eradicate diseases like sickle cell anaemia.

## Jal Jeevan resolves water crisis in remote Bastar



**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
KANKER

The residents of a remote village, Kariyapahar, in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district now have uninterrupted access to drinking water thanks to the Jal Jeevan Mission, an official statement said on Friday.

Drinking water is scarce in this village due to the high mineral

**Drinking water is scarce in this village due to the high mineral content.**

Normal life was highly disrupted during the summer due to the drying of water sources.

The Jal Jeevan Mission has ensured water supply to the homes, schools and Anganwadis, bringing ease and convenience in the lives of residents, the statement said.

## Three Maoists surrender



**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
DANTEWADA

Three Maoists including a woman on Friday surrendered to security personnel in Dantewada district of Chhattisgarh.

Hidma Sodhi, Kosa Veko alias Prem Kumar Veko and Babita Oyam alias Bhime turned themselves in, Dantewada Superintendent of Police Gaurav Rai said.

They were active in Bhairamgarh and Katekalyan Area Committees of the outlawed Maoist outfit. So far, 844 Maoists, including 186 carrying cash rewards, have quit violence in the district since June 2020.

## Education a medium to fulfill dreams: CM

**Shala Praveshotsava launched at CM's native village Bagiya**

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Friday said education was a medium to fulfill one's dream.

He was speaking to students at the state-level 'Shala Praveshotsav' programme held in a government school in village Bagiya in Jashpur district.

Sai tried his hand on a potter's wheel and prepared an earthen lamp.

An exhibition was also organised at the programme venue in Bagiya where different departments showcased their models related to education, training and research.

The Chief Minister distributed free bicycles to girl students taking admission in Class 9. The students expressed their joy by simultaneously ringing the bells of the bicycles.

Finance Minister OP Choudhary, Raigarh MP Radheshyam Rathia,



Jashpur MLA Raimuni Bhagat, Pathalgaon MLA Gomti Sai and Arang MLA Guru Khuswant Sahab were also present.



Under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign, an initiative by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai on Friday planted a sampling of Rudraksh in his village Bagiya.

## Govt employee jumps off from 4th floor to end life



**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
RAIPUR

Chhattisgarh Housing Board (CGHB) employee on Friday ended his life by jumping from the Paryavas Bhawan in Nava

Raipur in Chhattisgarh. The incident took place around 11 am, Raipur Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Kirtan Rathore said. Naresh Kumar Sahu (36) leaped from the fourth floor

**He worked in the Senior Assistant Accounts Department in the Chhattisgarh Housing Board**

of the building. No suicide note was found.

He worked in the Senior Assistant Accounts Department in the Chhattisgarh Housing Board. He hailed from Bhilai city in Durg district.

## Bastar women S-HG learn brick making to become self dependent

**STAFF REPORTER ■**  
DANTEWADA

Women of Geedam in Chhattisgarh's Bastar have taken to brick making to be economically self dependent.

The women of Maa Gauri Self-Help Group in the remote Hidpal Gram Panchayat, located 30-35 km from the district headquarters of Dantewada, are engaged in the labour-intensive task of manufacturing cement bricks.

Five male masons trained the women in operating the brick-making machine and mixing the correct proportion of cement, sand and dust.

The primary knowledge



has immensely benefited the women as they now operate the machine themselves. The state government's

prioritization of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana has increased the demand for bricks in rural areas.

Kamla Korram of the Maa Gauri Self-Help Group was happy to learn brick-making as this would help her earn livelihood and support her family. Another member, Tulsi Kashyap, said the district administration provided free dust and cement. They also got brick molds under the National Livelihood Mission and free training from the administration.

The Self-Help Group has taken a loan of Rs 3 lakh from the bank. Previously, they were involved in making red clay bricks.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

## BRS member's resignation from RS accepted



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI



The Congress on Friday criticised the Centre for the delay in publishing new Class 6 textbooks, alleging the Education Ministry is "sabotaging" the education of children after doing the same with the examination process through the "incompetent" National Testing Authority. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh hit out at the government over the issue, saying that either the "rot runs deep", or the incompetence scales new heights everyday. In a social media post, he said, "After sabotaging the examination process through the incompetent National Testing Authority, the non-biological PM's Education Ministry is sabotaging the education of our children." "Even as the school year has begun, the NCERT - the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is working on a proposal to recreate 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' in a virtual format via a web platform. They cannot ensure leak-proof Parikshas, and they cannot ensure schoolchildren get their textbooks on time -- but this is what the Ministry of Education is spending its time on. The blame for these warped priorities lies entirely on the non-biological Pradhan Mantri," Ramesh said. His remarks come a day after Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan reviewed the development of school textbooks in accordance with the New Curriculum Framework (NCF) at a meeting here. The meeting came in the backdrop of a delay in the publication of Class 6 textbooks that were supposed to be taught from April and are yet to hit the

