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SUU KYI SPENDS ANOTHER BIRTHDAY IN JAIL

WORLD 8

BIDEN STUMBLES IN FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE WITH TRUMP

MONEY 10

MARKETS SNAP RECORD-BREAKING RALLY

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DELHI DELUGE AFTER 90 YEARS

INDEPENDENT INDIA'S CAPITAL CHALLENGE



(Left to right): Parked vehicles are damaged by the collapse of a departure terminal canopy at New Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport following heavy pre-monsoon rains in New Delhi; Pragati Maidan tunnel underpass waterlogged and waterlogging at the Minto Bridge underpass on Friday Photos: PTI and Ranjan Dimri/The Pioneer

RAJESH KUMAR/SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

After enduring scorching heat for several weeks, the national capital on Friday witnessed heavy rainfall, breaking an 88-year record of precipitation in a single day, causing flooding and massive traffic jams across the city. According to the Meteorological Department, Delhi recorded 228.1 mm of rainfall between 8:30am on Thursday and 8:30am on Friday, the highest 24-hour rainfall in June since 1936.

The IMD data showed 148.5 mm of rain, much of this coming in just a three-hour window between 2:30 am 5:30 am. "The highest ever rainfall recorded in 24 hours at Safdarjung, the primary observatory of Delhi, during the month of June was 235.5 mm on June 28, 1936. The 228.1 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours ending at 8.30 am on Friday is three times more than the June rainfall average of 74.1 mm and the highest for the month since 1936. On June 24, 1936, 235.5 mm rainfall was

recorded in the month of June in Delhi. On June 24, 1933, 139.7 mm rainfall was recorded while Delhi recorded 191.6 mm rainfall on June 30, 1981," the IMD said. "They are checking 24-hour rainfall records for every year since then to see whether this is the second-highest spell after that," officials added. IMD data showed 228.1 mm of rainfall was recorded at Safdarjung, the city's primary weather station, 192.8 mm at Lodhi Road, Mausam Bhavan, 150.4 mm at Ridge,

106.6 mm at Palam, and 66.3 mm at Ayanagar in the last 20 to 30 hours. The IMD, which defines very heavy rain as rainfall amounting to between 124.5 and 244.4 mm in a day, said later in the morning that the monsoon has arrived. The downpour began around 3 am. In many residential areas, locals had to wade through knee-deep to waist-deep water to leave their homes. Water-logging in many areas of the city led to a flood-like situation forcing vehicles to crawl in massive traffic jams.

One killed in Airport collapse

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Heavy rain accompanied by thunderstorms and lightning, hit Delhi-NCR in the small hours of Friday morning causing severe water-logging and flooding in various parts of the national Capital. Flooded roads witnessed massive gridlock and miles-long traffic snarls causing too much inconvenience to road

users. Under the impact of the downpour, a portion of the canopy at the Indira Gandhi International Airport's Terminal 1 (T1) collapsed and fell down killing a cab driver and injuring at least six others. The falling debris enshrouded several cars parked under the canopy. Following the incident, departure of all flights from Terminal 1 were temporarily

suspended and shifted to Terminal -3. Suspension of operations at T-1 comes at a time when the expanded terminal was supposed to open after a long wait. Passengers now stare at chaos in the oncoming weekend of summer holiday and peak travel season as Delhi and NCR schools reopen from July 1 onwards. A Delhi International Airport

Limited (DIAL) statement said that a technical committee had been set up to investigate the roof collapse. Union Minister of Civil Aviation Kinjarapu Rammohan Naidu took stock of the situation after the roof collapse and rushed to Safdarjung Hospital to visit those affected. "We are taking this incident very seriously", Naidu said.

NEET not so neat in Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The NEET and NET row rocked Parliament on Friday with the Congress-led Opposition alleging their voice was being muzzled and the BJP-led ruling alliance NDA declaring that the government was ready for discussion as per tradition and by maintaining decorum.



Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi speaks in the Lok Sabha during ongoing Parliament session in New Delhi on Friday PTI

While proceedings of the Lok Sabha were adjourned for the day before noon, the attempts to run Rajya Sabha ended with Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar remarks of "worst sacrilege that could be committed for this temple of democracy" following heated exchange of words with Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge who stepped in the Well of the House. Kharge claimed he was forced to take the step as he was being humiliated by the Chair and his voice along with those of other Opposition members went unheard. Both Dhankar and Speaker Om Birla and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju told Opposition members that they could discuss the matter during the course of the Motion of Thanks on the President's address but the

that the government and Opposition are together in addressing concerns of students," Rahul said. The House also witnessed some unusual scenes as Rahul Gandhi claimed his microphone was turned off and asked the Speaker to switch it on, to which the

latter gave a prompt rejoinder. "I don't have any button to switch off the microphone. There existed a similar set-up earlier. "There is no mechanism to gag the microphone," Birla retorted. Rajya Sabha too witnessed chaotic scenes as Opposition members, demanding a discussion on the alleged irregularities in the conduct of the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET), raised slogans and entered the Well of the House during the discussion on the Motion of Thanks on the President's address. Congress MP Phulo Devi Netam fainted earlier due to blood pressure and Dhankar instituted for arrangements.

NEWS BRIEFS

Hemant Soren gets bail

Ranchi: The High Court of Jharkhand on Friday granted bail to former Chief Minister Hemant Soren in a money laundering case linked to a land scam. The court had on June 13 reserved its order on Soren's bail plea. ...The petitioner is directed to be released on bail on furnishing bail bond of ₹50,000 with two sureties of the like amount each," said the order passed by the single bench of Justice Rongon Mukhopadhyay.



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राजस्थान की राजधानी सिंधु नदी पर चलाए गए निर्माण कार्य का समाप्ति सूचना

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Notice It is informed to public at large that We, Raju Paswan S/o Sh. Sudhama Paswan R/o Panchpura Rawlinda Distt. Chhara Bihar...

