



OPINION 6
MAJOR LOSSES FOR BJP,
COALITIONS RE-EMERGE

WORLD 8
'274 KILLED IN ISRAELI RAID
THAT RESCUED 4 HOSTAGES'

MONEY 10
PNB PLANS TO EXPAND ITS
OVERSEAS FOOTPRINT

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Modi 3.0 sworn into office

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Scripting a history, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday took over as Prime Minister for a third consecutive term becoming the first non-Congress leader and second after first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to don the mantle. With this Modi also becomes the only leader in the country to hold a constitutional post back to back for more than two decades which includes — three term as PM and prior serving 12 years as Chief Minister of Gujarat. President Draupadi Murmu administered Modi the oath of office and with this he also become the only PM to have been administered the oath by three presidents, including Pranab Mukherjee and Ramnath Kovind. Modi also under his regime was part of the consecration of Ram Temple in Ayodhya early this year and dedicated to the nation a new Parliament last year in September. If Modi completes his current five year term as PM leading the NDA regime he will have served a total of 27 years in office. He has been since leading his party to victory and power in 2002, 2007 and 2012 in Gujarat as CM and then in 2014 and 2019 at the Centre and again in 2024. It is though different this time as the BJP has lost majority on its own. Modi's third term which has



President Droupadi Murmu administers the oath of office to Narendra Modi as Prime Minister at Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Sunday

not come with a massive mandate will have to sail across the 'coalition dharma' as the Congress led INDIA Bloc will keep a prey on the two major allies-TDP and JD(U) to seek an opportunity

to dislodge Modi. The BJP secured however its third-best tally of 240 seats and the Opposition called it a "moral defeat". BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has won 293 seats, which

Modi has noted is the biggest success for any pre-poll alliance when a single party did not get a majority. Always being noticed for his apparels, Modi was dressed in white kurta and churidar with

a blue chequered jacket as he took oath in the presence of top world leaders, the who's who of country from politics, industry and celebrity world. Chief Justice DY Chandrachud was also present with his wife. Former presidents Ram Nath Kovind and Pratibha Patil also attended the event. Several religious leaders also attended the ceremony. Along with Modi, senior BJP leaders Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Amit Shah, Shivraj Singh Chauhan also took oath as the Cabinet Ministers, while party president JP Nadda returned to the cabinet after five years, indicating the Prime Minister's focus on continuity and experience in his third term. Top leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region, including Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu, Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe graced the swearing-in ceremony held in the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Mauritius Prime Minister Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, his Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay and Vice-President of Seychelles Ahmed Afif also attended the glittering ceremony held at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Old wine in new bottle

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

In his third straight term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi retained his old guards in the 72 members of Council of Ministers which include 30 Cabinet Ministers, 36 Ministers of State and five Ministers of State with Independent charge. The allocation of portfolios was not released from the Rashtrapati Bhavan till the time of the newspaper going to Press. Union Ministers in the outgoing Modi Government — Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman, Dr S Jaishankar, Hardeep Singh Puri, Jitendra Singh, Bhupendra Yadav, Dharmendra Pradhan, Ashwini Vaishnaw and Piyush Goyal — are among the Ministers who were retained and took oath as Cabinet Ministers in the Modi Government 3.0. Among them are thirty three first-timers and at least six of them hail from well-known political families. While a total of 61 members from the BJP were inducted in new Council of Ministers, a total 11 members from the allies — TDP, JD(U) and others — were administered the oath of office. A mix of several caste like 27 OBC, 10 SC, five ST, five from minority members were amongst the other general category and all States and UTs have been given representation in the Modi.3 Government. Besides, BJP veteran Jyotiraditya Scindia, JD(U)

NEW INNINGS IN MODI 3.0



leader Rajiv Ranjan Singh, HAM leader Jitan Ram Manjhi, RLD's Jayant Chaudhary, JDS leader HD Kumaraswamy, LJP (Ram Vilas) chief Chirag Paswan and Jitan Prasada are among the part of the Council of Ministers. BJP leaders Manohar Lal Khattar, CR Paatil, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Bandi Sanjay Kumar and Ravneet Singh Bittu, Harshdeep Malhotra, Bandi Suresh Kumar, Raksha Khadke, Suresh Gopi are among the new faces in the Union Council of Ministers. The fresh faces in the Government are mostly from BJP allies. Allies like TDP's

Ram Mohan Naidu and Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, JD(U)'s Lalan Singh and Ram Nath Thakur, Shiv Sena's Prataprao Jadhav besides other National Democratic Alliance members such as Chirag Paswan, Jitan Ram Manjhi, HD Kumaraswamy, Jayant Chaudhary, Ramdas Athawale, and Anupriya Patel are inducted in the Council of Ministers. BJP's G Kishan Reddy, Sukanta Majumdar, Jiten Prasad, Rao Inderjit Singh, Nityanand Rai and Bhagirath Choudhary are also inducted in new Government. Seven former Chief Ministers are part of the new Council of Ministers. The other six former Chief Ministers are Shivraj Singh Chouhan (Madhya Pradesh), Rajnath Singh (Uttar Pradesh), Manohar Lal Khattar (Haryana), Sarbananda Sonowal (Assam), H D Kumaraswamy (once dubbed the "accidental Chief Minister" by Karnataka BJP, (Karnataka), and Jitan Ram Manjhi (Bihar). While five of these former Chief Ministers are from the BJP Kumaraswamy and Manjhi represent two of the BJP's allies — JD(S) and Hindustani Awam Morcha, respectively. Meanwhile one its constituent in the NDA coalition, Ait Pwar-led NCP, turned down BJP's offer to accommodate Praful Patel as a Minister of State with Independent charge said it was assured that "remedial measures" would be taken.



(Left to right): Chandrasekhar Pemmasani, Suresh Gopi, Ram Mohan Naidu and HD Kumaraswamy

PM leans on south to make fortunes go north

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has inducted several MPs from Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Telangana into his Council of Ministers, including actor-turned politician Suresh Gopi, the first MP from the BJP in Thrissur, Kerala. Two MPs each from the Telugu Desam Party (TDP) and the BJP in Andhra Pradesh, where the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) won 21 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats, have been inducted in the Council of Ministers. Three-time MP Kinjarapu Ram Mohan Naidu and first-timer Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani have been made Ministers in Modi 3.0. Industrialist and TDP leader Jayadev Galla congratulated the two leaders on their likely

induction. Hours before the swearing-in ceremony, TDP leader Jayadev Galla announced the induction of Ram Mohan Naidu, 36, and Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, 48, as Ministers in the Union Council of Ministers. Telugu Desam Party's candidate for Guntur Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh, Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, with total assets worth ₹5,705 crore, is the richest Minister in the Council of Ministers of Modi Government 3.0. He took oath from the quota of the TDP. Pemmasani had defeated his nearest rival, YSRCP's Kilari Venkata Rosaiah, by over 3.4 lakh votes in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. From the BJP's quota in Andhra Pradesh, where it bagged three seats, State unit

chief Daggubati Purandeshwari and Narsapuram MP Bhupathi Raju Srinivasa Varma are also inducted in the Council of Ministers. The Janasena, which won two seats in Andhra Pradesh as a constituent of the NDA, is likely to get the Deputy Speaker's post in the Lok Sabha. From Telangana, where the saffron party made huge gains, bagging eight seats of the available 17, Bandi Sanjay and G Kishan Reddy are also inducted in the Council of Ministers. BJP national general secretary Bandi Sanjay Kumar thanked Modi and people of Karimnagar Parliamentary Constituency after his name figured in BJP-led NDA Council of Ministers.

Bihar footprint in new Govt grows

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

Bihar got a better pie in the Modi.3 Council of Ministers when compared to Uttar Pradesh given the coalition dharma since the Nitish Kumar-led Janata Dal (U) and Chirag Paswan-led LJP have extended support to Narendra Modi with 12 and five Lok Sabha seats, respectively. Among the new faces included is Ram Nath Thakur. JD(U) leader and son of Bharat Ratna Karpoori Thakur. The moves send a strong message to the EBCs in Bihar. For the States — Bihar and UP — caste



(Left to right): Giriraj Singh (BJP), Lalan Singh (JD(U)), Jitan Ram Manjhi (HAM) and Chirag Paswan (LNP)

combination and comfort of the allies have been kept in mind. The other five Bihar leaders who were inducted in the Council of Ministers included JD(U)'s Rajiv Ranjan Singh,

BJP's Giriraj Singh, and Nityanand Rai, LJP's Chirag Paswan, HAM's Jitan Ram Manjhi. Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lalan Singh, former national president of JD(U) and a

senior leader of his party, is a trusted loyalist of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and has served as a Minister in the State Government. Singh, 69, an upper Bhumihar caste, began his political

career in 1974. He later joined the old Janata Dal Parivar and was among the founding members of the Samata Party, led by Nitish and former Defence Minister George Fernandes. Incumbent Union Minister and Bihar BJP stalwart Giriraj Singh, who was re-elected from Begusarai, also took the oath with his party colleague and MoS Nityanand Rai who were part of the outgoing Modi.2 Government. BJP has promoted Rai as a Yadav face in Bihar to counter RJD's traditional Yadav vote base and made him the State president of the party in 2016.

BJP heavyweights sink without a trace

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Several prominent faces of Modi Cabinet 2.0 have been dropped from the Cabinet in his historic third consecutive term beginning from Sunday. The list include Union Minister and BJP leader Parshottam Rupala, Anurag Thakur, RK Singh, Smriti Irani, Narayan Rane, Ravi Shankar Prasad, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Ajay Mishra Teni, Arjun Munda, Ashwini Choubey, Sadhvi Niranjan Jyoti, Kaushal Kishore, Mahendra Nath Pandey, former Army Chief VK Singh, Kailash Chaudhary. Rupala, who was given the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal

Husbandry and Dairying in the Cabinet reshuffling of 2021, is likely to be dropped this time. During the election campaign, Rupala courted controversy by calling erstwhile 'maharajas' being subjects of the British and foreign rulers, angering the Kshatriya community. The omission of Union and Information Minister Anurag Thakur has surprised many as he was not among the leaders invited to meet Modi. The PM customarily



Anurag Thakur and Smriti Irani

interacted with new Ministers ahead of their swearing-in ceremony. Similarly Irani also could not get a call from the Prime Minister Office for about his place in Modi Cabinet. Irani had lost the Lok Sabha election from Uttar

Pradesh's Amethi by over 1.6 lakh votes to Congress loyalist Kishori Lal Sharma. She was Women and Child Development Minister in the second term of the Modi Government. She had defeated Congress's Rahul Gandhi in his family bastion five years ago. Thakur, who won the general election from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, held the Sports, and Information and Broadcasting portfolios. Thakur clinched his fifth consecutive term from Himachal Pradesh's

Hamirpur constituency, securing victory over Congress' Satpal Raizada by a significant margin of 1,82,357 votes. "I am a party worker first. Being elected to the Lok Sabha for the fifth time is itself a great honour," he told reporters here when asked if he would be getting some key responsibility in Himachal Pradesh as he is not being inducted into Modi's new Council of Ministers. Thakur said "the BJP has given me the opportunity to contest the Lok Sabha polls five times. There cannot be a bigger opportunity than this for me".



Pandian keeps word, quits active politics following Odisha loss

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHUBANESWAR/NEW DELHI

Exactly six months and 13 days after joining politics, former bureaucrat VK Pandian on Sunday announced his withdrawal from active politics following the BJD's drubbing in both the Assembly and Lok Sabha polls, but said he would keep Odisha in the core of his heart and "Guru Naveen babu" in his breath. Detailed report on Page 5

Terrorists swear by their own agenda in J&K

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

In a dastardly attack, a group of suspected Pakistani terrorists targeted a pilgrim bus which resulted in a fatal incident leading to the killing of at least nine pilgrims while 33 others also received injuries on Sunday at 6.10 pm. The gruesome attack coincided with the oath ceremony of Prime Minister Narendra Modi which was attended by heads of the neighbouring countries sans Pakistan. The bus was returning from Shiv Khori shrine towards the Katra base camp of Mata Vaishno Devi Shrine when these terrorists hiding in the area opened indiscriminate firing on the pilgrim bus. The injured have been rushed to the district hospital in Reasi and Katra-based Narayana hospital for advanced medical treatment. SSP Reasi Mohita Sharma while sharing details of the horrific incident told reporters, "Initial reports suggest that terrorists fired upon the passenger bus



The damaged bus after it plunged into a gorge following an alleged attack by suspected terrorists, in Reasi district of Jammu and Kashmir

going from Shiv Khori to Katra. Due to the firing, the bus driver lost balance of the bus and it fell into a gorge. So far nine pilgrims succumbed to their fatal injuries and 33 people were injured in the incident". SSP Reasi said the rescue operations have been completed. According to a statement of the Jammu and Kashmir police spokesman, a bus carrying pilgrim from Shiv Khori to Katra was targeted apparently by terrorists using firearms. With the help of local villagers, police evacuated all the passengers by 8.10 pm. SP Reasi supervised the evacuation and dispatched the injured to different hospitals. Eight deaths have been confirmed. The 33 injured have been referred to various hospitals. District headquarter hospital Reasi (13), CHC Trepath (5), GMC in Jammu (15). A joint security force temporary operation Headquarters by Police, Army and CRPF have been set up at the site and a multidimensional operation has been launched to get at the attackers.

'One-third PM dares challenge Nehru's record'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition leaders under the INDIA Bloc led by Congress took a swipe on Narendra Modi, who took over as Prime Minister for the third consecutive term on Sunday, calling him "the leader of the Narendra Destructive Alliance (NDA)" even though he lacks all legitimacy. While Congress claimed that Modi has suffered a huge personal, political, and moral defeat, TMC said Modi may have taken oath for a third term, but he does not have a mandate like Jawaharlal Nehru, the only other PM to have three consecutive terms, had. "A vastly diminished 'one-third' Pradhan Mantri, now lacking all legitimacy, has managed to get himself



sworn this evening, as the leader of the Narendra Destructive Alliance (NDA)," Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said. RJD leader and Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha expressed hope that the ruling dispensation will work on issues such as providing employment. Newly reelected TMC Lok Sabha MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay said the Government took oath on Sunday "which is okay" according to democratic process.

Mallikarjun Kharge. "We hope it will create less polarisation in society this time, the lives of the weaker sections are improved and the Government is free of crony capitalism. The biggest requirement of youngsters today is employment, so employment is a big issue, he should work on it," the RJD leader added. It is an NDA Government that is taking oath this time and not a "Modi Government", Manoj Jha said and expressed hope that the ruling dispensation will work on issues such as providing employment. Newly reelected TMC Lok Sabha MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay said the Government took oath on Sunday "which is okay" according to democratic process.

Self-respecting Maharana Pratap never compromised with freedom

PNS ■ UJJAIN

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav has said that self-respecting Maharana Pratap never compromised with freedom. He was addressing a function organized on the birth anniversary of Maharana Pratap at Shujalpur in Shajapur district today. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that Maharana Pratap became a legend in his lifetime. The example of Maharana Pratap's love for his horse Chetak is now well known to us. Frustrating Mughal attacks, Maharana Pratap lived with dignity of life and upheld freedom. We are fortunate to be celebrating the birth anniversary of a great personality Maharana Pratap. It is important to know that



Maharana Pratap inspired landlords and affluents to give their wealth for the nation. The best example being Bhamashah. Vanvasis also gave full support to Maharana Pratap, barring caste discriminations. Maharana Pratap used to take everyone's cooperation. Maharana Pratap was a

much respected figure. Maharana Pratap figures in the new education policy as lessons are being taught about his life and deeds. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav said that the hostel land, installation of the statue of Maharana Pratap and naming of the intersection will be done along with building a memorial for the martyrs of Mewada community who were heroes in the Army. Dr. Yadav also released Pratap Varta, the magazine of Mewada community. **Exhibition of Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan** Chief Minister Yadav inaugurated an exhibition of pictures on Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan. Chief Minister Dr. Yadav visited the exhibition of excellent work done in various Gram Panchayats of Shajapur district under the Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan. He also praised the Gram Panchayats for their brilliant performance. It may be noted that Jal Ganga Samvardhan Abhiyan is going on from June 5 and will conclude on June 16, Ganga Dussehra. Under this campaign, conservation and revival of rivers, drains, historical and traditional water structures, ponds, lakes, wells, step wells, etc., and work for cleaning and deepening them is also being done. Higher Education, Technical Education and AYUSH Minister Inder Singh Parmar, MLA Shajapur Arun Bhimavada, Kalapeepal MLA G h a n s h y a m Chandravanshi, District Panchayat President Hemraj Singh Sisodia, Municipal President Babita Parmar, Ashok Nayak, District Panchayat President Smt. Sitabai Patodiya, District Panchayat member Manohar Singh Vaghela, Kedar Singh Mandloi, and representatives of the Mewada community were present.

It rains in Ratlam, Dhar and Chhindwara, alert issued in many districts

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Rains were witnessed in Ratlam, Dhar and Chhindwara on Sunday evening, an alert of change in weather in the next 24 hours in many districts of Madhya Pradesh has been issued. According to the Meteorological Department, moderate thunderstorms with lightning, hailstorm and storm with speed up to 60 km per hour are expected in Jhabua, Alirajpur, Betul, Harda, Dewas and Pandhurna. Similarly, there is a possibility of light rain with thunderstorms in Ujjain, Ashoknagar, Mandasaur, Agar, Indore, Rajgarh, Sehore, Shajapur, Vidisha, Raisen, East Khandwa, Bawangaja of Barwani, Khargone, Narsinghpur, Sagar, Damoh, Seoni, Mandla and South Balaghat districts may experience thunderstorms at night. Due to Western Disturbance,

Cyclonic Circulation, there is a phase of thunderstorms and rain in Madhya Pradesh. On Sunday, the weather department had issued an alert of storm, rain and thunderstorm in 38 districts of the state including Bhopal, Indore, Jabalpur. The temperatures have pacified to the level of 44 which was recorded at Damoh, Niwari, Chhatrapur and Tikamgarh. Bhopal recorded a relief witnessing 40.9 degree celsius on Sunday. Warning of hailstorm and light rainfall has been issued for Dindori, Chhindwara, Seoni, Mandla, Balaghat and Pandhurna districts while hail storm and thundery activities and gusty winds for Burhanpur, Khandwa, Khargone, Barwani districts. Among other districts Bhopal, Vidisha, Raisen, Sehore, Rajgarh, Narmadapuram, Betul, Harda, Alirajpur, Jhabua, Dhar, Indore,

Ujjain, Dewas, Shajapur, Guna, Ashoknagar, Shivpuri, Anuppur, Shahdol, Umaria, Katni, Jabalpur, Narsinghpur, Patna, Damoh, Sagar, Chhatrapur, Maihar districts would witness hail storm and thundery activities and gusty winds and light rainfall according to the alert issued by Met. IMD Bhopal said, due to cyclonic circulation and western disturbance, the eastern part remained cloudy on Saturday. It also rained in many districts. Similar weather will prevail on Sunday as well. For this, orange and yellow alerts have been issued. Heat will also affect some districts. According to IMD as of Sunday the Southwest Monsoon has further advanced into some more parts of remaining Arabian Sea, some more parts of North Arabian Sea and some more parts of Maharashtra. The Northern Limit of Monsoon is

passing through Thane, Ahmednagar, Beed, Nizamabad, Sukma, Maninagar, Vijayanagar. A cyclonic circulation is active over Marathwada. During the last 24 hours, scattered rainfall was recorded in the districts of Bhopal, Indore, Narmadapuram, Ujjain, Jabalpur, Shahdol, Sagar and the weather remained generally dry in the rest of the districts. Umaria experienced a warm night. Day temperatures fell particularly in the districts of Bhopal, Indore, Ujjain; the night temperatures fell significantly in the districts of Narmadapuram, Gwalior, Sagar divisions and there was no significant change in temperatures in all the remaining districts. They were noticeably lower than normal in the districts of Bhopal division; they were noticeably lower than normal in the districts of Indore,

Ujjain divisions and normal in all the remaining districts. The night temperature increased significantly in the districts of Ujjain division and there was no significant change in temperatures in all the remaining districts. They were below normal in the districts of Jabalpur division; they were above normal in the districts of Rewa, Sagar divisions; they were noticeably higher than normal in the districts of Shahdol division and normal in all the remaining districts. Dust storm occurred in Rampur Kalan, Neemuch, Mandasaur from yesterday till today morning; thunderstorms and strong winds occurred in Jhabua, Dhar, Indore, Alirajpur, Barwani, Khargone, Neemuch, Ratlam, Ujjain, Agar, Dewas, Sehore, Rajgarh, Guna, Betul, Chhindwara, Pandhuna, Seoni, Balaghat, Mandla, Dindori, Anuppur, Shahdol, Jabalpur, Damoh.



BJP workers celebrate after former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan inducted as Union Cabinet Minister, outside at his residence in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Former Madhya Pradesh CM Shivraj Singh Chouhan enters Modi 3.0 government

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Sunday took oath as Union minister on Sunday as part of Modi government 3.0. Proving wrong his detractors' claim of being sidelined after denial of CM's post for fifth time last year, BJP leader Shivraj Singh Chouhan won Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha Lok Sabha seat for the sixth time by a record margin of 8.21 lakh votes. The former four-time MP chief minister, popularly known as "mama" (maternal uncle) and "paon-paon wale bhैया" (foot soldier), assiduously worked on his 'soil of the soil' image and identified himself with the socio-economic concerns of farmers, villagers, women and children in the state.

On Sunday, Chouhan became the Union cabinet minister for the first time in his more than three-decade-long political career. Born on March 5, 1959 in a farming family of Prem Singh Chouhan and Sundar Bai Chouhan at Jait village in Sehore district, Shivraj Singh Chouhan's political journey began with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) when he was just 13 years old. His leadership skills first came to the fore when he was elected president of the Model Higher Secondary School students' union in 1975. He participated in the underground movement against Emergency and was imprisoned in 1976-77 and also on many other occasions for political agitations and public causes. A volunteer of the RSS since 1977, Chouhan is a gold medal-

ist in Masters of Philosophy from the Barkatullah University Bhopal. He also served as general secretary of the BJP and president of the party's MP unit. Chouhan was first elected to the MP assembly from Budhni constituency in 1990. He was elected as Member of Parliament for the first time from Vidisha constituency the following year. He was re-elected from the seat in 1996, 1998, 1999 and 2004. He won his fifth Lok Sabha election with an impressive margin of over 2,60,000 votes. In the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and Chouhan campaigned extensively for the BJP in the state where the party won all the 29 Lok Sabha seats, including Congress bastion Chhindwara, which the saffron party failed to win in 2019.



Police use water cannons to disperse youth congress activists during a demonstration against the alleged irregularities in the NEET entrance exam results, in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Demanding punishment in Nursing scam, YC activists protest

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Madhya Pradesh Youth Congress activists protest in Bhopal demanding punishment for the accused in the nursing scam. The workers were going to surround the bungalow of Minister Vishwas Sarang and were charged by the police to stop the protesters. After this, they were chased away with water cannons. Youth Congress started a protest near Nanke Petrol Pump in New Market at 1 pm on Sunday, 500 activists from across the state including Bhopal participated in it. The protest lasted for about two hours. More than 50 workers also got arrested. Youth Congress demanded resignation from Minister Sarang

Over 500 Youth Congress activists from across the state including Bhopal participated in it. The protest lasted for about two hours. More than 50 activists also got arrested

Youth Congress State President Mitendra Darshan Singh said, there is collusion of government ministers and BJP leaders in the nursing scam. Till the government does not register a case against all the accused involved in this scam and send them to jail, this fight will continue. The government is trying to suppress our voice by arresting us. The Youth Congress will not let the government save the accused. Minister Vishwas Sarang should immediately

resign and face investigation. Youth Congress Media Department President Vivek Tripathi said, the then Medical Minister Vishwas Sarang and officials and big names of BJP are involved in the nursing scam. The government is trying to save the culprits by whitewashing it. District President of Media Department Akash Chauhan said, Youth Congress was protesting peacefully demanding the resignation of Minister Vishwas Sarang. Police

attacked. Many workers have been injured. Ravi Parmar, State Coordinator of NSUT's Medical Wing, said that about 50 Youth Congress workers who were protesting were arrested by the police. Police took everyone to Khajuri Sadak Police Station by putting them in a bus. According to Ravi Parivar, all the Youth Congress workers arrested from Link Road here were released. For the first time under the leadership of Youth Congress President Mitendra Darshan Singh, Youth Congress workers demonstrated on Sunday demanding a fair investigation into the nursing scam. Not only this, this was the first protest of the Youth Congress even after the Lok Sabha elections were over.