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

## BJP retains most of its office bearers in States

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

## Foreigners must comply with organ transplant rules

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



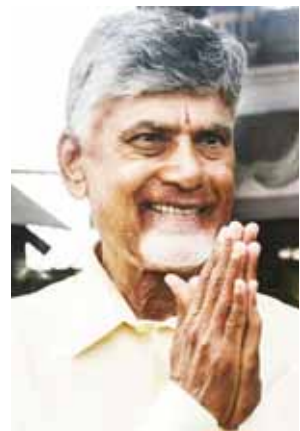
es known as 'Garima Greh' in all districts to provide shelter to members of the community facing harassment and violence and dedicated hotline numbers which they could use in case of trouble. Holding that transgender people in heterosexual relationships have the freedom and entitlement to marry under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

animous in refusing to accord legal recognition to same-sex marriage under the Special Marriage Act and had observed it was within Parliament's ambit to change the law for validating such union. While the CJI had written a separate 247-page verdict, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul (since retired) had penned a 17-page judgement in which he broadly agreed with Justice Chandrachud's views. Justice S Ravindra Bhat (since retired), who authored an 89-page judgement for himself and Justice Hima Kohli, had disagreed with certain conclusions arrived at by the CJI including on applicability of adoption rules for queer couples. Justice PS Narasimha had said in his 13-page verdict that he was in complete agreement with the reasoning given and conclusions arrived at by Justice Bhat. The judges were unanimous in holding that queerness is a natural phenomenon and not "urban or elite" occurrence. In his judgement, the CJI had recorded the assurance by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta that the Centre will constitute a committee chaired by the Cabinet Secretary for the purpose of defining and elucidating the scope of entitlements of queer couples who are in union. The LGBTQIA++ rights activists, who had won a major legal battle in 2018 in the Supreme Court which decriminalised consensual gay sex, had moved the apex court seeking validation of same-sex marriage and consequential reliefs such as rights to adoption, enrolment as parents in schools, opening of bank accounts and availing succession and insurance benefits. Some of the petitioners had urged the apex court to use its plenary power, "prestige and moral authority" to push the society to acknowledge such a union which would ensure LGBTQIA++ lead a "dignified" life like heterosexuals. LGBTQIA++ stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex, pansexual, two-spirit, asexual and allied persons.

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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

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

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

## CJI calls for participation in special Lok Adalat

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

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





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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Momentous meeting

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

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



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

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### PICTALK



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

# Nuanced shift in parliamentary conduct

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



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

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

It is not as if in each of the preceding Lok Sabhas, the selection of the speaker was unanimous. There were instances when the Speaker was chosen by ballot and the Lok Sabha still, functioned with a fair degree of cohesiveness.

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



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



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

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

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

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### NEW BUILDING NORMS

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

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

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

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

#### MAKE QR CODE PAYMENTS UNIVERSAL

Madam — There is a recurring problem with currency change across various services, including both government and private sectors such as transportation (RTC buses, metro trains), and e-seva centers. To address this issue, it is crucial to provide the option of QR code-based online payments everywhere. Additionally, offering a choice between partial cash payment and partial online payment would be beneficial.

QR code payments are a secure, contactless method that reduces the risk of account hacking compared to credit or debit card payments. It would also be

#### Vigilance urged for Zika virus



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

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

Shanthi Ramanathan | Ghaziabad

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

PVS Sreelekha | Secunderabad

#### PM ON MANIPUR

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

both central and state governments being under BJP control, there has been minimal action to address the crisis effectively. Kuki residents have been unable to use Imphal airport since May 3, 2023, and essential supplies have to be transported through Mizoram. Modi's recent comments seem insincere and detached from the reality on the ground.

The Prime Minister, who has ample time for inaugurating projects and foreign visits, has not visited Manipur, which has been plagued by violence for the past 14 months. The Supreme Court has expressed its distrust in the Manipur government, reflecting the sentiment of the people towards Modi's assurances. Even as Manipur starts to stabilize, it is imperative for the Prime Minister to prioritize visiting the state and addressing the issues directly, rather than focusing on his image and political importance.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## Give freebies only when essential and unavoidable

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

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

and are a way of promoting social justice, equity, and human development. Some examples of welfare schemes are the Public Distribution System, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act



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

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

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



KAJLEEN KAUR

(The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



## FIRST COLUMN

### A TALE OF DECEIT, DESIRE AND DEVASTATION

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



RAVI VALLURI

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

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



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

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

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

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

# Paper leak: Call for fair and a political resolution



GOURAV VALLABH

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



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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

# How Assange redefined the political terrain for modern whistleblowers

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

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



SANTOSH MATHEW

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

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

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

expose hidden truths, Assange has empowered journalists and activists worldwide to challenge powerful institutions and demand accountability.