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Table with 6 columns: Sr. No., Branch Name & Authorised Officer, Brief Description of Property, Total Liabilities, Reserve Price, Earnest Money Deposit, Detail of A/C No. & IFSC Code.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Presidential address

President's address, while highlighting various Govt achievements, fell short of raising some serious concerns

As the inaugural session of the 18th Lok Sabha progresses, it is evident that this Lok Sabha would be way livelier and more eventful than the previous one. Thanks to a more evenly distributed treasury and opposition benches. This was evident from the day one and in the address by President Droupadi Murmu to both houses of Parliament. Her address and drawn significant attention and controversy. In the customary joint address, President Murmu made a mention of the various achievements of the government, including its pervasive welfare schemes and the resilience of the Indian economy. The address, while highlighting various achievements of the Government was silent on various issues of national importance. For this the Opposition was vocal in criticising for its content and omissions, especially the exclusion of the ongoing violence in Manipur. The Opposition response was not ill founded but rooted in deeper political and social tensions prevailing in the State. The address, intended to set the tone for the parliamentary session, included references to several critical issues and achievements. Notably, it highlighted irregularities in examinations and touched upon the historical context of the Emergency imposed in 1975. The reference to the Emergency was frowned upon by the Congress which dubbed it as an effort to deflect attention from the current political scenario. However, the glaring omission of the escalating violence in Manipur stood out starkly. President Murmu addressed the troubling trend of examination paper leaks, acknowledging the impact on the credibility of academic processes. She emphasised the government's commitment to transparency and reform in examination systems, underscoring the need for stringent measures to ensure fairness and integrity. The mention of the Emergency, referred to as the 'biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack on the Constitution,' was a strategic move that dug up the historical blunder. This reference, while aimed at highlighting the Government's commitment to democracy, struck a nerve with the Congress, reminding them of a period they would prefer to distance themselves from. The most contentious aspect of President Murmu's speech was the omission of any direct mention of the violence in Manipur. The President's speech did acknowledge the government's broader efforts in the Northeast, citing increased allocations for development and initiatives under the Act East Policy, but this was seen as insufficient by many. The exclusion of the Manipur violence from the President's speech was perceived by the Opposition as an attempt to downplay the crisis and avoid accountability. The speech did not adequately address the concerns of the day and call for action from the Opposition regarding various pressing issues. Engaging with these concerns and outlining a collaborative approach to resolve the crisis could have fostered a more constructive political dialogue and demonstrated Govt's willingness to work across party lines.



President Murmu made a mention of the various achievements of the government, including its pervasive welfare schemes and the resilience of the Indian economy. The address, while highlighting various achievements of the Government was silent on various issues of national importance. For this the Opposition was vocal in criticising for its content and omissions, especially the exclusion of the ongoing violence in Manipur. The Opposition response was not ill founded but rooted in deeper political and social tensions prevailing in the State. The address, intended to set the tone for the parliamentary session, included references to several critical issues and achievements. Notably, it highlighted irregularities in examinations and touched upon the historical context of the Emergency imposed in 1975. The reference to the Emergency was frowned upon by the Congress which dubbed it as an effort to deflect attention from the current political scenario. However, the glaring omission of the escalating violence in Manipur stood out starkly. President Murmu addressed the troubling trend of examination paper leaks, acknowledging the impact on the credibility of academic processes. She emphasised the government's commitment to transparency and reform in examination systems, underscoring the need for stringent measures to ensure fairness and integrity. The mention of the Emergency, referred to as the 'biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack on the Constitution,' was a strategic move that dug up the historical blunder. This reference, while aimed at highlighting the Government's commitment to democracy, struck a nerve with the Congress, reminding them of a period they would prefer to distance themselves from. The most contentious aspect of President Murmu's speech was the omission of any direct mention of the violence in Manipur. The President's speech did acknowledge the government's broader efforts in the Northeast, citing increased allocations for development and initiatives under the Act East Policy, but this was seen as insufficient by many. The exclusion of the Manipur violence from the President's speech was perceived by the Opposition as an attempt to downplay the crisis and avoid accountability. The speech did not adequately address the concerns of the day and call for action from the Opposition regarding various pressing issues. Engaging with these concerns and outlining a collaborative approach to resolve the crisis could have fostered a more constructive political dialogue and demonstrated Govt's willingness to work across party lines.

PICTALK



Sadhus shout slogans as the first batch of pilgrims leaves for the Amarnath Yatra, in Jammu

Suu Kyi spends another birthday in jail



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Despite the Junta's desperate measures, including heightened repression and forced conscription, the resistance continues to gain ground

On June 19, 2024, Aung San Suu Kyi spent yet another birthday in prison, as she completed 79 and stepped into her 80th year. No one knows where she is. Even her son, Kim Aris, has not heard from her since receiving a thank-you note from her in January this year for a package he had sent her. Yet not a squeak was heard from leaders of Western democracies who were, not so long ago, condemning her incarceration and Myanmar's ruling junta which had usurped power through a coup on February 1, 2021, and unleashed savage repression as protests surged throughout the country. Clearly, Myanmar is no longer visible on the radar of the democratic world's concerns. There are doubtless possible explanations. Member countries of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) are engrossed with the war in Ukraine and the possibility of the latter turning into a wider European War, if not World War III. Liberal elements in several European countries are alarmed by the gains made by right-wing forces in the recent elections to the European Parliament. Prime Minister Rishi Sunak of the United Kingdom and President Emmanuel Macron of France are facing elections. Growing popular anger over Israel's continuing offensive in Gaza, which has caused around 40,000 deaths, a large part of whom are women and children, is worrying governments that continue to support the Netanyahu regime. President Joe Biden's worries range from Israel's war, the conflict in Ukraine, immigration, and fending off the challenge posed by Donald Trump in the November presidential elections in the US. Whatever the reasons, the fact is that Myanmar is no longer the global concern it was. Such things have happened before. Public and governmental spans of attention are proverbially ephemeral. It is this transience that mostly sustains autocracies. There is a perceptible process. The initial response to a coup is condemnation by democracies and,



often, the imposition of sanctions. Not all countries, however, react this way. Given the dynamics of global power play, some countries, mainly autocracies themselves, do not join the chorus of outrage. Rather, they rally behind the usurper. Mostly thanks to them, the sanctions do not work. The junta that had staged the coup carries on. New developments on the global scene consume the attention of countries condemning the coup. The junta is replaced by another entity as the principal target of outrage. Slowly, opposition towards it declines and there is a gradual trudge towards normalization of ties, particularly if the uniformed dictators relax their tyranny a little while retaining their grip on power. Is this what is going to happen in Myanmar? One does not know. It will, however, be of no credit to the world's democracies if this does not happen and the people of Myanmar are able to overthrow the junta forcibly, which, by the look of things, is by no means a remote possibility. The Sit-Tat (which, and not Tatmadaw, is the real name of the junta's army), has been suffering reverse after reverse ever since the opposition Three Brotherhood Alliance (henceforth the Alliance) launched its current offensive, codenamed