Two persons injured in Maharana Pratap Jayanti celebrations

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Two persons including Congress corporator were injured during Maharana Pratap Jayanti celebrations at MP Nagar square after hydraulic lift of the Municipal Corporation fell. Congress councillor Jitendra Singh Rajput from Ward 66 and his maternal uncle were injured in the accident. The incident took place at 1.20 pm. On Sunday, people of Kshatriya community gathered at MP Nagar Square to garland the statue of Maharana Pratap. Leaders and people of the community were garlanding the statue of Maharana Pratap through the hydraulic lift of the Municipal Corporation. Councillor Jitendra Singh Rajput along with his maternal uncle Rishi Singh Rajput rode in the hydraulic lift and reached the statue 20 feet above. During this, the welding of the hydraulic lift broke and it fell down. Councillor Jitendra Singh has a fracture in his leg. His maternal uncle is injured. Councillor Jitendra has been

admitted to Anant Hospital in Indrapuri. The responsible officers should be suspended immediately. Councillor Jitendra Singh Rajput, injured in the accident, said that he had gone to garland the statue of Maharana Pratap ji on behalf of Rajput Samaj Pragati Mandal. We fell due to the breaking of the welding of the hydraulic lift. People present in the lift have been injured. Certainly, there is a great negligence of the Municipal Corporation of Bhopal. This matter should be investigated. The machines of the Municipal Corporation, hydraulic lifts, JCB machines, whatever equipment, all should be checked. Fitness certificates should be checked. This issue has also been raised in the Municipal Corporation of Bhopal regarding maintenance. But, the Municipal Corporation of Bhopal is not doing any work in the name of maintenance. It has completely failed. The concerned officials should be suspended. The entire matter should be investigated.

Police arrest three burglars, recover ornaments worth Rs 4.50 lakh

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

Ayodhya nagar police have arrested three burglars and recovered gold and silver jewellery worth Rs 4.50 lakh from their possession, accused had committed 4 thefts in the Ayodhya Nagar area. The police said that on May 28, the complainant Arun Khatri had lodged a complaint that unknown thieves broke the lock of his neighbour Abu Asif's house at night and stole gold and silver jewellery and cash. The police team examined the CCTV footage around the crime scene and due to which the accused could be identified. After this, the police activated the informers. They confirmed that the crime was committed by Krishna Giri, Anurag Sundare and his partner together. The police kept searching for the accused continuously. The accused Anurag alias Annu is an expert in cutting locks. On Saturday, the police again received information from an informer

that both the accused were standing with a blue Activa in Jamboree ground near Ratnagiri. The police reached the spot and arrested Krishna Giri (21) and Anurag Sundare (20). During interrogation at the police station, they revealed the name of their third accomplice Pankaj Lodhi. The accused admitted to committing a total of four burglaries in Ayodhya nagar area. The three accused had formed their team together in jail. The police said that they used to do recce of the area by posing as carpenters. A dozen cases including theft, burglary and robbery are registered against these three accused in different police stations.

Kerala fest concludes with display of cultural performances

STAFF REPORTER ■ BHOPAL

The final day of the Kerala Fest in Bhopal concluded with an array of captivating performances, celebrating the rich cultural heritage of Kerala. Organized by the United Malayalee Association in commemoration of its 40th anniversary, the event at the Bittan Market Ground drew an even larger crowd, eager to witness the culmination of this three-day cultural spectacle. The evening's program commenced at 6:45 pm with a mesmerizing fusion music performance by the talented Swathishri Ku: Malavika Pillai S. Her innovative blend of traditional Kerala music with contemporary elements set a perfect tone for the evening, captivating the audience with her melodious and dynamic performance. Following the fusion music, the renowned dance troupe Natyashree took the stage with a stunning classical dance performance. Choreographed by Kalamandalam Kavitha Shaji and Shaji M, the dancers showcased the intricate and graceful movements of classical Indian dance. Their performance was a testament to the rich artistic traditions of Kerala, leaving the audience spellbound with



their precision and expressiveness. Adding to the cultural tapestry of the evening, Aakruti Mehra enthralled the audience with a soulful rendition of a traditional Malayalam song. Her heartfelt performance highlighted the musical heritage of Kerala, evoking a deep sense of nostalgia and pride among the Malayalee community in Bhopal. The cultural journey continued with the segment titled "Kala Roopangal," which featured a variety of traditional Kerala art forms. This segment provided a vibrant and diverse showcase of Kerala's artistic traditions, allowing the audience to experience the state's cultural richness firsthand. A significant part of the evening was the dais program, where distinguished guests and dignitaries shared their thoughts and insights. They praised the United Malayalee Association for its efforts in promoting cultural exchange and unity among diverse communities. Their speeches underscored the importance of such cultural festivals in fostering mutual understanding and appreciation. Returning to the stage, Natyashree performed the second part of their classical dance repertoire, further mesmerizing the audience with their exceptional talent and dedication to

the art form. The dancers' fluid movements and expressive storytelling continued to captivate everyone present. The highlight of the evening was the electrifying Kalarippayattu demonstration. This ancient martial art form, presented by the esteemed K. F. Thomas Gurukkal and his team, showcased a thrilling display of skill, strength, and coordination. The performance not only emphasized the physical prowess required for Kalarippayattu but also its philosophical and spiritual dimensions, offering a holistic view of this traditional practice. The evening concluded with another segment of "Kala Roopangal," presenting more mesmerizing Kerala art forms that left the audience in awe. Reflecting on the success of the third day, O.D. Joseph, President of the United Malayalee Association, expressed his joy: "The overwhelming response we have received on the final day of Kerala Fest is truly heartwarming. The enthusiasm and appreciation from the people of Bhopal for Kerala's rich cultural heritage are inspiring. We are delighted with the success of this event and look forward to more such celebrations in the future."

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Traffic Police issues advisory for Modi oath taking ceremony

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

As the world witnessed the oath taking ceremony of Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi which took place on Sunday, commuters who stepped out to enjoy their weekend in the national capital faced major traffic snarls. In view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony on Sunday evening, the Delhi Traffic Police had made special arrangements and issued an advisory on diversions and restrictions in the vicinity of the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Many who stepped out to enjoy the highly electrical battle between India and Pakistan in the T20 cricket world cup in restaurants and public places, faced major problems amid the traffic restrictions. Further, the Delhi Metro



also posed a problem to the travellers as many complained of the metros coming after a long gap. According to the advisory issued Sunday morning, no traffic movement will be allowed on the Sansad Marg (between Transport Bhawan and T-point Rafi Ahmed

Kidwai Marg), North Avenue Road, South Avenue Road, Kushak Road, Rajaji Marg, Krishna Menon Marg, Talkatora Road and Pt. Pant Marg between 2 pm to 11 pm. Pedestrian movement, however, will be allowed. "No vehicle will be allowed to halt or park anywhere on Imtiaz Khan

Marg, Rakab Ganj Road, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Marg, Pandit Pant Marg and Talkatora Road," said the advisory. The traffic police further said vehicles found parked on these roads will be towed away and its owners prosecuted. The towed vehicles would be parked in the Traffic Pit at Pandit Pant Marg towards Gole Dak Khana. The traffic will be diverted also from Patel Chowk, Roundabout Patel Chowk, Rail Bhawan, Roundabout Gurudwara Rakab Ganj, Gole Dakkhana, Roundabout RML and Roundabout GPO. "People who are going towards ISBT/Railway Stations/Airports are advised to carefully plan their travel with sufficient time at hand," the advisory added. A senior police officer said that almost 1,100 traffic personnel have been deployed. Also, the Delhi Police has imposed prohibitory orders and declared

parts of the national capital no-flying zone for the swearing-in ceremony Sunday evening. The prohibitory orders will remain in force on June 9 and 10. More than 2,500 police personnel along with paramilitary staff have been deployed to maintain law and order. Modi is set to take oath on Sunday for a third straight term as the head of a coalition government after two full tenures in which the BJP enjoyed a majority on its own. The 73-year-old will be equalling the feat of first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who won in 1952, 1957 and 1962 general elections. Leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean Region are among the dignitaries and special invitees expected to attend the swearing-in ceremony of the prime minister and his council of ministers at Rashtrapati Bhawan at 7.15 pm.



Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav participates in a cleanliness drive during 'Jal Ganga Samvardhan' campaign in Nemawar, Dewas district Madhya Pradesh on Sunday. Pioneer photo



Students celebrate their victory after the results of JEE advanced were declared in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Traffic Police books 16,800 people for defective number plates this year

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Traffic Police has booked more than 16,800 people for defective number plates so far this year, up by 286 per cent from the corresponding period of last year from January 1 to June 5. According to a senior officer of the Delhi Traffic Police, 16,859 people were booked for defective number plates between January 1 and June 5 this year while the figure was at 4,363 in the corresponding period of 2023. This represents a notable surge of nearly 286 per cent in prosecutions compared to the previous year with the offences in 2024 increased by 12,496. "In the current year, the Delhi Traffic Police have intensified their crackdown on vehicles with defective number plates. This surge in prosecution is part of a broader effort to enhance road safety and enforce compliance with traffic regulations," a statement by the Delhi Traffic Police stated. The traffic police department said it has intensified the crackdown on vehicles with defective number plates

and the initiative has led to a significant increase in the number of penalties imposed. A senior official said that these defective number plates, which include those that are illegible, improperly formatted or do not conform to the prescribed standards, have been identified as a major issue contributing to traffic violations and security concerns. Special drives and checkpoints have been established across the city, with a particular focus on high-traffic areas and entry-exit points, police said. The Delhi Traffic Police has also undertaken a thorough analysis of the top 10 traffic circles with the highest number of challans issued for defective number plates in 2024. The maximum number of violations were found in Mayur Vihar which reported 926 such incidents, followed by Nand Nagri with 917 violators, Khajuri Khas with 845 violators, Samaypur Badli with 826 violators, Civil Lines with 804 violators, Bhajan Pura with 798 violators, Ashok Vihar with 736 violators, Gandhi Nagar with 699 violators, Sadar Bazar with 579 violators and

Narela with 565 violators of having defective number plates. "In addition to on-ground enforcement, there has been a concerted effort to raise public awareness about the importance of proper number plates. Campaigns through social media and collaboration with automobile associations have been launched to educate vehicle owners on the legal requirements and the potential penalties for non-compliance," the statement read. Further, it stated that the Delhi Traffic Police remain committed to sustaining these efforts throughout the year, ensuring that all vehicles on the road meet the required standards for number plates, thereby contributing to safer and more orderly traffic management in the city. It also urged the vehicle owners to check their number plates for compliance and make necessary corrections promptly to avoid penalties. "The Delhi Traffic Police reiterate their dedication to maintaining road safety and upholding the law for the benefit of all road users," it stated.

Lieutenant Governor to meet Atishi over less water being released by Haryana

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena will have a meeting with Delhi Water Minister Atishi on Monday at 11:00 am after the senior AAP leader sought time from him for an emergency meeting over the "inadequate" amount of water being released by Haryana through the Munak Canal, one of the primary sources of potable water for the national capital. In a post on X (formerly Twitter), Atishi said Delhi is supposed to receive 1,050 cusecs of water from the canal but it has reduced to only 840 cusecs and stated that she has sought time from the LG. Upon her request, the LG will hold a meeting with her on Monday and in a tweet said, "LG will meet Atishi at 11:00 AM on Monday. In the interim he has asked officials to ascertain the actual position of Water released by Himachal & Haryana, measures to check wastage & leakage of water in Delhi & the status of desilting of Wazirabad reservoir, as directed by Supreme Court. He has further directed the officers concerned to take up the matter with Upper Yamuna River Board to ascertain the facts wrt release of water to Delhi." Earlier in the day, she also wrote a letter to Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, requesting him to ensure 1,050 cusecs water is released from the



Munak Canal for the national capital, otherwise "Delhi will have a major crisis in next one to two days". In her letter, she said seven Water Treatment Plants (WTPs) in Delhi are dependent on supply from Yamuna and "due to the deficit of raw water, our water treatment plants are unable to run at their optimum capacity." Delhi is supposed to receive around 1,050 cusec water at Munak, but the supply has reduced, she said. "With the water from Munak Canal reducing to 840 cusecs, Delhi will be unable to produce adequate water from our seven WTPs." "If Haryana doesn't release the adequate amount of water by today, Delhi will have a major crisis in the next 1-2 days. Therefore, I humbly request you to ensure that 1,050 cusec water is released from Munak Canal for Delhi," she added. According to the agreement in the 53rd meeting of the



Upper Yamuna River Board, which was convened on May 2018, around 1,050 cusecs (i.e. 568 MGD) was allocated to Delhi at Munak through career lined channel (CLC) canal and Delhi Sub Branch (DSB) Canals, she said. "Considering the transmission loss, the allocation of 1050 Cusec at Munak corresponds to about 1,013 Cusec (i.e. 548 MGD). This is measured by Delhi at the Bawana contact point, where the water enters Delhi, where flow meters have been installed by Delhi. These flow meters have been checked by representatives of the Upper Yamuna River Board, last week itself," Atishi said. Meanwhile, in a tweet, Atishi stated that she wants to inform Saxena about the inadequate water being released from Haryana following the Supreme Court decision directing Congress ruled Himachal Pradesh government to provide

additional water to Delhi. "Have sought time from the Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena for an emergency meeting, to apprise him of the inadequate water being released by Haryana from the Munak Canal," she said. Elaborating on the water crisis situation in the national capital, Atishi said, "Delhi is supposed to receive 1050 cusecs of water from the Munak Canal via the CLC and DSB sub-canal. However, this has been reduced to 840 cusecs. Seven Water Treatment Plants are dependent on this water. If the amount of water does not increase today, then the water situation across Delhi will worsen in 1-2 days." Amid rising temperatures, Delhi has been facing a water shortage. She further stated, "Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena is the representative of the

Central Govt. Will be requesting him to intervene and resolve the situation."

THE PIONEER CLASSIFIEDS

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I, HOZEIFA holding Indian Passport No:53879301 issued at DUBAI on 22/03/2018 and Permanent Resident of 3 SAIFEE VILA CHHOTA TELIWADA UJJAIN MP and presently residing at DUBAI UAE do hereby change my name from HOZEIFA to HOZEIFA (Given name) KOTHAWALA (SURNAME) with immediate effect

PD(518)C



Aspirants being checked by an examiner as they appear in the Madhya Pradesh Public Service Commission Assistant Professor exam, in Bhopal on Sunday. Pioneer photo

Nobel Peace Prize is awarded not in Stockholm, but in Oslo, Norway

When you hear the words Nobel Prize, you are likely to think of Sweden. And yet, every year, the Nobel Peace Prize is awarded not in Stockholm, but in Oslo, Norway. Here's why. The Nobel Prizes, including the Peace Prize, were established by the will Alfred Nobel drafted in 1895, about a year before his death. The Swedish inventor, engineer and industrialist instructed that the bulk of his fortune be set aside as a fund for the awarding of five annual prizes "to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind". The Nobel Foundation was then established in Stockholm to manage the finances and administration of the prizes. At the time, however, Norway was in a union with Sweden and Nobel's will specified that the Peace Prize should be awarded by a committee selected by the Norwegian Nobel Institute. The Norwegian Nobel Committee was thus established to fulfil Nobel's wishes regarding the Peace Prize after his death in 1896. The other Nobel prizes (in physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, and lit-

erature, along with the prize in economics, later instituted in 1968) continue to be awarded in Sweden. I have always been fascinated by what the Nobel Peace Prize stands for. It is an exercise in finding change makers, rewarding their effort to bring about peace in their given historical, cultural or geographical context. That's why I was so excited to receive an invitation to attend the ceremony in Oslo in 2019. I embarked on a whirlwind journey from Kolkata to Oslo, where I was fortunate to secure accommodation at the historic Grand Hotel, known for its association with the Nobel Prize since 1901. Situated in the heart of Oslo on Karl Johans gate, the hotel boasts a rich history, once frequented by luminaries like playwright Henrik Ibsen and painter Edvard Munch. My stay provided me with a first-hand experience of the festivities surrounding the Nobel Peace Prize. That year's laureate was Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed Ali, lauded for his efforts in peace and international cooperation, particularly for resolving the border conflict with Eritrea. He was staying in the Nobel Suite, as is the custom.

The ceremony itself takes place at City Hall, and as I arrived there for the ceremony, I felt the gravity of the occasion, knowing it's a rare privilege even for family members of past laureates to attend. Amidst attendees, dignitaries and media, I sensed the honor of being part of such a significant event. It was a crisp ceremony, with Berit Reiss-Andersen, the chair of the Norwegian Nobel Committee, delivering an address about why Ahmed Ali had been chosen for the prize. I've watched with some interest as the laureate has in recent years come under scrutiny for his role in increased violence in the region. The Nobel Committee too has spoken out about the issue. It is a complex matter, choosing recipients who are still politically active and are subject to change. But that isn't all I did during my stay. In addition to attending this august event, I initiated talks to launch activities for the Prabha Khaitan Foundation (PKF) in Norway. Established in Kolkata in the early 1980s by my late mother Dr Prabha Khaitan, the PKF is committed to socio-cultural welfare and humanitarian causes, emphasising literature,

education, women's empowerment, and gender equality. Following UNESCO's belief in the role of cultural activities in sustainable development, the Foundation regularly collaborates with various stakeholders to implement welfare projects. Expanding its reach to Norway seemed natural, given the vibrant Indian community there. Since then, the PKF's activities in Oslo have flourished, beginning with sessions featuring prominent figures such as Manoj Muntashir, Vikram Sampath and Anuja Chauhan, followed by in-person events like Deepak Ramola's session on Project FUEL and a performance by Kathak dancer Shinjini Kulkarni, in collaboration with the Vishva Hindu Parishad in Norway in December 2023. This partnership with Norway's culturally engaged Indian diaspora has proven to be mutually rewarding for the Foundation. I also had the great fortune to meet the Gulati family, with whom I have been associated for decades now. Ravi Gulati emigrated to Norway years ago and now his son, Himanshu, is the youngest member of Norway's Storting and the sole Indian-origin representative. He grew up

in Norway, displaying an early interest in politics by joining the youth wing of the right-wing Progress Party. Rising through the ranks, he became the youngest state secretary in the Norwegian cabinet at the age of 25. Despite studying medicine initially, he later pursued economics and leadership, even delving into filmmaking with his feature film Desert Tears, showcasing his artistic talents. Alongside his political career, Himanshu's passion for travel has taken him to over 160 countries, where he educates himself about diverse cultures and aids Norwegians stranded abroad. Apart from the Indian diaspora, I also could meet my old associates from my association with WFUNA (World Federation of United Nations Associations). UNA Norway, a non-governmental organisation, convened a lunch event where I engaged with members to discuss their dedication to promoting the principles of the United Nations within Norway. Their focus lies in raising awareness about the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and advocating for international cooperation on issues like poverty, inequality, climate

change and human rights. Through educational initiatives targeting schools, universities, and media outreach, UNA Norway strives to foster a better understanding of global challenges and the UN's role in addressing them. Finally, before I ended my brief but impactful trip, I experienced a moment of unexpected delight. As I made my way from my room to the lobby, the elevator stopped, and to my surprise, the Nobel Peace Prize recipient himself, Abiy Ahmed Ali, stepped in alongside two others. Before I could fully register the moment, he greeted me with a warm smile and a simple yet meaningful word: "India." It was a chance encounter I never expected. When we reached the ground floor, the doors opened to reveal a crowd eagerly waiting to capture a moment with the Nobel laureate. Despite the clamour, he graciously obliged me, taking the time to snap a selfie together, a gesture that encapsulated the warmth and hospitality I had experienced throughout my time in Norway. (As chronicled in my recently published book, 'Norway Diary', released just last week - Sundeep Bhutoria)

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SALE INTIMATION AND PUBLIC NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.

The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. (the "Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loan/Overdraft Against Securities.

Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loan terms, the below loan accounts are in delinquent status. The Bank has issued multiple notices to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose off the Securities on or after 17th June 2024 for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 5 th June 2024	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXX6291	DINESH A G	1,78,925.76	22-05-2024
2	XXXX9623	RADHE SHYAM MEENA	19,466.02	06-06-2024
3	XXXX7797	SAMIL RAM CHANDRAN	4,64,142.66	05-06-2024
4	XXXX7627	DEEPAK KUMAR SHARMA	20,074.92	30-05-2024
5	XXXX2721	ANITA CHOURASIYA	5,14,718.41	22-05-2024

Date : 10.06.2024 Sd/ Place : MADHYA PRADESH HDFC BANK LTD.

HDB Financial Services Limited Ground Floor, Zenith House, Keshavnagar Khadye Marg, Mahalaxmi, Mumbai - 400034 Tel No.: +91 22 49116300

FINAL AUCTION CUM SALE NOTICE FOR GOLD ORNAMENTS

The borrower(s) (whose details are provided in the table herein below), in particular, and the public, in general, are hereby informed that the below mentioned accounts are overdue, and the borrowers/account holders have not responded/complied with the communication, and notice sent by HDB Financial Services Limited (the "Company") requesting the borrower to clear his/her/their dues as per the documents in respect of the below mentioned loan signed/accepted by the borrower(s) (such documents, collectively "loan agreement") and therefore defaulted in terms thereof. The Company has in exercise of its rights as a pledgee, decided to enforce the pledge and therefore hold a public auction of the gold ornaments pledged to the company as security for the loan for the purpose of selling the same and realizing/recovering the dues owed by the borrower(s) to the company. The auction will be conducted on/after 14-06-2024 at the below mentioned local branch of HDB Financial Services Limited from 11:00 am onwards on the date and branches mentioned in the below table:-

Loan No	Customer Name	Date of Loan	Overdue Amount ₹	Branch Name
31652250	Saboor Rehman Siddiqui	15/02/2023	7078	Bhopal-New Market
43455588	Pushpendra Singh	28/12/2023	9008	Bhopal-New Market
27393642	Shubham Kushwaha	14/09/2022	74627	Bhopal-New Market
30850152	Bhagwan Das Badoniya	17/01/2023	385828	Gwalior
36767694	Aman Shankhwar	11/07/2023	14655	Gwalior
32567132	Sourabh Soni	20/03/2023	151117	Indore-Annapurna
32025935	Arpit Chouksey	28/02/2023	17505	Jabalpur
43719825	Gopal Raikwar	04/01/2024	14107	Jabalpur
43959219	Sourabh Gupta	11/01/2024	22130	Jabalpur
25139461	Abdulhaq Khatri	20/06/2022	22507	Khandwa
35165088	Erashad Yusuf	06/06/2023	11264	Khargone
39164982	Hozefa Ramalwala	19/09/2023	24915	Mandsaur
40195328	Hitesh So Brijmohan	16/10/2023	16582	Mandsaur
42584621	Furkan Shekh	06/12/2023	17088	Mandsaur
33627441	Pawan Kumar Gandharv	20/04/2023	9559	Neemuch
40668562	Ashutosh Singh	28/10/2023	43770	Rewa
44120754	Harmendra Singh	19/01/2024	18771	Rewa
37670903	Mahendra Singh	08/08/2022	10298	Satna
38159317	Sangeeta Gupta	19/08/2023	7770	Satna
38807576	Sangeeta Gupta	08/09/2023	16343	Satna

The auction shall be conducted on an "AS IS WHERE" and "AS IS WHAT IT" basis and the Company is not making and shall not make any representation or warranties as regards the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments. It shall be the sole and absolute responsibility of the potential purchaser to verify, examine and satisfy themselves about the quality, purity, caratage, weight or valuation of the said gold ornaments prior to placing their bid and for such purpose it shall be open to potential purchasers to examine, at their sole cost and expense, and at the address set out herein above, the gold ornaments whether with or without expert advice 45 minutes prior to the time stipulated for the conduct of the auction. All the bid shall be subjected to such minimum reserve price as the company may deem fit to fix in this regards. The auction process and sale (if any) pursuant to such auction shall be subjected to such further terms and condition as the company may at sole discretion deem fit to impose. If the borrower(s) mentioned above pays the amount due to the Company in terms of the loan agreement in his individual loan account in full before the auction as mentioned above, the pledged ornaments securing the said loan may be withdrawn from the said auction without further notice. Please note that it is the absolute discretionary power of the undersigned authorized officer of the company, either to postpone or to cancel the auction proceeding without prior notice and without assigning any reason thereof and to reject any or all the bids or offer without assigning any reason for the same.

Place : MADHYA PRADESH Date : 10-06-2024 Authorised Officer (HDB Financial Services Ltd)

Lok Sabha to get LoP after 10 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the INDIA Bloc parties' numbers increasing in the 18th Lok Sabha, the lower House is set to get a Leader of the Opposition (LoP) after 10 years, and Opposition leaders also hope that a Deputy Speaker will be elected soon, a post that had been vacant for the last five years.