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

WikiLeaks in 2010. Her disclosures included the infamous "Collateral Murder" video, showing U.S. helicopter gunship attacks that killed civilians in Baghdad. Manning was convicted in 2013 and sentenced to 35 years in prison, but her sentence was commuted by President Barack Obama in 2017 after seven years in custody.

India, with its complex socio-political landscape, has its own history of whistleblowing and press freedom challenges. Cases like those of Sanjiv Chaturvedi, an Indian Forest Service officer who exposed corruption in the Haryana Forest Department, highlight the risks faced by whistleblowers in India. Despite the Whistle Blowers Protection Act, 2014, which aims to pro-

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

protection of whistleblowers is far from over.

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

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





# Hungary PM Orbán meets Putin for talks in Moscow

**AP ■ MOSCOW**  
Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomed Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to Moscow on Friday for a rare meeting with a European leader to discuss peace proposals for Ukraine. Orbán's visit comes only days after he made a similar unannounced trip to Ukraine, where he met with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and proposed that Ukraine consider agreeing to an immediate cease-fire with Russia. "The number of countries that can talk to both warring sides is diminishing," Orbán said. "Hungary is slowly becoming the only country in Europe that can speak to everyone." In comments at the beginning of their meeting that were televised, Putin suggested that Orbán had come to Moscow as a representative of the European Council, despite several European officials having condemned the visit. The Hungarian prime minister, widely seen as having the warmest relations with Vladimir Putin among all

European Union leaders, has routinely blocked, delayed or watered down EU efforts to assist Ukraine and impose sanctions on Moscow for its actions in Ukraine. He has long argued for a cessation of hostilities in Ukraine but without outlining what that might mean for the country's territorial integrity or future security. That posture has frustrated Hungary's EU and NATO allies, which have broadly considered Russia's actions as a breach of international law and a threat to the security of countries in Eastern Europe. Putin told Orbán that he wanted to hear about the position of his "European colleagues" on Ukraine and discuss Moscow's plan for peace as well as bilateral relations. Orbán noted that the meeting was the fourth time the leaders have held bilateral talks since 2009. European officials and leaders have heavily criticised Orbán's visit to Moscow, something only one other European leader has done since the start of the conflict. "This is about appeasement. It's not about peace," European



Commission spokesperson Eric Mamer said. Hungary at the beginning of the month took over the six-month rotating presidency of the EU Council, a largely formal role that can be used to shape the bloc's policy agenda. Orbán has said he wants to use the presidency to advocate for an end to the fighting in Ukraine. The EU's foreign policy chief,

Josep Borrell, said in a statement that Orbán's visit to Moscow "takes place, exclusively, in the framework of the bilateral relations between Hungary and Russia." "Prime Minister Orbán has not received any mandate from the EU Council to visit Moscow," Borrell said, adding that his "position excludes official contacts between the EU and President Putin. The

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

foreign policy chief, accused Orbán of "exploiting" the presidency and said the Hungarian leader is trying "to sow confusion." "The EU is united, clearly behind Ukraine and against Russian aggression," Kallas, a staunch supporter of Ukraine, wrote Friday on the social media platform X. In an email on Friday, Orbán's press chief, Bertalan Havasi, said the Hungarian leader's trip comes "as part of his peace mission" — reflecting the image of a peacemaker that the populist leader has cultivated since Putin sent his troops into Ukraine in February 2022. Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó also joined the trip to Moscow, according to a post on his Facebook page. Speaking to Hungarian state radio before departing Friday morning, Orbán said he was aware that his country's presidency of the EU "does not entitle us to negotiate on behalf of anyone." Without mentioning reports of his planned trip to Moscow, he said his trip earlier this week to Kyiv did not "need a mandate, because I do

not represent anything. The only thing I do is go to those places where there is a war or the threat of war that has negative consequences for Europe and Hungary as well." Other EU officials have expressed dismay that Orbán undertook the trip unilaterally and without the approval of the bloc's member states. European Council President Charles Michel on Thursday said on the social media platform X that "the EU rotating presidency has no mandate to engage with Russia on behalf of the EU." "The European Council is clear: Russia is the aggressor, Ukraine is the victim. No discussions about Ukraine can take place without Ukraine," Michel wrote. Orbán is the first European leader to visit Russia and sit down for talks with Putin since Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer visited Moscow in April 2022, just weeks after Putin ordered his troops into Ukraine. During that visit he said he raised the issue of crimes allegedly committed in Ukraine by Russian forces.

