

**WORLD 5**

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**SPORT 7**

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## INDIA LIFTS DREAM WORLD CUP



Team India erupts in celebration after South Africa's Reeza Hendricks, right, leaves the field after losing his wicket to India's Jasprit Bumrah, centre, with his arms raised, during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup final cricket match between India and South Africa at Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Saturday

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

On an emotion-filled day, India ended their years' wait for a global trophy, overcoming South Africa, who choked at the business end of the match by seven runs to emerge champions in the T20 World Cup here. It was India's second T20 World Cup victory after they had won it in 2007 under the legendary MS Dhoni in South Africa, and first since winning the Champions Trophy in 2013. Star batter Virat Kohli, who was an upcoming cricketer 17

years ago, made his first fifty of this tournament in the final — a classy 76 off 59 balls with six fours and two sixes that carried India to a competitive 176 for seven. Then the Indian bowlers, led by Arshdeep Singh (2/20) and Jasprit Bumrah (2/18), worked their magic as they did throughout this tournament, limiting South Africa to 169 for eight to propel India to their second T20 World Cup. There were pockets of fight from the Proteas, who were playing in their maiden World Cup final. Heinrich Klaasen threatened

India with a 52 off 27 balls (2x4, 5x6) but Hardik Pandya (3/20) snatched the crucial wicket to bring the game decisively in favour of India. But a large chunk of the credit should go to Kohli for anchoring the innings and pushing India to a fighting total. He completed his fifty in 48 balls, but the knock was what precisely India needed the early dismissals of skipper Rohit Sharma (9), Rishabh Pant (0) and Suryakumar Yadav (3), which had reduced India to a worrying 34 for three.

However, Kohli had an able partner in Axar Patel (47, 31 balls, 1x4, 6x4) during the fourth wicket alliance that produced precious 72 runs to ease the early nerves. After the run-out of Axar, who took on SA bowlers bravely, another left-hander Shivam Dube (27 off 16 balls, 3x4 1x6) gave some late steam to Indian innings. **Brief scores:** India: 176/7 in 20 overs (Virat Kohli 76, Axar Patel 47; Keshav Maharaj 2/23) beat South Africa: 169/8 in 20 overs (Henrich Klaasen 52, Jasprit Bumrah 2/18, Arshdeep Singh 2/20) by 7 runs.

## JD(U) invokes Bihar Package Bond

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Janata Dal (U), a major partner in the NDA Government at the Centre, on Saturday urged the Central Government to consider either special category status or a special package for Bihar underlining the party's important role in the formation of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Government. The party's national executive meeting held in the national Capital flagged price rise and unemployment as "burning issues", as its political resolution expressed the confidence that the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government would take more effective steps to handle them. In the meeting chaired by JD (U) president and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, the party appointed Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Kumar Jha as its working president since he enjoys good rapport with the BJP leadership and is considered to be very good at crisis management. Meanwhile, Congress took the opportunity to ask JD (U) to pass a Cabinet resolution for the special status in Bihar where it's in alliance with the BJP and simultaneously hoped that another major partner of NDA, TDP, too would gather courage to press demand for a special package.



Bihar Chief Minister and JD(U) leader Nitish Kumar during the party's National Executive Meeting in New Delhi on Saturday

JD (U) was part of Congress-led INDIA Bloc before the Lok Sabha polls while TDP was looking for a Third Front until it joined hands with BJP. The JD (U) resolution called for extensive probe into paper leak cases to ensure stringent action against the guilty and maintain the credibility of central competitive exams. "There is also a need for Parliament to enact a strong law against leaks of examination papers," it added. The JD (U)'s decision to include a special package as an alternative to its historical push for special category status for Bihar marked a pragmatic climbdown as the Modi Government had cited the 14th Finance Commission's report to rule out special category status for any more states.

Kumar's decision to appoint his confidant Jha as the party's working president, a position not held by anyone, gives ample hint of his inclination to maintain better coordination with the BJP and drive a helpful bargain as Jha has good ties with the party's national leadership. A former Minister in Bihar, Jha was originally in the BJP and served as its link with Kumar before crossing over to the JD (U). Seen as competent, likeable and low-profiled, the Mithilanchal leader has long been a trusted aide of his ageing mentor who has burnt his fingers in the past due to shifting loyalties of his ostensibly reliable colleagues, including former JD(U) president RCP Singh, now in the BJP.



## Fresh dates for UGC NET

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a raging row over alleged irregularities in the conduct of competitive exams, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has released fresh dates for cancelled and postponed examinations, announcing the UGC-NET will now be held from August 21-September 4. The University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) was cancelled a day after being conducted on June 18 as the Education Ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam was compromised. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the question paper was leaked on the darknet and circulated on the Telegram app. The matter is being probed by the CBI. The UGC-NET is a test to determine the eligibility for the award of Junior Research Fellowship, for appointment of assistant professors and admission to PhD courses.

## Tragedy hits Army in Ladakh

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

A Junior Commissioned Officer (JCO) and four other soldiers returning from a military training exercise were reportedly swept away by a flash flood while crossing the Shyok river near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Nyoma-Chushul area of Ladakh early Saturday morning. The soldiers, belonging to the field artillery unit, were crossing the river bed in a T-72 Tank at the time of the incident. Due to the sudden rise in water levels, the soldiers could not move out of the tank which was stuck in the river bed and were swept away by strong currents. Rescue teams were rushed to the location but they failed to save them. The soldiers who sacrificed their lives in the line of duty have been identified as Ris MR K Reddy, Dfr Bhupender Negi, LD Ekeidaung Teibam, Hav Subhan Khan (6255 Fd workshop) and Cfn S Nagraju. In a post on X, Fire and Fury Corps said, "GOC Fire and Fury Corps and All Ranks salute the Bravehearts who made supreme sacrifice, in the line of duty in Ladakh on 29 Jun 24 and offer deep condolences to the bereaved families in this hour of grief." "Rescue teams rushed to the location but due to high water level and strong currents the rescue mission didn't succeed and the tank crew lost their



lives. The Indian Army regrets the loss of five brave personnel while being operationally deployed in eastern Ladakh. Rescue operations are still underway," the post explained. Earlier, on August 19, 2023, a JCO, along with eight other soldiers, lost their lives when an Army truck they were travelling in veered off the road and plunged into a deep gorge near Kiari in Leh district. Since the May 2020 stand-off between the Indian and Chinese troops several soldiers of the Indian Army have sacrificed their lives during operational duties in the region. Even as the two sides completed disengagement from several areas following extensive diplomatic and

military parleys, the stand-off continues in the cold desert region. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed grief over the unfortunate accident. In a post on X, the Defence Minister said, "Deeply saddened at the loss of lives of five of our brave soldiers in an unfortunate accident while getting the tank across a river in Ladakh. We will never forget the exemplary services of our gallant soldiers to the nation. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The nation stands firm with them during this hour of grief." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said he was deeply distressed by the news of the accident and the loss of lives.

## Exchange of fire reported along LoC

PTI ■ MENDHAR/JAMMU

A brief exchange of fire was reported along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch district, official sources said on Saturday. The firing from across the border was reported on a forward Indian post in Krishna Ghati sector late Friday night, prompting retaliation by the Army troops guarding the LoC, the sources said. They said there was no casualty in the firing, which lasted for a brief period. The vigil was intensified to ensure that there is no infiltration by terrorists.

## Delhi siblings rescued Bollywood style

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Two siblings, aged three and eleven, kidnapped from Laxmi Nagar on Saturday by a man posing as a parking attendant, were rescued after a dramatic three-hour car pursuit by the Delhi Police, straight out of a Bollywood thriller. The daring rescue unfolded as officers chased the suspect across the city, ultimately saving the children. The suspect, who demanded a staggering ₹50 lakh ransom from the parents, had abducted the children on



Friday night when they had briefly left them in a vehicle while they stepped into a nearby confectionery shop. Little did they know, their

errand would end up in the abduction of their children. According to police, the chase involving around 20 police vehicles culminated in the

kidnapper abandoning the car with the children inside before escaping. The vehicle was eventually found abandoned in the Samaypur Badli area after a relentless pursuit spanning approximately 100 to 150 kilometres. Deputy Commissioner of Police (East) Apurva Gupta reported receiving information about the kidnapping at 11:30 pm on Friday. The children's father informed the police that they were sitting in the car in front of Hira Sweets shop on Vikas Marg in the Shakarpur area.

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# GDMC sets up sleep lab in hospital premises

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) hospital has established a sleep lab, also known as polysomnography, in the hospital premises. Providing the information, the medical superintendent of GDMC hospital Dr Anurag Aggarwal said that the hospital administration had been planning to establish the sleep lab for a long time. However, due to the model code of conduct for the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, the process took longer than expected. He informed that the sleep lab has been established recently at the hospital.

He further informed that currently, the sleep lab has not started functioning as only the necessary equip-



ment has been set up but there is no technician or specialised doctor to operate the machine. To address this issue, the proposal for hiring specialised doctors has been sent to the authorities concerned. It is expected that the appointment of a specialised doctor for the sleep lab will be made within 15 days, and the lab will start functioning im-

mediately. Aggarwal further added that the testing of sleep disorders in patients will be conducted at night in the sleep lab.

Commenting about the patients suffering from sleep disorder, Aggarwal stated that patients dealing with sleep disorders should undergo testing at a sleep lab. While it's normal for individuals to snore during

sleep, those with sleep disorders not only snore loudly but also wake up unknowingly. Additionally, sleep disorders can lead to other health issues such as irregular heartbeat, uncontrolled diabetes and lack of sleep at night. Aggarwal emphasised the importance of sleep hygiene in preventing sleep disorders, recommending that individuals sleep in their own beds, avoid using mobile phones at night and refrain from consuming alcohol, tea and coffee before bedtime. He also noted that sleep disorders are more common in males due to alcohol consumption, sedentary lifestyles and obesity, and advised those affected to prioritise weight loss efforts.

# Health department asks CEO to send dengue guidelines to private schools

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Health department has directed the Chief Education Officer (CEO) to send a letter to all private schools in Dehradun outlining the guidelines that must be followed to prevent cases of dengue among students. Notably, as the summer vacation has ended and the monsoon season has arrived, the risk of dengue has also increased. Due to this seasonal change, the Health department emphasised the importance of preventing dengue cases, especially within schools. Stating this, the District Service Officer (DSO) at the Health department, Dr CS Rawat stated that student safety in schools is a top priority. The aedes aegypti mosquito, which transmits the dengue virus, is most active during the day when children are at school. In light of this and the upcoming monsoon season, Rawat stated that they have recently instructed the CEO to send a letter to the school outlining the necessary guidelines to prevent dengue cases. The guidelines dictate that

students must wear full-sleeved shirts upon entering the school, regular fogging should be conducted on campus and the school management must ensure there is no stagnant water on the premises. Additionally, the DSO said that in accordance with these guidelines, the Health department will dispatch a team of officials to inspect the school. Further, Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) workers have been directed to carry out an awareness and training programme at schools aimed at preventing the proliferation of dengue larvae in the vicinity. He informed that they will also conduct training sessions for teachers so they can educate students on dengue prevention. Rawat further emphasised that students are the primary responsibility of parents. Hence, it is imperative for parents to ensure that their children wear full-sleeve school uniforms when going to the school, as well as apply mosquito repellent on their bodies, he said.

# 2,300 beneficiaries to avail benefits under NGY

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In order to access the benefits provided under the Nanda Gaura Yojana (NGY), about 2,300 beneficiaries are set to receive their beneficiary amount soon, the director of the Women Empowerment and Child Development (WECD) department Prashant Arya said. Arya said that in March, the department successfully disbursed the beneficiary amount to the beneficiaries enrolled in the NGY. Additionally, in March 2024, the amount designated under the NGY was disbursed not only to the beneficiaries of 2024 but also to those from the years 2023, 2014, 2016 and 2018. However, it was noted that a significant number of beneficiaries did not receive their allocated amount due to incorrect contact information provided during the online registration process for the NGY, he added. Arya said that the department has instructed the district programme officers in every district of the

State to ensure that Anganwadi workers visit the beneficiaries' households and assist them in updating their account numbers to facilitate access to benefits under NGY. It is estimated that there are about 2,300 beneficiaries in the State who will receive these benefits. These beneficiaries will not only be from the year 2024, but from past years as well. The transfer of the beneficiary amount under NGY is expected to occur promptly, he added. It will be recalled that the NGY scheme involves transferring Rs 11,000 upon the birth of a girl child and Rs 51,000 upon her passing class XII, which will benefit them in pursuing higher studies. Considering this, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has recently allocated the beneficiary amount for one lakh girls in the State as part of the Nanda Gaura Yojana with the objective of supporting the girl child.