THE JUNTA'S GROWING DESPERATION IS REFLECTED IN THE STERN MEASURES IT HAS BEEN TAKING AGAINST THOSE IT REGARDS AS SURRENDERING OR DESERTING, THE KILLING OF ALL SUSPECTED OPPONENTS AND HEIGHTENED EFFORTS AT CONSCRIPTION GIVEN THE REFUSAL OF PEOPLE TO SERVE IN ITS FORCES

Operation 1027, on October 27, 2023. Comprising the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDA) operating in the Kokang Special Region of Northern Shan State, the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA), also active in Shan State, and the Arakan Army, based in the Rakhine State in the country's western part, it has been acting in close cooperation with the National Unity Government's military arm, the People's Democratic Force (PDF), and other ethnic armies like the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), the Karen Liberation Army (KNA), the Karenni Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), and one of the country's most powerful armed ethnic organisations, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). According to an analysis in the website *The Irrawaddy*, dated June 22, 2024, the junta has lost, since its coup on February, 2024, to the resistance forces one Military Regional Command, three Military Operational Commands, seven headquarters of the Border Guard Police Battalions, and 63 of the 545 military battalions besides more than 2,500 frontline bases including tactical and frontline bases of military divisions.

Among the latest gains by the resistance forces, Mohnaga Matters lists the Chin Brotherhood Force's capture of the junta's battalion station 304 in Chin State's Matupi township on June 17, 2024, and the KNLA's capture of Sukali military station, south of Myawaddy city, on June 18. The Junta's growing desperation is reflected in the stern measures it has been taking against those it regards as surrendering or deserting, the killing of all suspected opponents and heightened efforts at conscription given the refusal of people to serve in its forces. Indeed, those sentenced to death include Brigadier-General Zao Myo Win for surrendering to the MNDA. The junta has also killed a highly respected Buddhist monk, Bhaddanta Manindabhivamsa, who has been strongly critical of it by shooting at his car on June 19, Aung San Suu Kyi's birthday. Given its faltering conscription scheme, the junta has reportedly been planning to conscript women in some parts. Needless to say, all this only serves to swell the tide of anger against it sweeping the country. Time is running out for Myanmar's uniformed tyrants. (The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PLIGHT OF GIG WORKERS

Madam — The alarming unemployment rate and the availability of cheap labor in India enable multinational companies to dictate terms and exploit poor gig workers with low wages. Over the years, there has been significant outcry in the U.S. and Europe about companies like Amazon, which have been fined and investigated for poor working conditions for non-permanent employees. These commercially driven giants often prioritize profit over worker welfare. The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken cognizance of the dire working conditions in Amazon warehouses, where workers are forced to endure inhumane conditions without breaks, often in extreme heat. Despite regulations like the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, which aims to ensure the safety, health, and social security of contract laborers, the situation remains dire. To meet unrealistic and dangerous targets, unemployed youths are compelled to work under miserable and unhealthy conditions. Consumer indifference further exacerbates the situation, allowing such exploitation to continue unchecked. Regulatory agencies and consumer awareness can make a significant difference. It's crucial to recognize that the gig economy relies on underpaid employees, whose rights and well-being should be central to national development.

Vijay Singh Adhikari | Nainital

PRESERVING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Madam — This refers to the article, "The Dark Days of India's Emergency" (27-6-24). When India achieved independence, many doubted its ability to sustain a democratic republic for long. However, the Indian people have consistently demonstrated their wisdom, commitment to democracy, and their ability to resurrect it whenever it has been threatened. Indira Gandhi's declaration of the Emergency, despite being an act that stifled democracy, required considerable boldness. The hardships endured during that peri-

Integrity of India's education system



Scams and the Integrity of India's Education System The National Testing Agency (NTA) is under immense pressure following irregularities in this year's NEET-UG (medical), NET (teaching), and JEE (engineering) exams. The plight of the affected candidates, who prepared for months and traveled long distances to their exam centers, is heartbreaking. They now face the

daunting task of preparing for re-examinations, which could have a detrimental effect on their morale and undermine their faith in the system. These candidates come from diverse backgrounds, including corporate employees, housewives, and educators, making it difficult to balance their jobs and studies, let alone prepare for re-exams. There are significant flaws in the examination system, necessitating stringent legal actions and severe punishments for those responsible for these scams. Re-examinations only delay the admission process without addressing the root causes of the problem. Political parties should focus on addressing the underlying issues rather than exploiting the situation for political gain. They need to cooperate and propose constructive solutions to tackle this urgent matter. The states must collaborate with the central govt to restore the integrity of the education system.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

THE SPEAKER'S ELECTION

Madam — The election of Om Birla as Speaker was a foregone conclusion, serving merely as a formality to placate opposition parties. The tradition of allotting the Speaker's post to the ruling party and the Deputy Speaker's post to the opposition has been abandoned. Although AICC President asserted the INDIA bloc would not withdraw its candidate, Jairam Ramesh admitted they did not seek a division. Consequently, the opposition has forfeited its right to demand the Deputy Speakership. The trust deficit between the treasury benches and the opposition necessitated the election. Ideally, an agreement could have been reached where the opposition conceded the Speaker's post to the ruling party in exchange for the Deputy Speakership. This trust, if honoured, would have exposed any ruling party's deception.