# Lanka achieved \$8 billion relief through debt restructuring; Prez

**Colombo (PTI):** President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Friday said Sri Lanka saved USD 8 billion over the past two years due to "effective economic management" and emphasised that the nation is now recovering from economic turmoil due to debt restructuring. Sri Lanka finalised debt restructuring agreements with bilateral lenders, including India and China, in Paris on June 26. Earlier on June 12, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) disbursed the third tranche of USD 336 million of its USD 2.9 billion bailout package to Sri Lanka. In April 2022, the island nation declared its first-ever sovereign default since gaining independence from Britain in 1948. The unprecedented financial crisis led President Ranil Wickremesinghe's predecessor Gotabaya Rajapaksa to quit office in 2022 amid civil unrest. "Thanks to the harvest in 2022-2023, the country's production increased, and tourism thrived. As a result, we've achieved USD 8 billion relief and paved the way to debt relief," the President said on Friday. "When the economy collapses, it affects ordinary people the most. When it recovers, its benefits reach another segment," the President's Media Division (PMD) said in a statement quoting Wickremesinghe. The President was speaking at a ceremony held in Kurunegala, about 100 km northeast of Colombo. "Now, our country has emerged from bankruptcy. We have a four-year plan to repay our loans, offering reduced burdens and interest cuts that will yield USD 5 billion in savings. We are currently in negotiations with private contractors. As a result, approximately USD 3 billion has been withdrawn," he said. "In total, USD 8 billion has been allocated for our use. Additionally, we have been granted USD 2 billion under relaxed terms. This does not account for funds expected from China or assistance from India. As a result, we have saved USD 8 billion over the past two years," Wickremesinghe, also the finance minister, added.

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

**PTI ■ KATHMANDU**  
Nepal's embattled Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', who lost support from two major alliance partners earlier this week, is set to seek a vote of confidence from the House of Representatives on July 12, it was announced on Thursday. The prime minister sent a letter to the Parliament Secretariat asking the latter to make arrangements for the vote, local media reported. "Dahal chose to go for the floor test by the article 100(2) of the Constitution which says if the political party which the prime minister represents is divided or a political party in coalition government withdraws its support, the prime minister shall table a motion in the House of Representatives for a vote of confidence within thirty days," The Kathmandu Post reported. Earlier, Prachanda had announced that he would not quit after the resignation of eight Cabinet ministers

belonging to the largest party and instead face a vote of confidence in Parliament. His announcement was prompted after Nepali Congress (NC) president Sher Bahadur Deuba and Communist Party of Nepal-Unified Marxist-Leninist (CPN-UML) chairman K P Sharma Oli, both former premiers, inked a power-sharing deal on Monday night to form a new NC-UML alliance government. The Nepali Congress, which is the largest party in the 275-member House of Representatives (HoR), has 89 seats, while CPN-UML has 78 seats. Prachanda's party, the Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist Centre (CPN-MC), has 32 seats. The CPN-Unified Socialist (CPN-US), which has 10 seats in the Lower House, has said it will vote in favour of the Prachanda-led government. Despite that support, Prachanda enjoys support from just 63 members of the HoR.

# Vatican declares US ex-envoy Vigano guilty of schism

**AP ■ ROME**  
The Vatican has excommunicated its former ambassador to the US, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, after finding him guilty of schism, an inevitable end for the firebrand conservative who became one of Pope Francis' most ardent critics. The Vatican's doctrine office imposed the penalty after a meeting of its members on Thursday and informed Vigano of its decision Friday, a press statement said. It cited Vigano's "refusal to recognize and submit to the Supreme Pontiff, his rejection of communion with the members of the church subject to him, and of the legitimacy and magisterial authority of the Second Vatican Council." The Vatican excommunication means that Vigano is formally outside the church, and cannot celebrate or receive its sacraments, for having committed one of the gravest crimes in canon law: schism. A schism occurs when someone withdraws submission to the pope or from the communion of

Catholics who are subject to him. It is considered particularly dangerous to the faith because it threatens the unity of the church. And in fact, Vigano had created a following of like-minded conservatives and traditionalists over the years as he delved deeper and deeper into conspiracy theories about everything from the coronavirus pandemic, to what he called the "Great Reset" and other fringe ideas. Vigano knew the schism declaration was coming after the Vatican informed him that it was launching a penal process against him last month. He defiantly called it "an honor" and refused to appear in person or in writing to defend himself. Vigano, who issued a lengthy public statement last month justifying his conduct, didn't directly respond to the schism declaration on X, his usual forum. About an hour before the Vatican decree was made public, he announced he would be celebrating a Mass on Friday for those who have been supporting him and asked for donations. Vigano first burst into the pub-

lic's awareness in 2012, during the first Vatileaks scandal, when Pope Benedict XVI's butler leaked the pontiff's private papers to an Italian journalist to try to draw attention to corruption in the Holy See. In some of the leaked letters Vigano, then the No. 2 in the Vatican City State administration, begged the pope not to be transferred after exposing corruption in the awarding of Vatican contracts that cost the Holy See millions of euros (dollars). By the time the letters were published, Benedict had transferred Vigano to be the Vatican's ambassador to the United States, which was a prestigious post but one that took him far from Rome and out of the running to one day be a cardinal. Vigano reappeared on the scene during Francis' 2015 visit to the United States, which as nuncio Vigano helped organize. Everything was going fine until Vigano arranged for Kim Davis, a Kentucky clerk at the center of the U.S. gay marriage debate, to be among a small group of people at the Vatican residence to greet Francis.