The 17th Lok Sabha, which was dissolved on June 5, did not have a deputy speaker for its full term, and it was the second consecutive term of the lower house without an LoP. All eyes are set at the lower house which will get an LoP, and is also expected to have a deputy speaker, a post which usually goes to the opposition ranks.

While the INDIA bloc has not yet held any coordination meeting on its strategy for the Parliament, an opposition leader said they will mount pressure that the deputy speaker's post is not left vacant this time. "The BJP government has been rejected by people, they did not elect any deputy speaker in last five years... Hope they have learnt a lesson and will elect a deputy speaker this time," a TMC leader said.



The 17th Lok Sabha, in which the BJP was in an absolute majority with 303 seats, elected Om Birla as the Speaker. In a first, no deputy speaker was elected through its term of five years.

As per Article 93 of the Constitution, the Lok Sabha shall, as soon as may be, choose two members to be speaker and deputy speaker so often as the offices become vacant. However, it does not provide a specific time frame. In the 16th Lok Sabha, M Thambidurai of the AIADMK was elected as Deputy Speaker, 70 days after the election results.

Before this, the longest that the lower house had no deputy

speaker was in the 12th Lok Sabha, when the House functioned for 269 days without one since election, data compiled by the PRS shows. The tenure of the 12th Lok Sabha, led by BJP's Atal Bihari Vajpayee lasted only for 13 months, from 10 March 1998 to 26 April 1999.

While GMC Balayogi was elected the Speaker in the 12th Lok Sabha in March 1998, P M Sayeed of the Congress was elected the deputy speaker only in December that year. In the ninth Lok Sabha, the term of which started on 2 December 1989, Rabi Ray was elected the Speaker in December 1989, while Shivraj Patil became the Deputy

Speaker in March 1991. The 18th Lok Sabha will also have an LoP for the first time in ten years. In the previous two Lok Sabhas, the largest opposition party Congress could not get the post as it did not have the requisite numbers, which is one-tenth of the strength of the House.

In the 16th Lok Sabha, the Congress had 44 MPs, while in the 17th Lok Sabha it had 55. The post of LoP was not recognised till 1969, when Ram Subhag Singh became the first recognised LoP of the Lok Sabha. This time, the leader of Congress, which is the largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha with 99 MPs, will be recognised as the LoP.

Honour to serve Modi Ministry as a tribal, minority: Kiren Rijiju



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Kiren Rijiju, who took oath as a Cabinet minister in the third Narendra Modi government on Sunday, said he will continue to work with all sincerity and dedication to fulfil the prime minister's dream of a developed India. Rijiju, who continues as a minister for the third consecutive time -- first as a minister of state and then a Cabinet minister -- said he is thankful to the prime minister for giving him the opportunity to serve in his ministry. "It is a privilege and honour to serve as a minister under Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the third time," he told PTI. Rijiju said as a tribal and a member of the minority Buddhist community and hailing from a remote state, Arunachal Pradesh, he is immensely happy to serve the people of the country. "I will do my best with all sin-

cerity and dedication to fulfil the dream of the prime minister for a Viksit Bharat (developed India)," he said.

Earlier, in a post on X, Rijiju said he would take oath as Cabinet minister in the Modi government and vowed to serve the nation with zeal and devotion.

"I will take oath as Cabinet minister around 7.30 pm on 9th June 2024," said Rijiju, the earth sciences minister in the outgoing government. Rijiju said he had taken oath as a minister of state in 2014, minister of state with independent charge in 2019, and as a Cabinet minister in 2021.

"Thank you Arunachal Pradesh, @narendramodi ji, @BJP4India and people of India. I will serve the nation with greater zeal and devotion," he said.

Rijiju won a fourth term from the Arunachal West Lok Sabha seat in the recent general elections.

Plea in SC seeks Centre, SEBI to submit report in June 4 stock market crash



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court, seeking directions to the Centre and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) to submit a detailed report into the stock market crash on the day of election results on June 4, when investors lost billions of rupees. The plea, filed by advocate Vishal Tiwari, also sought direction to the government and the SEBI to submit a status report on the orders given on January 3 for considering the suggestion of the expert committee, headed by Justice A M Sapre, made in its report on the PIL in Adani-Hindenburg matter.

The top court had said the Centre and the SEBI should constructively consider the suggestions of the expert committee and take any further action necessary to strengthen the regulatory framework, protect investors and ensure the

orderly functioning of the securities market.

"It is said that after announcements of exit polls in respect to the Lok Sabha 2024 results, the share market went high, but when the actual results were announced the market crashed," the plea said. "Stock market volatility again emerged. As per news reports, the loss was Rs 20 lakh crore. This again has raised question mark on the regulatory mechanism... Despite this court's direction, nothing has changed," the petition said. Following the exit poll prediction of a resounding BJP victory, BSE benchmark Sensex shot up on Monday by 2,507 points or 3.4 percent to settle at a new closing peak of 76,469. However, a day later on Tuesday, the equity markets witnessed a bloodbath, with the Sensex tanking 4,390 points or 6 percent to settle at 72,079. This was the worst single-day fall in four years.

JEE Advanced results announced, Ved Lahoti tops

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Advanced results were announced on Sunday morning, with Ved Lahoti from IIT Delhi zone bagging the top rank by securing 355 out of 360 marks. According to IIT Madras, which conducted the Joint Entrance Exam (JEE)-Advanced this year, Dwija Dharmeshkumar Patel from IIT Bombay zone is the topper among female candidates with 332 marks. Her all India rank is 7.

Four among the top 10 rank-holders are from IIT Madras. The second rank has been bagged by Aditya (Delhi zone) followed by Bhogalpalli Sandesh (Madras zone) at the third position. Rhythm Kedia (IIT Roorkee zone), Putti Kushal Kumar (IIT Madras), Rajdeep Mishra (IIT Bombay zone), Koduri Tejeswar (IIT Madras zone), Dhruvi Hemant Doshi (IIT Bombay zone) and Alladabona SSDB the Sidhvik Suhas (IIT Madras zone), have bagged the subsequent ranks in that order. The maximum number of candidates have qualified from IIT Madras zone, fol-

lowed by IIT Delhi Zone and IIT Bombay zone. Among the top 500 candidates, 145 are from IIT Madras zone, followed by 136 from IIT Bombay zone and 122 from IIT Delhi zone.

A total of seven foreign candidates have qualified the exam while 179 Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) have also cleared it.

Explaining the criteria for inclusion in rank list, a senior IIT Madras official said, "The aggregate marks will be calculated as the sum of marks obtained in Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry. Candidates have to satisfy the subject-wise as well as aggregate qualifying marks to be included in a rank list."

A total of 1,80,200 candidates appeared in both papers in IIT-JEE Advanced, of which 48,248 have qualified including 7964 female candidates. JEE-Main, which is the admission test for engineering colleges across the country, is the qualifying exam for JEE-Advanced. The exam was conducted on May 26. The Joint Seat Allocation (JoSAA) counselling will begin from Monday.

After brief respite, North India set for blistering heatwave: IMD

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

After brief respite from the scorching heat, Delhi and Northern India, including Uttar Pradesh is all set to brace for blistering weather with a fresh spell of heatwave conditions forecasted by the Indian Meteorological Department (IMD). Temperatures are set to exceed 44 degree Celsius, potentially reaching 45 degree Celsius in the coming days. A yellow alert has been issued for severe heat waves by the IMD.

This comes after days of momentary relief from the scorching heat in Delhi and nearby areas, some witnessing light rainfall and thunderstorms. The IMD said "there will be a resurgence of heatwave conditions starting from Monday with these areas expected to experience temperatures exceeding 44 degrees Celsius on Monday, possibly reaching up to 45 degrees Celsius by Tuesday and Wednesday." Additionally, heat wave conditions are expected to persist over parts of East and East-Central India, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh for the next five days.

The IMD has forecast heatwave conditions very likely in isolated pockets of Punjab,



Haryana, Bihar, Jharkhand and Gangetic West Bengal during June 9 till June 13 while in Jammu division, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhanda, Delhi, West Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh heat wave will prevail during June 11 till June 13. Odisha will witness blistering hot weather from June 11 till June 13th. In contrast, heavy to very heavy rainfall is likely over Maharashtra, coastal, and northern Karnataka during the same period.

"In Southern India, particularly Maharashtra, Goa, and Karnataka, heavy rainfall is expected to continue. Thane and Palghar districts in Maharashtra have already

experienced heavy rains, leading to instances of water-logging." The IMD has issued a red alert for these areas, indicating the possibility of further heavy rainfall.

Specifically, heavy to very heavy rain with isolated extremely heavy falls are predicted over south Konkan & Goa, south Madhya Maharashtra, and Coastal & North Interior Karnataka. This dynamic weather situation underscores the importance of staying informed about local weather forecasts and taking necessary precautions to mitigate the impacts of extreme weather conditions, whether it be heat waves or heavy rainfall.

Congress takes swipe at Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi, the Congress on Sunday said he will get himself sworn-in this evening as "the leader of the Narendra Destructive Alliance (NDA)" even though he lacks all legitimacy.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "Remember May 28th, 2023? It was the day that Narendra Modi walked into the new Parliament building with the Sengol for which a August 15th 1947 history was fabricated 'to not only justify Modi's pretensions of being Samrat but also to appeal to the Tamil electorate.'" "That day itself, I had exposed Modi's fakery using archival material," he said. "We now know the outcome of that drama. The Sengol remains a respected symbol of Tamil history but the Tamil electorate and indeed India's electorate has rejected Mr. Modi's pretensions," Ramesh said.

The Congress leader claimed that Modi has suffered a huge personal, political, and moral defeat. Modi has been forced to bow to the Constitution that he has subverted in the last decade, Ramesh said. "A vastly diminished 'one-third'



Pradhan Mantri, now lacking all legitimacy, has managed to get himself sworn in this evening, as the leader of the Narendra Destructive Alliance (NDA)," he said. Modi is set to be sworn-in this evening. The dignitaries and special invitees attending the ceremony at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday evening include leaders from India's neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean Region. Though the BJP could not get a majority on its own in the recent Lok Sabha polls, the party-led National Democratic Alliance secured 293 out of 543 seats. The Congress got 99 seats in the polls. The majority mark in the lower house is 272. In another post on X, Ramesh took a swipe at Modi over his visit to Rajghat this morning.

"Aap track record dekhiye: His ideological brotherhood created such a toxic environment of hostility and hatred that it resulted in the cold-blooded murder of the Mahatma on January 30th, 1948."

"He (Modi) never pulls up his colleagues who make Nathuram Godse into some sort of a hero. He displaces Mahatma Gandhi's statue in Parliament House - not once but twice," Ramesh said. "He (Modi) falsely claims that before the Attenborough film of 1982 on him Mahatma Gandhi was not known to the world. He demolishes and destroys Gandhian institutions in Varanasi, Ahmedabad, and elsewhere. Breath-taking hypocrisy!" Ramesh said.

Will new FM support global effort for billionaire tax, asks Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Will India's new Finance Minister support the global effort for a "billionaire tax" and will the Prime Minister stand with the common people or billionaires, the Congress asked on Sunday, ahead of the swearing-in ceremony of a new government.

Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi will on Sunday take oath for a third consecutive term as prime minister, along with members of his council. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh took a swipe at the BJP-led government and asked if it has taken "too many tempes of black money" to take such a progressive step.

"This year, the one-third Pradhan Mantri has a chance to show whether it stands with the common people, or with billionaires. At the G20 in Brazil, a proposal to set a Global Minimum Tax on billionaires will be discussed, backed by finance ministers of



Brazil, France, Spain, South Africa, and Germany," the Congress general secretary said in a post on X. "Will India's next finance minister support the global effort for a 'billionaire tax'?" Or have they taken too many tempes of black money to take any such progressive step?" he asked. Ramesh claimed that all around the world, billionaires manage to pay lower

taxes than working people through legal loopholes, offshore wealth, shell companies, or other schemes.

To ensure that they pay their fair share, a proposal for a Global Minimum Tax on billionaires will be discussed at the G20 under Brazil's presidency in November 2024, he claimed.

Such a tax would raise "21 lakh crores" globally each year, providing critical funding for sectors such as health care, education, housing, and climate change, he noted. "Note also that Brazil has taken over the rotational G20 presidency without any drama, and used it not for some philosophical mumbo-jumbo but to advance meaningful policy," Ramesh said. "In contrast, 'Photo-Jeevi' Narendra Modi spent the entire presidency plastering every hoarding, school, and petrol pump in India with his face, to portray the G20 presidency as some kind of foreign-policy achievement. India's turn was pre-destined and inevitable," the Congress leader added in his post.

Major accident narrowly averted at Mumbai airport

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

A major accident was narrowly averted at Mumbai's Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport after two flights came dangerously close on the runway. A viral video shows one flight landing on the same runway from which another flight was taking off. The incident took place on Saturday, when IndiGo flight 6053, arriving from Indore's Devi Ahilyabai Holkar Airport (IDR), landed on runway 27, while Air India flight 657 was still in the process of taking off for Thiruvananthapuram International Airport (TRV). Taking a note, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has ordered a probe on an incident of an IndiGo plane landing and an Air India aircraft taking off from the same runway in less than a minute at the Mumbai airport.

The DGCA has derostered the Air Traffic Controller (ATC) who was on duty at the time of the incident on Saturday, while IndiGo has initiated a probe into the matter. A video of the incident has been making the rounds on social media in which one plane landing and



another taking off from the same runway. The DGCA, in a statement, said that the Air Traffic Control (ATC) staff involved has been derostered. It confirmed that an inbound IndiGo flight landed on Runway 27 while an Air India flight was still in the process of taking off. The DGCA has also ordered a probe into the matter to understand the circumstances that led to the breach of safety protocols. Mumbai airport is a single-runway operation with two crossing runways. On a single runway RW27 at the Mumbai airport, there are around 46 arrivals and departures per hour. IndiGo said its aircraft continued the approach and landing as per the ATC instructions.

"On June 8, IndiGo flight 6E 6053 from Indore was given landing clearance by ATC at Mumbai Airport. The Pilot in Command continued the approach and landing and followed ATC instructions," IndiGo said in a statement. At IndiGo, passenger safety is paramount to us, and we have reported the incident as per procedure. Air India, in its statement, said, "AI657 from Mumbai to Trivandrum was on take-off roll on June 8. The Air India aircraft was cleared by Air Traffic Control to enter the runway and subsequently cleared for take-off. The Air India aircraft continued with the take-off roll in accordance with laid down procedures. An investigation has been initiated by the authorities to find out more

about the clearance given to the airlines."

According to an Airports Authority of India (AAI) source, as a rule, departing aircraft have to cross the end of the runway or take a turn, only after which the ATC can issue the landing clearance for arriving aircraft.

"However, in this case, this was allegedly not followed," the source said. "Mumbai airport is one of the high-density airports, which means that the number of flight movements is high. On a single runway RW27 at the airport, there are around 46 arrivals and departures per hour," said another source. Also, Air Traffic Controllers (ATCs) are allowed to clear up to two arrivals and two departures within three min-

utes as per standard operating procedures, subject to certain conditions, according to source, who added that the separation minima between two aircraft can be reduced if the visibility is good.

"In this particular case that happened on Saturday at the Mumbai airport, the visibility was good and there was no air prox situation with respect to the landing IndiGo flight and the taking off Air India flight," said the source.

"There might have been a delay in quite fair visibility. The tower controller is allowed to reduce separation minima between two aircraft's if reasonable assurance has been established by visualising both aircraft's.

In the video it can be seen that departure has crossed V2 speed -- the speed at which the aircraft may safely climb with one engine inoperative and nosed up and on the other end of runway arrival is touching down," he explained.

ATCs are under "significant pressure" when there is high density traffic at airports with the safety of aircraft and passengers, the source said, adding that the DGCA probe will be looking at whether all norms were followed by the ATC as well as the pilots concerned.

Pandian quits active politics after BJD's defeat in Odisha

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Exactly six months and 13 days after joining politics, former bureaucrat V K Pandian on Sunday announced his withdrawal from active politics and said he would keep Odisha in the core of his heart and Guru Naveen Babu in his breath.

In a video message, Pandian said his only intention to join politics was to assist Naveen Patnaik, which is why he did not contest in the 2024 elections.

He also apologised to the people and BJD leaders and workers if they held him responsible for the electoral loss. "My intent in joining politics was only to assist Naveen Babu, and now I consciously decide to withdraw from active politics. I am sorry if I have hurt anyone on this journey. I am sorry if this campaign narrative against me played a part in BJD's loss," Pandian said.

During the campaign, Pandian had asserted that he would quit politics if party president Patnaik did not become the chief minister of Odisha for the sixth consecutive time after the assembly elections.

"You (BJP) say there is a BJP wave and a wave for change in Odisha, but I strongly say if the chief minister (Patnaik) does not become CM again, I will take 'sanyas' from politics," Pandian had



declared at a rally in Brajrajnagar, Jharsuguda district.

Defending his close aide, BJD president Naveen Patnaik on Saturday termed the ongoing criticisms against Pandian as "unfortunate" and "praised him for doing an 'excellent job'."

Patnaik also clarified that Pandian was not his successor. "There has been some criticism of Pandian. This is unfortunate. He joined the party and has not held any post. He did not contest the elections from any constituency. I have always clearly said when asked about my successor that it is not Pandian. I repeat again that the people of Odisha will

decide my successor." Announcing his decision, Pandian expressed his apologies to the entire Biju Parivar, including all the workers, and conveyed his heartfelt gratitude to the lakhs of BJD members with whom he was associated. "I will always keep Odisha in the core of my heart and my Guru Naveen Babu in my breath and pray to Lord Jagannath for their well-being and prosperity," Pandian said. Reflecting on his background, Pandian mentioned that he came from a humble family and a small village, and his childhood dream was to join the IAS and serve the people, which Lord Jagannath made possible.

Swearing-in ceremony of first BJP Government in Odisha on June 12

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The swearing-in ceremony for the first BJP government in Odisha has been rescheduled from June 10 to June 12, party leaders Jatin Mohanty and Vijaypal Singh Tomar confirmed here on Sunday. Mohanty explained that the postponement was due to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitments. Modi will be busy with his own swearing-in ceremony on Sunday and meeting party MPs the following day. Additionally, the first legislature party meeting of the newly elected members is now set for June 11. During the election campaign, Modi had said Odisha's first BJP government would be sworn in on June 10. BJP state

He also explained that he came to Odisha because his wife is from Kendrapara. "From the day I set foot on the soil of Odisha, I have received immense love and affection from the people... From Dharamgarh to Rourkela to Mayurbhanj to Ganjam. I have tried to work very hard for the people," he recalled. Speaking about his entry into

president Manmohan Samal had also confirmed this on Saturday.

However, the decision to change the date was taken on Sunday, party sources said.

Meanwhile, suspense still remains over the new chief minister. Senior BJP leader and newly elected MLA Suresh Pujari rushed to New Delhi, triggering speculation that he may be among the main contenders for the top post, sources said. Pujari, who was elected to the Lok Sabha from Bargarh in the 2019 polls, won the recent election from Brajarajnagar assembly constituency. His supporters believe he was called to New Delhi for discussions with central leaders.

the power corridor, Pandian noted that 12 years ago, he joined the chief minister's office (CMO). "It was an honour to work for Naveen Patnaik. The experience and learning I had from him are for a lifetime. His grace, leadership, ethics, and above all, his love for the people of Odisha always inspired me," the former IAS officer said.

Andhra polls shake up political families, cause estrangement

PTI ■ AMARAVATI

Besides leaving a trail of violence at a number of places, the fiercely fought simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh has shaken up a string of political families resulting in discord and estrangement. Siblings took on each other, a son contested against his minister-father while a determined wife was cajoled to stop competing against her husband at the last moment, among others.

In this battle of blood relatives, YSRCP chief and outgoing Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy faced a real challenge from his sister, Andhra Pradesh Congress chief Y S Sharmila who emerged as a 'thorn in the flesh' for him. After experimenting with politics in Telangana through the YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) and merging it with Congress, Sharmila took over the reins of the grand old party in Andhra Pradesh to target her brother on a daily basis, accompanied several times by her cousin Suneetha Narreddy.

"Jagan is not the successor of YSR (Y S Rajasekhara Reddy) at all. There is no similarity between the regimes led by YSR and Jagan... Jagan's reign is marked by murderous politics," said Sharmila at Mydukuru in Kadapa district on April 8.

As Congress candidate for Kadapa Lok Sabha constituency, Sharmila took on



her cousin Y S Avinash Reddy from YSRCP, who is an accused in the Vivekananda Reddy's murder case. Though she lost, Sharmila, garnered more than 1.4 lakh votes and managed to inflict electoral damage on Avinash Reddy, who won by a margin of 62,695 votes.

Avinash Reddy had the full backing of Jagan Mohan Reddy who said people of Kadapa 'know who killed' his uncle Vivekananda Reddy. A 'conspiracy' has been hatched to 'destroy' the life of Avinash Reddy and alleged that his younger sisters Sharmila and Narreddy are a 'part' of it. Ditching Jagan Mohan Reddy backed Avinash Reddy, Y S Vijayamma, Rajasekhara Reddy's wife and the mother of the siblings backed her daughter Sharmila, urging the Kadapa Lok Sabha electorate to vote for her daughter.

Similarly, the Vijayawada Lok Sabha constituency saw a battle

between brothers, K Srinivas and K Sivanath. Srinivas, a transport tycoon-turned-politician from the YSRCP took on his younger brother Sivanath from the TDP. Srinivas (58), the older brother, was a key TDP leader until some months ago but differences with party leaders compelled him to jump ship to YSRCP in January. Eventually, his gamble didn't pay off and Srinivas lost the battle to Sivanath, who won with a thumping margin of over 2.82 lakh votes, garnering 7,94,154 votes in total.

In north Andhra region, Duvvada Vani, wife of YSRCP's Tekkali Assembly segment candidate Duvvada Srinivas, for several reasons, almost came close to competing against her husband. At the last moment, senior party leaders successfully persuaded her against doing it. Likewise, B Ravi Kumar, son of YSRCP Anakapalli Lok Sabha candidate and deputy chief minister B Mutyala Naidu contested as an independent from Madugula Assembly seat against his step-sister E Anuradha and all the three family members lost their elections.

Another fallout was violence at many places that went to the extent of even ordinary people, who owed allegiance to TDP and YSRCP leaders assaulting each other in a number of places. Palnadu, Tirupati and Anantapur districts became notorious for such attacks.

Situation tense but under control in violence hit Manipur's Jiribam

PTI ■ IMPHAL

The situation in Manipur's Jiribam district remained "tense" but "under control" on Sunday, after suspected militants torched two police outposts and at least 70 houses in a fresh bout of violence in the state, police said. Additional security forces have been deployed in the affected areas following the incident on Saturday, they said.

"The situation is tense but under control in the wake of violent disturbances that broke out in Jiribam district in which miscreants torched two police pickets, a forest beat office... And several houses belonging to both Meitei and Kuki communities," the Manipur Police said in a statement.



More than 70 houses were set on fire in Lamtai Khunou, Dibong Khunou, Nunkhal and Begra villages, a senior police officer said. "Police is also actively

monitoring social media updates, which may incite communal feelings amongst the communities and requests general public to refrain from spreading

unfounded/unverified information," it said.

Violence broke out in Jiribam in the ethnic strife-torn state on Thursday evening, after suspected militants killed a 59-year-old man.

The person, identified as Soibam Saratkumar Singh, went missing after he had gone to his farm on June 6 and later, his body was found with wounds made by a sharp object, an official had said. Meanwhile, an irate mob stopped a truck at Sorok Atingbi Khunou late on Saturday and reportedly torched essential commodities it was carrying, a police officer said.

A contingent of more than 70 state police commandos was airlifted from Imphal to

Jiribam to assist security personnel in their operations against militants, he said.

Around 239 Meitei people, mostly women and children, have been evacuated from peripheral areas of Jiribam on Friday, and moved to a newly set up relief camp at a multi-sports complex in the district, officials added.

The state government has also transferred Jiribam SP A Ghanashyam Sharma to the post of additional director of the Manipur Police Training College, according to an order issued by the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms. The transfer order was issued hours after police outposts of Jiri Mukh and Choto Bekra, and the Goakhal forest beat office were set after on Saturday

morning, they said.

Reacting to the incidents of fresh violence, newly elected Congress MP from the Inner Manipur Lok Sabha seat, Angomcha Bimol Akoiyam, urged the Manipur government to protect the lives and properties of the people of Jiribam.