KV Seetharamiah | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Directive on doctor's fees sparks controversy in Bihar

The debate over how much doctors should charge for consultations has heated up in Bihar after Pappu Yadav capped fees in his constituency

Pappu Yadav, an independent Member of Parliament from Purnia in Bihar, has sparked a heated debate by instructing doctors in his constituency to cap their consultation fees at 500 rupees. This directive has not only caused an uproar in medical and political circles but has also highlighted a long-ignored issue: the regulation of doctors' fees for patient consultations. Amid the political backlash and ongoing arguments, several critical questions arise: Who sets the consultation fees for doctors? Is there any mechanism to control the exorbitant fees that doctors often charge? What roles do the Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Medical Council of India (MCI) play in regulating these fees? Unfortunately, the answers appear bleak for patients. The IMA has distanced itself from the responsibility of setting doctor's fees, citing the "Clinical Establishments Act" as a reason for their inaction. In reality, doctors charge consultation fees ranging from 500 to 2,000 rupees per visit, with no standardization or over-



sight. Adding to the problem is the unethical practice of government doctors running private clinics, sometimes even during official hospital hours. In Bihar, it is common knowledge that government doctors often skip their hospital duties to treat patients privately. Many of these patients had initially visited them at government hospitals. Despite this rampant issue, the IMA has not implemented any regulations to curb this behavior, instead deferring the matter to state governments, stating they will follow any rules set by the states regarding private practice. In Bihar, however, such rules are frequently disregarded. Historically, whenever a state government has

attempted to ban private practice for government doctors, the medical community has reacted with strong opposition, organizing protests and strikes, which have left many patients without care. This ongoing struggle highlights the urgent need for regulatory reform in the medical sector to ensure fair and ethical treatment for all patients. The controversy ignited by Pappu Yadav's directive to cap consultation fees at 500 rupees underscores the urgent need for regulatory reform in India's medical sector. The outcry from both political and medical circles highlights the long-standing issue of unchecked and exorbitant consultation fees, which often range from 500 to 2,000

rupees, with no standardization or oversight. The Indian Medical Association (IMA) and the Medical Council of India (MCI) have largely abdicated responsibility, citing the "Clinical Establishments Act" as a reason for their inaction. Meanwhile, unethical practices persist, such as government doctors running private clinics during official hours, exacerbating the problem. In Bihar, the issue is particularly severe, with government doctors often neglecting their duties in public hospitals to treat patients privately. Attempts by state governments to regulate this practice have faced fierce opposition from the medical community, leading to protests and strikes that disrupt patient care. This situation reveals a critical need for comprehensive reforms to ensure fair and ethical medical practices. By addressing these challenges, regulatory bodies can create a more equitable healthcare system that prioritizes patient welfare over profit, ultimately fostering a more just and efficient medical landscape. (The author is a columnist, views are personal)

GYAN BHADRA





FIRST COLUMN

DISCOVERING WISDOM THROUGH A ZEN TALE

The truth is that the world around us is often a reflection of our inner world



RAVI VALLURI

There was a man who stumbled upon a Zen story which in several ways typified his state of mind, thought process, attitudes and his reactions and responses to various adverse situations in life.

Zen Story

Aeon's ago two men visit a Zen Master. The first man says, "I am thinking of moving into this town. What is it like to inhabit this place?"

The Zen Master pondered for a while and then questioned the man, "What was your old town like?"

The first man responds, "It was dreadful living in the town. Everyone was hateful. I loathed staying in the town. This therefore is the reason why I am looking for a fresh place to dwell."

The Zen Master replied instantly, "This town is very much the same. I do not think you should move here. You will discover the place to be resentful and you would end up hating and disliking everyone." This left the first man flummoxed and speechless.

The first man left in a disarray and the second one entered the room of the bearded Zen Master. The room was dimly lit but the virtuous one was incandescent with radiance, sitting silently.

The second man posed the same question, "Master I am thinking of moving to this town. What is it like?" The Zen Master was once again thoughtful and asked the second man, "What was your old town like?"

This man blessed with a cheery disposition exclaimed, "Oh, Master! It was wonderful. Everyone was brimming with confidence and zest; people were friendly and I was jollity personified. Right now, I am interested in a change of place though I am comfortable in the old place of dwelling."

The Zen Master nodded his head and with a twinkle in his eye replied, "This town is very much similar to your old one and I am positive that



you would feel at home in the new township. Welcome aboard."

Life is full of vicissitudes. There are high points and low ones. The first man faced constant misadventure in his old township. He squabbled with his wife, snarled at his children and was at odds with his superiors, juniors, and peers. He was not at peace with himself, with his energy/prana/chi levels at a low ebb.

While the second person, accepted all situations and people as they were. This resonates with one of sutras of the Art of Living, "Accept people and situations as they are." Such people do not find fault with any situation and are at peace with themselves. This becomes the state of their mind.

This Zen story pivots on the idea of karma. Whatever happens to anyone is the result of their own actions. We may travel around the world in the hope of escaping a life we condemned. What we will find instead is that we continue to carry our baggage with us wherever we go. Verily it applies to a positive mindset too, in that happiness is a matter of one's choice.

Upon reading the Zen story the man whose life was like that of the first individual decided to make a metamorphosis in his life and opted to be positive like the second man. He made a 360 degree turn in his thought process and broke the glass ceiling of negativity and accepted all challenges in life. "Invoke the valour in you. Just say, 'Okay, whatever comes, I am going to take it as a challenge.' When you invoke this energy, fear vanishes," says the spiritual master Gurudev Sri Sri Ravi Shankar.