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

**Seoul (AP):** A man who stabbed South Korea's opposition leader in the neck earlier this year was sentenced to 15 years in prison on Friday, court officials said. The knife-wielding man attacked Lee Jae-myung, head of the liberal Democratic Party, South Korea's biggest political party, in January after approaching him asking for his autograph at an event in the southeastern city of Busan. After being detained by police, he told investigators that he wanted to kill Lee to prevent him from becoming South Korea's president. The Busan District Court said the man was handed the prison term after being found guilty for an attempted murder and a violation of an election law. The court said that both the man and prosecutors have one week to appeal. The attack happened ahead of

the country's crucial parliamentary elections in April, which ended with Lee's Democratic Party and other opposition parties winning a massive victory against President Yoon Suk Yeol's conservative governing party. A court verdict called the attack "a grave challenge" to the country's election systems and an act that "significantly destroys social consensus and confidence on the basic liberal democratic principles," according to Yonhap news agency. It cited the verdict as saying the attacker had long loathed Lee because of differences of political opinions, practised stabbing his neck in advance and followed him on five public events. The court's public affairs office couldn't immediately confirm details of Friday's verdict. The court didn't disclose the man's identity. Police earlier said he's about 67.

# Af wants to dust off postal service and modernise

**AP ■ KABUL**  
In parts of Afghanistan where there are no street names or house numbers, utility companies and their customers have adopted a creative approach for connecting. They use mosques as drop points for bills and cash, a "pay and pray" system. Now the national postal service wants to phase this out by putting mailboxes on every street across the country, part of a plan to modernise a service long challenged by bureaucracy and war. The lofty aspirations include introducing access to shopping via e-commerce sites and issuing debit cards for online purchases. It will be a leap in a country where most of the population is unbanked, air cargo is in its infancy and international courier compa-

nies don't deliver even to the capital, Kabul. The changes mean Afghans will pay higher service fees, a challenge as more than half the population already relies on humanitarian aid to survive. The Afghan Post, like much of the country, still does everything on paper. "Nobody uses email," said its business development director, Zabihullah Omar. 'Afghanistan is a member of the Universal Postal Union, but when we compare ourselves to other countries it is at a low level and in the early stages.' The postal service has 400 to 500 branches across the country and is key for completing administrative tasks like obtaining a passport or driver's licence. It distributes up to 15,000 passports daily. Another popular service is the certification of documents for

admission to higher education or overseas institutions. The main Kabul branch has dedicated counters for it along with VIP lanes and a women-only area. Post offices in Afghanistan are vital for women wanting to access services or products they would otherwise be denied, since they are often barred from entering ministries or other official premises. But the spectre of the Taliban's edicts targeting women and girls also looms at the Afghan Post. At the entrance to the main Kabul branch, a sign tells women to correctly wear hijab, or the Islamic headscarf. One picture shows a woman with a red cross over her visible face. The other has a green check mark over the face because only her eyes are seen.

# Pope to preside over interfaith meeting in Indonesian mosque

**Rome (AP):** Pope Francis will preside over an interfaith meeting in a mosque in the world's largest predominantly Muslim country during a four-nation Asian visit in September that will be the longest and most complicated foreign trip of his pontificate. The Vatican on Friday released the itinerary for Francis' September 2-13 trip to Indonesia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea and Singapore. The packed schedule makes clear that the 87-year-old pontiff, who has battled health problems and is increasingly reliant on a wheelchair, has no plans to slow down. After a day of rest upon arrival in Jakarta on September 3, Francis launches into a typically rigorous round of protocol visits to the four countries' heads of state and

government, speeches to diplomats and meetings with clergy and public Masses in each location. In Jakarta, he'll preside over an interfaith meeting at the capital's Istiqlal Mosque. Sprinkled in the mix are encounters with young people, poor and disabled people, elderly people and Francis' regular meetings with his Jesuit conferees. The trip was originally planned for 2020 but was called off because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Francis had to cancel his last planned foreign visit -- a quick trip to Dubai last year to participate in the UN climate conference -- because of a recurring case of bronchitis. He has seemed in relatively good form in recent months, including during day trips to Italian cities and visits to Roman parishes.