Jiribam, which has a diverse ethnic composition of Meiteis, Muslims, Nagas, Kukis and non-Manipuris, had so far remained unaffected by the ethnic strife that has been raging in the northeastern state since May last year.

The ethnic conflict between Imphal valley-based Meiteis and hill-based Kukis has led to the deaths of over 200 people, and rendered thousands of people homeless.

BJP's LS poll victory, State liquor policy row to dominate Kerala Assembly session

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

The 28-day Kerala Legislative Assembly session, set to commence on Monday, is expected to be stormy as the opposition Congress-led UDF is likely to target the Left government in the state over a host of issues ranging from the recent liquor policy row to its humiliating defeat in the Lok Sabha polls.

The House is being convened for the first time after the announcement of the results of the April 26 Lok Sabha polls, in which the UDF won 18 seats and the ruling LDF and the BJP

one each.

While the UDF MLAs would attend the session with regained confidence and strength following their historic success in the general elections, the legislators of the CPI (M)-led LDF would struggle to find political narratives to defend their mass drubbing. Armed with the poll victory, the UDF MLAs will look to sharpen their attack in the Assembly against the Marxist party, especially against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan, who had criticised Congress leader Rahul Gandhi throughout the election campaign.

Bengal CID quizzes key suspect in Bangladesh MP murder case

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The West Bengal CID on Sunday recovered parts of human bones near a canal in South 24 Parganas district, during a search operation in connection with its probe into the murder of Bangladesh MP Anwarul Azim Anar, a senior official said.

The specimen was found on the south-eastern bank of Bagjola canal in Bhangar's Krishnamati village, following the interrogation of Mohammad Siyam Hussain, a key suspect in the case who was arrested by the Nepal Police and extradited to India, he said.

"The bone parts appear to be of a human being as suggested by medical officers and forensic experts who were present when these were recovered," the CID officer said. It has lodged a suo moto case in this regard at the Bijoyganj Bazar Police Station, he said. The bone parts will soon be sent for forensic examination.

"Search is underway to trace other body parts of the Bangladeshi politician," the officer said. Sleuths of the CID had earlier recovered pieces of flesh, weighing around 3.5 kg, from the septic tank of a flat in New Town area where the MP was last seen on May 12. The daughter of the Bangladesh MP is likely to arrive in Kolkata next week

to take part in a DNA test in connection with the recovery of the bones and flesh pieces, the CID officer said.

A key suspect in the case, Hussain was arrested by the Nepal Police and extradited to India on Friday.

He was also taken to the New Town flat on Sunday to assist the CID in tracing the body parts of the Bangladesh MP, and the tools used to commit the crime.

Hussain was brought to West Bengal on Saturday evening and sent to 14-day custody of the CID by a local court in Barasat in North 24 Parganas district.

An initial probe had revealed that the MP's close friend Akhtaruzzaman, a US citizen, paid around Rs 5 crore to those involved in the crime.

Circumstantial evidence indicated that the Awami League leader was first strangled and killed after which his body was chopped into pieces, police claimed. Efforts to locate the missing MP, who reportedly arrived in Kolkata on May 12 for medical treatment, have been underway since Gopal Biswas, a resident of Baranagar in north Kolkata and an acquaintance of the Bangladeshi politician, filed a complaint with the local police on May 18.

Modi has given me an opportunity: JD(S) leader Kumaraswamy

PTI ■ BENGALURU

JD(S) leader H D Kumaraswamy on Sunday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given him an opportunity to serve as a Minister in the new Cabinet that will be sworn-in this evening, and credited the people of "Kannada Naadu" for it.

While maintaining that he has not placed a demand for any portfolio, the former Chief Minister reiterated his desire to be the Agriculture Minister.

"Under Narendra Modi's leadership a decision has been made, after discussion with BJP national President (JP Nadda), Home Minister (Amit Shah)

and Defence Minister (Rajnath Singh). They have identified me and given me an opportunity. The entire credit for this has to go to people of Kannada Naadu in my opinion," Kumaraswamy said. Addressing reporters in New Delhi, he said his intention was to serve the people of the country and the state honestly, using the opportunity.

"To implement Narendra Modi's vision I want to work honestly and thereby bring a good name to him and to our state. This is my resolve." The son of JD(S) patriarch H D Deve Gowda has made no secret of his desire to become the Agriculture Minister, and has repeatedly expressed it



before and after the polls. By winning the Mandya Lok Sabha seat, the former CM has not only managed to regain the JD(S)' lost bastion, but has also

successfully managed to retrieve his party's lost political relevance in Karnataka, by allying with the BJP. Kumaraswamy defeated

Venkataramane Gowda (also known as Star Chandru) of the Congress by a margin of 2,84,620 votes. Noting that he has left it to the PM to decide and has made no demand for any portfolio, Kumaraswamy while replying to a question, said, "If I get it, I will be happy, because I've been interested in Agriculture since beginning."

"The Prime Minister has reposed faith in me, he has respect towards my father. I'm not interested in making money. Under Modi's leadership, I want to stay among people. I want to connect with people to resolve their issues, if I get such a portfolio, it will help me to serve as a Minister better," he

said. Kumaraswamy asserted that JD(S) performance in the Lok Sabha polls and his win is a "revival" for the party. "Narendra Modi's leadership and Kannadigas have given me and my party a revival. Kannadigas have accepted the BJP-JD(S) alliance and have given me the strength. I thank the people of the state, especially voters of Mandya and Bangalore Rural segments," he said. Citing health reasons for his father Deve Gowda's inability to travel to Delhi, Kumaraswamy said if he is able to successfully work and stay good to the faith that the people have reposed in him, he will be "happy".

Heavy rain lashes Mumbai, other districts; road cave-in hits traffic on Ahmedabad bound highway

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai and its neighbouring areas received heavy rains in the last 24 hours, bringing down the mercury and providing relief to residents from the hot and humid weather, officials said on Sunday.

Due to the heavy showers, a part of the road in neighbouring Palghar district of Maharashtra caved-in, affecting traffic movement on the busy Mumbai-Ahmedabad highway for more than four hours on Sunday morning, they said. Repair works, including of a pipeline, were in progress when a portion of the road in Maljipada area of Palghar caved-in due to heavy rains,

an official from the police control room said.

Traffic came to a standstill and movement on both sides of the road was disrupted, he said.

Some people held up in the traffic jam since 5.30 am on Sunday claimed no agency was attending to the problem. Various other districts of Maharashtra, including Thane, Nashik, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar, Ahmednagar, Satara and Jalgaon, also received good showers in the last one day. In the 24-hour period ending at 8.30 am on Sunday, Mumbai received more than 60 mm of rainfall. The Colaba observatory, situated in south Mumbai where most of the state

government's administrative offices are located, recorded 67 mm rainfall, while the Santacruz observatory, near the Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj International Airport, recorded 64 mm downpour in the same period, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

The Colaba observatory recorded a maximum temperature of 34.8 degrees Celsius, 1.1 degrees higher than normal, while the minimum temperature was 24.3 degrees Celsius, 2.9 degrees lower than normal, it said.

A drop in the minimum temperature indicates nights getting cooler. The Santacruz observatory

recorded a maximum temperature of 36.4 degrees Celsius, 1.6 degrees more than normal, while the minimum temperature was 25.5 degrees Celsius, 1.9 degrees less than normal, as per the IMD.

Some of the agriculturally important districts like Satara recorded 91 mm rain in the last one day, Nashik 64 mm, Ahmednagar 57 mm, Chhatrapati Sambhajnagar 51 mm and Jalgaon 41 mm, according to an IMD report. Thane and Palghar districts also witnessed heavy rains overnight, leading to water-logging in some areas, officials said on Sunday. There were reports of tree branches falling in some areas of Thane city, they said.

Sadhus reach Jammu ahead of annual Amarnath yatra

PTI ■ JAMMU

The famous Ram Mandir in the old city reverberates with chants in praise of Lord Shiva as Sadhus from across the country have started reaching here to take part in the annual yatra to the holy cave shrine of Amarnath in the south Kashmir Himalayas. The 52-day pilgrimage will commence from the twin tracks — the traditional 48 km Nunwan-Pahalgam route in Anantnag and the 14 km shorter but steep Baltal route in Ganderbal — on June 29. A day ahead, the first batch of pilgrims will leave Jammu's Bhagwati Nagar base camp and Ram Mandir for the valley.

The shrine houses the naturally formed ice-shivlingam and over 4.5 lakh pilgrims paid their obeisance at the 3,880 meter high shrine last year. Ram Mandir in the Purani Mandi area of Jammu, the city of temples, hosts the Sadhus and Sadhvis at its sprawling complex with the government departments lending their support to ensure various facilities including on-the-spot registration for yatra for the visitors.

The temple head Mahant Rameshwar Dass said all necessary arrangements including the round-the-clock free community kitchen service and medical facilities are in place for the Sadhus, expressing confidence in a trouble-free yatra.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Parched Capital

The water crisis in Delhi shows no signs of abating, the SC's directions to Haryana notwithstanding

The water situation in the Capital has gone worse due to Haryana's and Himachal Pradesh's refusal to supply water to Delhi, especially during these sweltering months. The issue is especially vexed since a major amount of Delhi's water supply comes from these nearby States, affecting millions of people and several industries in the NCR. The Yamuna provides Delhi with most of its water, and Haryana is an important supplier via the Western Yamuna Canal. Himachal Pradesh, for its part, makes an indirect contribution to the river through its tributaries. The significance of upholding the current water-sharing arrangements among States has been emphasised and reiterated by the Supreme Court, the latest instance being less than a week old. This entails making certain that Himachal Pradesh and Haryana provide Delhi with the agreed-upon amounts of water, particularly during the hot summer months when the demand soars. The Supreme Court last week allowed Himachal Pradesh



to release 137 surplus cusecs and directed the Haryana Government to facilitate this flow through Hathnikund barrage to Wazirabad uninterruptedly to Delhi to mitigate the drinking water crisis there. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP has demanded a special session of the Assembly to discuss the poor water situation. The move would help the issue receive quick and widespread attention, guaranteeing that legislators and bureaucrats give it top priority and move more quickly as a result of this urgency.

With almost 35 million people in Delhi as of 2023, there is every year major shortage of water as supplies from Himachal Pradesh and Haryana dwindle.

The Delhi Jal Board, the city's water provider, finds it difficult to maintain steady supply levels, which frequently results in water shortages and rationing. Both wealthy and low-income households face severe inconveniences because water is available only a few hours a day. The residents are forced to depend on costly, unhygienic and erratic private water tankers. Public health hazards are made worse by this water problem. The possibility of water-borne illnesses rises when there is insufficient water available, which affects hygiene standards. The city's healthcare system may be further taxed by outbreaks of cholera, dysentery and typhoid brought on by poor sanitation. To redress Delhi's water scarcity issue, a multipronged response is needed to be put into place as a standard operating procedure. It is imperative that States stick to legal agreements and cooperate more with one another. Requirements for water infrastructure, such as treatment facilities and reservoirs, can be lessened with investment. Furthermore, encouraging water-saving behaviors and enhancing wastewater recycling might lessen the demand on the available water resources. To improve groundwater recharge, long-term initiatives should also involve rainwater gathering and the revitalisation of nearby water bodies.

PICTALK



A newly inducted officer with his wife after the Passing Out Parade at the IMA, in Dehradun

Major losses for BJP, coalitions re-emerge

The recent elections in India show the BJP's struggle due to divisive talk and policies, highlighting the importance of diverse coalitions



SHIVAJI SARKAR

Coalitions naturally suit this diverse country, allowing all voices to be heard and leaving no room for hatred. The BJP's overemphasis on religion, anti-Muslim rhetoric and offensive language has backfired. The Lok Sabha's composition has shifted significantly for three States of Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Maharashtra. In Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra, where the BJP excelled in 2019, it now faces significant setbacks. In West Bengal, it sank to 11 seats enduring conflicts with TMC workers even on polling day, the BJP's position has weakened. Democracy survives in this country because of the innate wisdom of the ordinary common people. The Samajwadi Party with 37 seats have emerged as the largest party. Along with six by its Congress ally, total UP tally is 43 for INDIA. The BJP which aimed at winning 80, is satisfied with a mere 34 with many of its central and State ministers losing. Voters in areas around Ayodhya have done the unthinkable. They voted against excesses for Ram temple construction by acquiring 64-acre extra land for the temple, demolishing thousands of houses, shops, temples and structures with impunity. Many homes and shops were demolished for the Ram Path in Ayodhya, leaving people questioning why the BJP Government chose to do so. Some wonder why the Government is involved in temple construction. Similar concerns arose in Varanasi, where PM Modi faced a close contest despite winning decisively in 2019.

Even Sitapur connected to Sita, not far off Ayodhya, elected an unknown Congressman Rakesh Rathor. All these places had voted with vengeance against the highhandedness they suffered. Ganga remains as dirty as it was ten years before in Banaras. But the temple town which had varied temples of Shiv, Ganesh and other mandirs of several deities was razed for a beautification corridor that the locals never wanted. Even the main Vishwanath temple was not spared. It had images of other deities; they were all demolished to give it a new look. These



5000 temples and shops were the family livelihoods. They never expected to suffer from a Hindu party. Even a Muslim ruler did not do it.

Asked if they were acting like Aurangzeb, some senior BJP leaders replied

"he was the ruler then, now we are and would do whatever we can". The electorate did what they could. Chitrakoot and Vindhyachal repeated it vengefully for similar "beautifying corridors".

The Ram mandir had limited influence. Allahabad, the city named after Vaivaswat Manu's daughter Eela, from where Ram walked to Chitrakoot today is in a sorry State. For no rhyme or reason Eelabhad name was changed. Over 100-year-old houses were razed or partially demolished to create roads for toll or Kumbh Mela. Arbitrary actions have given the city a devaStated look. The BJP leaders told citizens, "Modiji ne kaha hai to hoga hi" - that was the guarantee.

Most demolition agents were related to one or the other BJP leaders or their friends in a distant western State.

The issue of Ram historically had never helped the BJP. In 1989, when BJP was agitating for shilanyas, it lost the UP State assembly elections. In 1992, when they demolished the temple structure as Hindus called it since 1949, which the BJP called a disputed structure, the BJP lost power for the next six years. As of now through

a judgment based on continued occupation of a premises, the temple is coming up, the Pran Pratistha of not bal (infant) Ram but a balak (child) Ram is not taken kindly by Ayodhya residents.

Residents in Ayodhya face confinement during celebrations, worrying about the missing infant Ram image. Locals resent security measures affecting their livelihoods. Temple visits are like airport security, requiring a long walk and Aadhaar. Footfall dwindles; people yearn for the original idol. Will the new one satisfy them?

Kalighat takeover

Even before the polls began, observers assessed severe losses for the BJP in West Bengal for unemployment, rapid price rises, agniveer and other issues. This was added by the frictions within the BJP fold. The BJP leaders were fighting more against themselves than with Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool. It was not an easy challenge for Mamata Banerjee, to protect Bengali pride. She effectively did it launching her campaign for BJP-humiliated Mohua Maitra from Krishnanagar. The BJP tried to turn it into a VIP constituency by pitting an unknown Rajmata of Krishnanagar royal family of Maharaja Krishnachandra Roy. The Krishnanagar ploy not only did not work, it also became Waterloo for BJP. Its tally came down from 18 to 11. Many ministers like Subhash

Sarkar, former State party chief Dilip Ghosh, Sandeshkhali supposed rape victim Rekha Patr lost at the hustings.

Sandeshkhali was hyped up. It was busted by Mamata as fake and people believed her.

The famous Kalighat temple, supposedly one of the 51 shakti peethas also became a poll issue. A business house from Ahmedabad has reportedly illegally taken it over. It hurts the Bengali psyche.

Maharashtra was another Waterloo where the Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thakre) emerged as the real Sena. Along with Uddhav, Sharad Pawar and the Congress, the opposition won 30 of the 48 seats. While BJP had to cut a sorry figure, Maharashtrians have proved that Uddhav Thakre's is the real party. Even Muslims in large numbers did not mind voting Uddhav and Shiv Sena (UT) voted for the Congress. Their vote was against betrayal by the elected leaders Eknath Shinde, Ajit Pawar and BJP which rocked the BJP-Sena alliance.

The recent polls prove that hatred, name calling and below the belt Statements by the mighty have no place in electoral fray. Nobody is an enemy. They are just rivals. In a democracy there is no authoritarian leader. All are equal. It also proves that coalition is more natural in this country than a one-party rule.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)



THE RECENT POLLS PROVE THAT HATRED, NAME-CALLING AND BELOW-THE-BELT STATEMENTS BY THE MIGHTY HAVE NO PLACE WHILE IN ELECTORAL FRAY. NOBODY IS AN ENEMY. THEY ARE JUST RIVALS

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MILK PRICES IMPACT HEALTH, TOO

Madam — Apropos the news story "Soaring milk prices may hit affordability, health," published on June 8, this is my response. As a daily newspaper reader, I'm struck by the paradox of India being a global leader in milk production yet facing rising milk prices, which threatens the affordability of this essential nutrition for many. With whole milk prices around Rs. 66 a litre, the common man's ability to provide nutritious milk for their family is at risk. Despite India's rich dairy heritage, the increasing cost could impinge on public health, underscoring the need to address the reasons behind these price hikes.

It's also concerning that while milk production is booming, with an impressive output of 231 million metric tonnes in 2023, 60 per cent of it still comes from the unorganised sector. This sector might struggle as urban consumers lean towards packaged milk from organised dairies. However, these packaged products often contain preservatives that pose health risks, raising questions about their safety. As we mark Milk Day, it's crucial to ensure milk remains accessible and safe for everyone, maintaining its status as a staple in our diet.

Kiara Rao | Mumbai

URGENT INVASIVE SPECIES CRISIS

Madam — Apropos the news story "Invasive species threaten Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary," published on June 9, this is my response. As a daily reader of the newspaper, the ongoing situation at Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS) is profoundly concerning. Invasive species like Senna spectabilis are transforming this once-thriving biodiversity hotspot into a monoculture. The rapid spread of these species has overwhelmed local flora, disrupted the food chain and contributed to a decline in native wildlife, including tigers and elephants. The Asian elephant's role in dispersing Senna seeds through its dung exemplifies how interconnected and delicate

Excitement for T20 clash



Apropos the news story "India Vs Pakistan: Spotlight on NY pitch as steady India take on wounded Pakistan," published on June 8, this is my response. As a regular reader of cricket news, I'm eagerly awaiting the high-stakes T20 World Cup clash between India and Pakistan this Sunday. India's confidence contrasts sharply with Pakistan's recent struggles,

these ecosystems are. The forest department's 1986 decision to plant Senna, although well-intentioned, highlights the importance of thoroughly assessing ecological impacts before introducing new species. The Forest Department's efforts to control Senna are commendable but face significant challenges. Sustainable strategies and community involvement are crucial to restoring Wayanad's ecological balance. This situation serves as a stark reminder of how invasive species can cascade into widespread ecological and economic crises, urging us to approach conservation with greater caution and urgency.

Aditya Gupta | Mysore

SLEEP EARLY, STAY HEALTHY

Madam — Apropos the news story "Nightbirds, hit the sack early for mental health, longevity," published on June 9, this is my response. As someone who peruses the newspaper daily, I find the new study by Stanford Medicine quite enlightening. Grandma's advice about early bedtimes holds more weight than

highlighted by their shocking defeat to the USA. The newly constructed Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, with its unpredictable pitch, adds an intriguing layer to the matchup.

The pitch's uneven bounce has been a major talking point, raising both safety concerns and doubts about its suitability for high-scoring games. Rohit Sharma's injury and his cautious remarks post-Ireland match underline the uncertainty. Pakistan's limited preparation time at the venue could be a significant disadvantage. However, their unpredictability, especially their formidable bowling led by Shaheen Afridi, keeps the contest balanced. India's strategy, possibly including the in-form Kuldeep Yadav, adds another dimension. This game promises to be a fascinating blend of skill, strategy and unpredictability, making it a must-watch event.

Dhruv Chatterjee | Varanasi

ever, transcending our natural sleep preferences, or chronotypes. The research, involving nearly 74,000 adults, reveals that late-night wakefulness correlates with higher rates of mental health disorders, such as depression and anxiety, regardless of being a night owl or a morning person.

The study's unexpected findings challenge the long-held belief that aligning sleep schedules with one's chronotype is key for mental well-being. Instead, the timing of sleep itself is crucial. Those who go to bed early exhibit better mental health outcomes. This discovery emphasises the importance of sleep hygiene and the potential benefits of adopting an earlier bedtime for everyone. Despite the difficulty in altering one's chronotype, strategies like morning sunlight exposure and consistent routines might aid in improving sleep patterns and, subsequently, mental health.

Aarush Mehta | Agra

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Protecting health through food safety

Food fuels our health. Its quality influences, and aggravates, chronic diseases such as heart issues, diabetes, obesity and some cancer types

Food is an essential component of our life. The quality of food one consumes plays a significant role in developing and managing chronic diseases. Many chronic conditions, such as heart disease, diabetes, obesity and certain types of cancer, are closely linked to diet and nutrition. Unfortunately, the public rarely looks into the quality of food one consumes. We can see the mushrooming of street food stalls across the nook and corner of the country, sans any hygiene or quality. Even the food items we procure from supermarkets do not guarantee quality. In many cases, there would be a mismatch between what is mentioned on the label and actual ingredients. Even enforcement agencies rarely check the quality of foods served by the vendors.

Food safety is crucial for maintaining public health, preventing foodborne illnesses and ensuring the economic stability of the food industry. These diseases are caused by consuming food or beverages contaminated with harmful microorganisms (bacteria, fungi, parasites) or



toxins. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 600 million people fall ill after consuming contaminated food each year, leading to 420,000 deaths. These figures underscore the severe health implications of unsafe food. Foodborne illnesses can cause long-term health problems, including kidney failure, chronic arthritis, brain and nerve damage and death. This year's World Food Safety Day theme, "Prepare for the Unexpected", underscores the importance of proactive measures in maintaining food safety amidst various unforeseen challenges. The need for robust and adaptive food safety measures is of prime importance in the current scenario, where new pathogens are evolving and new toxic additives are added to foods to make money. Earlier, every food item had

a local flavour available in a particular place and in a specific shop. Since the production level was minimal, the manufacturers had control over the quality and safety of their food products. Unfortunately, the globalization of the food supply chain has increased the complexity of ensuring food safety. Food products often travel long distances and pass through numerous intermediaries before reaching consumers. This extended supply chain makes it challenging to trace the source of contamination and implement consistent safety standards. Reliance on technology in food production and safety monitoring introduces risks related to technological failures. For instance, breakdowns in refrigeration systems can lead to spoilage, while contamination in automated processing lines can spread quickly if not detected. Bioterrorism, or the intentional contamination of food supplies, is a potential but severe threat. Members of the Rajneeshee (Osho) cult contaminated salad bars in Oregon with Salmonella, sickening 751 people. The quality

standards should be fixed not on a nation's stature but based on its consumable stature. The quality of food products available in the Indian markets and overseas has a wide gap. Harmonizing standards globally can help address disparities in food safety practices across countries. There should also be active collaboration between agencies like WHO and FAO in evolving strategies to combat foodborne diseases and health issues. Enforcement agencies should embrace tech advancements like blockchain for better food traceability and IoT sensors for real-time monitoring of storage conditions. Keeping food safe demands constant innovation and vigilance. As our global food system continues to grow and change, so must our approaches to ensuring its safety. Preparing for the unexpected in food safety is not just a reactive measure but a proactive commitment to safeguarding the well-being of all humanity.

(The is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bengaluru; views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN



FIRST COLUMN FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE OUR ATTITUDES

Fear and affection stem from experiences shaping human thoughts and emotions



RAVI VALLURI

The Mahabharata is one of the greatest epics essayed in the sub-continent, perhaps in the world. It is believed to have been recited by the sage Veda Vyasa with Lord Ganesha himself playing the role of meticulous scribe.

The saga captures variegated attitudes and heterogeneous characteristics of humans in both the gross and subtle form. Human attitudes and standpoints emerge in all shades of the spectrum, rather than in simple black, white and grey.

Attitude is all

Lord Krishna, an avatar of Lord Vishnu decides to test the waters and mollify the ego, arrogance and anger of the Kaurava scion- Duryodhana. Social influences, overwrought emotions and environmental factors impinge upon human minds. Consequently, individual behavioural patterns become complex and often antipathetic in nature. The mind gets filled with cobwebs and nugatory thoughts and human attitudes towards self and others become ossified.