(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)

Challenges ahead for RaGa as Leader of the Opposition



KS TOMAR

Rahul Gandhi's new avatar enhances his ability to foster the Opposition unity and effectively counter the BJP's influence within Parliament

Rahul Gandhi's decision to accept the Congress Working Committee's (CWC) offer to become the new Leader of the Opposition in Parliament may serve a dual purpose. Firstly, it will provide him with a statutory position under the law, positioning him as a direct rival to Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the 2029 elections, compelling Modi to take him seriously, unlike in the past. Secondly, despite being the strongest critic of the Prime Minister both inside and outside Parliament, Gandhi's voice has often been drowned out by the BJP's "shouting brigade" over the past decade. However, this scenario is poised to change as the BJP enters the Lok Sabha with a reduced strength of 240 MPs, down from 303 in the previous Lok Sabha. In contrast, the Congress has almost doubled its strength, increasing from 52 to 102 MPs, including three independents.

This bolstered presence will enable the Congress to counter the BJP's tactics more effectively. A tit-for-tat dynamic may emerge in Parliament: if the BJP's "shouting brigade" attempts to silence Rahul Gandhi, Congress MPs may respond by disrupting the Prime Minister's speeches. The overall parliamentary balance of power has shifted as well. The combined strength of the NDA (BJP and its allies) will be reduced to 294, down from 336 in the previous term. Meanwhile, the Congress-led UPA has increased its seats from 90 to 234, including several new additions, posing a significant challenge for the ruling party.

Challenges as Leader of the Opposition As the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in Parliament, Rahul Gandhi will face numerous challenges requiring a dedicated and full-time commitment. The role cannot be managed on an ad hoc basis as it demands continuous effort and strategic planning. Key responsibilities and strategies include:

Regular Interaction with Allies: Gandhi must engage regularly with leaders of allied parties to formulate strategies aimed at cornering the weakened BJP-led alliance in Parliament. Building and maintaining strong relationships with diverse political groups will be essential.

Aggressive yet Mature Approach: It will be crucial for Gandhi to demonstrate aggression balanced with maturity, particularly when highlighting issues of public importance. His ability to address these issues effectively in Parliament will be key to his success.

Unifying a Fragmented Opposition: One of the most significant challenges will be unifying a fragmented opposition. The diverse political ideologies and regional interests create a complex landscape, making consensus-building a critical yet difficult task.

Countering the Ruling Party's Narrative: Despite the BJP's reduced majority, countering its dominant narrative remains a formidable challenge. The ruling party's stronghold on media and public perception necessitates a strategic and compelling opposition narrative.

Scrutiny of Leadership Style: Gandhi's leadership style and communication skills will be under constant scrutiny. Establishing his credibility and demon-



RAHUL GANDHI MAY ALSO GAIN AN IMPORTANT POSITION AS THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE, WHICH PRIMARILY EXAMINES REPORTS FROM THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL

strating robust leadership in parliamentary debates and public forums are crucial for gaining public trust and support.

Responsibilities as LoP **Holding the Government Accountable:** Gandhi will lead the opposition's efforts in holding the government accountable. This involves articulating the opposition's stance on various issues, participating in debates, and ensuring effective representation.

Rallying Opposition Parties: He will need to rally opposition parties, build consensus, and coordinate their efforts. This can be challenging given the diverse ideologies and interests of different parties.

Effective Communication: Gandhi must communicate effectively within and outside Parliament. His speeches, statements, and interactions with the media will shape public perception and influence political discourse.

Strategic Decision-Making: Making strategic decisions regarding when to cooperate with the ruling party and when to oppose them requires astute political judgment. Balancing these choices will be crucial.

Mastery of Parliamentary Procedures: Understanding parliamentary rules, procedures, and tactics is crucial. Gandhi will need to master these to effectively challenge the government.

Raising Critical Issues: People expect the LoP to raise critical issues, propose alternatives, and offer constructive solutions.

Meeting these expectations will be key to Gandhi's effectiveness as LoP.

Rahul Gandhi may also gain an important position as the chairman of the Public Accounts Committee, which primarily examines reports from the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG). The PAC has a majority of government nominees and typically decides issues by vote. Additionally, as LoP, Gandhi would be part of various collegiums alongside the Prime Minister and Chief Justice of India (or government nominees), responsible for selecting the heads of key investigative and transparency agencies including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), Lokpal, Central Vigilance Commission (CVC), Chief Election Commissioner/Election Commissioners, and Chief Information Commissioner (CIC).

Historical Parallels: Indira Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi An amended version of Karl Marx's quote suggests that history repeats itself first as tragedy and not necessarily as farce; hence its recurrence has ended up enhancing Rahul Gandhi's prestige as LoP. Political observers note two stark similarities between the late Mrs. Indira Gandhi's comeback in 1980 and Rahul Gandhi's recent resurgence. Indira Gandhi earned the title "Bechari" in the eyes of the people due to the excesses and humiliation inflicted on her by the Janata Party after losing power, a fallout of the

Emergency's dark era. In the late 1960s, she was derisively called "Goongi Gudiya" (Dumb Doll) by her detractors, which ultimately helped her emerge strong and bounce back to power in 1980. Similarly, Rahul Gandhi's rejuvenation as a credible LoP in 2024 comes after being dubbed "Pappu" by the BJP.

At this juncture, experts suggest that the common people witnessed a privileged member of the Gandhi family walking in scorching heat and biting cold, highlighting their problems. This might have changed their opinion about him, leading them to perceive him as a "Bechara Shehzada" (Poor Prince), earning their sympathy and contributing to the BJP's undoing in the 2024 polls.

The NDA government's focus on Hindutva, anti-Muslim rhetoric, and tall promises failed to address people's real issues. Prime Minister Modi can be credited for popularizing the term "Shehzada" (Scion) for Rahul Gandhi, but this campaign ultimately transformed his image from "Pappu" to a credible national leader. Overall, Rahul Gandhi's leadership as LoP will significantly impact India's political landscape. To effectively represent the opposition in Parliament, he will need to rise to these challenges, demonstrating strong leadership and a commitment to addressing the concerns of the Indian people.