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

**Lahore (PTI):** The government in Pakistan's Punjab province is now set to ban all social media platforms — YouTube, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok — for six days between July 13 and 18, citing the need to control "hate material" during the Islamic month of Muharram. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz's cabinet committee on law and order has recommended banning all social media platforms — YouTube, X, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, among others — during the 6th to 11th day of Muharram (July 13-18) in Punjab, a province of over 120 million people, to "control hate material, misinformation to avoid sectarian violence", according to a notification issued here late Thursday night. The Punjab government has also requested her uncle Shehbaz Sharif's government at the Centre to notify the suspension of all social media platforms on the internet for six days (July 13-18).

The provincial government has decided to go beyond the routine measures of internet suspension and mobile jamming over Ashura, , after getting reports that 'external forces', including elements from across the border, were involved in the sharing of hate content and memes, Dawn News reported. Sources said the Punjab government had initially deliberated that social media apps be shut down on Muharram 9 and 10. Muharram — the period of recalling and mourning the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain by the community of Shia Muslims — marks the first month of the Islamic Calendar. A greater amount of importance is placed on the first ten days of the festival. On the tenth day, Shia Muslims take out processions via streets. Punjab Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani acknowledged that the cabinet committee had put forward a suggestion to close social media apps to avoid dissemination of hate content. Kirmani said a meeting over the issue discussed that hate content increases manifolds on social

media apps, particularly Facebook and X during Muharram, which eventually becomes a bone of contention between two sects instead of the two persons involved. "Dissemination of hate content creates bad blood and spoils the overall environment, particularly during Muharram," he said and added that shutting down social media apps was recommended before, during and a day after Muharram. Pakistan Army Chief Gen Asim Munir has already declared social media a "vicious media" and underscored the need to fight what he called "digital terrorism".

# Fierce fighting breaks out as militias launch new attacks

**AP ■ BANGKOK**  
New fighting has broken out in northeastern Myanmar, bringing an end to a Chinese-brokered cease-fire and putting pressure on the military regime as it faces attacks from resistance forces on multiple fronts in the country's civil war. The Taang National Liberation Army, one of three powerful militias that launched a surprise joint offensive last October, renewed its attacks on regime positions last week in northeastern Shan state, which borders China, Laos and Thailand, and the neighbouring Mandalay region with the support of local forces there. Since then, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army has joined in, and by Friday, combined forces from the two allied militias had reportedly encircled the strate-

gically important city of Lashio, headquarters of the regime's northeastern military command. This is the next phase of October's "1027" offensive, said Lway Yay Oo, spokesperson for the TNLA, which last week said the military provoked retaliation with artillery and airstrikes despite the cease-fire. "In phase two, our number one aim is the eradication of the military dictatorship, and number two is the protection and safety of local people," she said. The She, a spokesperson for the military regime, which seized power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi in February 2021, accused the militias of putting civilians in jeopardy by restarting the fighting. "As the TNLA are starting to violate the cease-fire, the Tatmadaw is protecting the lives and the property of the ethnic people," he said in an

email to the AP, referring to the military by its Burmese name. There was no indication that the third ethnic armed organization that makes up the Three Brotherhood Alliance, the powerful Arakan Army, has joined in the renewed fighting in Shan state, but its troops have never stopped fighting in its home Rakhine state, which was not covered by the Jan. 11 cease-fire. The TNLA claims to have already captured more than 30 army outposts, and to now control the western part of Mogoke, whose ruby mines make it a lucrative target. There is also fighting for the town of Kyaukse, which sits at a high-way crossroads, and Nawngghiko to the southwest, which leads toward the major military garrison town of Pyin Oo Lwin along the same high-way. "That's where you need to cut

it off to prevent the military from sending reinforcements," said Morgan Michaels, a Singapore-based analyst with the International Institute of Strategic Studies who runs its Myanmar Conflict Map project. In Mandalay, the region west of Shan, a local People's Defense Force — one of many armed resistance groups that have sprung up in support of the underground National Unity Government, which views itself as Myanmar's legitimate administration — joined the TNLA's offensive. Osmond, a spokesperson for the Mandalay People's Defense Force who would only give his nom de guerre because of safety concerns, said his and other local resistance groups have seized nearly 20 military outposts. The October offensive by the Three Brotherhood Alliance made rapid advances as the militias took large

expanses of territory in the north and northeast, including multiple important border crossings with China and several major military bases. The alliance militias have close ties to China, and it's widely believed that the offensive had Beijing's tacit approval because of its growing dissatisfaction with the military regime's seeming indifference to the burgeoning drug trade along its border and the proliferation of centers in Myanmar at which cyberscams are run, with workers trafficked from China and elsewhere in the region. China then helped broker the cease-fire in January, bringing the major fighting in the northeast to an end, even as other ethnic armed organizations and PDF groups launched their own attacks on regime positions elsewhere around the country.