Duryodhana's mind was prejudiced against his cousins and this attitude was fuelled by his scheming uncle Shakuni, sibling Dushasana and bosom friend and fabled archer, Karna. History is replete with examples of such discriminatory practices. The genocide committed by the Nazis in Germany against the hapless Jewish populace is a singular and extreme example of how prejudice leads to hatred, discrimination and mass extermination of sections of people and humanity.



Compassion: an efficacious attitude

Aeons ago an estimable Zen Master assembled several monks and novices for vigorous sessions of meditation. During one of these sessions a tutee was caught stealing by his colleagues. The unity was produced before the Zen Master and all those present demanded that he be expelled from the Temple of Knowledge as an exemplary punishment. The Zen Master ignored the entreaties of the monks.

Once again, the pupil was caught stealing. This angered the assembly of monks who demanded that the culprit recompense the losses he caused so that it had a salutary influence on all the inhabitants of the monastery. The Zen Master, after deep thought, forgave the troubled student, causing dismay among others. He believed the student lacked moral clarity while others had evolved through meditation. "I can't abandon him," the Master said. Touched, the student vowed to change, shedding his thieving ways to become a better person.

The consideration and compassion displayed by the Master was singularly responsible for this change. Psychologists opine that the inclination and slant of humans is immovably wedged in by certain predominant factors like the actor-observer effect arousal by various stimuli, attribution, balance maintained in day-to-day operations.

Likewise, the Zen tutee was overwhelmed by the tenderness and benevolence shown by the Master and he mutated into a better human being by eschewing the act of surreptitious pilferage.

Essentially human beings are social creatures and need to interact with and relate to others. This in turn shapes their attitudes and behavioural patterns. Individual attitudes evolve through a continuous learning process. Xenophobia and fondness are a result of various occurrences and their influence on the human mind. Impression formation takes place in a systematic manner and is exhibited as decent or indecent behaviour. The illustrious American business honcho, Harold S Geneen was to famously say, "Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitudes and in action."

(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 are personal)

Uncertainty prevails after Lok Sabha polls



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

Congress, with its allies, gains strength as Opposition. Modi adapts to a new landscape, reliant on diverse regional satraps for support

The dust has settled and the performers are back in their homes as the great election carnival has come to an end. What pervades all over India is a sense of uncertainty and indecisiveness. No political parties have an absolute majority of their own to form the Government though the National Democratic Alliance (also termed as Non Dependable Allies) has nearly 300 MPs, 27 more than the halfway mark. Though the Congress, the main player in the opposition, could not touch the three digit mark, together with its allies, the party has emerged as a striking force.

While reporting about the Bharat Jodo Yatra undertaken by Rahul Gandhi, The Pioneer had forecast that it was going to be the gamechanger of national politics. The question is whether Rahul could maintain the initial enthusiasm generated by the Yatra. He was handicapped by the absence of a team of leaders who could rise up to his expectations. Better luck next time.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not his normal self when addressed the party cadre on the day results were announced. Something was missing from his hitherto confident voice and the speech failed to inspire the party ranks, a rare incident in his decade long avatar as Prime Minister. This is not Narendra Modi who is familiar to the electorate. Modi had made a grant entry to New Delhi in 2014 after winning the Lok Sabha election. He had 282 seats of his own and 336 with the support of his alliance partners. The people offered India on a platter to Modi in the 2019 election despite the sustained campaign by a section of the New Delhi media. The BJP on its own won 303 seats while the NDA had 353 seats which made Narendra Modi the monarch of all he surveyed.

But 2024 turned out to be an entirely different scenario. The charismatic, uncompromising and powerful Modi is at the mercy of two regional satraps with national ambitions, Nitish Kumar of JD(U) and Chandrababu Naidu of TDP. Even before the NDA held its first meeting, Kumar and Naidu had put forward a set of demands including conducting the caste census and scrapping the Agriweaver Scheme. Equally important is the opposition of these two leaders to the Uniform Civil Code, a dream project of Modi as well as BJP. These are in addition to Naidu's demand for the post of Speaker and four or five berths in the union cabinet. Nitish too has demanded an equal number of berths in the cabinet and that too with the coveted ministries like Railways, Agriculture and Rural Development.

Cut to 2014 when Narendra Modi led the Lok Sabha election campaign for the first time. Television images aired pictures of a sheepish Chandrababu Naidu walking behind Modi throughout the campaign yatra in Andhra Pradesh. Within two or three years, Naidu walked out of the NDA, cursing and abusing Modi. His ire was directed against the Prime Minister's refusal to accord Special Category Status to Andhra Pradesh. He walked over to the Congress camp and declared that his mission was to oust Narendra Modi from the post of Prime Minister as well India. Some media even reported that Naidu is a strong contender for the top post of the country. But the 2019 assembly election shattered Naidu's dreams. Jagan Mohan Reddy, leader of YSR Congress, demolished Naidu in the assembly election with a massive win and was sworn in as chief minister. As part of his



objective of finishing TDP once and for ever, Reddy launched a thorough probe into the charges of corruption against Naidu, his family and friends. Three years ago, Naidu's six-year old grandson Devansh had assets worth Rs 19.55 crore and there was nothing abnormal in an investigation by the Income Tax officials. Naidu faces a series of corruption charges for which he was arrested and imprisoned for months by the Jagan Mohan Reddy Government. When it was time for the 2024 assembly election, Naidu felt the need of support and that was how he cast his lot with BJP and Modi, till then his bete noir. Having got more than what he aspired for, Naidu has set his eyes on the chair of the Prime Minister. We cannot expect anything better from a person who stabbed his father-in-law N T Rama Rao, the founder of the TDP and usurped the proprietorship of the party.



THE UNCERTAINTY FOLLOWING THE 2024 ELECTION, WITH NO PARTY SECURING AN ABSOLUTE MAJORITY, UNDERSCORES THE SHIFTING DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES FACING KEY POLITICAL FIGURES LIKE NARENDRA MODI AND RAHUL GANDHI

Nitish Kumar is no different from Chandrababu Naidu. He is emblematic of the Aaya Ram, Gaya Raam phenomenon in Indian politics. Even late Arjit Sen, the ace radio commentator of football and hockey matches may find it tough to describe Nitish's defection from one front to another laced with speed, agility and the Perfect 10 landing. It is not possible to say whether Nitish Kumar would be with the NDA by the time this article goes into press and reach the hands of the readers. Naidu and Nitish are two deceiving crutches and can lead Modi to a "no man's land" with their "dedication". Both TDP and JD(U) are secular and liberal parties and that settles the issues. Naidu and Nitish have been entrusted with the task of saving secularism from "communal" BJP and once the mission is achieved they would cross over to INDI Alliance, a rainbow alliance launched by Nitish Kumar himself. The BJP is in a Catch-22 situation. Chandrababu Naidu has won Andhra Pradesh assembly election with a brutal majority despite the

good works done by Jagan Mohan Reddy and Modi has become extra-luggage for the TDP leader. Naidu was instrumental in easing out the then Prime Minister Deve Gowda in 1997 after a ten month tenure much to the anguish of the latter. Now come back to 2024. The present political imbroglio is BJP's own making. How many of us remember the five day long crisis in Maharashtra when Devendra Fadnavis, the then leader of the opposition was sworn in as chief minister in 2019 with Ajit Pawar (NCP) the chief minister only to make an ignominious exit after four days. Fadnavis and the BJP had termed Ajit Pawar as the embodiment of corruption but they found no qualms in forming a coalition Government with him. Despite Ajit Pawar returning to the Pawar Parivar within two days of swearing in as deputy chief minister dumping the BJP, Fadnavis solicited him again and right now the former is back in the Hindutva fold. Fadnavis should have understood the truth that BJP can never compromise with a dynasty party. Having failed to cross the magic figure (having failed to cross the half line mark) in the legislative assembly, the best option for him was to bid his time till the next assembly election or the disintegration of MVA. But he was in a hurry to become the Prime Minister of the country and this forced him to commit the hara-kiri. This reminds us of the kamikaze by Choudhri Charan Singh in 1979 ostensibly to teach the then Prime Minister Morarji Desai a lesson. Choudhri Saheb went down with the Janata ship and could not stage a comeback.

And the most important thing about the 2024 election is another hara kiri by J P Nadda, the BJP president. His declaration that the BJP has no links with the RSS and his outfit is free of "Bhagwa Dhwaj", the flag of the Maratha Empire and emblematic of the followers of Hinduism. Nadda's claim was a cardinal sin because without Bhagwa,

there is no Sanatana Dharma. The saffron is the color of Hinduism and all Sanatana organizations. The disownment of the Bhagwa hurt the RSS karyakartas and swyam sevaks forcing them to cry off from the campaign trail. "Our flag was apparently created by Lord Indra himself. The flag carries the saffron color of the Lord. We chose the flag for our kingdom. The flag represents humanity and we need to ensure that we live up to its representation," Shivaji, the great Maratha emperor is quoted as telling his ministers and commanders. It is time for Nadda to move out of the presidency of BJP. He has neither inspired nor enlightened the people through his words and actions. With nothing to show as his credentials, Nadda is a burden for the BJP and Sangh Parivar. The ouster of Nadda is the need of the hour. What the country needs is a leader who is capable of generating oneness and enthusiasm amongst the Hindus. Nadda should read and learn about two gentlemen from South India, K Kamaraj and S Nijalingappa, both former presidents of the Congress and were rated as titans of Indian politics. (It is a sad twist of history that we have only Congress leaders wearing Titan watches made by the House of Tatas!). Nadda is occupying the seat which was once held by the likes of A B Vajpayee, L K Advani and Murlis Manohar Joshi. BJP should identify persons with leadership qualities. Nadda has no qualities to be in that chair. The 2024 election has thrown a fractured mandate even as the BJP has emerged as the single largest party. Rahu Gandhi should remember the fight between Bjorn Borg and John McEnroe in the Wimbledon championship. McEnroe was beaten by Borg in a marathon five setter in 1980 but the former came back to claim the championship in 1981 by defeating Borg. Tennis and Politics have a lot of similarities.

(The writer is a special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

Women lead India's 2024 election transformation

Women's increasing involvement in Indian elections led to nearly equal representation in voter turnout, marking historic progress

The Lok Sabha 2024 elections in India this year marked the emergence of women as a significant contributor to India's destiny, reflecting 'she' as an important factor in the democratic process. For the first time, women constituted nearly half of the voter turnout, as the electoral gender ratio increased from 928 in 2010 to 948 in 2024. This shift reflects a critical evolution in the democratic process, highlighting women as a decisive voting bloc.

REKHA SHARMA

Public Choice Theory and Electoral Strategies

According to the public choice theory, as women become a decisive voting bloc, political parties will act in their self-interest to cater to 'she' needs. So, every political party in

India gauged the importance of the female demographic bloc and put concerted efforts to engage female voters. They acknowledged and addressed the unique needs of women through various women-centric welfare schemes and community initiatives such as Ujjwala Yojana, the Swachh Bharat Mission, free bus rides, direct cash transfers and prohibition policies. These initiatives garnered substantial support from female voters, highlighting the electoral impact of gender-focused strategies.

Beyond Electoral Gains

The implications of these gender-focused strategies extend far beyond immediate electoral gains: Improved Governance and institutional reforms: The increased competition among

political parties to attract female voters has led to a promise of more responsive and effective governance. Parties are encouraged to deliver more and better public services, welfare programs; thereby improving overall welfare. This may also lead to institutional and legal reforms that protect and promote rights of women.

Challenging Patriarchal Norms: Rising literacy and civic participation among women signify a transformative shift. This shift challenges traditional patriarchal norms and expands the role of women beyond traditional caregiving responsibilities.

Enhancing Capabilities:

This progressive attitude promotes economic growth and productivity. Enhancing Capabilities:



Drawing on Amartya Sen's "capabilities approach," enhancing women's abilities to participate politically, socially and economically not only

improves their individual functioning but also boosts the overall human development level of the economy. Studies have shown that States with

higher female representation have increased investments in public services such as sanitation, drinking water and education, leading to improved community well-being.

Role Models and Leadership: Women in leadership roles serve as role models, encouraging other women and girls to participate in public life and pursue leadership positions. This self-empowerment breaks down social barriers and fosters more inclusive and representative governance.

Vision for Viksit Bharat@2047

The focus on gender empowerment in the 2024 elections is pivotal for achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat@2047, which envisions a developed and inclusive India. Political parties that recognized and

acted upon this cultural shift have positioned themselves on the right side of history, understanding the changing dynamics of Indian democracy.

As Indian democracy continues to evolve, the empowerment of women in politics will pave the way for more balanced and equitable institutions, reflecting the true spirit of democracy. This evolution promises a governance system that is more inclusive and effective, ultimately contributing to the nation's development and the fulfillment of its long-term vision.

(The writer is Associate Professor Department of Economics Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)

'274 killed in Israeli raid that rescued 4 hostages'

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

At least 274 Palestinians were killed and hundreds more were wounded in the Israeli raid that rescued four hostages held by Hamas, Gaza's Health Ministry said Sunday. The military said its forces came under heavy fire during the complex daytime operation deep inside the territory.

The killing of so many Palestinians, including women and children, in a raid that Israelis celebrated as a stunning success because all four hostages were rescued alive, showed the heavy cost of such operations on top of the already soaring toll of the 8-month-long war ignited by Hamas' October 7 attack. Scores of hostages are believed to be held in densely populated areas or inside Hamas' labyrinth of tunnels, making rescue attempts extremely complex and risky. A similar raid in February rescued two

hostages while leaving 74 Palestinians dead. The operation deep into Nuseirat, a built-up refugee camp in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 Arab-Israeli war, was the largest rescue since October 7, when Hamas and other militants stormed across the border, killing some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking around 250 hostage.

Israel launched a massive offensive that has killed over 36,700 Palestinians, according to the ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its counts.

It said nearly 700 people were wounded in Saturday's raid. The ministry did not say how many of the casualties were women and children, but Associated Press reporters saw several being treated at Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital in the nearby town of Deir al-Balah in the aftermath of the raid.

'MY BROTHER DIED OF GRIEF'

Israelis celebrated the return of Noa Argamani, 26; Almog Meir Jan, 22; Andrey Kozlov, 27; and Shlomi Ziv, 41, after Israeli forces raided two locations at once while under fire. Argamani was one of the most widely recognised hostages after being taken, like the three others, from a music festival. The video of her abduction showed her seated between two men on a motorcycle as she screamed, "Don't kill me!" Her mother, Liora, who has brain cancer, had released a video pleading to see her daughter. Israel's Channel 13 said Argamani was moved to the hospital where her mother is treated. Meir Jan's aunt, Dina, said his father had died on Friday, hours before the operation. "My brother died of grief, and he didn't get to see Almog return," she told Israel's Kan public broadcaster. Dr. Itai Pessach, a physician at Sheba

Hospital where the freed captives were being treated, said none had serious physical injuries but that it would likely be days before they could be discharged. "A lot of them have lost friends and family. Things happened in these eight months that they weren't here. So (medical staff) have been assisting them in rebuilding the infrastructure of their life," he told reporters. SCENES OF HORROR AT GAZA HOSPITAL. In Gaza, medics described scenes of chaos after Saturday's raid as wounded people overwhelmed hospitals that were already struggling to treat the wounded from days of heavy Israeli strikes in the area. "We had the gamut of war wounds, trauma wounds, from amputations to eviscerations to trauma, to TBIs (traumatic brain injuries), fractures, and obviously, big burns," said Karin Huster of Doctors Without Borders, an international charity work-

ing in Al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, one of the facilities that received dead and wounded. "Kids completely grey or white from the shock, burnt, screaming for their parents. Many of them are not screaming because they are in shock." The Israeli military said it had attacked "threats to our forces in the area," and that a special forces officer was killed in the rescue operation. Israel's military spokesman, Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, told reporters Saturday that the hostages were being held in two apartments, about 200 meters (219 yards) away from each other, in the heart of the Nuseirat camp. He said the forces had trained repeatedly on a model of the apartment buildings. Hagari said the forces moved in simultaneously in broad daylight on both apartments, believing this ensured the best element of surprise. But he said the rescuers came

under heavy fire as they moved out, including from gunmen firing rocket-propelled grenades from within the neighborhood. He said the military responded with heavy force, including from aircraft, to extract the rescuers and freed hostages. Israel's Foreign Minister Israel Katz lashed out at critics of the operation in a post on X, saying "only Israel's enemies complained about the casualties of Hamas terrorists and their accomplices."

freed shortly after the October attack. Israeli troops have recovered the bodies of at least 16 others, according to the government. The latest rescue lifted some spirits in Israel as divisions deepened over the best way to bring hostages home. Many Israelis urge Netanyahu to embrace a cease-fire deal U.S. President Joe Biden announced last month, but far-right allies threaten to collapse his government if he does. Thousands of Israelis again gathered Saturday night to protest the government and call for a cease-fire agreement. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will return to the Middle East this week, seeking a breakthrough. International pressure is mounting on Israel to limit civilian bloodshed in its war in Gaza. Palestinians also face widespread hunger because fighting and Israeli restrictions have largely cut off the flow of aid.

Haiti's new Prime min hospitalized

Port-Au-Prince (AP): Haiti's newly selected prime minister, Garry Conille, was hospitalised late Saturday in the capital of Port-au-Prince just days after arriving in the country, an official told The Associated Press. It wasn't immediately known why Conille was hospitalised. Louis Gérard Gilles, a member of the transitional presidential council that recently chose Conille as leader of the troubled Caribbean country, said he was en route to the hospital and did not have further information. A spokesman for Conille did not immediately return a message for comment. AP journalists observed high-ranking officials entering the hospital, including Frantz Elbé, director of Haiti's National Police. Also present was Bruno Maes, UNICEF's representative in Haiti. They both declined comment. A handful of curious onlookers gathered outside the hospital as authorities blocked the street with tinted-glass SUVs. Conille was chosen as prime minister May 28 after a convoluted selection process. He faces an arduous task as Haiti's newest leader, including quelling widespread gang violence as the country prepares for the U.N.-backed deployment of a Kenyan police force, a move that was delayed in part because Haiti lacked a premier after former Prime Minister Ariel Henry stepped down April 25. Henry was on an official visit to Kenya when gangs launched coordinated attacks Feb. 29, burning police stations, shooting at the country's main international airport and storming Haiti's two biggest prisons, releasing more than 4,000 inmates. The violence left Henry locked out of the country and eventually led to his resignation. Conille arrived in Haiti on June 1, having worked outside the country until recently as UNICEF's regional director for Latin America and the Caribbean, a post he assumed in January 2023. He previously served as Haiti's prime minister from October 2011 to May 2012 under then President Michel Martelly.

Houthi rebels claim latest attack on cargo ship in Gulf of Aden

AP ■ MANAMA

A missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels hit an Antigua- and Barbuda-flagged cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden, the latest assault on shipping in the region. The missile hit the ship's forward station late Saturday, starting a fire that those on board later put out, the private security firm Ambrey said. A second missile fired at the ship missed and people "on board small boats in the vicinity opened fire on the ship during the incident," Ambrey added, though no one was hurt onboard. The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre similarly reported the attack and fire in the same area off Aden, saying "damage control is underway." Houthi military spokesman Brig. Gen. Yahya Saree claimed the attack in a prerecorded video message Sunday, saying the vessel had been targeted with both mis-

siles and drones. He identified the vessel as the Norderney, a ship that tracking data analysed by The Associated Press showed was still in the Gulf of Aden on Sunday afternoon. Saree also claimed unreported attacks on a warship and another vessel in the Arabian Sea, without providing any evidence to support his claim. The Houthis have exaggerated some of their attacks since launching their campaign. The Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital nearly a decade ago and have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since shortly after, have been targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. They say the attacks are aimed at stopping the war and supporting the Palestinians, though the attacks often target vessels that have nothing to do with the conflict. The war in Gaza has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians there, while hundreds of oth-

ers have been killed in Israeli operations in the West Bank. It began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostage. The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, killed three sailors, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the U.S. Maritime Administration. A U.S.-led airstrike campaign has targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say. But while gaining more attention internationally, the secretive group has cracked down at dissent at home. Eleven Yemeni employees of United Nations agencies and others working for aid groups have been detained by the Houthis under unclear circumstances, as the rebels face increasing financial pressure and airstrikes from the U.S.-led coalition.

Aid delivered to Gaza from newly repaired US-built pier: US official

Washington (AP): Badly needed aid has been delivered into Gaza from a newly repaired American-built pier, a U.S. official said Saturday, following problems that had plagued the effort to bring supplies to Palestinians by sea. The pier constructed by the American military was only operational for about a week before it was blown apart in high winds and heavy seas on May 25. The damaged section was reconnected to the beach in Gaza on Friday after undergoing repairs at an Israeli port. Crews delivered about 1.1 million pounds (492 metric tons) of humanitarian aid to Gaza via the pier on Saturday, the U.S. official said. They spoke on condition of anonymity ahead of an official announcement of the delivery. It came the same day that Israel mounted a heavy air and ground assault that rescued four hostages, who had been taken by Hamas during the October 7 assault that launched

the war in Gaza. At least 210 Palestinians, including children, were killed, a Gaza health official said. It brings back online one way to get desperately needed food and other emergency supplies to Palestinians trapped by the eight-month-old Israel-Hamas war. Israeli restrictions on land crossings, and fighting, have greatly limited the flow of food and other vital supplies into the territory. The damage to the pier was the latest stumbling block for the project and the persistent struggle to get food to starving Palestinians. Three U.S. service members were injured, one critically, and four vessels were beached due to heavy seas. Early efforts to get aid from the pier into the Gaza Strip were disrupted as crowds overran a convoy of trucks that aid agencies were using to transport the food, stripping the cargo from many of them before they could reach a U.N. warehouse. Officials responded by altering

the travel routes, and aid began reaching those in need. Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, deputy commander of U.S. Central Command, told reporters on Friday that the lessons learned from that initial week of operations made him confident greater amounts of aid could be delivered now. He said the goal was to get to 1 million pounds (500 tons or 450 metric tons) of food and other supplies moving through the pier into Gaza every two days. Before the causeway broke apart in the storm, more than 1,100 tons (1,000 metric tons) of aid were delivered, Pentagon officials said. The U.S. Agency for International Development is working with the U.N. World Food Program and their humanitarian partners working in Gaza to distribute food, high-nutrition emergency treatment for starving children, and other aid via the sea route. Relief agencies have pressed Israel to reopen land routes that could bring in

all the needed aid. Israel says it has allowed hundreds of trucks to enter through a southern checkpoint and pointed the finger at the U.N. for not distributing aid. The U.N. says it is often unable to retrieve the aid because of the security situation. U.N. agencies have warned that over 1 million Palestinians in Gaza could experience the highest level of starvation by the middle of next month if hostilities continue. President Joe Biden's administration has said from the start that the pier wasn't meant to be a total solution and that any amount of aid helps. Biden, a Democrat, announced his plan for the U.S. military to build a pier during his State of the Union address in early March, and the military said it would take about 60 days to get it installed and operational. It took a bit longer than planned, with the first trucks carrying aid for the Gaza Strip rolling down the pier on May 17.

Pope Francis appeals for urgent aid for Gaza

Vatican City (AP): Pope Francis called Sunday for humanitarian aid to urgently reach Palestinians in Gaza and for Israel and Hamas to immediately accept proposals for a cease-fire and release of hostages. During his Sunday noon blessing, Francis also thanked Jordan, which this week will host an international humanitarian aid conference for Palestinians. "I encourage the international community to act urgently, with all means, to come to the aid of the people of Gaza, worn out by the war," he said. "Humanitarian aid must be allowed to reach those in need, and no one can impede it." He recalled that Saturday marked the 10-year anniversary of a peace prayer he hosted in the Vatican gardens, attended by then-Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas.