(The writer is a senior journalist and a policy analyst; views expressed are personal)

Union budget needs to adopt all-inclusive approach to health

India needs to spend more on infrastructure development, innovation, and accessibility for universal health coverage by 2030

As India anticipates the unveiling of the first comprehensive Union Budget under the Modi 3.0 government, the healthcare sector finds itself at a crucial crossroads. The interim budget has set a preliminary roadmap, yet achieving a transformative overhaul of the healthcare ecosystem requires a robust and unified effort. It is imperative to prioritize increased funding for healthcare infrastructure, innovation, and accessibility to create a new ecosystem that can support India's ambitious healthcare objectives. One of the primary expectations from the forthcoming budget is the reclassification of hospitals as infrastructure investments. This reclassification has the potential to attract substantial



SUGANDH AHLUWALIA

private sector investments, which are vital for the development of state-of-the-art healthcare facilities across the country.

Additionally, extending interest rate subventions for medical equipment could alleviate the financial strain on hospitals, facilitating the modernization of technology and improvement in service delivery. A significant step forward for India's healthcare system

would be the formulation of a roadmap to boost public healthcare expenditure to 3% of the GDP. According to the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Reserve Bank of India estimates, healthcare expenditure needs to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 18.9%. The current goal is to achieve 2.5% public expenditure on healthcare by 2025-26 and 3% by 2030-31.

While these targets are ambitious, they require meticulous planning and strategic execution to be realized. The economic burden of healthcare costs is a major concern for the lower and middle-income groups in India. High out-of-pocket expenditures, coupled with escalating healthcare costs and insurance barriers, neces-

sitate immediate government intervention. Incorporating advanced treatment methods into the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) and encouraging private health insurance companies to adopt similar practices can significantly enhance healthcare accessibility for these groups. The government must also place a strong emphasis on rural healthcare in its budget allocations.

Direct investments in healthcare infrastructure and medical personnel, along with targeted incentives to attract doctors and hospitals to underserved areas, are critical. This approach will expand healthcare coverage and spur innovation in insurance products, making comprehensive health-

care accessible to all, especially in rural regions where the need is most pressing. Physical infrastructure along with the human resources is essential for delivering quality healthcare.

Rational regulations and policies are critical to supporting India's aspiration to achieve UHC by 2030. Such regulations should enable seamless collaboration among all stakeholders, ensuring that quality healthcare services are accessible to all citizens, regardless of socio-economic status.

This approach will help address health disparities and improve overall health outcomes in the country. The private sector has a pivotal role in delivering quality healthcare services. Bridging the critical gaps in service delivery is

essential for achieving UHC, particularly in addressing the dual burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases. Health insurance is a vital component in the journey toward "Health for All." With low insurance coverage, many individuals face substantial out-of-pocket expenses when seeking healthcare services.

Implementing mandatory health insurance and gradually expanding coverage to include self-employed professionals and other currently excluded groups can pave the way for a more equitable healthcare system.

This strategy would ensure that all citizens have access to essential health services without financial hardship. Access to quality healthcare is fundamental for everyone, and UHC

is key in this regard. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), UHC means access to essential health services, including affordable medicines and vaccines, without financial difficulty. Strengthening health systems and essential infrastructure is vital for achieving UHC.

The private sector's investments in healthcare infrastructure and training health workers are significant contributions toward this goal. Achieving the goal of Healthcare for All by 2030 in India presents numerous opportunities but also requires overcoming significant barriers. A multi-faceted approach is essential for increasing access to and delivery of quality healthcare. Developing a

sustainable healthcare business model that integrates primary, secondary, and tertiary care systems is crucial. Such a model should emphasize affordability and high quality, enhancing the reputation of Indian healthcare. Substantial support for the hospital sector is also necessary, including a combination of investments and tax reliefs, to build infrastructure assets and provide top-tier healthcare services across the country. Bridging the rural-urban divide in critical care facilities is imperative to reaching the goal of Healthcare for All by 2030.

(The author is Chief Strategy Officer at Indian Spinal Injuries Centre, New Delhi. The views expressed are personal)

USA's Casey, world's number 1-ranked women's archer, seeks gold in Paris



AP ■ PARIS
It didn't take long for Brady Ellison to see that Casey Kaufhold was heading toward greatness. Ellison is a former world No. 1 men's archer who is heading to his fifth Olympics this year. He said when he first started teaming up with Kaufhold in 2019, the 15-year-old sometimes would beat him when they practiced. They won gold for the United States in the mixed team category at the Pan-American Games that year. "The beauty of the archery is that you get these talented people, and it doesn't really matter how old they are, they can hit," Ellison said. "And I knew that she

was good. Like, as soon as she made the World Cup teams and she was (an under-18) shooter that was making our senior teams, she was one of the best in the country. And if she made the team, any team that we were on, we had a chance to win." The fact that Ellison was a former world No. 1 resonated with Kaufhold, now 20 years old, and drove her to reach that status last year on the women's side. She became the first American woman to reach the top of the Sanlida World Archery rankings since they were established in 2001. She tops the recurve category. "That was huge for me," she said. "And I wanted to be that. And so to

accomplish that at 19 for the first time, that was like - I always knew I was going to get there, but never in a million years would I have imagined it would have been at 19." The rising star from Lancaster, Pennsylvania looks to become the first American to win Olympic gold in archery since 1996. She could become the first American woman to claim an individual medal since 1976, when Luann Ryon won gold in Montreal. Kaufhold also will participate in the team event with Catalina Gnoriega and Jennifer Mucino-Fernandez. Kaufhold qualified for the Tokyo Games at age 17 but didn't medal. She considered her performance

disappointing and said she learned the cost of not trusting herself. "Even though it is on the Olympic stage or even though there are however many people watching on TV, like, it doesn't change your shot," she said. "It doesn't change that the target is the same distance away as it always is, even though the surroundings might be different, it's still you, your bow and the target, and you shouldn't change the way you think or the way you shoot." What she considered a slump continued when she finished fourth at the youth world championships after the Olympics. She bounced back. Perhaps her most important medal was the silver she earned at the world championships later that year. "That was huge for me," she said. "That was my first individual international medal. And so that was just a huge confidence booster. And I feel like that experience has carried a lot with me throughout my last few years of my career." She has continued to thrive since. Last year, she won the Olympic test event in Paris, which led to her No. 1 ranking. It was among three straight top-four finishes for her in World Cup events. She won gold in the mixed team and team events and bronze in the individual event at the Pan-Am Games later that year in Santiago, Chile. This year, she won gold in the individual and team events at the Pan-American Championships in Medellin, Colombia. Kaufhold said her parents have helped. Rob Kaufhold is the founder and president of Lancaster Archery Supply and Carole Kaufhold is the CEO.