# UPES and JSW MG Motor India collaborate to empower future engineers

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Dehradun-based multidisciplinary university UPES and JSW MG Motor India have signed a memorandum of understanding to empower students with new-age skills and gain experience in the automotive industry. This strategic part-

gramme extends beyond EVs to encompass autonomous and connected vehicles, enriching engineering and diploma colleges across India.

UPES registrar and head of training and placements Manish Madaan said, "At UPES, our focus has always been on empowering the youth and fostering a future-ready ecosystem that enables them to thrive and contribute meaningfully to their chosen fields. This collective effort will equip our students with new-age skills and knowledge which will help them realise their true potential. Together, we are paving the way for a generation of leaders who will reshape our future."

Speaking about MG Nurture programme's CAEV (Connected, Autonomous and Electric Vehicle) course will provide an opportunity for students at UPES to learn about the internal components of electric vehicles. With this, students will gain practical knowledge through the automobile engineering courses offered in the curriculum. JSW MG Motor India through this strategic partnership with over 40 colleges, aims to upskill over 1,00,000 students. This pro-

nership is part of the MG Nurture programme which aims to bridge the gap between industry and academia by helping students develop skills relevant to the job market, university officials said.

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# HNB Garhwal University signs MoU with University of Canberra

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The HNB Garhwal University signed a memorandum of understanding with the University of Canberra, Australia, to enhance student exposure. As part of the MoU, the University of Canberra has opened applications for its students enrolled in bachelor of science, bachelor of biomedical science, bachelor of environmental science and bachelor of medical sciences to participate in the 'science in the Himalayas study tour' and earn three academic credit points in their respective degrees. As part of this programme, the students of the University of Canberra will attend science lectures and interactive sessions at the HNB Garhwal Central University in November 2024.

University vice chancellor Anpurna Nautiyal expressed her happiness regarding the progress of the MoU and stated that this programme will enhance the exposure of the students of the Garhwal University, making them more aware of the current global study scenario. She added that HNB Garhwal University is consistently striving to achieve quantitative and qualitative improvements in research and to enhance the national rankings of the university.

Notably, the University of Canberra is ranked among the top 200 universities in the world and is one of Australia's top 10 universities. It has consistently been improving its global rankings in recent years.

# Doon University declares result of entrance test for UG and PG courses

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Doon University has recently declared the results of the entrance examination for enrollment in under-graduate and post-graduate courses for the academic year 2024-2025. According to university registrar MS Mandrawal, the entrance examination took place on June 15 to facilitate the enrollment of students in these programmes. He added that out of approximately 2,800 registered students, 2,200 successfully passed the examination. The university currently offers 800 seats for under-graduate courses and 600 seats for post-graduate courses. Following the examination results, a merit list will be prepared, with 1,400 students being selected for the 22 programmes available, encompassing both under-graduate and post-graduate courses, he said. The registrar further said that the university will publish the merit list on the Doon University website on July 1.

Regarding the admission procedures, he said that the university will initiate the admission process from July 11 which will continue till July 20 after releasing the merit list. He emphasised that students must ensure to bring essential documents including high school and intermediate mark sheets, migration certificate, domicile certificate and categorisation certificate during the admission process. Mandrawal further stated that the university has recently launched three new certificate courses, one of which is a Master of Science (MSc) in Urban Development Management. This initiative aims to promote youth involvement in urban development. Currently, 11 students have enrolled in the two-year MSc programme out of the 25 available seats. Mandrawal said that the remaining seats will soon be filled through counselling sessions with other students.

# UVSP releases results of high school and intermediate answer sheets revaluation

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Uttarakhand Vidyalaya Shiksha Parishad (UVSP) declared the revaluation results for the high school and intermediate examinations for the year 2024 on Saturday. According to the officials of UVSP, the board examination results for high school and intermediate were initially declared on April 30. However, after the results were released, many students requested a revaluation of their answer sheets. The officials stated that applications for the revaluation of answer sheets were accepted till May 29. This year, students had the option to apply for revaluation both offline and online. Following the receipt of applications, the revaluation process for answer sheets began on May 30 and spanned over a month. The officials further informed that the revaluation results were declared and uploaded on the UVSP website on June 29 for the students to check the results. This year, 250 applications were received for revaluation of high school answer sheets, with marks being changed in the case of 13 students. Last year, 207 applications were received and marks of 24 students were changed. For intermediate revaluation, 423 applications were received this year, with marks of 19 students being changed. Last year, 490 applications were received for intermediate revaluation and marks of 23 students were changed. The officials emphasised that students whose marks have been changed will soon receive revised certificates cum mark sheets through their schools.

# KGCCI members for 2024-25 elected during its 35th AGM

PNS ■ RUDRAPUR

The 35th annual general meeting of Kumaun Garhwal Chamber Of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI) was held in Bazpur in Udham Singh Nagar district during which its office bearers and managing committee members for the year 2024-25 were elected. While Ashok Bansal was elected the president Alok Kumar Goel was elected the vice-president and Ashish Kumar Gupta, the treasurer. Following the election, Bansal apprised the newly elected KGCCI office bearers of the initiatives his organisation had taken to solve the problems the entrepreneurs faced at the administrative level in 2023-24.



# Plastic bank opened in Doon's GPO

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Continuing its efforts for establishing plastic banks in Dehradun, Social Development for Communities (SDC) Foundation has also established a plastic bank in the General Post Office (GPO) premises located at Clock Tower in the city. In this plastic bank, along with the post office, plastic waste from the homes of officers and employees working in this complex will also be collected.

Officers and employees of the GPO were present on the occasion of the establishment of this new plastic bank. Various officers and employees of the post office including senior postmaster Tikambar Singh Gusein and assistant postmaster Rajendra Prasad Uniyal participated in the programme.

Gusein said in his address that the Plastic Bank Project started by SDC Foundation is a commendable effort for the protection of the environment. He added that all the officers and employees of the post office are committed to remain associated with the said project.

Dinesh Semwal of SDC

Foundation said that they have established 135 plastic banks in Dehradun. Now the establishment of a plastic bank in the GPO is a new initiative. Apart from the plastic waste generated from various departments of the post office, plastic waste from the homes of officers and employees working in this complex will also be collected.

also be collected in this plastic bank.

Praveen Upreti of SDC Foundation said that after government and non-governmental institutions, SDC Foundation's plastic bank scheme is now reaching homes too. He said that if plastic waste is collected from

homes and sent for recycling, then on one hand plastic waste will not be scattered here and there, on the other hand it will become easier for the Municipal Corporation of Dehradun to collect the waste. He said that the SDC Foundation will continue to take this campaign forward.

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1	14452975 & 27467644	LOAN AGAINST PROPERTY	1. M/S SAJAL SAREE EMPORIUM PROPRIETOR RAM BABU 2. MEENU BANSAL ALIAS MEENU SOHANLAL TAYAL 3. RAM BABU	20.09.2023	1,54,54,307.47/-	ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF PLOT MEASURING 1400 SQ. FT. (1/2 OR HALF PORTION OF PLOT NO. 24), PART OF KHASRA NO. 2499 MIN., KHEVAT NO. 01, SITUATED AT NEW HARIDWAR COLONY, GRAM: AHMADPUR KARACH, PARGANA: JWALAPUR, TEHSIL & DISTRICT: HARIDWAR, UTTARANCHAL-247407, AND BOUNDED AS: EAST:ROAD 30 FT. WIDE WEST: GALI 12 FT. WIDE, NORTH: PLOT OF SUMAN BANSAL & SUBHASH CHANDAR BANSAL, SOUTH:HOUSE OF SATISH BAGDOTTI

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Date : 30.06.2024  
 Place : HARIDWAR  
 Sd/-  
 Authorized Officer  
 IDFC FIRST Bank Limited  
 (erstwhile Capital First Limited, amalgamated with IDFC Bank Limited and presently known as IDFC First Bank Limited)

# NAGAR NIGAM DEHRADUN

Telephone: 0135-2714074, Website: www.nagarnigamdehradun.com  
 Email : nagarnigam.ddn@gmail.com

## Tender Notice for Supply and Installation of Fiber Reinforced Plastic (FRP) Toilets Under Swachh Bharat Mission

NND invites RFP for Supply and Installation of Fiber Reinforced Plastic (FRP) Toilets Under Swachh Bharat Mission RFP document. Interested bidders are requested to download the RFP document from tenders portal Nagarnigam Dehradun from 01.07.2024, 11:00 AM onwards. The Municipal Commissioner have right to cancel tender at any stage without giving any reason. The last date for online submission of bids is 20.07.2024 at 2:00PM.

No 474(H) Date: 29.06.2024 Municipal Commissioner, Nagarnigam Dehradun

# NAGAR NIGAM DEHRADUN

Telephone: 0135-17140740, Website: www.nagarnigamdehradun.com  
 Email : nagarnigam.ddn@gmail.com

## Expression of Interest (EoI) for Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation & Maintenance of 100 TPD Construction and Demolition (C & D) waste processing plant in Dehradun City

Nagarnigam Dehradun invites Expression of Interest (EoI) for "Supply, Installation, Commissioning, Operation & Maintenance of 100 TPD C & D waste processing plant in Dehradun City" from eligible bidders having experience as indicated in the EoI document. Interested bidders are requested to download the EoI document up to 15.07.2024 from e-tenders portal Government of Uttarakhand & Nagarnigam Official website. Any Addendum/Corrigendum including date of extension will be uploaded only on www.uktenders.gov.in. The Municipal Commissioner have right to cancel tender at any stage without giving any reason. The last date for online and hard copy submission of bids is 15.07.2024 at 4:00PM.

No 836 C&D/NND/2024 Date: 29.06.2024 Municipal Commissioner, Nagarnigam Dehradun

## 14,800 appointments made in last 3 years by UKSSSC & UMSSB: Dhami

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has said that 14,800 appointments were made in the last three years in the State by the Uttarakhand Subordinate Services Selection Commission (UKSSSC) and Uttarakhand Medical Services Selection Board (UMSSB). He was addressing a programme on Saturday in which appointment letters were given to 165 assistant engineers (AEs) and five junior assistants in different departments of the State government.

Congratulating the newly appointed employees, the CM expressed hope that they will work with dedication and honesty. He said that the State government is working in every sector to bring Uttarakhand in the category of the leading States of the country. The CM said that from the last three years, the State government is trying to provide employment to youngsters and linking them with self employment opportunities. He said that all the recruitment examinations were transparent and error free after enactment of a stringent anti-copying law. The CM said that he was involved in student politics from his college days and welfare of the youth has always remained his top priority. Speaking on the occasion, cabinet minister Satpal Maharaj



said that the newly appointed youth should move forward with a mindset to learn new things and work with dedication. Cabinet minister Prem Chand Agarwal said that there was shortage of AEs in different departments from quite some time and the new appointments will help in expediting development and other works. He said that there are development authorities in nine out of 13 districts of the State and the new AEs will be appointed in them. The min-

ister added that the objective of setting up development authorities is planned development of the State. The CM gave appointment letters to 24 AEs in Civil Engineering (Rural Construction department), 44 AEs in Civil Engineering (Irrigation department), 20 AEs in Uttarakhand Jal Sansthan, 41 AEs in PWD, 14 AEs in Housing department, 10 AEs in Engineering wing of the Irrigation department, six AEs in Minor Irrigation department, two AEs each in

Electrical wing of PWD and Power department and one AE in Electrical wing of Rural Roads department on the occasion.