Body of missing British TV presenter Mosley found on Greek island

AP ■ ATHENS

The body of missing British TV presenter Michael Mosley was found on a Greek island Sunday morning after a days-long search. A police spokesman, who spoke on condition of anonymity because of an ongoing investigation, said a body was found on a rocky coast by a private boat and that formal identification was pending. Mosley's family confirmed his death Sunday. Mosley's wife said in a statement that her husband took the wrong route on a hike and collapsed in a place where his body couldn't easily be seen. Mosley went missing on the island of Symi on Wednesday afternoon. "Michael was an adventurous man, it's part of what made him so special," Dr. Clare Bailey Mosley said. "It's devastating to have lost Michael, my wonderful, funny,

kind and brilliant husband. We had an incredibly lucky life together. We loved each other very much and were so happy together." She thanked the people of the island of Symi, who she said worked tirelessly to find him. "Some of these people on the island, who hadn't even heard of Michael, worked from dawn till dusk unasked," she said. "My family and I have been hugely comforted by the outpouring of love from people from around the world. It's clear that Michael meant a huge amount to so many of you." Lefteris Papakaloudoukas, the island's mayor, told The Associated Press he was on the boat with members of the media representatives when they saw a body some 20 metres above the Agia Marina beach. "We zoomed with the cameras and saw it was him," he said. The mayor said that Mosley appeared to have fallen down

a steep slope, stopping against a fence and lying face-up with a few rocks on top of it. Mosley, 67, was well-known in Britain for his regular appearances on television and radio and his column in the Daily Mail newspaper. He was known outside the UK for his 2013 book "The Fast Diet," which he co-authored with journalist Mimi Spencer. The book proposed the so-called "5:2 diet," which promised to help people lose weight quickly by minimising their calorie intake two days a week while eating healthily on the other five. He subsequently introduced a rapid weight loss program and made a number of films about diet and exercise. Mosley often pushed his body to extreme lengths to see the effects of his diets and also lived with tapeworms in his guts for six weeks for the BBC documentary "Infested! Living With Parasites."

Voting in 20 EU countries under way as polls for European Parl enters final day

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Tens of millions across the European Union voted Sunday in EU parliamentary elections in a massive exercise of democracy that is expected to shift the bloc to the right and redirect its future. The war in Ukraine, migration, and the impact of climate policy on farmers are some of the issues weighing on voters' minds as they cast ballots to elect 720 members of the European Parliament. Surveys suggest that mainstream and pro-European parties will retain their majority in parliament, but they will lose seats to hard right parties like those led by Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni, Hungarian leader Viktor Orban, Geert Wilders in the Netherlands and Marine Le Pen in France. That would make it harder for Europe to pass legislation and

could at times paralyse decision-making in the world's biggest trading bloc. "I do hope that we will manage to avoid a shift to the right and that Europe will somehow remain united," voter Laura Simon said in Berlin. EU lawmakers have a say in issues from financial rules to climate and agriculture policy. They approve the EU budget, which bankrolls priorities including infrastructure projects, farm subsidies and aid delivered to Ukraine. And they hold a veto over the appointment of the powerful EU commission. This elections come at a testing time for voter confidence in a bloc of some 450 million people. Over the last five years, the EU has been shaken by the coronavirus pandemic, an economic slump and an energy crisis fuelled by the biggest land conflict in Europe since the Second

World War. But political campaigning often focuses on issues of concern in individual countries rather than on broader European interests. Sunday's voting marathon winds up a four-day election cycle that began in the Netherlands on Thursday. An unofficial exit poll there suggested that Wilders' anti-migrant hard right party would make important gains in the Netherlands, even though a coalition of pro-European parties has probably pushed it into second place. Casting his vote in the Flanders region, Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency until the end of the month, warned that Europe is "at a crossroads" and "more under pressure than ever." Since the last EU election in 2019, populist or far-right parties now lead governments

in three nations — Hungary, Slovakia and Italy — and are part of ruling coalitions in others including Sweden, Finland and, soon, the Netherlands. Polls give the populists an advantage in France, Belgium, Austria and Italy. "Right is good," Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who leads a stridently nationalist and anti-migrant government, told reporters after casting his ballot. "To go right is always good. Go right!" After the election comes a period of horse-trading, as political parties reconsider in their places in the continent-wide political alliances that run the European legislature. The biggest political group — the centre-right European People's Party (EPP) — has moved right during the present elections on issues like security, climate and migration.

Trump to hold outdoor Las Vegas rally in scorching heat

Las Vegas (AP): Former President Donald Trump's campaign is hiring extra medics, loading up on fans and water bottles and allowing supporters to carry umbrellas to an outdoor rally Sunday in Las Vegas, where temperatures are expected to exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit (37.8 degrees Celsius). Trump is returning to Nevada, one of the top battleground states in the November election, for his second rally since he was found guilty in a hush-money scandal. The unprecedented conviction of a former president has juiced Trump's fundraising and galvanised his supporters, but it remains to be seen whether it will sway swing voters. Temperatures in the Southwest have cooled since reaching historic highs late last week but remain above normal for this time of year and are expected

to top 100 degrees Fahrenheit (38 degrees Celsius) by the time Trump is scheduled to begin speaking around noon. His rally is at a park with little shade next to the airport. Campaign organisers say they will have ample water bottles to hand out to attendees and that cooling tents will be placed throughout the venue. Misting fans will be given out. The campaign has paid for additional EMS services to be on site in the case of emergency. The US Secret Service will be making an exception to allow people to bring in personal water bottles and umbrellas. During a Trump rally in Arizona on Thursday, the Phoenix Police Department said 11 people were transported to hospitals, treated and released for heat exhaustion. Many Trump's supporters waited in line for hours and

some were unable to get inside before the venue reached capacity. The temperature reached a record 113 degrees Fahrenheit (45 degrees Celsius) that day. Trump's Nevada rally, his third in the state this year, comes on the tail end of a Western swing that included several high-dollar fundraisers where he was expected to rake in millions of dollars. Democrat Hillary Clinton won Nevada in 2016 as did President Joe Biden in 2020, but Nevada was the only battleground state where Trump did better against Biden than Clinton. In the 2022 midterms, Nevada Gov. Steve Sisolak, a Democrat, was the only incumbent governor who did not win reelection. Trump hopes his strength among working-class voters and growing interest from Latinos will push him to victory in the state.

Vet, 100, marries bride, 96, near Normandy's D-Day beaches

AP ■ FRANCE

Together, the collective age of the bride and groom was nearly 200. But World War II veteran Harold Terens and his sweetheart Jeanne Swerlin proved that love is eternal as they tied the knot Saturday inland of the D-Day beaches in Normandy, France. Their respective ages — he's 100, she's a youngster of just 96 — made their nuptials an almost double-century celebration. Terens called it "the best day of my life". On her way into the nuptials, the bubbly bride-to-be said: "It's not just for young people, love, you know? We get butterflies. And we get a little action, also." The location was the elegant stone-walled town hall of Carentan, a key initial D-Day objective that saw ferocious fighting after the June 6, 1944, Allied landings that helped rid Europe of Adolf Hitler's tyranny. Like other towns and villages



across the Normandy coast where nearly 1,600,000 Allied troops came ashore under fire on five code-named beaches, it's an effervescent hub of remembrance and celebration on the 80th anniversary of the deeds and sacrifices of young men and women that day, festooned with flags and bunting and with veterans feted like

rockstars. As the swing of Glenn Miller and other period tunes rang out on the streets, well-wishers — some in WWII-period clothes — were already lined up a good hour before the wedding, behind barriers outside the town hall, with a rousing pipe and drum band also on hand to serenade the happy couple.

After both declaring "oui" to vows read by Carentan's mayor in English, the couple exchanged rings. "With this ring, I thee wed," Terens said. She giggled and gasped, "Really?" With Champagne flutes in hand, they waved through an open window to the adoring crowds outside. "To everybody's good health. And to peace in the world and the preservation of democracy all over the world and the end of the war in Ukraine and Gaza," Terens said as he and his bride then clinked glasses and drank. The crowd yelled "la mariée!" - the bride! — to Swerlin, who wore a long flowing dress of vibrant pink. Terens looked dapper in a light blue suit and matching pink kerchief in his breast pocket. And they enjoyed a very special wedding-night party: They were invited to the state dinner at the Elysee Palace on Saturday night with President

Emmanuel Macron and U.S. President Joe Biden. "Congratulations to the newlyweds," Macron said, prompting cheers and a standing ovation from other guests during the toast praising French-American friendship. "(The town of) Carentan was happy to host your wedding, and us, your wedding dinner," he told the couple. The wedding was symbolic, not binding in law. Mayor Jean-Pierre Lhonneur's office said he wasn't empowered to wed foreigners who aren't residents of Carentan, and that the couple, who are both American, hadn't requested legally binding vows. However, they could always complete those formalities back in Florida if they wished. Lhonneur likes to say that Normandy is practically the 51st state of the USA, given its reverence and gratitude for Allied soldiers and the sacrifices of tens of thousands who never made it home from the Battle of Normandy.

Seoul to restart anti-Pyongyang loudspeaker broadcasts over North's trash balloons

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea announced Sunday it would resume anti-North Korean propaganda loudspeaker broadcasts in border areas in retaliation to the North sending over 1000 balloons filled with trash and manure over the last couple of weeks. The move is certain to anger Pyongyang and potentially prompt it to take retaliatory military steps, and adds to tensions between the warring rivals amid a diplomatic stalemate over the North's nuclear ambitions. Following an emergency security meeting led by South Korean national security director Chang Ho-jin on Sunday, officials decided to install and begin the loudspeaker broadcasts, Seoul's presidential office said in a statement. Chang and other South Korean

security officials berated Pyongyang for attempting to cause "anxiety and disruption" in South Korea and stressed that North Korea would be "solely responsible" for any future escalation of tensions between the Koreans. The North said its campaign came after South Korean activists sent over balloons filled with anti-North Korean leaflets, as well as USB sticks filled with popular South Korean songs and dramas which Pyongyang is extremely sensitive to as it fears it could demoralise front-line troops and residents and eventually weaken leader Kim Jong Un's grip on power, analysts say. With the loudspeakers, South Korea may blare anti-Pyongyang broadcasts, K-pop songs and outside news across the rivals' heavily armed border. In 2015, when South Korea

restarted loudspeaker broadcasts for the first time in 11 years, North Korea fired artillery rounds across the border, prompting South Korea to return fire, according to South Korean officials. No casualties were reported. Last week, as tensions spiked over the trash-carrying balloons, South Korea also suspended a 2018 tension-easing agreement with North Korea, allowing it to resume propaganda campaigns and possibly restart live-fire military exercises in border areas. South Korean Defence Minister Shin Won-sik in a meeting with top military commanders called for thorough preparation against the possibility that the North responds to the loudspeaker broadcasts with direct military action, the South Korean Defence Ministry said in a statement. However, the



ministry didn't immediately confirm whether the loudspeaker broadcasts had started as of Sunday afternoon. North Korea continued to fly hundreds of balloons into South Korea over the weekend, a third such campaign since late May, the South's military said. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected the North

launching around 330 balloons toward the South since Saturday night and about 80 were found in South Korean territory as of Sunday morning. The military said winds were blowing eastward on Saturday night, which possibly caused many balloons to float away from South Korean territory. The South's military said the

balloons that did land dropped trash, including plastic and paper waste, but no hazardous substances were discovered. The military, which has mobilised chemical rapid response and explosive clearance units to retrieve the North Korean balloons and materials, alerted the public to beware of falling objects and not to touch balloons found on the ground but report them to police or military authorities. In North Korea's previous two rounds of balloon activities, South Korean authorities discovered about 1,000 balloons that were tied to vinyl bags containing manure, cigarette butts, scraps of cloth, waste batteries and waste paper. Some were popped and scattered on roads, residential areas and schools. No highly dangerous materials were found and no major damage has been reported.

The North's vice defence minister, Kim Kang Il, later said his country would stop the balloon campaign but threatened to resume it if South Korean activists sent leaflets again. In defiance of the warning, a South Korean civilian group led by North Korean defector Park Sang-hak, said it launched 10 balloons from a border town on Thursday carrying 200,000 anti-North Korean leaflets, USB sticks with K-pop songs and K-dramas, and USD 1 US bills. South Korean media reported another activist group also flew balloons with 200,000 propaganda leaflets toward North Korea on Friday. Kim in recent years has waged an intensifying campaign to eliminate South Korean cultural and language influences. In January, Kim declared the North would abandon its longstanding goal of a peaceful uni-

fication with the South and rewrite its constitution to cement the South as a permanent enemy. Experts say Kim's efforts to reinforce the North's separate identity may be aimed at strengthening the Kim family's dynastic rule. North Korea's balloon campaign is also possibly meant to cause a divide in South Korea over its conservative government's hard-line approach to North Korea. Liberal lawmakers, some civic groups and front-line residents in South Korea have called on the government to urge leafletting activists to stop flying balloons to avoid unnecessary clashes with North Korea. But government officials haven't made such an appeal in line with last year's constitutional court ruling that struck down a law criminalising an anti-North Korea leafletting as a violation of free speech.

Iran OKs six candidates for presidential race

Blocks Ahmadinejad again

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran's Guardian Council on Sunday approved the country's hard-line parliament speaker and five others to run in the country's June 28 presidential election following a helicopter crash that killed President Ebrahim Raisi and seven others. The council again barred former President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, a firebrand populist known for the crackdown that followed his disputed 2009 re-election, from running. The council's decision represents the starting gun for a shortened, two-week campaign to replace Raisi, a hard-line protégé of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei once floated as a possible successor for the 85-year-old cleric. The selection of candidates approved by the Guardian Council, a panel of clerics and jurists ultimately overseen by Khamenei, suggests Iran's Shiite theocracy hopes to ease

the election through after recent votes saw record-low turnout and as tensions remain high over the country's rapidly advancing nuclear program, as well as the Israel-Hamas war. The Guardian Council also continued its streak of not accepting a woman or anyone calling for radical change to the country's governance. The campaign likely will include live, televised debates by the candidates on Iran's state-run broadcaster. They also advertise on billboards and offer stump speeches to back their bids. So far, none of them has offered any specifics, though all have promised a better economic situation for the country as it suffers from sanctions by the US and other Western nations over its nuclear program, which now enriches uranium closer than ever to weapons-grade levels. Such matters of state remain the final decision of Khamenei, but presidents in

the past have leaned either toward engagement or confrontation with the West over it. The most prominent candidate remains Mohammed Bagher Qalibaf, 62, a former Tehran mayor with close ties to the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard. However, many remember that Qalibaf, as a former Guard general, was part of a violent crackdown on Iranian university students in 1999. He also reportedly ordered live gunfire to be used against students in 2003 while serving as the country's police chief. Qalibaf ran unsuccessfully for president in 2005 and 2013. He withdrew from the 2017 presidential campaign to support Raisi in his first failed presidential bid. Raisi won the 2021 election, which had the lowest turnout ever for a presidential vote in Iran, after every major opponent found themselves disqualified. Khamenei gave a speech last week alluding to qualities that Qalibaf's supporters have highlighted as potentially signalling the supreme leader's support for the speaker. Yet

Qalibaf's role in crackdowns may be viewed differently after years of unrest that have gripped Iran, both over its ailing economy and the mass protests sparked by the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman who died after being arrested for allegedly not wearing her headscarf, or hijab, to the liking of security forces. The Guardian Council disqualified Ahmadinejad, the firebrand, Holocaust-questioning former president. Ahmadinejad increasingly challenged Khamenei toward the end of his term and is remembered for the bloody crackdown on the 2009 Green Movement protests. He was also disqualified in the last election by the panel. The election comes at a time of heightened tensions between Iran and the West over its arming of Russia in that country's war on Ukraine. Its support of militia proxy forces throughout the wider Middle East has been increasingly in the spotlight as Yemen's Houthi rebels attack ships in the Red Sea over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip.

Ukraine strikes one of Russia's most advanced warplanes

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine on Sunday said its forces hit an ultra-modern Russian warplane stationed on an air base nearly 600 kilometers (370 miles) from the front lines, after its Western allies allowed Kyiv to use their weapons for limited strikes inside Russia. Kyiv's main military intelligence service shared satellite photos it said showed the aftermath of the attack. If confirmed, it would mark Ukraine's first known successful strike on a Su-57 fighter plane, a twin-engine stealth fighter lauded as Moscow's most advanced military aircraft. In one photo, black soot marks and small craters can be seen dotting a concrete strip around the parked aircraft. According to the Main Intelligence Directorate of Ukraine's Ministry of Defense, the strike took place on Saturday at the Akhtubinsk base in southern Russia, some 589 kilometers (366 miles) from the front line. It wasn't immediately clear what weapons were used, but the airfield's distance from Ukraine suggests that it was likely hit by drones. The strike comes after the

United States and Germany recently authorized Ukraine to hit some targets on Russian soil with the long-range weapons they are supplying to Kyiv. Ukraine has already used U.S. weapons to strike inside Russia under newly approved guidance from President Joe Biden that allows American arms to be used for the limited purpose of defending Kharkiv, Ukraine's second-largest city. The Ukrainian agency said that the plane, which is capable of carrying stealth missiles across hundreds of kilometers (miles), was among "a countable few" of its type in Moscow's arsenal. According to reports by Russian agencies, Moscow's armed forces obtained "more than 10" new Su-57s last year, while 76 are set to be produced by 2028. Moscow did not immediately comment on the reports. Russia's Defense Ministry on Saturday claimed its forces downed three Ukrainian drones in the Astrakhan region, home to the Akhtubinsk airstrip. Since Moscow's full-scale invasion more than two years ago, Kyiv has ramped up domestic drone production and used the drones to strike deep inside

Russia, including a gas terminal near St. Petersburg that lies over 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) north of the Ukrainian border. Elsewhere, Ukrainian forces kept up drone attacks on Russia's southern border regions, according to local Russian officials. Three drones hit Belgorod province late on Saturday, damaging a power line and blowing out windows but causing no casualties, said Gov. Vyacheslav Gladkov. The Russian Defense Ministry said another drone was shot down over the nearby Bryansk region. Across Ukraine's front-line provinces, Russian shelling killed at least three civilians and wounded at least nine others on Saturday and overnight, according to reports by regional officials. A man died and two women suffered wounds in the village of Khotimla in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, where shelling damaged the local school, a council building and a shop, Gov. Oleh Synyehubov said. Heavy battles continue in the area as Ukrainian troops try to beat back Russia's invading forces after a weeklong push by Moscow that sparked fears for Kharkiv and a wave of civilian evacuations.

Cargo ship hit by missile in Gulf of Aden

AP ■ DUBAI

A missile struck an Antigua and Barbuda-flagged cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden on Sunday in a suspected attack by Houthi rebels in Yemen, authorities said. The missile hit the ship's forward station, starting a fire that those on board later put out, the private security firm Ambrey said. A second missile fired at the ship missed and people "on board small boats in the vicinity opened fire on the ship during the incident," Ambrey added, though no one was hurt onboard. The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center similarly reported an attack late Saturday in the same area off Aden, but provided no further details. Suspicion for the attack immediately fell on the Houthis. The rebels did not immediately claim the assault, though it can sometimes take hours or even days for them to acknowledge their attacks. The Houthis, who seized Yemen's capital nearly a decade ago and have been fighting a Saudi-led coalition since shortly after, have been targeting shipping throughout the Red Sea corridor over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. They say the attacks are aimed at stopping the war and supporting the Palestinians, though the attacks often target vessels that have nothing to do with the conflict. The war in Gaza has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians there, while hundreds of others have been killed in Israeli operations in the West Bank. It began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostages. The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, killed three sailors, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration. A US-led airstrike campaign has targeted the Houthis since January, with a series of strikes May 30 killing at least 16 people and wounding 42 others, the rebels say. But while gaining more attention internationally, the secretive group has cracked down at dissent at home. Eleven Yemeni employees of United Nations agencies and others working for aid groups have been detained by the Houthis under unclear circumstances, as the rebels face increasing financial pressure and airstrikes from the US-led coalition.

Pak, IMF disagree over new income tax rates

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Talks between Pakistan and the IMF have ended inconclusively due to a disagreement over new income tax rates for salaried and non-salaried persons and the imposition of a standard 18 per cent sales tax on agriculture and health sector goods, according to a media report on Sunday. On Friday, Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) authorities discussed the outstanding issues related to taxation and the energy sector. Citing sources, the Express Tribune newspaper reported that both sides could not resolve their differences on the income tax threshold, the merger of salaried and non-salaried rates and the maximum income tax rate for individuals. Discussions are revolving around whether to charge a new backbreaking 45 per cent income tax from salaried and non-salaried individuals on a

monthly income of just over Pakistani Rs 4,67,000, sources said. At present, the maximum rate of 35 per cent applies to a monthly income of over Pakistani Rs 5,00,000. However, both sides have converged on the issue of increasing the income tax burden on exporters in the next budget who paid a paltry sum of Pakistani Rs 86 billion this year, which is 280 per cent less than the taxes paid by the salaried people. Pakistan also showed a willingness to tax pensions beyond a certain income threshold. In the latest talks, the international money lender insisted on merging the slabs related to salaried, non-salaried and other incomes. On the government's proposal of increasing the annual threshold of taxable income to Pakistani Rs 9,00,000, the IMF is asking for the maximum income tax rate to be increased from 35 per cent to 45 per cent. However, the government is

unwilling to increase the maximum rate for salaried individuals to 45 per cent but showed flexibility to keep the taxable income threshold at the current Pakistani Rs 6,00,000. It is also asking to keep the salaried and non-salaried slabs separate but is willing to increase the highest tax rate for non-salaried persons to 45 per cent, said the sources. The non-salaried business individuals pay tax after excluding expenses while the salaried persons pay tax on their gross income without excluding the expenses. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is until now unwilling to increase the burden on the salaried class. According to a proposal, if the taxable income threshold is increased to Pakistani Rs 9,00,000 per annum, the income tax rate can be up to 7.5 per cent on a monthly income of Pakistani Rs 100,000. The current rate is 2.5 per cent for this category.

'Imran major hurdle in reconciliation'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has said his successor Imran Khan was the main hurdle in political reconciliation in the country and underscored the ruling PML-N party's commitment to dialogue and not indulging in vengeance, according to media reports. Sharif's remarks came during a meeting with party senators on Friday evening, where the issue of negotiations with Khan's Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) party was extensively discussed. Sharif, the President of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, said that Khan, also a former prime minister, himself was not displaying seriousness in the negotiation process, which posed a significant challenge to fruitful discussions. He questioned the feasibility of negotiations when one party involved was not committed to the process. "How can one negotiate when he is not serious?" Nawaz responded to the party lawmakers. Sharif, 74, referenced past

instances where Khan had rejected offers of friendship, indicating a pattern of reluctance to engage in constructive dialogue. "I travelled to Bani Gala (Imran Khan's house) myself. Our sincerity is considered our weakness," the former premier stressed. To underscore the importance of dialogue despite political differences, Nawaz cited the example of his meeting with the late premier Benazir Bhutto, despite facing staunch opposition. Since he did not believe in political vengeance, he and ex-premier Benazir Bhutto had signed the Charter of Democracy, the PML-N president added. Sharif said he had no political vengeance or grudge against anyone, even those who had attempted to keep him out of power in the past. "I am not the person who takes political revenge," Nawaz Sharif said. The PML-N president said that during Khan's tenure, he was threatened to get his prison cell's AC removed. However, he said he did not believe in political vengeance. In fact, the three-time prime

minister said that he did not even think about it as Khan is serving his jail sentence now. Khan has repeatedly said he would hold talks with the "real stakeholders" only. Khan has accused the PML-N of stealing his party's mandate to form the government with the Pakistan Peoples Party. **PAKISTAN PEOPLES PARTY VOICES CONCERNS** Meanwhile, the Pakistan Peoples Party has said it was not consulted by the ruling PML-N-led government on the upcoming federal budget despite being a coalition partner, according to a media report on Sunday. The Pakistan government will likely present the budget for the financial year 2024-25 on June 12. The government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party, "neither told us anything related to the budget nor took us into confidence," Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah said. "We don't know what the PML-N is doing about privati-

sation policy, taxes, developmental programme," the report quoted Shah as saying. After the controversial February 8 general elections marred with massive rigging allegations, the PML-N and PPP formed a coalition government following a fractured poll verdict. Asserting that the Bilawal Bhutto-led PPP does not know anything about relief, Shah said that he's unaware whether the government is making the budget or if the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) budget is being imposed. Underscoring the need for the inclusion of the PPP's proposals in the budget, he said, "People will ask us what have we done. Will we tell them that we don't even know about it?" Shah further said that the party will have to scrutinise politically the decisions to be made about the budget. On Wednesday, Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik said the budget would be tabled on June 12 and added that its schedule was changed due to Prime Minister Sharif's ongoing visit to China.