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**Tender Enquiry No. 105/GHTP/MM-II/CS-49(X) Dated 04-07-2024**  
Dy. Chief Engineer / MM-II/ GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of "AMC for Repair, Laying & Joining of Conveyor Belts and Pulley Lagings of Conveyor System of CHP Stage-I & II at GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat as per detail in tender specifications.  
For detailed NIT and tender specifications please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> from 05-07-2024, 11:30 AM onwards.  
Note: Corrigendum and addendum if any, will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in> only.  
GHTP-48/24  
76155/12/3069/2023/35373 Dated CHD - 7/5/2024

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**Tender Enquiry No. 321/HPs/ED-I/S-426 Dated 04-07-2024**  
Dy. Chief Engineer / MM-II/ GHTP, Lehra Mohabbat invites E-tender for the work of "REPAIR OF ONE NO.15 MW PELTON TURBINE RUNNER HAVING SR. NO. 03/RE/SHANAN FOR SHANAN, HEP, PSPCL, JOGINDER NAGAR, DISTT. MANDI (H.P.)  
For detailed NIT & tender specification please refer to <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>  
Note: Corrigendum and Addendum, if any will be published online at <https://eproc.punjab.gov.in>  
C407/24  
76155/12/3072/2023/35378 Dated CHD - 7/5/2024

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Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative Qty
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• ½ Ltr	
• 1 Ltr	28 Lakh

NOTE:  
1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. [www.verka.coop](http://www.verka.coop) & e Tendering portal i.e. [eproc.punjab.gov.in](http://eproc.punjab.gov.in).  
2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.

Dy. General Manager (Purchase)  
NA/12/23917/2023/35350 Dated CHD - 7/5/2024



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

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



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

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



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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

**AP ■ DUESSELDORF (GERMANY)**  
Jude Bellingham has avoided an immediate ban after the England midfielder appeared to make an offensive gesture in his team's win over Slovakia. Bellingham will be available for England's game against Switzerland on Saturday for a place in the semifinals after UEFA on Friday imposed a one-game ban but said it "is not immediately enforced and is subject to a probationary period" of a year. The Real Madrid midfielder will have to pay a fine of 30,000 euros (\$32,500). UEFA said the punishment was "for violating the basic rules of decent conduct" in the Slovakia game. Bellingham seemed to make a gesture with his hand toward his crotch after scoring an overhead kick to level the score Sunday as England went on to win 2-1 in extra time. Bellingham's goal with about 80 seconds left in the game



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

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

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



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

Verstappen overtook Hamilton after a controversial restart to win his first world title and deny Hamilton a record-breaking eighth. Observers have drawn comparisons between Silverstone 2021 and Austria 2024 with Verstappen coming in for some unfair criticism, according to his former Red Bull teammate Daniel Ricciardo. "People are probably hammering Max a bit," said Ricciardo, who now races for the RB team. He defended Verstappen as an "elbows out" and "tough" racer who imposes himself. He knows that given they raced together from 2016-18, the year they collided at the Azerbaijan GP and scored no points. Ricciardo said the late incident at the Red Bull ring, where Verstappen recovered from a

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

PTI ■ HARARE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

Hence Jurel, who made an

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

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

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

### SQUADS

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

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



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

PTI ■ HARARE

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

The new line of Indian players is here to play a five-match T20 series against Zimbabwe, which is starting from Saturday at the Harare Sports Club.

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

The 24-year-old rated the victory as a "feather in the cap".

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PTI ■ MUMBAI

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

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

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

It culminated into a felicitation

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

"Big thank you to Mumbai

police. You did a fantastic job last night #realhero," he said.

India captain Rohit Sharma, who also announced his T20 international retirement at the end of the World Cup, was welcomed enthusiastically by his neighbours and friends at his Mumbai house.

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

PTI ■ LONDON

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

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

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

Diksha, who started her second round late in the



afternoon from the 10th tee, had two birdies on the back nine on 11th and 16th. She added three more birdies on the first, seventh and ninth.

Another Indian making the cut was Tvesa, runner-up at the Swiss Ladies Open last week. She was T-24 after the first round but fell dramatically on the back nine. Even par for the first round, she parred the entire front nine but dropped shots on

10th and 11th. Then came a roller-coaster, as she birdied the Par-3 14th, but dropped a double bogey on Par-5 15th. Then she birdied Par-4 17th and dropped a second double bogey on Par-5 18th to close at 4-over 77 and was T-41st.

Diksha, winner of two Ladies European Tour titles and third last year at Hero Women's Indian Open, is five shots behind the leader, Leona Maguire of Ireland. Maguire

shot 66-72 for 8-under and England's Georgia Hall (70-70) was second at 6-under.