Additional chief secretary Anand Bardhan, principal secretary RK Sudhanshu, secretaries R Meenakshi Sundaram, Pankaj Pandey, R Rajesh Kumar, Vinay Shankar Pandey, SN Pandey, MDDA VC Banshidhar Tiwari and others were present in the programme.

## Heavy rain alert issued for four districts

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Light to moderate rain was experienced in various parts of the State on Saturday, a day after the monsoon covered the entire State. For Sunday, the State meteorological centre has issued an orange alert regarding the possibility of heavy to very heavy rainfall likely to occur at isolated places in Haridwar, Dehradun, Bageshwar and Nainital districts. A yellow warning (Watch) has also been issued regarding the possibility of thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/intense to very intense spells of rain likely to occur at isolated places over all districts of the State. Heavy rainfall is also likely to occur at isolated places in Pithoragarh, Tehri, Uttarkashi, Pauri, Udham Singh Nagar and Champwat districts today. Apart from this, light to moderate rain/thunderstorms are likely to occur at most places in Dehradun and Nainital district, at a few places in Chamoli and Rudrapur districts and at many places in the remaining districts of the State on Sunday.

Dehradun is forecast to witness a partly to generally cloudy sky with few spells of rain/thundershowers likely to occur. One or two spells of intense/heavy rainfall are

also likely to occur in some areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 33 degrees Celsius and 25 degrees Celsius respectively in

Dehradun, 34.6 degrees Celsius and 26.5 degrees Celsius respectively in

Dehradun and 28 degrees Celsius and 19 degrees Celsius in New Tehri. There was 55 millimetres of rain in Nainital, 40.5 millimetres in Haldwani, 17 millimetres in



Children frolic on a road filled with water during a spell of rain in Dehradun on Saturday

Pioneer photo

Dehradun today.

The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded on Saturday were 35.4 degrees Celsius and 25.9 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 34.6 degrees Celsius and 26.5 degrees Celsius in

Dehradun, 14 millimetres in Laldhang and 10.5 millimetres in Lansdowne.

## Process of recruitment of 955 CRPs & BRPs starts in Education Dept

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Education department has started the process of recruitment on the 955 vacant posts of Block Resource Persons (BRPs) and Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) under Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) in the State. The Education minister Dhan Singh Rawat said that the eligible candidates can apply on the employment portal 'Prayag' of the department of Training and Employment. The process of registration on the portal started on Saturday and will end after two weeks. The appointments will be made on contractual basis and through the outsourcing agency.

The applicants can contact on the phone number 0135-2653665 and on the number 0135-4145780 of the outsourcing agency for necessary assistance and information. The minister said that only the candidates who are registered in any employment

office of the State will be eligible for recruitment. The department has reserved 10 per cent of the posts for the retired teachers. For the BRPs Hindi, English, Science, Maths and Social Studies the minimum educational qualification will be graduation and Post Graduation with 55 per cent marks in the subject concerned. For the CRPs, the candidate should have a PG degree in any subject with minimum 55 per cent marks. Apart from the PG degrees, the candidates must have a Bachelor of Education (B Ed) degree with CTET or UTET certificate. The retired teachers can also apply for these posts as 10 per cent of total vacancies are kept reserved for them.

The minimum and maximum age for these posts is 21 years and 42 years respectively while the maximum age for retired teachers is 65 years.

## Cars end up in Ganga after rainy spell in Haridwar

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A number of cars were swept away in the Ganga river in Haridwar after a sudden rise in water in a dry river channel where these vehicles were parked on Saturday. The car owners had parked the vehicles in a dry riverbed instead of using the paid parking. According to the police, there was no loss of life.

A day after the advent of monsoon in Uttarakhand, light to moderate rain with heavy spells in some places is being witnessed in various areas in the plains and mountains. According to the police, an intense spell of rain was witnessed in Haridwar on Saturday especially at Mansa Devi and nearby hilly areas. This resulted in a rapid rise in the level of water in the

Ganga. In order to avoid paying Rs 100 to Rs 200 to park their vehicles in designated parking spaces, some



persons had parked their vehicles on the Sukhi Nadi at Khadkhadi.

This river remains dry throughout the year except in the monsoon. Following an intense spell of rain in the region, these vehicles were carried away by the river in spate to the Ganga. Vehicles floating in the Ganga elicited

surprised reactions from the public as some vehicles also reached Har Ki Paudi. While some people went

live on social media to capture this scene, others could be seen making reels to capture the scene rarely witnessed here. According to officials, the vehicles were empty so there was no loss of life. The police have appealed to the public to park their vehicles only in the designated parking spaces.

## Badrinath & Manglaur bypolls

## U'khand Cong presses senior leaders in election campaign

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

With the election campaign for the Badrinath and Manglaur Assembly by elections becoming hectic, the Uttarakhand Congress has pressed its senior leaders into the campaign. The voting in both these constituencies will be held on July 10. Considering the importance of the by elections which are being held after the recent Lok Sabha elections, the Congress party has inducted its top leaders in the campaign.

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara started campaigning in support of the party candidate from Badrinath constituency Lakhpat Butola on Friday. The political advisor to the PCC president, Amarjeet Singh told The Pioneer that Mahara will camp in Badrinath till the day of voting. Apart from Mahara,

the former Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Ganesh Godiyal is also camping in Badrinath. Godiyal who was Congress candidate from Garhwal seat in the recent Lok Sabha elections has made the Badrinath by-election as an issue of his prestige. In his public meetings Godiyal is reminding people about the betrayal of Rajendra Singh Bhandari the local MLA who left the Congress during the BJP candidate from the constituency in the by elections.

Former chief minister Harish Rawat is campaigning extensively in Manglaur constituency and seeking votes for Congress candidate Qazi Nizamuddin. Though Rawat is focusing on Manglaur, he has already toured Badrinath and is likely to visit the area again. The Leader of Opposition (LoP)

in State assembly Yashpal Arya is also campaigning in Manglaur which has a substantial population of Dalits. Former PCC president Pritam Singh is camping in Badrinath constituency and is holding public meetings in villages and towns.

Former deputy chief minister of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot and Saharanpur MP Imran Masood are likely to visit Manglaur in the coming days. Party leaders opine that being a Gurjar, Pilot will be able to woo the Gurjar vote bank in Manglaur. The BJP has fielded Kartar Singh Bhadana, a Gurjar from Manglaur constituency. Similarly Imran Masood who has won from Saharanpur LS seat of Uttar Pradesh by defeating Raghav Lakhnawal of BJP in the recent LS elections will help in influencing Muslim voters of Manglaur.

## Using AI & technology necessary to increase reach of health facilities: Governor

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The governor lieutenant general (retd) Gurmit Singh has said that the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and technology is necessary to increase the reach of health facilities in the State. He was participating in a dis-

cusson organised by All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Rishikesh

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## Cong spreading lies on gender crimes & corruption: BJP

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Bharatiya Janata Party has accused the Congress of spreading lies regarding gender crimes and corruption for political gains. The BJP State president Mahendra Bhatt said that the State government under chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami has a strict zero tolerance policy on both these issues and is ensuring stern action without bias against those guilty of these offences.

In a statement issued to the media, Bhatt averred that the Dhami government is doing a good job in maintaining law and order. "Strict action has been taken in all the cases of crimes against women and corruption which have been revealed so far. The government and party organisation have taken swift and strict action against the accused in the Haridwar case which the Congress is citing," he said referring to the gangrape and murder of a girl. Apart from being arrested, the accused was

also expelled from the party. Bhatt assured that the BJP government is committed to ensuring the strictest punishment to the accused as per the legal process without any bias. "Like other parties, our government doesn't pursue legal action on the basis of aspects like political clout and connections.

We have a clean track record on this issue. Whether the accused be from our party or another party, whether he be well connected, such people are awaiting their punishment behind bars. Further, the Dhami government has taken swift action in all the corruption cases which have come to the fore so far. Since the creation of Uttarakhand, the maximum-63 corrupt officials and employees have been sent behind bars," the BJP State president said.

Taking a dig at the Congress, he said that the general public and the

courts are satisfied with the action being taken against criminals but the Congress is not satisfied.

"This is because the aim of the Congress is to satisfy its political hunger by making noise on such sensitive issues. In the past too, the Congress has tried to score political points by spreading lies and confusion on unfortunate and sensitive cases. In response, the people have totally rejected the Congress in 2022 Vidhan Sabha elections and the Haridwar Panchayat election. Despite this, the Congress is still conspiring to defame the BJP government at the cost of risking the State's image. The Congress never saw gaps in its government in Rajasthan which tops the nation in crimes against women. The party's government failed to get justice for its own leader whose daughter was murdered in Karnataka," Bhatt added.



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# Leaders condole death of five soldiers in Ladakh flash flood

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday expressed sadness over the death of soldiers in a flash flood in Ladakh and said the entire country is with their families. Five Army personnel, including a junior commissioned officer, drowned when their T-72 tank sank due to flash floods in the Shyok River near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Nyoma-Chushul area in Ladakh during an exercise early Saturday. "I am saddened by the news of the accident during the military exercise in Ladakh. I express my condolences to the families of the brave soldiers who lost their lives in this accident. The whole country is with the families of the brave soldiers," Shah said in a social media post in Hindi. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra expressed sorrow at the death of five soldiers who



drowned when their T-72 tank sank due to a flash flood in the Shyok river in Ladakh on Saturday. "Deeply distressed at the loss of lives of five Indian Army brave hearts, including a JCO (junior commissioned officer), while getting a T-72 tank across a river in Ladakh," Kharge said in a social media post. "Our heartfelt condolences to the families of the Army personnel who fell victim to this

painful tragedy. In this hour of grief, the nation stands together in saluting the exemplary service of our valiant soldiers," he added. The five Army personnel, including a junior commissioned officer, drowned when their tank sank in the Shyok river near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Nyoma-Chushul area of Ladakh. Rahul Gandhi, the leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha,

said the news of the soldiers' death was extremely sad. "The news of the martyrdom of five Indian Army soldiers in an accident during a military exercise of a tank crossing a river in Ladakh is extremely sad," he said in a post in Hindi on X. "While paying my humble tribute to all the martyred soldiers, I express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families. We stand with them in this hour of grief. The country will always remember their dedication, service and sacrifice," he said in a post. Priyanka Gandhi also expressed her condolences to the families of the five soldiers. "The news of the martyrdom of five army soldiers in the sudden flood ... in Ladakh is extremely sad. May God grant peace to the departed souls. My deepest condolences to the bereaved families," she said in social media post in Hindi. "The country will always remain indebted to our brave soldiers and their families for this supreme sacrifice," she added.

# PM greets Amarnath pilgrims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday greeted pilgrims on the start of the Amarnath Yatra, saying the 'darshan' of Lord Shiva is known to infuse immense energy in his followers. The annual Amarnath Yatra began early Saturday as the first batch of pilgrims left the twin base camps in Baltal and Nunwan to start their journey to the 3,880 metre-high cave shrine in the south Kashmir Himalayas, officials said. "My heartfelt best wishes to all pilgrims on the commencement of the holy Amarnath Yatra. This yatra associated with the darshan of Baba Barfani infuses immense energy in the devotees of Lord Shiva. May all devotees prosper with his blessings. Jai Baba Barfani," Modi said in a post on X in Hindi. The 52-day pilgrimage will conclude on August 19. In his message, added.

# India, Qatar to review bilateral ties during Jaishankar's visit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India and Qatar will review the entire spectrum of their bilateral ties during External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's visit there on Sunday. He will meet Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said here on Saturday. Incidentally, Jaishankar's visit comes four-and-half months after Qatar released eight former Indian Navy personnel, who were sentenced to death after being arrested in August 2022. India and Qatar share historic and friendly relations which are marked by regular exchange of high-level visits. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had visited Qatar on February 14-15 and held discussions with Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, MEA said while giving details of Jaishankar's visit. Jaishankar's visit will enable both sides to review various



aspects of bilateral relations including political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural and people-to-people as well as the regional and international issues of mutual interest." During the visit, he will meet the Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Qatar Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani," MEA said. It said the visit would "enable both sides to review various aspects of bilateral relations, including

political, trade, investment, energy, security, cultural and people-to-people as well as the regional and international issues of mutual interest." India and Qatar are looking at broadening trade basket with a view to link it to regional trade. It is expected that Jaishankar and Al Thani would also deliberate on the overall situation in West Asia against the backdrop of Israel's continuing military offensives in Gaza.