Javelin thrower DP Manu could be in dope net; NADA asks AFI to stop him from competing

PTI ■ PANCHKULA (HARYANA)
Javelin thrower DP Manu has been asked to stay away from competitions by the Athletics Federation of India on the instructions of the National Anti-Doping Agency as the Olympic hopeful is suspected to have been caught in the dope net. The 24-year-old Manu, who won a silver medal at the 2023 Asian Championships, was more or less certain to qualify for the Olympics through world ranking quota but is set to miss the Paris bus after the latest development. He was in the initial entry list for the National Inter-State Championships which began on Thursday here. But his name has been dropped from

the updated roster. AFI president Adille Sumariwalla told PTI that NADA has asked the federation to stop Manu from competitions but he did not confirm whether the athlete has committed a doping offence. "There could be something like that, but we still don't know what is the actual thing. There was a phone call to AFI office (from the NADA) yesterday that he (Manu) be stopped from competitions," Sumariwalla said. "Otherwise there are no details (on what kind of possible violation). I think the athlete himself (DP Manu) is finding out from the NADA what is the exact thing." Manu finished second behind

Olympic champion Neeraj Chopra with a throw of 82.06m in the Federation Cup from May 15 to 19 in Bhubaneswar. He later won gold in Taiwan Athletics Open in Taipei City on June 1 with a throw of 81.58m. Manu was 15th in the World Athletics Road to Paris list and on course to qualify for Paris Olympics as 32 athletes will compete in the men's javelin throw event. The qualification deadline is June 30. Chopra and Kishore Jena have already secured automatic qualification for the Olympics after breaching the entry standard of 85.50m. A country can have a maximum of three athletes in an Olympics track and field event.

Carlos Alcaraz and Jannik Sinner, Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff are taking over tennis

AP ■ WIMBLEDON (ENGLAND)
There is a real shift happening at the top of tennis, a youth movement that long seemed inevitable but never actually arrived until now. As the sport's attention shifts to the grass of Wimbledon, where play begins Monday, Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff are the players whose names are on everyone's lips. Alcaraz is the defending men's champion and owner of three Grand Slam titles at the age of 21 after his triumph at the French Open. Sinner, 22, is the top-seeded man at Wimbledon and won the Australian Open in January. Swiatek, 23, is the top-seeded woman and just earned her fourth championship at Roland Garros and fifth major overall. Gauff, the youngest of the bunch at 20, is ranked a career-best No. 2, has reached at least the semifinals at the past three Slam tournaments and won her first such trophy at last year's U.S. Open.



sets). Then there's this: For so long, people wondered when the men's game would evolve from the extended dominance of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic, owners of a combined 66 majors, and that trio would cede space to others. That time, it seems, is now - and Alcaraz and Sinner are beginning to separate themselves from the rest. "These two guys will win many, many Grand Slams. How many? That's the question. Of course, they will be the best for 10 years, I imagine - Alcaraz and Sinner. I have no doubt about it," said Richard Gasquet, a three-time major semifinalist, including twice at Wimbledon. "They will be the future of the game. ... The new generation is coming." Gasquet, a 38-year-old Frenchman who got to No. 7 in the rankings, knows all too

well the difficulties of being a professional tennis player during the era of the so-called Big Three of men's tennis. The opponents in his three losses in Grand Slam semifinals? Federer, Nadal and Djokovic, once each. But Federer, now 42, played the last match of his 20-Slam-trophy career in 2021. Nadal, 38, lost in the first round at the French Open - where he claimed 14 of his 22 major championships and then opted to miss Wimbledon so he could focus on preparing for the Paris Olympics that start in late July; he has dealt with a string of injuries that included a hip operation last year. And Djokovic? The owner of a men's-record 24 Grand Slam titles needed to pull out of the French Open before the quarterfinals after tearing the meniscus in his right knee and having surgery. As of

Thursday, he still was gauging whether his knee had healed enough for him to compete at the All England Club, where his streak of four consecutive trophies ended last year in a five-set loss to Alcaraz in the final. Sinner was eliminated by Djokovic at Wimbledon each of the past two years, in the 2022 quarterfinals and 2023 semifinals. But Sinner won their two most recent matchups, at last year's Davis Cup Finals and in this year's Australian Open semifinals. Both Alcaraz and Sinner excel at court coverage and big hitting. Both bring excitement, too, whether it's Alcaraz's creative shot-making or Sinner's all-out dives along the way to his first career grass-court title at Halle, Germany, in June, a rare instance of a man winning his first tournament after making his debut at No. 1. "No one has ever played like Alcaraz. No chance. And Sinner? The same thing," said Mats Wilander, a seven-time Slam champ in the 1980s. "They're like, Whoa! What and where did they come from?" Alcaraz and Sinner realize they are well-positioned to take over. They're also aware that they've only just started down a path to possible greatness. "We have to see what we do from now on," Sinner said, "(and) do it year after year after year after year.