Risks of cosmetic dentistry nothing to smile about

Lancaster: How much would you be willing to pay for a perfect movie star smile? For some, trying to achieve dazzlingly white, uniformly straight teeth without a Hollywood budget comes at a cost to their health as well as their wallet. The UK social media trend for "Turkey teeth" - named after influencers' penchant for travelling abroad for budget veneers - may offer a cheaper alternative to more expensive cosmetic dentistry at reputable clinics - but it can come at the cost of oral health and may even prove life threatening. But the health risks don't always outweigh the prospect of a gleaming grin. Naturally, teeth should be an off-white

colour because yellow-coloured dentin (the middle layer of the tooth - between the enamel and the pulp - that makes up the majority of the tooth's structure) shows through the thin, tough, white enamel outer layer of the tooth. But the natural colour of healthy teeth is currently unfashionable and there's a heavy demand for sparkly white veneers. While there are many people who are delighted with their new gnashers, there seem to be equally as many horror stories. From being left in "constant pain" to developing "rotting gums", fixing problems caused by cut price cosmetic dentistry can end up costing much more than it would have cost to

get the procedures done properly in the first place. This is something Ramazan Yilmaz discovered when his tooth implants at a private clinic in Bursa, Turkey, went disastrously wrong. During surgery, the dentist allegedly "forced" the implant through Ramazan's jawbone and into the area behind the eye where the brain and spinal fluid are located. According to reports, the dentist then took him to the emergency department of a local hospital and ran away. But experiences don't have to be as extreme as Ramazan's to cause serious problems. Even the best cosmetic dentistry can lead to oral health problems if scrupulous oral hygiene isn't

maintained. Poorly fitted veneers, for example, can allow plaque, food and drinks into the space between the veneer and the tooth, causing bad breath, staining, tooth decay and gum disease. Gum disease is also linked to liver disease, chronic kidney disease, oral cancers and cardiovascular diseases. **RISKY BUSINESS** There are a number of options to achieve the Turkey teeth look popularised in the UK by reality shows such as Towie and Love Island, from veneers to more invasive procedures such as crowns or implants that are screwed into your jawbone. Veneers are thin shells applied to the surface of exist-

ing teeth to hide imperfections. They are the least invasive of cosmetic dental procedures but usually require the removal of enamel. Improper preparation of the tooth for this process leaves the tooth susceptible to decay. There are different types of veneer, including porcelain, composite and no prep. No prep veneers preserve tooth structure with minimal, if any, removal of enamel but they tend to last only between five to seven years. With proper care, well fitted porcelain and composite veneers can last up to 20 years. Dental crowns are permanent tooth-shaped caps that cover broken, worn down or damaged teeth. Crowns are fitted

over existing teeth, which are filed down to fang-like pegs. Filing away the teeth removes protective material that cushions the soft living tissues and can open up these areas to pathogens causing local or systemic infection, potentially resulting in death. Similar risks exist for dental implants; however these can take much longer to bond into your existing bone and therefore it may be months before any potential issues arise. Dental implants are a permanent replacement for missing teeth or to support dentures. The implants are screw-like metal fixtures that are fastened surgically to the jaw bone, beneath the gums. Implants are expensive and it's

a challenging procedure - they are prone to damage and fracture if fitted without proper attention to bite force and the way the mouth works when eating. Replacing teeth can cause significant changes in how bite forces are transmitted through the jaw bones and the rest of the face. Bones take time to remodel and, because many people have all their teeth done at once, implants can cause large scale alteration of the mouth's bony micro-structure, resulting in pain and discomfort in the gums, jaw joints and muscles of the face that can last for months. Dental implants can reduce bone in the mouth by up to 22 per cent three years after insertion.

HOME FREE... OR NOT Cosmetic dental procedures can be risky - but so can the journey home. Patients who've undergone restorative treatments like veneers should avoid flying for at least 24 hours post-procedure. Those who've had implants and extractions - with no complications - should wait at least 72 hours before hopping on the plane home to limit the risk of swelling during the flight. There's a serious complicating factor for anyone suffering with problem dental work on their return to the UK: who will fix any issues and to what extent? The shortage of NHS dental provision in the UK means that dentists are unable to help patients who've had faulty work done abroad.

India a big aviation market: Star Alliance CEO

PTI ■ DUBAI

India is a big aviation market and a stronger partnership between Air India and Lufthansa is good, as efforts of the Star Alliance are to bring the partners together to provide a unique value proposition for the passengers, the airline group's CEO Theo Panagiotoulas has said.

Air India and Lufthansa are part of the Star Alliance, whose 26 member airlines come together at more than 50 global hubs to offer smooth connections across a global network.

A management company, based in Frankfurt and Singapore, coordinates Star Alliance projects and activities. It includes airport co-location, digital infrastructure, frequent flyer integration and joint business lounge projects to improve the travel experience. Talking to PTI on the sidelines of IATA annual general meeting in Dubai this week, Panagiotoulas was bullish about the prospects in



the Indian market that offers "so much of opportunities". "The alliance is to bring the partners together to provide a unique value proposition... It is all about more choices, options and for a market size of India that is the very best thing," he said.

When asked about the enhanced partnership between Air India and Lufthansa, Panagiotoulas said it is good to have stronger partnerships within the alliance. Both airlines have a strong codeshare partnership that provides for a seamless

connectivity for the passengers of both airlines. Meanwhile, on the sidelines of the IATA annual general meeting, Lufthansa Group Chairman and CEO Carsten Spohr had a meeting with Air India CEO and Managing Director Campbell Wilson. To a query about the Indian market during a media roundtable here, Spohr said he had a long meeting with Air India CEO but did not disclose the details. He also replied in the affirmative when asked whether the partnership with Star Alliance could go beyond Star Alliance. Star Alliance has 50 standards for the member airlines and the effort is to provide a strong value proposition to customers. It needs to be made sure that the right value proposition is there in India, which is a big market, Panagiotoulas said. As per the alliance's website, connecting partners and intermodal partners extend its network beyond the 1,200 airports currently served by the 26 member airlines.

Commerce Ministry may seek more funds for startups in forthcoming Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The commerce and industry ministry may seek more funds for startups in the forthcoming Budget, to be announced by the new government, to promote innovation in the country, an official has said.

The new government may announce the Budget for 2024-25 in July. The seed fund scheme, announced in April 2021 with a corpus of Rs 945 crore, will end in 2025, and the ministry may consider proposing a new scheme on similar lines. The seed fund scheme was aimed at providing financial assistance to startups for proof of concept, prototype development, product trials, market-entry, and commercialisation. The fund was divided into four years for providing seed funding to eligible startups through incubators across India. Easy availability of capital is essential for entrepreneurs at the early stages of growth of an



enterprise, and the capital required at this stage often presents a make-or-break situation for startups with good business ideas, another official said. There are over 1.17 lakh government-registered startups in the country. They are eligible for income tax and other benefits. These recognised startups have been reported to have created over 12.42 lakh direct jobs. The ministry is also expected to propose a dedicated policy for deep tech startups. Deep technology refers to innovations founded on advanced scientific and technological breakthroughs.

Due to their disruptive nature, they have the potential to solve India's most pressing societal issues. Focus on promoting startups was crucial in the previous government, which unveiled the Startup India initiative on January 16, 2016, along with an action plan for startups consisting of schemes and incentives to create a vibrant startup ecosystem in the country. The action plan comprises 19 action items spanning various areas, such as simplification and handholding, funding support and incentive, and industry-academia partnership and incubation.

Asus bets big on India's personal computer market

PTI ■ TAIPEI

India's personal computer (PC) market is better than the rest of the world and low penetration level of the devices offers a good growth opportunity for the Taiwanese tech major Asus, senior company officials have said.

The Taiwanese PC maker has seen positive growth in the Indian market.

Asus India consumer and gaming PC vice president Arnold Su told PTI that "India's PC penetration per household is around 10 to 11 per cent. Which means around 90 per cent of Indian households still do not have a PC, which means it is a very good opportunity for us," he said.

Su said Asus is continuing to invest in India making its product available across the country. "... If you see today in India, out of 750 districts, we have already covered around 450 districts," he added.

Ahmedabad sees 45 per cent rise in average housing prices in last five years: PropTiger

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Housing prices in Ahmedabad have appreciated by an average 45 per cent in the last five years because of rise in demand of residential properties especially after the COVID pandemic, according to PropTiger.

The average housing prices stood at Rs 4,150 per square feet in January-March this year, as compared to Rs 2,867 per square feet in the January-March period of 2019, as per the data compiled by real estate consultant PropTiger. The average growth in housing price during January-March 2024 was 10 per cent from the year-ago period. PropTiger.Com is part of real estate technology firm REA India, which also owns real estate listing platforms Housing.Com and Makaan.Com. Vikas Wadhawan, Group Chief Financial Officer of REA India and Business Head of PropTiger.Com, noted that Ahmedabad has become one of the major real estate markets in India. "As the nerve centre of economic



Ahmedabad attracts numerous buyers and investors from neighbouring states such as Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan. Its well-developed infrastructure ensures seamless connectivity with other major financial centres in India, including Mumbai," he said. The city's robust economic environment and high safety standards significantly enhance its appeal as a leading housing market in India post-COVID, he observed. PropTiger data showed that housing sales in Ahmedabad during January-March 2024 rose 78 per cent to 12,915 units, from 7,256 units in the year-ago period.

New supply in Ahmedabad fell 64 per cent in January-March this year to 3,116 units, from 8,655 units in the corresponding period of last year.

Ahmedabad market has expanded a lot after the COVID pandemic. Housing sales stood at 41,327 units last year, as compared to 27,314 units in 2022, 16,874 units in 2021, 12,156 units in 2020 and 25,734 units in 2019.

Similarly, new supply rose to 55,877 last year, from 32,663 units in 2022. Launches stood at 41,357 units in 2021, up from mere 7,687 units in 2020 and 15,648 units in 2019. Average housing price stood at Rs 4,000 per square feet in October-December 2023, as against Rs 3,700 per square feet in the same period of 2022 calendar year. In the October-December period of 2021, the average housing price was Rs 3,452 per square feet, as compared to Rs 3,213 per square feet in the year-ago period. The average housing price stood at Rs 3,107 per square feet in October-December 2019.

Domestic open access solar capacity addition doubles in January, March: Mercom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Open access solar installations rose two-fold in India to 1.8 gigawatts during January-March this year supported by several factors, including reduced module cost, US-based Mercom Capital has said.

Solar power through open access is an arrangement where a power producer establishes a solar power plant to supply green energy to consumers. India added over 1.8 gigawatts (GW) of solar open access capacity in the first quarter of the calendar year of 2024, posting a two-fold increase from 909.3 megawatts (MW) in Q4 2023, the report titled 'Mercom India Solar Open Access Market' said. As of March 2024, the cumulative installed solar open access capacity stood at 14.3 GW. Solar open access developers benefited from lower Chinese module prices and the suspension of the Approved List of Models and Manufacturers (ALMM) order for projects commissioned through March 2024.

Instant flour mixes for dosa, idli, khaman cannot be classified as sattu; to attract 18 per cent GST

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Instant mixes, including idli, dosa and khaman flour, cannot be classified as chhatua or sattu and 18 per cent GST should be levied on them, the Gujarat Appellate Authority for Advance Ruling (GAAAR) has ruled.

Gujarat-based Kitchen Express Overseas Ltd had approached the AAAR against the ruling by the GST advance authority, saying that its seven 'instant flour mixes' are not 'ready to eat' but are required to undergo certain cooking procedures and can be termed 'ready to cook'. The company sells flour mixes of gota, khaman, dalwada, dahi-wada, dhokla, idli and dosa in powder form and pleaded that it is akin to Sattu and should attract Goods and Services Tax (GST) of 5 per cent. The GAAAR rejected the appellant's contention, saying that ingredients which go into the making of 'instant flour mixes' are not covered under the relevant GST rules as is the case with Sattu. According to a CBIC circular,



small amounts of ingredients, which are mixed to make Sattu, are specified in the GST rules to be eligible for a 5 per cent tax rate. "However, the said clarification is not applicable in the present case as the products being supplied by the appellant contain spices and other ingredients, which is not the case with the 'chhatua or sattu,'" the GAAAR said. The appellate authority also said that merely because the

end consumer of the instant mix flour is required to follow certain food preparation processes before such products can be consumed is no grounds that 18 per cent GST should not be levied on it. Abhishek Jain, Indirect Tax Head & Partner, KPMG, said classification disputes are among the most common areas of litigation under the GST. "Despite the issuance of circulars, differing interpretations of the

clarifications provided in these circulars have often elevated the challenges," Jain said. Moore Singshi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said the Gujarat Appellate Authority for Advance Ruling (AAAR) affirmed the ruling of the Advance Ruling Authority (AAR), classifying various 'Kitchen Express' branded flours, including Khaman and Dhokla, under Chapter Heading (CH) 2106 90 99, thereby subjecting them to an 18 per cent GST rate. "The determination was predicated on the products' significant inclusion of additives, such as sugar, salt, and spices, distinguishing them from simpler flours classified under chapter 1101, 1102, or 1106, which attract a 5 per cent GST rate," Mohan said. The AAAR elucidated that CH 2106 90 99 encompasses 'ready to cook' food preparations and dismissed the appellant's analogy to 'sattu,' asserting that the substantial presence of additives in the appellant's products justifies the higher tax rate, Mohan added.

Air India utilising group airlines' engineering skills for improved aircraft maintenance works

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Group-owned Air India is utilising the engineering skills available with group airlines to carry out more maintenance work of the aircraft under its own quality control amid multiple instances of its legacy planes facing operational issues, according to a senior company official. The official also said the airline is keen to lease aircraft but the market is very tight, especially for wide-body planes. After the takeover by the Tata Group in 2022, loss-making Air India has been making

efforts for improvement and has embarked on a five-year transformation plan. To address the engineering issues more effectively, the official told PTI that Air India is bringing the work of line maintenance component in-house as well as using the licensing and skills of the group airlines to do some things in certain types of aircraft. Such an approach will help Air India in doing more "maintenance work under our own quality control", the official said on condition of anonymity. Air India is setting up a



maintenance base in Bengaluru and the facility will be operational by the end of next year. The group has four airlines -- Air India, Air India Express, AIX Connect (formerly AirAsia India), and Vistara. The systematic upgrade is being done to bring some aircraft to the healthy standard. These are old Boeing 787s and 777s, the official said, while speaking on the sidelines of the IATA annual general meeting in Dubai this week. The Boeing 777-200 LRs are the smallest fleet and ones that operate to the West Coast of the US. When something goes

wrong with one of them, then there is relatively few to substitute and do that mission. One disruption can have a big effect, the official said. In recent weeks, at least four ultra long-haul flights of Air India, operated by Boeing 777 aircraft, faced inordinate delays due to technical and operational issues. Air India has at least 43 legacy wide-body planes -- 16 Boeing 777s and 27 Boeing 787s. Earlier this week at a conference in the national capital, Air India CEO and MD Campbell Wilson said the airline will be retrofitting more than 100 planes, including 40

wide-body planes, and has ordered around 25,000 aircraft seats as part of revamping the fleet. On plans to lease more aircraft to address the issues being faced with legacy planes operating ultra long-haul flights, the official said the airline will be happy to lease aircraft but the market is very tight, especially for wide-body aircraft. At present, the carrier is also operating wide-body aircraft leased from Delta Air Lines and Etihad Airways. While the airline sees continued opportunities for expansion, the official said it is also aware about the

unreliability of the legacy aircraft and efforts are on to get them to the standard as well as replace them with new planes. Last year, Air India placed an order for 470 planes with Airbus and Boeing, including for 70 wide-body aircraft. The carrier is already operating six A350s, which will be utilised more in international routes in the coming months. As part of the consolidation of Tata Group's airline business, AIX Connect is getting merged with Air India Express, and Vistara is getting merged with Air India. Both mergers are expected to be complete by the end of this year.

PNB plans to expand its overseas footprint, to open representative office in Dubai

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Punjab National Bank plans to open a representative office in Dubai, as part of its plan to expand its global footprint. The bank has got the board of directors' approval for opening a representative office in Dubai and the process is on for seeking regulatory clearance, PNB managing director Atul Kumar Goel told PTI. Hopefully, he said, the representative office should come up during the current financial year, if all regulatory approvals are in place. As on March 31, 2024, PNB had presence in six countries by way of two subsidiaries (London-UK and Bhutan), one joint venture (Nepal), two representative offices (Myanmar and Bangladesh).

Talking about the strategy to improve profitability, he said, the focus would be on expanding retail, agriculture, MSME (RAM) portfolio, extending good corporate loans, controlling slippages and improving recovery. Besides, he said, the thrust would also be on improving the forex income and garnering higher fee income from selling third-party products to augment non-interest income. With regard to improving interest income, he said, the focus would be to increase low cost deposit CASA (Current Account Savings Account). CASA as a percentage of total deposit stood at 41.4 per cent at the end of March 2024, he said, the target is to improve beyond 42 per cent by the end of the current fiscal year. The bank intends to keep

credit cost below 1 per cent during this financial year. With all these efforts, he said, the Return on Assets (ROA) is expected to increase to 0.8 per cent during the year and touch 1 per cent by the end of March 2025, translating into a substantial jump in profit. Asked about anticipated business growth in the current financial year, Goel said, credit growth is expected to be 11-12 per cent, while deposit would be 9-10 per cent. To fund this business growth, the bank has taken approval of raising capital to the tune of Rs 17,500 crore from Tier I and Tier II bonds and share sale through private placement during the year. During FY'24, the bank had raised Rs 10,000 crore from Tier I and Tier II bonds at a very competitive rate, he added.

GX Group expects 66 per cent revenue growth to ₹500 crore in two years, to double exports

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Telecom gear maker GX Group expects its revenue to grow by 66 per cent to Rs 500 crore by financial year 2026, on account of growth in domestic business as well as exports, a top company official has said. The company makes Gigabit Passive Optical Network (GPON) gears that are required to run fibre-based broadband networks. GX Group also makes routers and switches as well as Internet of Things (IoT) devices in India. GX Group CEO Paritosh Prajapati told PTI that the company is looking to expand its manufacturing unit in India with an investment of Rs 100 crore in the current financial year. According to him, benefits from the telecom production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme

are one of the key growth drivers for the company. "We have achieved a 40 per cent year-on-year (YoY) growth in consecutive years, supporting us to grow from a Rs 300 crore to a Rs 500 crore company within the next two financial years. "We are planning to build India as our Global hub, therefore, we are transferring technology and knowledge and investing in our new research and development centre in Chennai," Prajapati said. GX Group was the first telecom gear maker to meet PLI targets and receive the incentives from the government. "We anticipate a 120 per cent export increase to major telcos in Africa, Europe and South East Asian countries, primarily by shifting from software to hardware export," Prajapati said.

Sheela Foam sees 14-15 per cent CAGR growth in next 3-5 years, says CEO Nilesh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sheela Foam, which owns two leading mattress brands — Sleepwell and Kurlon — expects a double-digit CAGR growth of 14 to 15 per cent in short to mid-term, its CEO Nilesh Mazumdar has said. Sheela Foam, which acquired the Kurlon brand last year, has rebranded it with a new logo and tagline, as it expects to scale up the Karnataka-based company's business beyond Rs 1,000 crore. Currently, the Indian mattress market is estimated to be around Rs 15,000 crore. Though the market is still dominated by local players, in the last 4-5 years, branded players are getting good traction and a shift is happening towards them in key cities. "When we look at the organised sector, both the brands put together, we have



about 29-30 per cent market share. In mattress, Sleepwell has around 18 per cent market share and Kurlon has 11 per cent," Mazumdar told PTI. Both the brands put together, are distinctly ahead of their rivals and would focus on gaining market share further with innovations. When asked about the company's growth outlook, Mazumdar said: "We have a 3-5 year outlook. We are looking at about 14-15 per cent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) growth." Though he did not share a brand-specific turnover, he

said putting both brands together, the company has around Rs 3,000 crore in revenue from operations. Sheela Foam completed the transaction to acquire Kurlon last October and the process of integration is currently going on, which may take a couple of quarters to complete. According to Mazumdar, both brands will have "independent" operations and identity. "Kurlon is an independent brand. Sleepwell is also an independent brand in the consumer's mind and we will keep both of them completely independent of each other, as far as the consumer mind space is concerned," he said. Over the rebranding of Kurlon, Mazumdar said the endeavour is to make it more "modern and contemporary". This will be backed by a new television campaign, he added.



BRAIN TUMOUR

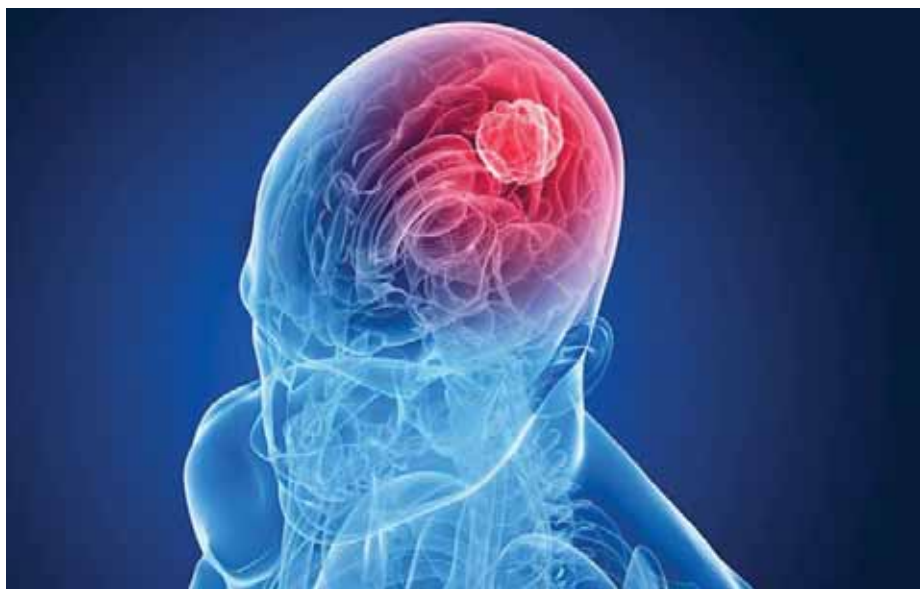
EARLY DETECTION, EARLY TREATMENT

Brain tumours pose a considerable health challenge worldwide, with India alone reporting approximately 33,000 new cases annually, predominantly impacting individuals aged 35 to 65. Despite the widespread fear and misunderstanding surrounding these conditions, not all brain tumours are cancerous, doctors tell **ARCHANA JYOTI**

As per the WHO, approximately 33,000 new incidents of brain tumours are detected each year in India alone and more than 60 per cent of these affected patients are in the prime of their life between the age of 35 and 65 years.

A brain tumour is an abnormal growth of cells in or around your brain. Spinal tumours and brain tumours are together called central nervous system (CNS) tumours. Brain tumours can be cancerous or noncancerous. Some tumours grow quickly, while others are slow-growing.

However, brain tumours are most feared and less-understood entities. It is a misconception that all brain tumours are cancerous. Almost 50% of brain tumours are benign and can be cured with surgery or radiosurgery. But brain tumours are dangerous because they can put pressure on healthy parts of the brain or spread into those areas. No doubt, prevention of brain tumours is challenging, as most cases are not associated with identifiable risk factors. There are 120 types of brain and central nervous system



tumours. It is ranked as 10th most common kind of tumour among Indians. The least aggressive type of tumours grows slowly while malignant tumours, containing cancer cells, grow rapidly invading other body systems. Its myth that only adults get tumours. Pediatric brain tumours are common, second most common cancer in children after blood cancer. While the cause of brain tumours is not known, as per research, exposure to ionising radiation from therapeutic and diagnostic medical procedures, atmospheric testing of nuclear weapons, industrial accidents, and heavy use of

mobile phones also increases the risk of gliomas - a type of brain tumour. Brain tumours impact brain function and health if they grow large enough to press on surrounding nerves, blood vessels and tissue. Tumours that develop in the brain are called primary tumours while tumours that spread to the brain after forming in a different part of the body are called secondary tumours, or metastatic brain tumours. Diagnosing a brain tumour typically involves a combination of neurological examinations, imaging tests such as MRI and CT scans, and biopsy for tissue analysis, say doctors.