# India's Shivalik to take part in world largest naval exercise

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian multi-role stealth frigate INS Shivalik, mission deployed in South China Sea and North Pacific Ocean, has reached Pearl Harbour in Hawaii to take part in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise, which is 'world's largest naval exercise,' navy said here on Saturday. It spans six weeks and navies from 26 countries will take part in the mega drill. Giving details, officials said the Indian warship sailed into Pearl Harbour on Thursday on completion of JIMEX 24, a bilateral exercise between India and Japan. The harbour phase of the exercise from June 27 to July 07 will see participation in multiple symposiums, exercise planning discussions, sports competitions and reciprocal deck visits. The sea phase of RIMPAC - 24, divided into three sub-phases



will witness ships undertaking basic and advanced level integration exercises during the first two sub-phases. The event will conclude with a theatre level large force tactical exercise\*. The exercise will witness the participation of an Aircraft Carrier Battle Group, submarines, maritime reconnaissance aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, remotely piloted surface ships and also an amphibious force landing operations including joint opera-

tions with special forces of multinational navies. RIMPAC-24, spanning over six weeks of intense operations and training is aimed at enhancing interoperability and building trust among the navies of friendly foreign countries. Led by the US Navy, approximately 29 countries are participating in the current edition of the multi-dimensional exercise. The world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC-24 provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants, critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security of world's oceans. INS Shivalik's participation in RIMPAC-24, 9,000 Nautical Miles away from Indian coast stands testimony to the Indian Navy's capability to operate in any part of the world. The ship is an indigenously designed and built 6,000 tonnes guided missile stealth frigate.

# Heavy to very heavy rainfall predicted for NW, NE India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall in northwest and northeast India over the next four to five days. A low-pressure area is currently situated over the northwest Bay of Bengal, adjoining the north Odisha-Gangetic West Bengal coasts, the weather office said. Cyclonic circulations have formed over northeast Rajasthan, east Uttar Pradesh bordering Bihar, and Odisha are likely to receive heavy rainfall on June 29-30, and Bihar from June 30 to July 2. The IMD has also predicted very heavy rainfall in isolated areas in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, and west Madhya Pradesh during this period.



Rajasthan from June 29 to July 3, the IMD said. Chhattisgarh, Gangetic West Bengal, Jharkhand, and Odisha are likely to receive heavy rainfall on June 29-30, and Bihar from June 30 to July 2. The IMD has also predicted very heavy rainfall in isolated areas in Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Uttar Pradesh, east Rajasthan, and west Madhya Pradesh during this period.

In the northeast, a cyclonic circulation over northeast Assam will bring light to moderate rainfall, thunderstorms, lightning, and isolated heavy to very heavy rainfall to Sub-Himalayan West Bengal, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram, and Tripura over the next five days. Isolated extremely heavy rainfall is expected in Arunachal Pradesh on June 29-30 and in

Assam and Meghalaya on June 29. The Met office also predicted isolated heavy rainfall for Saurashtra, Kutch, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and coastal and south interior Karnataka from June 29 to July 1. Gujarat, Goa, and central Maharashtra are expected to receive heavy rainfall from June 29 to July 3, with isolated very heavy rainfall in Konkan, Goa, and central Maharashtra from June 30 to July 3. The IMD also said the southwest monsoon has further advanced into the remaining parts of east Uttar Pradesh and some areas of west Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. Conditions are favourable for the monsoon to advance into more parts of west Rajasthan, Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab, and the remaining areas of west Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu over the next two to three days, it added.

# Canopy at Rajkot Airport collapses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After the tragic airport canopy collapse in Delhi that claimed a life and injured many, a canopy at the Rajkot International Airport in Gujarat has also collapsed due to heavy rain on Saturday. The canopy was placed at the passenger pickup and drop area outside the airport terminal. No injuries have been reported so far. A video on social media showed airport officials on the spot of the canopy collapse. This marks the third such occurrence in a short span, raising concerns over airport infrastructure resilience in extreme weather conditions. In a post on X, the Rajkot airport authorities said that water accumulation was observed on the city side of the canopy at the terminal building at 11.40 am due to heavy rains. "As we came to know about it we gave the information to the civil works department and the area beneath was cordoned off," said Rajkot International Airport in the post. The international airport is located at Hirasar, about 30 km from Rajkot city. "Around 11.55 am, more water accumulated on the canopy amid heavy rains, due to which the canopy fabric got torn and fell. No casualties were reported in the incident. The airport civil team is removing the (damaged) canopy," they added. Early Friday morning, heavy rains led to a canopy collapse at Delhi Airport's Terminal 1, injuring six individuals who were subsequently rescued and hospitalised, as reported by Delhi Fire Services. As a safety measure, all departures from Terminal 1 were temporarily suspended, and check-in counters closed. The Delhi Police also registered a first information report (FIR) under Sections 304A (death by negligence) and 337 (causing hurt by an act of endangering life or personal safety of others) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) in connection with the Terminal 1 collapse. In a separate incident, a section of the tensile roof canopy at Dumna Airport's newly expanded terminal in Jabalpur collapsed on Thursday following heavy rains. The incident, which damaged a parked government official's car, has led to allegations of corruption from the opposition Congress. The airport was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi just three months ago.

# Modi to release three books on Venkaiah today



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will release three books on former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu on his 75th birthday on Sunday. The event is scheduled to take place at the Anvaya Convention Centre in Gachibowli, Hyderabad, and Modi will release the books via videoconferencing, a statement said. Among the books the Prime Minister will release are a biography of the former Vice President titled "Venkaiah Naidu - Life in Service", authored by S Nagesh Kumar, former Resident Editor of The Hindu's Hyderabad edition, and "Celebrating Bharat - The Mission and Message of Shri M Venkaiah Naidu as 13th Vice-President of India" -- a photo chronicle compiled by his former secretary IV Subba Rao. The third book is a pictorial biography in Telugu titled "Mahaneta - Life and Journey of Shri M Venkaiah Naidu", authored by Sanjay Kishore, the statement said.

# Air connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar gets boost

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a boost to air connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar, an Air India flight made a successful night landing at Port Blair Airport, an official statement said. The Air India Airbus A321 with 68 passengers on board landed at INS Utkrosh on Friday evening. INS Utkrosh is under Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and it is located on the same premises

of Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair. A statement issued by the Andaman and Nicobar Command said, "The aircraft left Kolkata around 5.40 pm and landed successfully in Port Blair at 7.34 pm. The aircraft proceeded towards Veer Savarkar International Terminal to disembark passengers." "This successful night landing marks a significant step towards enhancing air con-



nectivity to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, benefiting islanders and boosting tourism. This landmark event was made

possible through consistent efforts by the Indian Navy, Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) over the past few years," it said. The statement said AAI upgraded the Instrument Landing System (ILS) to CAT-1 in Veer Savarkar International Airport to accommodate the anticipated increase in tourist inflow. "Utkrosh Airfield is fully capable of handling both day and

night operations. Apart from its strategic importance, these developments mark a crucial step in improving regional connectivity and strengthening the 'Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik' (UDAN) scheme," said a senior Andaman and Nicobar Command official. He urged private airline operators to avail maximum utilization of the night landing and takeoff facility at the Port Blair airport.

# 40% risk allowance for NDRF rescuers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government has approved a 40 per cent hardship and risk allowance for National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) rescuers, keeping in mind the tough operations undertaken by them, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Saturday. He said this while welcoming a 35-member expedition team of the NDRF that recently scaled the 21,625-foot-high Mt Manirang in Himachal Pradesh. "The government has approved a 40 per cent risk and hardship allowance for NDRF personnel only yesterday. This has been a long pending demand... All the 16,000 personnel of the force will benefit from this," Shah said after welcoming the expedition named 'Vijay'. Officials said this allowance would be granted over and above salaries. Special forces like the National Security Guard (NSG) and the Special Protection Group (SPG) get a 25 per cent hardship allowance owing to the special charter of



their duties. This is the second mountaineering expedition undertaken by the federal contingency force. The team was flagged off on June 1 from here. Mt Manirang is located along the border of Kinnaur and Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh. Shah said the government has also decided to make sports a "culture" for the various Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and special organizations like the NDRF. It has been decided that at least one team from these forces will mandatorily participate in international and

national tournaments, he added. "A committee under the chairmanship of the director of the Intelligence Bureau has been constituted and a roadmap has been prepared. We will soon present a new model," the minister said. Shah also underlined that forces like the NDRF should ensure that the policy of "zero casualty" during disasters is followed and no lives are lost during calamities. "We have come a long way... The government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working on the concept

of zero casualties during disasters for the last 10 years," he said. Shah said his government has allocated higher funds for capacity building and training of the NDRF and state disaster response forces by allocating Rs 2 lakh crore during 2014-24 as compared to Rs 66,000 crore during 2004-14. He complimented the NDRF team for the successful expedition, saying such exercises will boost the force's capabilities and morale and it will be able to do better during disasters and accident operations. Shah cautioned the rescuers that they should not rest on their laurels but keep improving. The NDRF was raised in 2006 as a federal contingency and disaster response force and at present, has a strength of more than 18,000 men and women rescuers deployed across the country as part of 16 battalions and 28 RRCs. It undertakes operations to mitigate and combat man-made and natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and train accidents among others.

# India presents action plan at Colombo Process

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has presented an action plan focusing on several of its priority areas for regional cooperation under the Colombo Process, a regional consultative forum comprising 12 Asian nations. India rolled out the plan while chairing a meeting of the grouping in Geneva on Friday. In the meeting, India listed a range of its priorities that included reviewing the financial sustainability of the Colombo Process and broadening the grouping's membership by including new nations as members and observers. Muktesh Pardeshi, Secretary (Consular-Passport-Visa Division) in Ministry of External Affairs, delivered the special address at the meeting. "He emphasised India's commitment to advancing the objectives of the Colombo Process and enhancing collaboration among member states," the ministry said. "India presented an outline of



an action plan for the next two years, focusing on key priorities and initiatives to further strengthen the Colombo Process," it said. In May, India assumed the chair of the Colombo Process for the first time since its inception. "The Process continues to play a pivotal role in enhancing regional cooperation on migration issues, and with India's leading role, there is a renewed commitment to engaging all member states actively, improving migration governance, and fostering safe, orderly, and regular migration for organised overseas employment," the ministry said in a statement.