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

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

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

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

With both teams level on 24-

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

**THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS**

**CHANGE OF NAME**

I, Rakesh Khadhe alias Rahanau Ram S/o Lakkan Ram Khadhe R/o Salihapara Tarhul Kanker Chhattisgarh-494635 changed my name to Dhanau Ram Khadhe. PD(572)A

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

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

consultant between 2021 to 2023.

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

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

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

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

The coach also heaped praises on newbie Riyan Parag.

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

**POSSESSION NOTICE**

Whereas, Muthoo Housing Finance Company Limited under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 ("said Act") and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 ("said Rules"), issued a demand notice dated 21-Aug-2019 & 21-Aug-2019 & 25-Oct-2019, calling upon the borrower viz. **Somnath Haridas Sukhdeve, Nilesh Haridas Sukhdeve AND Pratima Somnath Sukhdeve**, the guarantors and the mortgagors to repay the amount under LAN No. 18600075425 & 1860008512 & 18600076233, details of which are mentioned in the table below.

And whereas subsequently, Muthoo Housing Finance Company Limited has vide Assignment Agreement dated 31-03-2023 assigned all its rights, title, interest and benefits in respect of the debts due and payable by the borrower/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) arising out of the facilities advanced by Muthoo Housing Finance Company Limited to borrower/ guarantor(s) alongwith the underlying Immovable Property to Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Limited acting in its capacity as Trustee of ARCIL-Retail Loan Portfolio-086-A-TRUST ("Arcil") for the benefit of the holders of Security Receipts. Therefore, in view of the said assignment, Arcil now stands substituted in the place of Muthoo Housing Finance Company Limited and Arcil shall be entitled to institute/continue all and any proceedings against the borrower/ guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) and to enforce the rights and benefits under the financial documents including the enforcement of guarantee and security interest executed and created by the borrower/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) for the financial facilities availed by them.

The borrower/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) having failed to repay the said amounts, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general that the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Arcil has taken possession of the underlying Immovable Property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on "AS IS WHERE IS & WHATEVER THERE IS BASIS" on the date mentioned below.

Borrower Name and Guarantors	Demand Notice	Description of Property	Possession Date
<b>Borrower</b> Somnath Haridas Sukhdeve, Nilesh Haridas Sukhdeve AND Pratima Somnath Sukhdeve	7,80,674.17/- (Rupees Seven Lakhs Eighty Thousand Six Hundred Seventy Four and Seventeen Paise Only) as on 13-Aug-2019 & Rs.1,92,479.33/- (Rupees One Lakh Ninety Two Thousand Four Hundred Seventy Nine and Thirty Three Paise Only) as on 13-Aug-2019 along with future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount with effect from 13-Aug-2019 together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. & Rs.2,27,903.94/- (Rupees Two Lakhs Twenty Seven Thousand Nine Hundred Three and Ninety Four Paise Only) as on 16-Oct-2019 along with future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount with effect from 16-Oct-2019 together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. <b>Notice dated :</b> 21-Aug-2019 & 21-Aug-2019 & 25-Oct-2019	Property owned Somnath Haridas Sukhdeve, Nilesh Haridas Sukhdeve AND Pratima Somnath Sukhdeve ALL THAT PLACE OR PARCEL OF PLOT NO 17/H, MAUZA SAI NAGAR, URLA (EAST), WARD NO. 58, KH NO 845 12 PART P H NO 17, MOUJA URLA, RVM DURG 1 & 2 THEHIL DURG, CHATTISGARH, Durg, 491001, INDIA BOUNDED BY : East: Plot Of Other, West: Open Plot, North: Plot Of Other, South: Road. Hereinafter referred to as "Immovable Property"	<b>02nd Jul 2024</b>

The borrower/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned that Arcil is in the lawful possession of the Immovable Property mentioned above and under Section 13(13) of the SARFESI Act, 2002, the borrower/guarantor(s)/mortgagor(s) or any person whatsoever, shall after receipt of this notice not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise deal with/ alienate the Immovable Property, without prior written consent of Arcil and any dealings with the Immovable Property will be subject to the charge of Arcil for the amount as mentioned above along with future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. The borrowers/ guarantors/ mortgagors' attention is invited to the provisions of the Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the said Act, in respect of time available to redeem the above mentioned Immovable Property.

**Date - 06.07.2024, Place - Chattisgarh** **Sd/-, Authorized officer, Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Limited Trustee of ARCIL-Retail Loan Portfolio-086-A-TRUST**

**ASSET RECONSTRUCTION COMPANY (INDIA) LTD.**  
Acting in its capacity as Trustee of various Arcil Trusts  
Arcil office: The Ruby, 10th floor, 29, Senapati Bapat Marg, Dadar (West) Mumbai-400 028.  
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