Germany aims to ride the host-nation buzz against Denmark for a quarterfinal spot



AP ■ DORTMUND (GERMANY)
Germany takes on Denmark in the Ground of 16 at Euro 2024 on Saturday. Germany will have to make changes in defense for the game as it tries to carry the host-nation buzz deeper into the knockout stages. Kickoff is at 9 p.m. Local (1900 GMT) in Dortmund. Here's what to know about the match: Match facts- This is the only game in the round of 16 that features two unbeaten teams. Germany finished top of Group A with wins over Scotland and Hungary and a draw with Switzerland. Denmark drew all of its games against Slovenia, England and Serbia. - Germany was eliminated by eventual runner-up England in the round of 16 at Euro 2020 and hasn't won a knockout

game at a major tournament since Euro 2016. - Denmark went all the way to the semifinals at Euro 2020 before losing to England, its biggest success since winning the European title in 1992. - Three games into its Euro 2024 campaign, the German team hasn't yet ignited quite the same kind of patriotic fervor that it had at the 2006 World Cup. Flags have been popping up across the country and crowds in the stadiums are vocal, though, so a win over Denmark for a quarterfinal spot could build momentum. Team news- Germany will have to rethink the center of defense following a one-game suspension for Jonathan Tah and a hamstring injury for Antonio Rüdiger. Nico Schlotterbeck is set to

replace Tah, while Waldemar Anton could make his first Euro 2024 appearance if Rüdiger can't play. - Danish midfielder Morten Hjulmand - no relation to coach Kasper Hjulmand - is suspended after picking up two yellow cards. Thomas Delaney could replace him. - With six days between its last group game and the clash with Denmark, Germany had the benefit of extra rest. Coach Julian Nagelsmann gave his players a day off with their families Tuesday. Denmark was playing that day and had two days fewer to rest. By the numbers- Kai Havertz is on course to make his 50th appearance for Germany. He has started all of Germany's games so far at Euro 2024. Teammate Joshua Kimmich can play his 90th international game. - Striker Niclas Füllkrug has scored 13 goals in 19 games for Germany and, being a Borussia Dortmund player, should get an especially warm reception from the Dortmund crowd. - Denmark hasn't beaten Germany since 2007, but three of their last four games have been draws. The most recent was 1-1 in a Euro 2020 warmup. What they're saying- "I think the stadium is something very special because it's simply the biggest in Germany, the most atmospheric in Germany. ... We have triggered a little euphoria in Germany and are now trying to spread it. And I think if we play a good game, then all the fans will be happy and can cheer us on." - Germany defender Nico Schlotterbeck, who plays his club soccer in Dortmund. "I really love football here in Germany. And playing against Germany there, with the Danish team - can't be better, I can't wait. It's a great team. But we are great team as well. And when we play big nations we always step up.

AP ■ DORTMUND
Here's a quiz question: What do the 2022 World Cup final, the 2021 African Cup of Nations final, the 2020 European Championship final and the 2016 Copa America final have in common? Answer: They were all settled by a penalty shootout. Like it or not, the shootout - that tense battle of whiffs over 12 yards (11 meters) - has increasingly become a huge part of soccer, an unavoidable feature of the knockout stage in the biggest competitions. Added to the laws of the game in 1970, penalty shootouts have marred careers (Roberto Baggio has never gotten over his miss in the 1994 World Cup final), spawned pizza adverts (Gareth Southgate starred in one after his decisive failure from the spot at Euro 1996) and, in Lionel Messi's case at the most recent World Cup, earned a win that definitively secures a player a place in the pantheon of soccer greats. It's why those who delve into the psychology and science of soccer are perplexed why this tiebreaker system has been - and continues to be -

Penalty shootouts set to take center stage as psychology and new tactics come into play

overlooked by many teams, especially in these data-driven times. "There are so many things you can do to prepare your team for penalties, to train them for penalties, to help your players and team cope with the pressure of penalties," says Geir Jordet, professor at the Norwegian School of Sport Sciences and author of the recently published book, "Pressure: Lessons from the Psychology of the Penalty Shootout." "You can do this as an individual, as a team, as a manager," he said. The theory that penalty shootouts are a "lottery" is well worn and oft-repeated, with recently departed Chelsea manager Mauricio Pochettino saying just that in December after winning a cup game. Johan Cruyff, the late Dutch maestro, gave short shrift to the idea that teams can prepare



for spot kicks. "Taking penalties in training is useless," he said in 2000. "The penalty is a unique skill outside of football." Cruyff subscribed to the

philosophy that a player can never simulate the pressure of a penalty shootout - that initial wait in the center circle, that long walk to the penalty spot, those few seconds face-to-face

with the goalkeeper - on the training field. Just this year, France coach Didier Deschamps roiled against an attempt by the French Football Federation to

come up with an initiative to improve the team's performance in shootouts. France lost in them in the last 16 at Euro 2020 and in the 2022 World Cup final against Argentina. "I'm convinced - and my past as a player gives me this information - that it's impossible," Deschamps said, "to recreate a situation, on a psychological level, between training and a match." Jordet acknowledged that, but said it's "absurd" to not try to simulate these pressure situations in training. "There are studies showing that training with mild anxiety will prepare you and help you perform better under conditions of high anxiety," he said, before looking at other professions and areas of work. "If you look at military training - in peacetime, which is what we're used to, should they train for war activities and the

pressure and stress of being in a conflict, or should they just sit back and say we cannot simulate the pressure and the stress of being in an active firefight? That's absurd. It's the same case with pilots or if you look at surgeons or ER doctors." Jordet has looked specifically at penalty shootouts at the last World Cup and how coaches managed the two minutes they had with their players between extra time finishing and the shootout starting. He noted the winning teams, "without exception," were those whose coaches took the shortest time giving their instructions. In the final, Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni's nomination process took 15 seconds, Jordet said, because his team was prepared. "Deschamps," Jordet added, "spent almost 20 seconds considering who should take the shot for each of his penalty

takers, looking around, showing basically how little clarity he had about what to do. It was probably something his players would pick up on as well." **EUROS HISTORY** There have been 22 shootouts at the Euros, including four in 1996 and 2020. Of the 232 shots taken in the shootouts, 178 were successful - a 76.7% success rate. That fits the data models which typically say the expected success of a penalty is 0.76 (that is, 76 out of 100 penalties would typically be scored). **GO FIRST OR SECOND?** So much for the widely held perception that the team going second in a shootout is at a disadvantage for being under extra pressure. The latest major study of penalties, covering men's competitions in European soccer over the last 11 years, showed the winning percentage of the team shooting first in penalty kicks was 48.83. Jordet said the advantage has "progressively and dramatically shrunk" compared to older research, some of which said there was around a 60% chance of the team going first winning.