# Iran goes to a runoff election between reformist Pezeshkian, hard-liner Jalili

AP ■ DUBAI

Iran will hold a runoff presidential election to replace the late hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, an official said Saturday, after an initial vote saw the top candidates not securing an outright win. The election this coming Friday will pit reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian against the hard-line former nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili. Mohsen Eslami, an election spokesman, announced the result in a news conference carried by Iranian state television. He said of 24.5 million votes cast, Pezeshkian got 10.4 million while Jalili received 9.4 million. Parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf got 3.3 million. Shiite cleric Mostafa Pourmohammadi had

over 206,000 votes. Iranian law requires that a winner gets more than 50% of all votes cast. If not, the race's top two candidates will advance to a runoff a week later. There's been only one runoff presidential election in Iran's history: in 2005, when hard-liner Mahmoud Ahmadinejad bested former President Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. Eslami acknowledged the country's Guardian Council would need to offer formal approval, but the result did not draw any immediate challenge from contenders in the race. As has been the case since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women and those calling for radical change have been barred from running, while the vote itself will have no oversight from internationally recog-

nized monitors. There had been calls for a boycott, including from imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi. Mir Hossein Mousavi, one of the leaders of the 2009 Green Movement protests who remains under house arrest, has also refused to vote along with his wife, his daughter said. There's also been criticism that Pezeshkian represents just another government-approved candidate. In a documentary aired by state TV, one woman said her generation was "moving toward the same level" of animosity with the government that Pezeshkian's generation had in the 1979 revolution. Raisi, 63, died in the May 19 helicopter crash that also killed

the country's foreign minister and others. He was seen as a protégé of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and a potential successor. Still, many knew him for his involvement in the mass executions that Iran conducted in 1988, and for his role in the bloody crackdowns on dissent that followed protests over the death of Mahsa Amini, a young woman detained by police over allegedly improperly wearing the mandatory headscarf, or hijab. The voting came as wider tensions have gripped the Middle East over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. In April, Iran launched its first-ever direct attack on Israel over the war in Gaza, while militia groups that Tehran arms in the region — such as the

Lebanese Hezbollah and Yemen's Houthi rebels — are engaged in the fighting and have escalated their attacks. Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic continues to enrich uranium at near weapons-grade levels and maintains a stockpile large enough to build — should it choose to do so — several nuclear weapons. Despite the recent unrest, there was only one reported attack around the election. Gunmen opened fire on a van transporting ballot boxes in the restive southeastern province of Sistan and Baluchestan, killing two police officers and wounding others, the state-run IRNA news agency reported. The province regularly sees violence between security forces and the militant group Jaish al-Adl, as well as drug traffickers.

# US media expects Biden to withdraw from Pres race

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A day after Joe Biden's dismal showing at the first presidential debate against Donald Trump, leading US media outlets have commented that the incumbent US President should leave the race for the White House for the future of American democracy and prevent a second round of presidential elections. Biden, seeking a second term in the White House, stumbled and fumbled during the televised presidential debate with his predecessor Trump on Thursday night in Atlanta, setting off alarm bells among top Democrats about whether the 81-year-old president can stay atop the gruelling months ahead of the elections on November 5. The 78-year-old Trump, who is the presumptive Republican Party candidate for the presidential election, clashed right from the start with Biden and by the end of the 90 minutes debate, gave enough fodder for serious editorials and opinions as well as memes on social media. The New York Times Editorial Board on Friday went on to say how President Biden has repeatedly and rightfully described the stakes in this November's presidential election as "nothing less than the future of American democracy" and how Trump has proved himself to be a significant jeopardy to that democracy and someone who has "systematically attempted to undermine the integrity of elections."

"Mr. Biden has been an admirable president. Under his leadership, the nation has prospered and begun to address a range of long-term challenges, and the wounds ripped open by Mr. Trump have begun to heal. But the greatest public service Mr. Biden can now perform is to announce that he will not continue to run for re-election," it said. The Washington Post editorial, 'How Biden and the Democrats should think through what to do now' said it's incumbent on this incumbent (President Biden) to determine, "whether continuing to seek re-election is in the best interests of the country" as it continued: "Former president Donald Trump proved emphatically on Thursday why preventing another Trump presidency is the paramount consideration."

The Los Angeles Times editorial 'For the sake of the nation, Biden must reassure Americans he is up to a second term' presented a gloomy picture but with a ray of hope. "If all one was confronted with was a transcript of the debate, Biden's performance would look better. He effectively confronted Trump on the former president's complicity in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection and scored several policy points. Alas, for many viewers, especially those who don't follow politics carefully, that mattered less than the fact that Biden confirmed Trump's caricature of 'Sleepy Joe,'" it said. But it also added: "Nor, despite the visible jitters of many Democrats, does the disappointing debate performance mean that Biden should step aside from running for reelection — a scenario fraught with its own problems for the Democratic Party. However, it does mean that the president has to reassure Americans who might now have doubts about his fitness for another term."

## Attacker wounds guard at Israeli embassy in Serbia, before being shot dead

AP ■ BELGRADE (SERBIA)

An attacker with a crossbow wounded a Serbian police officer guarding the Israeli Embassy in Belgrade on Saturday, Serbia's interior ministry said. The officer responded by fatally shooting the assailant. Interior Minister Ivica Dacic said in a statement that the attacker fired a bolt at the officer, hitting him in the neck. He said the officer then "used a weapon in self-defense to shoot the attacker, who died as a result of his injuries." The policeman was conscious when he was transported to Belgrade's main emergency hospital, where an operation to remove the bolt from his neck will be performed, the statement added. A spokesman with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "today there was an attempted terrorist attack in the vicinity of the Israeli Embassy in Belgrade." The spokesman said the embassy is closed and no employee of the embassy was injured. The identity of the attacker was still being determined. "All the circumstances of the attack and possible motives are being investigated," Dacic said. Israel's Embassy is located not far from the US Embassy in an upscale Belgrade district. It has been guarded by an elite police unit with officers armed with automatic weapons. Serbia has maintained close relations with Israel during the war in Gaza.

physical, are very frightening there." The former prisoners, wrapped in blue and yellow flags, reunited with families in Kyiv and called those who couldn't be there. For some, the separation had lasted many years. "I really want to hug you. I'll be with you soon, Mommy," said Isabella Pekh, the daughter of freed art historian Olena Pekh, through a video call. "I'm so sorry I couldn't meet you." For almost six years, Isabella Pekh spoke at international conferences and appealed to ambassadors for help in freeing her mother, who was detained in the occupied part of the Donetsk region. "It was six years of hell that words cannot describe. But I knew I had my homeland, I had people who loved me, I had my daughter," Olena Pekh said. Two Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests were among those freed. One, Bohdan Heleta, was detained in 2022 in his church in the occupied city of Berdiansk in the southeastern region of Zaporizhzhia. "There are a lot of our men and women there," Heleta said of those who remain imprisoned. "They need help, concrete help. They are waiting for it." Pope Francis in an address on Saturday called for the release of all prisoners in the war, and thanked God for the liberation of the two priests. Zelenskyy in a post on X wrote that "I am grateful to everyone who helped. I thank our team working to free the prisoners. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of the Holy See in bringing these people home." According to Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 3,310 Ukrainians have already been released from Russian captivity since Russia's full-scale invasion.

## 10 Ukrainians held prisoner for years in Russia return home

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

Ten Ukrainian civilians held prisoner for years by Russia arrived in Kyiv overnight Saturday after the mediation of the Vatican, Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said. They were freed Friday. Some had been captured years before Russia's full-scale invasion. Among those freed was Nariman Dzheylal, deputy head of the Mejlis, a representative body of Crimean Tatars that was relocated to Kyiv after Russia seized the peninsula in 2014. He was taken from Crimea, where he lived despite the annexation, one year before the war. The chief of Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, and Crimean Tatar leader Mustafa Dzhemilev embraced him after nearly three years of captivity. Dzheylal said many Ukrainians remain in captivity: "We cannot leave them there because the conditions, both psychological and

up airstrikes in a bid to drain Ukraine's resources, often targeting energy facilities and other vital infrastructure. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said the country had lost about 80% of its thermal power and one-third of its hydroelectric power in Russian strikes. Discussing the attack in Dnipro, Zelenskyy said it was a reminder to Ukraine's allies that the country needed more air defense systems. The Ukrainian air force said Saturday that it had downed 10 Russian drones overnight. "This is why we constantly remind all of our partners: only a sufficient amount of high-quality air defense systems, only a sufficient amount of determination from the world at large can stop Russian terror," he said. Kyiv has also struck back at Russia with its own aerial attacks, also often targeting energy infrastructure.

disarmed. IS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared an Islamic caliphate from the mosque a decade ago on June 29, 2014, leading to its destruction when extremists blew it up during the battle to liberate Mosul in 2017. The discovery of these bombs underscores ongoing challenges in clearing Mosul of explosives and revitalising its devastated urban areas.



Elton John speaks as President Joe Biden listens at the grand opening ceremony for the Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center in New York. AP/PTI

## Pak court asks PMO to restrain intelligence agencies from interfering in judicial matters

PTI ■ LAHORE

A top Pakistani court on Saturday directed the Prime Minister's Office to issue directives to the country's powerful intelligence agencies, including Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), from approaching any judge or member of their staff to obtain favourable verdicts. The intelligence agencies especially ISI, Military Intelligence (MI) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) have been accused by several judges of pressuring them through different means to get desired verdicts, especially in the cases of the former prime minister and founder of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Imran Khan, his party leaders and supporters. Almost all — six of eight judges of the Islamabad High Court — and a couple of judges of the anti-terrorism courts in Punjab

have written to the chief justice of Pakistan and chief justice of the Lahore High Court (LHC), respectively, drawing their attention towards the intelligence agencies' open interference in judicial matters forcing them to get desired verdicts. Some of them had complained that their family members were picked up (by intelligence agencies) to put pressure on them (judges). The Lahore High Court Justice Shahid Karim on Saturday issued written directions to the Prime Minister's Office on the complaint of an ATC judge in the Sargodha district of Punjab against harassment by the personnel of ISI. "The prime minister is responsible and answerable for the actions of intelligence agencies as they come under his command. Instructions shall go out by the Prime Minister's

Office to all civil or military agencies, including the ISI and IB, regarding strict directions not to approach or contact any judge whether of the superior judiciary or subordinate judiciary or any member of their staff for any purpose in the future," the judge said in his written order. Similar directions have also been issued for the Punjab police. The court said the inspector general and police chief would be held personally responsible and contempt proceedings would be initiated in case of non-implementation of its order. The LHC also directed ATC judges across Punjab to "download call-recording applications on their mobile phones to have the record of all such calls (from intelligence agencies) made to influence judicial proceedings." The Sargodha ATC judge was scheduled to hear the cases of

some PTI leaders including opposition leader in the National Assembly Omar Ayub when he was told that a senior ISI officer wanted to meet him at his chamber. As the judge refused, several harassment incidents targeted at his family took place in the following days. PTI spokesperson Raouf Hasan said as part of a malicious and well-thought-out plot the mandate-thief government and its handlers are coercing the judiciary into making decisions of their choice. "The trend of holding judges and their family members hostage and occupying the courts are being used as new tactics to prevent the courts from delivering justice, as such brazen interference in judicial affairs has already been described by six judges of the Islamabad High Court in their letter," he said.

## 9 dead in Nepal landslide

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Landslides triggered by heavy rainfall on Saturday killed at least nine people including an entire family while they were sleeping in Nepal's mountainous districts, officials said. The landslides buried houses in three separate areas in the country's mountainous region, about 250 kilometers (156 miles) west of the capital, Kathmandu, according to Nepal's National Disaster Rescue and Reduction Management Authority. Five members of the same family were killed when their house was swallowed by a landslide while they were asleep at Malika village in Gulmi district. The victims included a couple, their daughter-in-law and two grandchildren including an 8-month-old girl. Two more people were killed in neighbouring Baglung district and another two in Syangja districts, officials said. The monsoon season that brings heavy rainfall in Nepal began earlier this month. It generally triggers landslides in the mountainous areas that cover most part of this Himalayan nation, causing deaths and damage until September.