Brazil, Indian scientists collaborate on research to create promising treatment for solid tumours

An article published in the Journal of Controlled Release details the results of a cross-border scientific collaboration that has developed an alternative for the treatment of solid tumours based on inhibition of the inflammatory tumour microenvironment (TME). Solid tumours are difficult to treat, partly owing to cells and substances in the TME that prevent drugs from penetrating and stop the patient's own immune system from combating the tumor. "These cells and molecules often fuel the growth of the tumour, which escapes immune surveillance," said Lucia Helena Faccioli, a co-author of the article. She is professor at the University of Sao Paulo's Ribeirao Preto School of Pharmaceutical Sciences (FCFRP-USP) in Brazil and heads the Center of Excellence for Quantification and Identification of Lipids (CEQIL), established with FAPESP's support via its Multiuser Equipment Program. "Immune cells that promote and inhibit tumors tend to be always in a tug-of-war in the TME, where metabolites, lipid mediators, cytokines and chemokines play an important role in the dominance of immunosuppressive nature," the article states. The team developed nanomicelles (very small particles, measuring between 1 and 100 nanometers) comprising different substances and for this reason termed chimeric. The chimeric nanomicelles were composed of phospholipids, docetaxel (DTX), a chemotherapy medication that destroys tumor cells, and dexamethasone (DEX), an anti-inflammatory drug widely used to reduce production of various inflammatory substances, such as prostaglandin E2 (PGE2). Tests in laboratory animals showed that these DTX-DEX NMs were highly effective when administered intravenously, reducing tumor size and increasing survival. Untreated animals always died aged 28-30 days, while treated animals survived to age 44-50 days, according to Faccioli. "The treatment induced a reduction of more than five times in tumour volume compared with untreated tumours in the colon cancer model," Bajaj said. The nanomicelles reduced and altered the cells around the tumor that prevent action by the immune system, favored an increase in specific types of white blood cell that kill tumour cells, and inhibited secretion of PGE2, an inflammatory substance in the tumor microenvironment that interferes with the anti-tumor action of certain defense cells. "Although these studies involved animals, the results are highly promising and point to the possibility of studies in humans, as the compounds used in the nanomicelles have been approved for human use," said Faccioli, who conducted postdoctoral research at the National Heart and Lung Institute, Imperial College London (UK). The other co-authors of the study include Viviani Nardini, a researcher in FCFRP-USP's Department of Clinical, Toxicological and Bromatological Analysis, and scientists affiliated with Indian institutions, led by Avinash Bajaj, head of the Nanotechnology and Biological Chemistry Laboratory at the Regional Center for Biotechnology in Faridabad, Haryana. Besides USP and Bajaj's lab, Amity Institute of Integrative Sciences and Health (Haryana), the Department of Surgical Oncology at All India Institute of Medical Sciences (Delhi), the National Institute of Immunology (Delhi) and the National Institute of Biomedical Genomics (Kalyani, West Bengal) also took part in the research.

SYMPTOMS

The symptoms of brain tumour depend on the size and location of the brain tumour. Brain cancer shares many symptoms with several less serious conditions, especially in the early stages. Many of the symptoms are common and unlikely to indicate brain cancer. Brain tumour symptoms are similar regardless of whether they are cancerous (malignant) or noncancerous (benign). They differ depending on the type, location in the brain, and the

- stage of the tumour. Some of the most common symptoms include:
- Headache episodes
 - Seizures
 - Vision problems
 - Memory loss
 - Mood changes
 - Loss of balance
 - Nausea
 - Fatigue
 - Anxiety or depression
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Speech problems
 - Feeling confused or



- disoriented
- Loss of coordination
- Muscle weakness
- Tingling or stiffness on one side of the body

The prognosis for brain tumour is greatly improved by early detection. If one experiences any of the above symptoms with regularity or think that their symptoms are more significant, they need to see a doctor as soon as possible for an evaluation, as per health experts.

DOCTORS SPEAK

DR MANISH VAISH

Senior Director of Neurosurgery at Max Super Speciality Hospital, Vaishali,



"Brain tumours can be sneaky. Early signs often feel like everyday issues you might brush off. New or worsening headaches, especially those worse in the morning and accompanied by nausea, could be a red flag. Difficulty concentrating, speaking clearly, or understanding others might signal a problem. Watch for personality changes, weakness on one side of the body, or blurry vision. Even slight dizziness or balance issues shouldn't be ignored. If you persistently

experience any of these symptoms, don't hesitate to see a doctor. Early detection of a brain tumor is crucial for a better chance of successful treatment. A little awareness can make a big difference."

DR YASHPAL SINGH BUNDELA

Senior Consultant at Sushrut Brain and Spine, Delhi



"A brain tumour diagnosis can be scary, but early detection is key to a brighter future. The sooner you identify the tumour, the more treatment options become available. Also, surgery can be more precise, minimizing side effects. Additionally, radiation and medication are often more effective when the tumour is smaller. While treatment can cause fatigue, weakness, or thinking changes, rehabilitation, and support groups help you manage them. You might need to adjust your daily routine or work, but open communication with loved

ones and employers can ease the process. Remember, many people thrive after an early brain tumour diagnosis. Focus on healthy habits, emotional well-being, and stay connected."

DR PRAVEEN GUPTA

Principal Director and Chief of Neurology, Fortis Hospital



"Amidst the fast pace of our daily living, we may easily overlook how much stress deeply affects our neurological well-being. It is possible for stress to secretly sneak in like a thief in the night and foster an atmosphere that can see brain tumors grow therein. We will protect ourselves from the invasion by stress by strengthening our mental fortresses with activities that encourage peace and resilience. For instance, let us practice mindfulness meditation or simply create time to think without any

distraction so as to guard against it with devotion towards mental health needs. Awareness of symptoms can lead to early diagnosis, faster and better treatment of tumors."

ORS, a potent tool to beat child diarrhoea

Oral Rehydration Salts stands as a potent weapon in the battle against childhood diarrhoea. Now, with a new formula endorsed by WHO, it's poised to deliver even greater impact, saving more young lives worldwide. **ARCHANA JYOTI** reports

The fight against diarrhoea in children has received a significant boost with the release of a new formula for oral rehydration salts (ORS) by the World Health Organization (WHO) recently. Since its adoption in 1978, ORS has been a cornerstone in the battle against diarrhoea deaths in children, contributing to a notable reduction in mortality rates. However, recognizing the need for further improvement, WHO spearheaded extensive research, resulting in the development of an enhanced ORS formula. UNICEF estimated that about 9% of all deaths of young children worldwide — about 1,200 children under 5 every day — occurred because of diarrheal disease in 2021. In India, diarrhoea is the third leading cause of child mortality. Despite the importance of ORS which can easily prevent dehydration caused by diarrhoea, only 60.6% of children receive this essential treatment, according to recent NFHS-5 data. The new formula, backed by research conducted in five developing countries among children with acute diarrhoea and dehydration, boasts a low-sodium, low-glucose composition. This

innovation promises to reduce the need for intravenous fluids by 33%, potentially leading to fewer hospitalizations, diminished secondary infections, and lower healthcare costs. For over two decades, WHO and UNICEF have recommended a single formulation of glucose-based ORS, which has been effective in combating diarrhoea disease globally. However, ongoing efforts to refine ORS have been underway, aiming to improve its efficacy and clinical benefits. The latest breakthrough, achieved through a reduction in osmolality, demonstrates promising outcomes in reducing stool output and vomiting in diarrheal patients. The recommended ORS formulation, with a total osmolality of 245 mOsm/l, has shown improved efficacy in treating acute non-cholera diarrhoea in children. Additionally, studies indicate its effectiveness in managing cholera in adults, albeit with careful monitoring due to the risk of transient hyponatremia. With this advancement, WHO and UNICEF now advocate for the widespread adoption of the new ORS formula, replacing the previous standard formulation.



Read the label before purchasing ORS	
ORS	Not ORS
The label will read - 'ORS based on WHO formula'	The label will read - 'not an ORS'
Used to replace fluids and electrolytes lost during diarrhoea	The label says that it is not to be consumed during diarrhoea. Might be called an energy drink/ready-to-serve fruit beverage
The composition is as per the WHO guidelines	There is no mention of the WHO-recommended formula

NEW ORS FORMULA

The total substance concentration (including that contributed by glucose) should be within the range of 200-310 mmol/l.

The individual substance concentration:

- Glucose should be at least equal that of sodium but should not exceed 111 mmol/l
- Sodium should be within the range of 60-90 mEq/l
- Potassium should be within the range of 15-25 mEq/l
- Citrate should be within the range of 8-12 mmol/l
- Chloride should be within the range of 50-80 mEq/l

While this single ORS formulation is endorsed, established criteria ensure its quality and effectiveness, reinforcing its role as a frontline treatment for diarrheal disease. As India grapples with severe heat conditions, doctors have recommended WHO-based ORS for adults as well as children to beat dehydration and diarrhea. Pankaj Garg, Senior Consultant in Neonatology at Delhi-based Sir Gangaram Hospital said, "Diarrhoea results in rapid fluid

loss and electrolyte imbalances, leading to dehydration. ORS is a simple yet highly effective solution to replenish lost fluids and electrolytes, preventing complications and promoting faster recovery in young children," said Dr Garg. While ORS is safe and effective, the expert warned against the incorrect mixture of salt or sugar in water as it can be harmful. "Incorrect homemade solutions or sugary drinks can disrupt this balance, leading to severe health

risks such as worsening dehydration or even death in extreme cases," cautioned Dr Garg. Dr Mohsin Wali, Consultant Physician at Sir Ganga Ram Hospital too stressed on the importance of selecting the correct ORS in the market. "Choosing the right ORS is crucial for effectively managing diarrhoea and dehydration. It's vital to differentiate between ORS and commercially available sugary drinks. While these beverages may offer some electrolytes and fluids, they lack the crucial glucose-sodium and potassium balance necessary for rapid and effective rehydration," said Dr Wali. Sugary drinks may provide temporary relief but do not address the core issue of dehydration. Dr Wali said one should opt for an ORS formulation approved by the WHO, specifically designed for this purpose. Most of these ORS packages will have "WHO" written on them. By understanding the benefits of ORS and its appropriate use, we can save the lives of many kids every year particularly during the hot summer months, he added.

SOUTH AFRICA TAKE ON PLUCKY BANGLADESH

PTI ■ NEW YORK

South Africa will hope for a better batting performance when they take on a plucky Bangladesh in their Group D match of the T20 World Cup here on Monday. Both teams will have their task cut out as they will have to navigate the unpredictable surface at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium. While South Africa may have a slight edge having played their previous two games here, Bangladesh are somewhat familiar with the conditions having faced India in their warm-up fixture at this venue. South Africa laboured to victory against the Netherlands on Saturday and their batters didn't look comfortable in the win against Sri Lanka either while chasing 103 and 77 respectively. The Proteas are not expected to tinker with their four-pronged pace attack comprising Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Marco Jansen and Ottniel Baartman that has served them well in the tournament so far with Keshav Maharaj taking on the spin duties.



The batters, however, will have to do better. Against the Netherlands, South Africa managed just 33 after 10 overs. Had it not been for their No. 4 Tristan Stubbs and David Miller, who walked in at number six to score an unbeaten fifty, the Proteas would have been staring at a hat-trick of defeats at the hands

of the Dutch at the World Cups. A win will put South Africa firmly in the driver's seat for a Super Eight spot. History is also on South Africa's side as they haven't ever lost to Bangladesh in T20s and have beaten the Tigers in each of the last two editions of the World Cup.

Bangladesh began their campaign with a win over rivals Sri Lanka which will boost their morale. But like the Proteas, the Bangladesh batters will also have to do better. They had struggled in the warm-up game against India and also against Sri Lanka. The top-order is prone to

collapses and while Liton Das has done well, the others have to take more responsibility, especially in testing conditions. All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is not firing either with the ball or the bat, which is a cause for concern for Bangladesh. Bangladesh's pace attack lacks a genuine tearaway fast bowler who can rock the opposition at the top and they might struggle against a formidable South African line-up comprising several power hitters.

TEAMS (FROM):
South Africa: Aiden Markram (c), Ottniel Baartman, Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Bjorn Fortuin, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Keshav Maharaj, David Miller, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Ryan Rickelton, Tabraiz Shamsi, Tristan Stubbs.
Bangladesh: Najmul Hossain Shanto (c), Taskin Ahmed, Litton Das, Soumya Sarkar, Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Shakib Al Hasan, Tawhid Hridoy, Mahmud Ullah Riyad, Jaker Ali Anik, Tanvir Islam, Shak Mahedi Hasan, Rishad Hossain, Mustafizur Rahman, Shoriful Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib.



Australia nails England by 36 runs in the T20 World Cup

AP ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Defending champion England charged at Australia's tournament-best 201 total and came up 36 runs short in a one-sided Twenty20 World Cup contest on Saturday. The first big heavyweight match - a day before India vs. Pakistan - failed to live up to the billing as Australia impressively squeezed England, which hit only three boundaries in the last six overs at Kensington Oval. Forced to bat first, Australia made a brutal start by opens David Warner and Travis Head - 70-0 in 4.5 overs - but was pulled back and posted 201-7, the highest total in a week-old tournament featuring tricky pitches. Tasked with making the third biggest successful run chase in tournament history, England took a swipe but decayed to 165-6. Adam Zampa and Pat Cummins took two cheap wickets each. Australia moved on top of Group B with two wins from two matches, while England remained winless with Oman and Namibia to come. England threw offspin at left-handed openers Warner and Head without success. Head smashed Will Jacks' first two deliveries for sixes, and Warner smoked him in the same over. Pace didn't bother the batters either. Warner hit three sixes and a boundary in one Mark Wood over. Warner, playing England for possibly the last time, was out for 39 off 16 when he backed up to a Moeen Ali delivery that stayed low. Head went in the next over, bowled by Jofra Archer for 34 off 18. Australia finished the

powerplay 74-2. Adil Rashid was put on the roof by captain Mitchell Marsh, and Chris Jordan went for 18 in an over. A change to Liam Livingstone's legspin was profitable, as Marsh was stumped for 35 and three balls later Glenn Maxwell departed for 28. Marcus Stoinis greeted Rashid with a one-handed six over backward square, and smacked Livingstone over his head. Australia reached 200 with three balls to go, and Stoinis was out for 30 off 17 - Jordan's 100th T20 wicket - and Cummins was run out. England's chase was measured but cruising. Phil Salt and Jos Buttler had them 54-0 after the powerplay then took 19 runs off a Mitchell Starc over. Zampa spun the momentum back Australia's way. His first ball bowled Salt for 37 off 23. Buttler then hit Zampa straight to backward point after 42 off 28, including five boundaries and two sixes. England was 92-2 in the 10th over and on track, but the middle order failed to fire as they were pinned down by the Australian battery. Starc was expensive but his brilliant diving catch on the boundary removed Jacks. England needed 14 runs an over with seven to go, and blasted 20 off Maxwell, including three sixes by Ali. But Maxwell then caught Jonny Bairstow on the boundary for a 13-ball 7 and blew a kiss to the England fans who had been ribbing him. After Ali was hairy in the deep for 25 off 15, Harry Brook and Livingstone were tied down by Hazlewood, Cummins and Zampa, the man of the match.

Earlier, David Miller bailed South Africa out of deep trouble against their bogey team the Netherlands in a four-wicket win on Long Island. Miller's unbeaten 59 off 51 balls, with four sixes and three boundaries, rescued South Africa from 12-4 in the fifth over. This was after the Netherlands was restricted to 103-9. Miller and Tristan Stubbs, with 33, saved the day in making 106-6 with seven balls remaining. The Netherlands was going for a hat trick of wins against South Africa in World Cups, after winning their T20 in 2022 and one-day international in 2023. Chasing a paltry 104 for victory, South Africa's big T20 hitters failed. Quinton de Kock was run out for a duck, and fellow opener Reeza Hendricks was bowled for 3. Aiden Markram was caught behind playing down the leg side for a three-ball duck and Heinrich Klaasen holed out for 4. Dutch medium-pace Vivian Kingma finished his four overs with 2-12. Miller and Stubbs put on a cautious 65 off 72 balls on a challenging pitch. Stubbs was caught in the 17th over and Marco Jansen was dismissed for a golden duck in the next over, and the situation tensed up again. But Miller held his nerve and the Proteas earned their second win in two games in Group D. Earlier, pacer Ottniel Baartman grabbed 4-11 in four overs as the Netherlands was cut down to 48-6 in 11.5 overs. Sybrand Engelbrecht scored 40 off 45 balls to anchor the Dutch, and Logan Van Beek scored 23 to push the total past 100.

Pulling out of IPL best thing for me moving forward into this World Cup, says Zampa

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Australia spinner Adam Zampa said that pulling out of IPL 2024 was the "best thing" to do coming into the T20 World Cup, adding that skipping the league also allowed him to spend time with family and tend to injuries. Zampa played a pivotal role Australia's 36-run win against arch-rival England at the Kensington Oval here on Saturday with the leg-spinner getting rid of both the openers, Phil Salt and Jos Buttler, in quick succession after they had given the defending champions a solid 73-run start in the chase of 201/7. "Yeah, obviously made that decision a little while ago to pull out of the IPL and I

thought it was the best thing for me moving forward into this World Cup," said Zampa at the post-match press conference. "I was tired, I had some niggles and I'm a family man as well, so trying to put them first over work sometimes is pretty important. "I actually am a bit of a slow starter and I put in a little bit of extra work. My body feels great and I just did that bit of extra work. Maybe a bit more bowling than I usually would before a tournament like this. And then the practice games and everything just feels nice at the moment," he added. With the win, Australia climbed to the top of Group B with four points, while England slumped to fourth. Cricket pundits have started



drawing comparisons between Zampa and the legendary Shane Warne, following the former's crucial role in Australia's title-winning run at the 2021 T20 World Cup. Zampa also stepped up in big matches during the ODI World Cup last year, but the 32-year-old said the thought

had never crossed his mind. "Never really thought of it that way, to be honest. Like I had to fight for my position in the team for a long time. And then I was lucky enough to have captains that backed me, (Aaron) Finch really backed me in. And it's the same with (Pat) Cummins and (Mitchel)

Marsh as well. "And under this coaching management, my role is clear, I've done the work over time to build up that skill level. But in terms of actually my role in the team, I get backed to take wickets and try and win the game for us and I absolutely feel that with our leadership. Zampa feels his skills had improved over the years. "As I said, I reckon I did the work when I was young, I went through some rough patches for sure, I got dropped I was in and out of the team a little bit and then I was probably in the team and not bowling that well - but in the last few years that skill is definitely better than it was eight years ago when I started. And then as I said, the leadership, it helps me feel at home."

Sanjivani bags top spot in 10,000 m event in Portland

PTI ■ PORTLAND (USA)

Asian Championships bronze medallist runner Sanjivani Jadhav won the gruelling women's 10,000m race at the Portland Track Festival High-Performance Meet, clocking a personal best time of 32:22.77 seconds here. Portland has turned out to be a happy hunting ground for the 27-year-old long-distance runner, who had finished second in the event last year, registering 32:46.88 seconds, her first sub-33 mark. Another Indian in the fray, Seema finished fifth clocking 32:55.91. Commonwealth and Asian Games medallist, Avinash Sable clocked 8:21.85 seconds



in men's 3000m steeplechase to finish second, though he was a good 10 seconds adrift of his national record of 8:11.20, set at the 2022 CWG where he had

won the silver medal. American Kenneth Rooks, winner of the 3000m steeplechase national title at the 2023 USA Outdoor Track

and Field Championships, took the top spot clocking 8:18.77, and coming close to the meet record of 8:18.55. Ace Indian women's long-distance runner Parul Chaudhary, winner of gold (5000m) and silver (3000m steeplechase) at the Hangzhou Asian Games last year, finished third in steeplechase, clocking 9:31.38 seconds, which was nearly 16 seconds adrift from the national record of 9:15.31 in her name set in Budapest last year. Another Indian in the event, Priti, was 20th clocking 10:12.88 seconds. Several Indian elite middle and long-distance athletes currently training in Colorado are competing in Portland Track Festival.

Puja Tomar becomes first Indian to win in UFC

PTI ■ KENTUCKY

India's Puja Tomar scripted history as she became the first mixed martial arts fighter from the country to win a bout at the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) in Louisville here. Debutant Tomar eked out a 30-27, 27-30, 29-28 split-decision win over Brazil's Rayanne dos Santos in the straw-weight (52kg) bout on Saturday. "This win is not my win. This win is for all Indian fans and all Indian fighters. Before everyone thought that Indian fighters did not stand anywhere. I only thought I have to win and show the world that Indian fighters are not losers," Tomar told Sony Sport Network after her win. The 30-year-old, known as "cyclone", signed a contract with the UFC last year in October to become the first woman from India to compete in the biggest Mixed Martial Arts promotion. Anshul Jubli and Bharat Kandare have



represented India on the world stage in the UFC, as has Canada-based Arjan Singh Bhullar. "I feel great, I had come from home thinking that I will win. I have worked really hard that's why I am here and the crowd is cheering me. I was very strong

and motivated so that's why I won." Born in Budhana village of Uttar Pradesh's Muzaffarnagar, Tomar is a five-time national wushu champion and also has a background in karate and taekwondo. "I was confident of winning. I attacked a lot. But I wasn't able to give my 100 percent. I felt pressured in the second round. I need to improve on a lot of skills like take downs. "My MMA journey was not easy, this win is for my mother, she has fought with the world for me. So this win is for her." She has competed in other tournaments including Matrix Fight Night, where she won the straw-weight title twice. MMA is a full-contact combat sport based on striking, grappling and ground fighting, incorporating techniques from various combat sports from around the world. Ultimate Fighting Championship is an American mixed martial arts promotion company.

Ronaldo, Modric go to Euro 2024 showing age is no boundary for soccer's modern stars

AP ■ LONDON

Aged 39 and about to play in a record-extending sixth European Championship, Cristiano Ronaldo's longevity at soccer's highest levels almost defies belief. Luka Modric is 38, still performing for Real Madrid and will be expected to provide the X-Factor for Croatia at the Euros in Germany, which start June 14. The best players are extending their careers for longer despite the increased pace and intensity of the modern game. Higher levels of fitness and stamina are being demanded of athletes, but that is being matched by ever-improving expertise in how to maximize performance. "Sports science has had an impact on how we prepare the modern-day player in terms of diet, nutrition, lifestyle, (and) training programs. We've moved out of the 80s and 90s with the increased level of professionalism," Tony Strudwick, a sports scientist with more than three decades of experience in soccer, told The Associated Press.

Strudwick has held prominent roles at Manchester United, Arsenal and England and is currently director of medical at West Bromwich Albion. He worked with Ronaldo at United when the Portugal forward first established himself as one of the best players in the world. "He just set himself up for success," Strudwick said. "I said four or five years ago, knowing how professional Ronaldo was, he could play up to the age of 40. That was no problem." With his 40th birthday in sight, Ronaldo shows no sign of being ready to quit. And, with the advancement of sports science, the longevity that the likes of Ronaldo and Modric are achieving could become the norm. **ATTITUDE:** It's not so much that athletes have changed physically over the years - rather it has been a shift in mentality. "We have seen a kind of evolution in professionalism as opposed to an evolution in genetics," Strudwick said. "It wasn't that players were unprofessional (in the past). They just didn't know what

they didn't know. There's a lot more scrutiny on players in terms of accountability." Improvements in player lifestyle are lengthening careers, with many using the services of fitness and conditioning experts to ensure they remain in prime condition even during the offseason. Ryan Giggs took on yoga in his later years to help extend his career and allow him to play for United until he was 40. **DIET:** Many top players also rely on the services of private chefs who deliver daily meals that are nutritionally balanced while also being of restaurant quality. That's in addition to what's provided by elite clubs, which have nutrition departments to help players keep food diaries and provide them with diet coaching. In the past, some players would have pre-match meals of steak. Much has changed, with some managers banning sauces at the table. Rod Thornley, a masseur who worked with Manchester United and England, can remember when Italian coach



Fabio Capello took charge of the Three Lions. "The first-ever pre-match

meal was just a massive bowl of pasta. No sauce, just pasta," Thornley told the AP. "The lads were looking around, going 'What is this? We can't eat this.' And that's all

he offered. That was it." **INJURY PREVENTION:** Massage plays a role in avoiding soft tissue injury. Contemporary players will have several massages throughout the week at the training ground or home. "With the more exercise you do, the more tight your muscles become," Thornley said. "You are affecting muscles. You're affecting muscle mass, you're affecting your buildup of tightness, your lack of elasticity in the muscle. "It's a huge part of keeping a player fit, keeping a player healthy, keeping them on the pitch." Ice baths are also used to help recovery. **MONEY:** For all the ambition of players to continue as long as they can, there is also a clear financial incentive at a time when the rewards have never been higher. It only makes sense for a player to want to extend their earning potential. Ronaldo, for instance, is reportedly paid USD 200 million a year playing for Al Nassr in the Saudi League. He is the CEO of the money-

making machine that is his playing career. It is something Strudwick calls the "rise of the entrepreneur" soccer player. And it can apply to players much lower down the food chain than Ronaldo. "There is a big incentive to keep your career going," Strudwick said. "An extra five years at the back end of your career sets up the modern footballer for a very, very comfortable future." **DRIVE:** In the case of Ronaldo, a remarkable career that has seen him win five Ballon d'Or awards for the best player in the world is no accident, according to Thornley. They worked together at United, where Ronaldo won the first of his five Champions League titles. "Ronaldo just had that mentality where he was just wanting to be the best at everything," Thornley said. "He wanted to be the best player in the world from the second he turned up there. He was just one of those lads that you knew he would do whatever it took to be that person, and he did, and he proved it."