## Russia reports 5 dead in Ukrainian drone strike

AP ■ KYIV

A Ukrainian drone strike killed at least five people in Russia's Kursk region, local officials said Saturday, while rescuers in the Ukrainian city of Dnipro dug through rubble after a Russian attack ripped through a nine-story residential building, leaving one dead. Two children were among the victims of the Ukrainian attack in the village of Gorodishche on the Russian-Ukrainian border, Gov. Alexey Smirnov said on social media. In Dnipro, at least one person died and 12 were injured, including a 7-month-old girl, after a Russian strike destroyed the top four floors of the apartment bloc Friday evening, regional head Serhii Lysak said. The attacks came as Russia continues to stretch out Ukrainian forces in several areas along the 1,000-kilometer (600-mile) front. Moscow has stepped

UNESCO finds IS-era bombs in Mosul mosque walls

AP ■ BAGHDAD

The UN cultural agency has discovered five bombs hidden within the walls of the historic al-Nouri Mosque in the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, a remnant of the Islamic State militant group's rule over the area, UNESCO said in a statement on Saturday. The mosque, famous for its 12th-century leaning minaret, was destroyed by IS in 2017 and has been a focal point of UNESCO's restoration efforts since 2020. The UN agency said that five large-scale explosive devices, designed for significant destruction, were found inside the southern wall of the Prayer Hall on Tuesday. "These explosive devices were concealed within a specially rebuilt section of the wall," the statement said. "Iraqi authorities were promptly notified, secured the area, and the situation is now fully under control." It added that "one bomb has been defused and removed, while the remaining four are interconnected and will be safely disposed of in the coming days." Iraqi authorities have requested that UNESCO halt all reconstruction operations at al-Nouri mosque and evacuate the entire complex until the devices are

## Pakistan seeks small arms from US for 'Operation Azm-i-Istehkam'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON / ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's ambassador to the US has urged the US to provide small arms and modern equipment to his country to ensure the success of Operation Azm-i-Istehkam, Islamabad's newly approved counter-terrorism initiative. The decision to launch the 'Azm-i-Istehkam' operation was taken on June 22 at the apex committee meeting of the National Action Plan, a strategy approved in 2014 to eliminate militancy from the country. The federal government recently approved the reinvigorated national counter-terrorism drive. "Pakistan has launched Azm-i-Istehkam (...) to oppose and dismantle terrorist networks. For that, we need sophisticated small arms and communi-

equipment," Ambassador Masood Khan was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper. He made these remarks while addressing US policymakers, scholars, intelligentsia, and corporate leaders at a Washington think tank, the Wilson Centre, earlier this week. Khan elaborated that 'Azm-i-Istehkam' comprises three components: doctrinal, societal, and operational. He noted that work on the first two phases has already begun, with the third phase set to be implemented soon. The decision to launch a new anti-terror operation was taken when the country faced a new onslaught by the Tehreek-i-Taliban militants who, according to officials, are based in Afghanistan. Khan emphasised that Pakistan and the US should maintain

strong security links, enhance intelligence cooperation, resume sales of advanced military platforms, and work on "the sustainment of US-origin defence equipment." "This is crucial for regional security and opposing the rising tide of terrorism that also threatens the interests of the US and its allies," he added. Khan argued that the bilateral relationship should be based on ground realities and not be hindered by a few issues. "Secondly, one or two issues should not hold the entire relationship hostage," he noted. He pointed to high-level defence talks, frequent meetings, and joint military exercises like Inspired Union-2024, Falcon Talon, and Red Flag as examples of robust defence cooperation between Pakistan and the US.

Khan also suggested that the US should consider Pakistan as a partner in its diplomatic efforts in Kabul and collaborate on counterterrorism and the rights of women and girls in Afghanistan. "In this era of renewed strategic competition, the US and Pakistan should build on existing partnerships and explore new horizons to establish the parameters of mutual interests," the envoy said. "We should not base our engagement on the incongruity of expectations. Our ties should be anchored in ground realities, even as we aim for stronger security and economic partnerships. Secondly, one or two issues should not hold the entire relationship hostage," he said. Meanwhile, the US State Department expressed support to Pakistan.

# UP to promote rooftop solar subsidy scheme

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government will launch an awareness campaign to promote the Centre's 'PM Surya Ghar Yojana' a rooftop solar subsidy scheme in Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Gorakhpur. The new initiative will add to the state's ongoing programmes and schemes to boost generation and use of solar energy. The campaign will be based on the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) module. In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision, the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Agency (UPNEDA) has begun implementing the



action plan, according to an official statement. The state government has allocated Rs 2 crore for the two months long campaign and started the process of roping in an agency to manage and execute the initiative. Initially, UPNEDA will run

the campaign in three major cities, including Ayodhya, Varanasi, and Gorakhpur, to increase public awareness and acceptance of the Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Yojana and boost the number of beneficiaries under this scheme, the statement said. The promotional activities

will include displaying banners, installing billboards at strategic locations, setting up booth camps, and distributing pamphlets during various events at universities, colleges, and schools. Besides, UPNEDA will also use radio and newspaper advertisements in Ayodhya, Gorakhpur, and Varanasi. Ayodhya and Varanasi are already being developed as solar cities, and this comprehensive campaign will now pave the way for increased awareness and promotion of solar energy in Gorakhpur as well, the statement said. According to officials, a solar city could fulfil at least 10 per cent of its energy demand through solar power.

# MVN Aero One pre-leases 3 lakh sq ft to co-working operator in Gurugram

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm MVN Aero One has pre-leased 3 lakh square feet office space to co-working operator Spring House in its upcoming project in Gurugram. The office space has been given in the upcoming project 'MVN Aero One Mall' located in Sector-37 D, Dwarka Expressway, Gurugram, Haryana. The company will develop 15 lakh square feet area over the next 4 years in the first phase of this mixed-use project comprising retail and workspaces.



"Today's workforce seeks more than just a workspace; they desire an environment that inspires creativity, enhances productivity, and

integrates seamlessly with lifestyle amenities. By integrating Spring House Co-Working with our luxury retail experience, we're meeting this demand head-on..." said Varun Sharma, Founder and Managing Director, MVN Aero One. This concept not only redefines the traditional office space but also sets a new standard for integrated, upscale commercial environments, he added. The company expects an annual rental income of Rs 40-45 crore from this 3 lakh square feet area. The company, which develops luxury projects, is building a

housing project in Bengaluru. According to real estate consultant Vestian, there are around 50 major flexible space operators in the country. The top 10 players hold more than 80 per cent of the total flexible office space portfolio. A Vestian report mentioned that flexible office spaces broadly include dedicated desks, hot desking, co-working spaces, and serviced and managed office spaces. While co-working centres are at the most flexible end of the spectrum, managed offices would be at the less flexible end, Vestian noted.

# European jewellers using services of Mega CFC for quality testing

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The services of a modern common facility centre developed at a special economic zone (SEZ) here are now being used by European jewellers for quality testing, an industry official said. The Bharat Ratnam Mega CFC (Common Facility Centre) at the SEEPZ (Santacruz Electronic Export Processing Zone) SEZ in Mumbai was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January. The centre has been operational since March 15. Ravi Menon, CEO, Mega CFC, said that the CFC has state-of-the-art machines and technology and it is helping improve the output in terms of quality, productivity and yield of the finished jewellery and further boosting gem and jewellery exports. "Besides Indian players using this facility, now European jewellers have also started using the services of the CFC for quality testing," Menon said. He said that a team of senior officials of certain European jewellery firms has visited the



centre earlier this month. Their lab managers have also visited the CFC, Menon added. SEEPZ accounts for 10.26 per cent of total gem and jewellery exports from India and 85 per cent of studded jewellery exports. Colin Shah, Head - Working Group, Bharat Ratnam Mega CFC said that the centre houses modern equipment, including Asia's first 3D metal printer, and smaller units can use these machines at a nominal fee which helps

simplify manufacturing and boost productivity. He said that the centre, set up at a cost of Rs 93 crore, also provides training to jewellery makers besides having a software centre and a tool room. Shah also said that a proper system is there to protect designs of jewellers. He said: "We are not here to make profits. This will help to create more jobs in MSMEs and it helps to make world standard products and not affected jobs."

# Confident of over USD 800 bn exports in goods, services this fiscal: Goyal

PTI ■ MUMBAI

India's goods and services exports are expected to cross USD 800 billion this fiscal despite global challenges, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday. In 2023-24, the shipments stood at USD 778.2 billion (goods USD 437.1 billion and services USD 341 billion). He said that the global situation is serious as war is still ongoing between Ukraine-Russia and Israel-Hamas, and the Red sea crisis. The minister added that there are also elections in some of the major democracies like in Europe. "In such a situation it's a positive sign that our exports are growing (9 per cent growth in May) and ... This also reflects that the world wants to do trade and investments with India. We are confident that this year we will have over USD 800 billion exports and it will be a historic record," Goyal told reporters here. He was here to participate in a programme of gems and jewellery exporters.



Goyal added that for the USD 800 billion exports, the ministry is working on specifics with Indian missions abroad and export promotion councils. He added that last year the current account deficit (CAD) has also reduced... Our exports will increase, manufacturing will get a boost. India recorded a current account surplus of USD 5.7 billion or 0.6 per cent of GDP in the March quarter. This is the first time in ten quarters

that the crucial metric of the country's external strength has turned into surplus mode. In the year-ago period, the current account deficit stood at USD 1.3 billion or 0.2 per cent of GDP, and the same was USD 8.7 billion or 1 per cent of GDP in the preceding quarter ending December 2023. India's merchandise exports rose by 9.1 per cent to USD 38.13 billion in May even as the trade deficit widened to a seven-month high of USD 23.78 billion during the

month, according to the latest government data. He added that focus on electric vehicles will help in reducing oil imports. The ministry is also holding a series of meetings with plantation boards, including spices, rubber, tobacco, tea and coffee, to promote exports especially those of value added goods. Further, he said that India has taken up on priority the issue of ban on imports of Russian-origin unpolished diamonds by the European Union (EU) and G7 nations to protect the interest of the domestic diamond polishing industry. "Our ministry and the gems and jewellery export promotion council are continuously in touch with the European Union and G7 nations," Goyal said, adding in the last meeting, India took up the matter strongly. "Still we are in touch with them to ensure that Indian industry does not have an impact," the minister said. G7 countries — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the UK, and the US — are major markets for Indian diamond exports.

# Setty to become new chairman of SBI; FSIB recommends him as successor of Khara

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Government appointment selection panel FSIB on Saturday selected senior-most managing director Challa Sreenivasulu Setty for the position of Chairman of country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI). Setty, who was appointed managing director in January 2020, currently looks after International Banking, Global Markets and Technology verticals. He will succeed Dinesh Kumar Khara, who will be superannuating on August 28, when he turns 63, the upper age limit for the position of SBI Chairman. Financial Services Institutions Bureau (FSIB), the headhunter for directors of state-owned banks and financial institutions, interviewed three candidates on June 29, 2024 for the position. "Keeping in view their performance in the interface, their overall experience and the extant parameters, the Bureau recommends Challa Sreenivasulu Setty for the position of Chairman in SBI," FSIB said in a statement. As per the convention, the chairman is appointed from a pool of serving managing directors of SBI. Usually, senior-most managing director becomes chairman of the bank. The final decision on FSIB recommendation would be taken by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Setty, who also headed various task forces/committees formed by the Government of India, had earlier looked after the retail and digital banking portfolio of the bank. A Bachelor of Science in Agriculture and also, a Certified Associate of Indian Institute of Bankers, he started his career with SBI in 1988 as a Probationary Officer. Across a career spanning over three decades, he has rich experience in corporate credit, retail, digital and international banking and banking in developed markets. Setty has held key assignments in State Bank of India, including Deputy Managing Director - Stressed Assets Resolution Group, Chief General Manager and General Manager in Corporate Accounts Group, Deputy General Manager in Commercial Branch, Indore and VP & Head (Syndications) in SBI, New York Branch. FSIB is headed by Bhanu Pratap Sharma, former secretary of Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT). The members of the government-appointed selection panel are Financial Services Secretary, Department of Public Enterprises Secretary and an RBI Deputy Governor. Other members of the headhunter are Animesh Chauhan, former chairman and MD of erstwhile Oriental Bank of Commerce, RBI's ex-executive director Deepak Singhal, and others.

# Gujarat Govt signs MoUs with IBM, Microsoft for enhancing AI capabilities

PTI ■ GANDHINAGAR

The Gujarat government on Saturday signed memorandums of understanding with software giants IBM and Microsoft, and the National Association of Software and Service Companies (NASSCOM) for promoting the use of Artificial Intelligence technologies in the state. The MoUs were signed in the presence of Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel, a government release said. IBM and the Department of Science and Technology, Government of Gujarat, entered into a MoU to establish and promote an "AI Cluster" to foster innovation and collaboration among financial institutions at Gujarat International Finance Tec (GIFT) City, it said. Microsoft and the Department of Science and Technology signed an MoU to establish an Artificial Intelligence Center of Excellence in GIFT City. The



AI Center will focus on key technologies such as machine learning, cognitive services and bot services. The department also signed another MoU with NASSCOM to enhance AI capabilities in the state. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has prioritized futuristic technology to propel India towards becoming the world's third-largest economy, chief minister Patel said. "Our aim is to keep Gujarat among the

top industrial states by promoting futuristic technology such as AI," he said. "Gujarat has emerged as a global gateway to the future. In response to the growing demand for skilled workforce in emerging industries leveraging advanced technologies, the state government has launched the Up Skilling Industry Ready Talent Program under the IT and ITES policy," the CM added. Sandeep Patel, Managing Director of IBM

India-South Asia, said AI is a "pivotal need of the hour" and would be a driving force for India's development. Through IBM's advanced AI platform and cloud infrastructure, fintech firms in GIFT City can develop actionable AI software, bolstering their ability to provide AI-driven digital solutions across the banking, financial services, and insurance sectors. Additionally, IBM will collaborate on developing AI curriculum for state schools and universities, the release said. This program has invited expressions of interest from universities and course providers across the state to participate in training youth in deep technology. IBM, NVidia, AWS, TCS, and L&T EduTech have committed to providing courses under this initiative, the release added. Additionally, four state universities - GTU, IITRAM, P.D.E.U and Ganpat University - have joined as aggregators, it said.

# Exporters' body urges Minister to restore IES benefits for all

PTI ■ KOLKATA

A body of exporters has written to Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal, expressing concerns over the extension of the Interest Equalisation Scheme (IES) for only two months and exclusively for MSMEs. Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) president Ashwani Kumar highlighted that the scheme has so far benefitted not only MSMEs but also merchant exporters and large manufacturing companies at a lower rate of two per cent for 410 tariff lines, covering labour-intensive products. The current scheme, valid till June, provides pre and post-shipment rupee export credit, offers a two per cent interest equalisation rate for manufacturers and merchant exporters dealing with specified 410 export items, and a higher rate of three per cent for MSME manufacturers exporting under any of these items.



Kumar pointed out that the exclusion of these categories from the extended scheme will severely impact labour-intensive exports, which have already been struggling in recent years. He urged the minister to intervene and restore the status quo, citing the export sector's challenges, including increased freight rates, longer voyage times, and rising interest rates.

Kumar warned that the withdrawal of IES benefits will blunt the competitive edge of exporters and hinder growth momentum. In contrast to FIEO's demand for an extension of the scheme benefits at a higher rate, the Director General of Foreign Trade (DGFT) restricted the benefits to MSMEs and capped the total outlay of the scheme at Rs 750 crore.



Bollywood actress Deepshikha Nagwal, along with Dr HBS Lamba MD Welcome New Wembley products LLP, Sanjay Aggarwal, MD Sirca Paints India Ltd during the signature agreement of both the company at Aerocity in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

# Titan launches jewellery brand Tanishq in Bangladesh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Titan Company on Saturday said it is launching its jewellery brand Tanishq in Bangladesh as part of expansion plans in the international market. On Friday, the Tata Group-managed firm signed a JV agreement to this effect with Rhythm Group which will make Tanishq available across the Bangladesh market, according to a joint statement. The joint venture will commence with the opening of the manufacturing facility in Narayanganj, in Bangladesh, it added. Besides the domestic market, Titan is expanding Tanishq's presence in the international



market and operates 17 stores across the UAE, US, Qatar, Singapore and Oman. Its watch business has a presence in SAARC, MENA (Middle East and North Africa), Southeast Asian regions. In the last few years, it has focused on growing its

flagship jewellery brand Tanishq overseas. Rhythm Group is a prominent entity in Bangladesh that was established in 1972 to produce desi textile fabrics and since then it has expanded into several verticals. "Through this joint venture

Titan aims to combine Tanishq's unparalleled artisanship and brand legacy with Rhythm Group's strong market presence and local expertise in Bangladesh, to manufacture and sell jewellery to discerning Bangladeshi consumers," it said. Titan Company MD C K Venkataraman said: "Together, we will leverage our combined strengths to elevate the jewellery industry in Bangladesh and make Bangladesh the hub for making Tanishq Exquisite Jewellery for the world." Titan Company is a joint venture between Tata Group and Tamil Nadu Industrial Development Corporation (TIDCO).

# I HAVE NO SPONSORS AND THAT IS WHY I AM STRUGGLING TO IMPROVE MYSELF: LILI DAS

PTI ■ PANCHKULA (HARYANA)

Middle-distance runner Lili Das was seen as a big hope for Indian athletics when she burst onto the scene in 2016. But things panned out differently from there and eight years later, she is still seeking her first senior international medal.

The absence of sponsors has prevented Lili from realising her full potential at the top level, but the feisty athlete from West Bengal is not giving up just yet, years after having created a national record in 1500m in the Federation Cup (Junior) in 2016. Das, now 26, qualified for the 2016 World Junior Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland, where Neeraj Chopra won a gold, and finished 10th in the 1500m final there.

That year, she bagged gold in both 800m and 1500m at the Asian Junior Championships but since graduating to the senior level, she has not won any international medal bar one bronze in 800m in the 2019 South Asian Games.

"I have won international medals at junior level, but somehow, I am not winning international medals at senior level. I missed a medal at 2017 Asian Championships and I missed out on taking part in the 2018 and

2022 Asian Games. That is the sad part," Das, who has been in the national circuit for more than 10 years, told PTI on Saturday.

"But I am not giving up just yet. I am 26 now, but luckily, I have not had major injuries in my career and as long as I am fit, I will keep working hard and try to win international medals. My next target is the 2025 Asian Championships and then the 2026 Asian Games."

Das has, however, achieved domestic success and she won a 1500m gold on Friday at the ongoing National Inter-State Championships, beating the likes of national record holder K M Deeksha.

Das stands at around 5 feet but is known to be a feisty character. In pursuit of more success, especially at the international stage, Das has begun dabbling in 5000m and even 10K road race.

She won 5000m gold at the Federation Cup last month and took part in the TCS World 10K Run in Bengaluru in April.

"I started running these longer distances in a bid to improve my timing in 1500m. Let us see what happens. I have to do whatever I can to improve my timing (in 1500m)."

Hailing from Hooghly district's Triveni town in West Bengal, Das'



father used to work at a jute mill while her mother is a homemaker. She said she had to struggle a lot financially when she started her career. "Who does not struggle in India?"

Most of the athletes except a few are from poor families and they will struggle. I also faced the same but I am better off now after getting a Railways job," she said.

Das is currently working as an office superintendent at the Eastern Railways headquarters in Kolkata, though she trains at the SAI Bengaluru.

"My mother is sports-minded, she used to compete at the local level when she was young. She encouraged me to do sports when I was in class 2 or 3. She used to take me to the playing ground. I chose athletics only because of her. Even now she would come to watch me on and off during championships.

"I joined SAI Kolkata in 2012 and since then I am in the national circuit beginning at the junior level."

Asked about her next competition, she said, "I will compete in the Inter Railways Meet in August and then the National Open. I won a gold here (Inter-State) and if I do well in the upcoming events, I am hoping to get promotion to chief OS (office superintendent)."

"Currently in India, there is disparity among athletes in getting sponsorship. I have no sponsors and that is why I am struggling to improve myself."

## HI names core probable group for women coaching camp

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Hockey India on Saturday announced a 33-member Indian women's probable group for a two-month long training camp at SAI center starting here from Monday.

The Indian team went on a short break after losing all its matches in the FIH Hockey Pro League season in London and Antwerp.

India had lost all four games against Belgium and Argentina in Antwerp last month and were beaten by Germany (1-3) and Great Britain (2-3) in London.

"We recently travelled to Antwerp and London for the Europe leg of the Pro League, and while the results were not in our favour, we learned a lot as a team," Chief coach Harendra Singh said in a release.

"On several occasions, we were leading, and we proactively searched and threatened to score while looking for an equalizer. These are good signs to have in the initial stages of a rebuild, and I am sure the Indian Women's Hockey Team will be a force to be reckoned with in the future."

The camp will conclude on August 31.



**TEAM:**  
**Goalkeepers:** Savita, Bichu Devi Kharibam, Bansari Solanki, Madhuri Kindo.  
**Defenders:** Nikki Pradhan, Uditia, Ishika Chaudhary, Monika, Ropni Kumari, Mahima Choudhary, Jyoti Chhattri, Preeti.  
**Midfielders:** Salima Tete, Marina Lalramnghaki, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Neha, Jyoti, Edula Jyoti, Baljeet Kaur, Manisha Chauhan, Akshata Abaso Dhakale, Ajmina Kujur.  
**Forwards:** Sunelita Toppo, Mumtaz Khan, Lalremisami, Sangita Kumari, Deepika, Sharmila Devi, Navneet Kaur, Deepika Soreng, Preeti Dube, Vandana Katariya, Rutuja Dadaso Pisal.



## Praggnanandhaa lets Gukesh off hook on day of draws

PTI ■ BUCHAREST (ROMANIA)

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa missed out on becoming a joint leader at the Superbet Classic chess tournament after settling for a draw against compatriot D Gukesh in the third round here.

After losing to Gukesh in the last Candidates tournament in April earlier this year, Praggnanandhaa had a great opportunity to equalise the score this year but could not find a winning continuation after Gukesh spoiled a drawn endgame.

The Catalan opening saw Gukesh sacrificing a pawn early and Praggnanandhaa had his share of counterplay on the Queen side. As things unfolded, Gukesh recovered the pawn with an optical advantage with his Knight against a slightly bad Bishop of Praggnanandhaa.

With the intricacies of the middle game over, Gukesh decided to part with a pawn and reached a Queen and rook endgame that should have been an easy draw but a blunder on his 53rd move saw a forced liquidation leading to a King and pawns endgame.

On another day, Praggnanandhaa may have found the winning continuation to become a joint leader but luck smiled on Gukesh and the game was drawn a few moves later.

For the first time in three days, all the five games in the ten-player double round-robin tournament ended in draws. The other player coming close to a win was Maxime Vachier-Lagrave who almost pulled it off against his French teammate Alireza Firouzja.

It was a Berlin defense game wherein Firouzja won the opening battle for the third day running getting a balanced position easily as black. However, a late error in the queen-less middle game, saw Vachier-Lagrave seize the initiative and it should have been a win that slipped out of hands for the older Frenchman.

With all games ending in draws, the lead positions remained unchanged and Gukesh continued to be at the top of the tables along with Fabiano Caruana of United States who drew a keenly contested game against Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan.

With both leaders on two points, Vachier-Lagrave, Praggnanandhaa, Alireza, Wesley So, Giri and Nepomniachtchi share the third spot on 1.5 points apiece. Another half point behind is Abdusattorov and Bogdan Daniel with six rounds still remaining in the USD 350000 prize money tournament.

Dutchman Anish Giri played out an easy draw on his 30th birthday against Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi with both players giving nothing away and this was also the first game to end in the day.

Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania played out his second draw in the tournament holding off a slightly worse endgame for more than a couple hours against Wesley So of United States.

**RESULTS ROUND 3:**  
D Gukesh (Ind, 2) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 1.5); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 1.5) drew with Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 1.5); Anish Giri (Ned, 1.5) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 1.5); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 1) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 2); Wesley So (Usa, 1.5) drew with Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rom, 1).

## Junior scores twice to lead Brazil to 4-1 win over Paraguay in Copa America group stage

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

Vinicius Junior scored two first-half goals to lead Brazil to a 4-1 victory over Paraguay and put itself in position to advance out of Group D in the Copa America.

Savinho also scored a first-half goal for Brazil and Lucas Paqueta scored on a penalty kick in the second half. Omar Alderete scored Paraguay's goal.

There were plenty of tense moments with five yellow cards and a red handed out. Andres Cubas was sent off for a red card in the 81st minute, forcing Paraguay to play the last part of the match down a man. Yellow cards were handed to Brazil's Wendell, Junior and Paqueta and Paraguay's Fabian Balbuena and Hernesto Caballero.

The victory was quite a response for the Seleção

Canarinho, who opened the tournament Tuesday with a scoreless draw against Costa Rica despite outshooting their opponent 18-2.

With four points, Brazil is two behind group leader Colombia, which defeated Costa Rica 3-0 earlier Friday. A victory or tie by Brazil against Colombia on Tuesday ensures one of the group's two spots in the knockout stage. Brazil also has a six-goal differential advantage over Costa Rica, so a loss likely won't keep out the nine-time Copa America champions.

Brazil has had its difficulties against Paraguay in Copa America play, having drawn in their previous five meetings. That tied for the second-longest unbeaten streak against Brazil in this tournament, which Paraguay also was part of from 1963-83.

But Brazil won the most recent



meeting, defeating Paraguay 4-0 two years ago in World Cup qualifying, and there was little doubt about the outcome of this match after two late goals broke it open in what was a contentious end to the first half.

Moments after teammate Bruno Guimaraes hit the

crossbar, Savinho put Brazil up 2-0 in the 43rd minute.

Both teams got into a scrum in extra time, with Chilean referee Piero Maza Gomez handing yellow cards to Wendell and Balbuena at three-plus minutes. Then Junior delivered the crushing blow five minutes into extra

time Paraguay had its chances and even outshot Brazil 8-5, including 4-3 on goal. Brazil goalkeeper Alisson Becker made a tremendous save diving to his right to prevent a goal from Damian Bobodilla 15 minutes into the match.

Early in the second half, however, Alderete scored to close the deficit to 3-1.

Then 17 minutes later, Paqueta made up for a missed penalty kick in the first half by converting to give back Brazil its three-goal lead.

Brazil coach Dorival Junior made a bold and controversial move by deciding not to start Raphinha. The move, with national team legend Neymar watching from the stands, clearly paid off.

Raphinha was a late-game substitute, entering the match at the 72nd minute in place of Savinho.

## Colombia dominates Costa Rica 3-0 to reach Copa America quarterfinals

AP ■ GLENDALE

Davinson Sanchez and Jhon Cordoba scored three minutes apart in the second half, and Colombia advanced to the Copa America quarterfinals with a 3-0 win over Costa Rica.

Colombia controlled possession (62%) for the second straight game and led 1-0 at halftime on Luis Diaz's penalty kick in the 31st minute.

Los Cafeteros kept up the pressure in the second half and wrapped up Group D with a dominating performance in front of 27,386 pro-Colombian fans at State Farm Stadium. Colombia outshot Costa Rica 14-5 and faces Brazil on Tuesday in Santa Clara, California to close out the



group stage. Colombia has won 10 straight and is unbeaten in 25 games (20-0-5) since losing to Argentina in a World Cup qualifier in 2022. Costa Rica did not have a shot on goal.

playing nine-time Copa America champion Brazil to a scoreless tie despite being outshot 18-2.

Los Ticos found themselves on their heels again against another powerhouse team in the desert - and it didn't go quite as well for the youngest roster in the tournament.

"The other team was clearly on another level," Costa Rica coach Gustavo Alfaro said.

Colombia controlled possession (66%) in its opening 2-1 win over Paraguay and dominated the ball early against Costa Rica.

Diaz had the first good chance in the fifth minute, just missing the crossbar on a header. James Rodriguez followed with the first shot on goal in the 20th minute, but Patrick Sequeira sprawled out for a diving save.

Diaz scored on the penalty kick after Sequeira took down a charging Córdoba at the edge of the penalty box. Los Cafeteros kept up the pressure, just missing another goal when Sanchez couldn't get a head on Diaz's bouncing cross.

Colombia had 71% possession in the first half and kept control in the second.

Sanchez made it 2-0 with a header off a corner kick in the 59th minute. Córdoba scored when he slipped behind Costa Rica's defense and beat Sequeira from a tough angle.

"We're a good team, but we also have good character," Lorenzo said.

"It's no miracle. They're good players," Lorenzo said after the game, in Spanish. "The quality of the players is what makes the difference."

AP ■ DORTMUND

## Ronaldo soccer's ultimate showstopper

Cristiano Ronaldo has been a showstopper, as expected, at the European Championship.

Just not necessarily in the way he'd like to be.

The Portugal superstar with 632 million followers on Instagram and a never-ending stream of endorsement deals has had to deal with a raft of on-field selfie-seekers, during matches and in training. One presumed super-fan even leapt from the stands over the players' tunnel toward a startled-looking Ronaldo as he headed to the locker room after Portugal's match against Georgia.

He's ragged at a referee (earning a yellow card), booted away a water bottle, and angrily remonstrated in the dug-out. He's also had 12 shots, more than anyone else at Euro 2024. What Ronaldo hasn't done is score a goal - and that's the currency he deals in, at least in soccer.

OK, there was that moment he passed up a golden chance to score by passing unselfishly to

Bruno Fernandes for Portugal's third goal in the 3-0 win over Turkey. A double-stopper that befuddled Abdulkarim Bardakci and left the Turkey center back on his back has proved a hit on social media and gave the world a reminder of the Ronaldo of 10, 15, even 20 years ago.

Ronaldo, though, is 39 now. Those big moments have become fleeting, especially when it comes to the big tournaments and when he's playing against top-level defenses.

Make that seven straight matches in which he has failed to score at a major tournament, covering the 2022 World Cup and Euro 2024. For the first time in his 21-year international career taking in five World Cups and six European Championships, he has ended a group stage without a goal.

So, with the powers of this undoubted soccer great on the wane, the question will again

### Still Portugal's main man despite slow start to Euro 2024



be asked heading into the knockout stage: will the constant drama surrounding Ronaldo wind up being a distraction for the Portugal team in its bid for another big soccer title, eight years after winning its only one at Euro 2016?

Roberto Martinez clearly doesn't think so.

The Portugal coach is in thrall with Ronaldo, as shown by his reaction to the striker's assist - his record-tying eighth at the

European Championship - against Turkey.

"It should be shown in every academy in Portugal and world football," Martinez said, purring at this "spectacular" piece of play.

A day earlier, he'd got into an exchange with a journalist who questioned whether Ronaldo could handle the intensity of a major tournament at age 39.

"All you need to do is look at what he has done in the last 12 months," Martinez proffered, pointing to his record in the Saudi league with Al-Nassr, for whom he started 31 of 34 games and scored a league-high 35 goals, and his 10 goals in Euro 2024 qualifying - second only to Belgium's Romelu Lukaku.

Before the tournament, Martinez had lauded Ronaldo by saying he "approaches every day as a new way to be the best" and that his stats "are better than anything, subjectively, that you can say."

Maybe to justify his arguments - or who knows, to keep in Ronaldo's good books - Martinez started the striker against Georgia despite resting all of his other key outfield players for a game that meant little for Portugal, which had already qualified as group winner.

It was at this stage at the last World Cup where Ronaldo lost his place in Portugal's team, to the shock and anger of his millions of fans who might not see him play as much these days because of his move to the Middle East. He had started all three of the group games, scoring only a penalty, and reacted poorly to being substituted by then-coach Fernando Santos against South Korea in the third.

Ronaldo didn't start the 6-1 win over Switzerland in the round of 16 - his replacement, Goncalo Ramos scored a hat trick - nor the quarterfinal loss to Morocco, after which he left the field in tears.

Giving his public comments, it's unlikely Martinez will follow Santos' path and drop his captain in the knockout stage, starting against Slovenia on Monday, for what may prove to be Ronaldo's last matches at a major tournament.

Nor do his teammates, who have grown up idolizing Ronaldo, want that to happen.

"We want to be side by side with our captain," Portugal defender Diogo Dalot said, while midfielder Vitinha has spoken of the "privilege to be able to share moments with him on and off the pitch."

Ronaldo's desire and passion clearly remains. He is still a prolific scorer, albeit mostly against weak opposition these days, even if his mobility and, in particular, his pressing isn't at the level of a top-notch striker. It would be no surprise to see the top scorer in men's international soccer - with 130 goals - get off the mark against Slovenia.

Whether his continued selection is beneficial for Portugal is another thing entirely.

# T20 WORLD CUP ON COURSE TO BECOME MOST IMPORTANT ICC EVENT, REVEALS PLAYER SURVEY

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

A player survey has revealed that the T20 World Cup is closing the gap in the race to become the "most important" ICC event to players around the world, marking a shift from the dominance of the ODI World Cup. According to a survey conducted by the World Cricketers Association (WCA), formerly FICA, an overwhelming 85 percent of players viewed the 50-over World Cup as the most important in 2019, compared to 15 percent for the T20 World Cup. In 2024 however, those figures have changed with 50 percent of the players considering the ODI showpiece as the most important and 35 percent favouring its T20 equivalent. The ongoing edition of the T20 World Cup, jointly hosted by the USA and West Indies, will conclude with the title clash between India and South Africa in Barbados on Saturday. As per the survey done by the re-branded body, for players under 26, the inclination towards the T20 World Cup rose significantly, with 41 percent preferring it over the 50-over World Cup at 49 percent in 2024. Overall, there has been a sharp increase in the popularity of the T20 format.

Compared to 2019 when 82 percent of players picked Test cricket as the most important format, it's only 48 percent right now. As many as 30 percent of the players picked T20 as the most important format. Players from India, Pakistan and Afghanistan are among those who are not represented by the WCA since they

are not unionised. Responses were sought from players of other major cricket nations, including Australia, England, New Zealand, South Africa, Bangladesh and West Indies. According to the WCA, the sample size for this year's survey was around 330 professional players from 13 different

countries, with the majority of them being current internationals. There is a higher proportion of female respondents in 2024. In the current edition of the T20 World Cup, the much-awaited clash between arch-rivals India and Pakistan garnered a staggering 256 million viewing hours in India alone.



# Gayle attributes low-scoring matches in US to jet-lagged and tired wickets

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN (BARBADOS)

Chris Gayle, the West Indies batting great and T20 World Cup ambassador, attributed the numerous low-scoring games in the USA leg of the tournament to "jet-lagged and tired" pitches. According to the ICC, drop-in pitches were prepared in Florida since late December, employing proprietary techniques honed over a decade at Adelaide Oval in Australia. The drop-in pitches prepared for the tournament were transported from Florida to New York in semi-trailer trucks for installation at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, which proved to be one of the most difficult wickets for batting during the tournament. "It's been a low-scoring World Cup without a doubt, and the wicket is on the slower side sometime. It's a batting format... Going to give bowlers edge from time to time, bowlers pretty much in control of T20 World Cup," Gayle said during a press conference on Friday. The tournament will conclude with the final between India and South Africa at Kensington Oval in Barbados. "Barbados has been one of the best for batting, hope batters are going to get some runs tomorrow. "We want to see better surface but the wicket in States was a bit jet-lagged as well, as we know. It was tired, all that travel from Australia, didn't get time to recover properly. That's why we had some low-scoring games," Gayle added. The development of the pitches was undertaken by Adelaide Oval Turf Solutions,



led by renowned Adelaide Oval head curator Damian Hough. The drop-in square - the type used around the world including at Adelaide Oval and Eden Park - was curated in Florida and transported by road to New York via a convoy of more than 20 semi-trailer trucks in April. The matches in New York took place at a state-of-the-art 34,000-seat modular stadium located at Eisenhower Park in Nassau County, east of Manhattan. The former West Indies captain lauded the ICC for efforts to promote the game in mainland America. "The ICC did a fantastic job, the trophy tour, did well to promote the game within the US. They have taken the trophy to the football games, baseball games, they have done a very good job from the marketing point of view," Gayle said. Coming back to the big-ticket title clash, Gayle said lead pacer Jasprit Bumrah could decide India's fate against South Africa. Inaugural edition winners India and first-time finalists South Africa will battle it out at the Kensington Oval in their bid to be crowned the world champions in the game's shortest format. "India are going to be so hard to beat. They bat so deep and in Jasprit Bumrah, have a world-class death bowler who can break the hearts of the opponents," Gayle wrote in a column for the ICC. "In contrast, I picked South Africa as a dark horse before the tournament began, and it is very special to see them finally reach their first final after so many semi-final upsets. "Getting over the hump and winning a World Cup is so special and if they can do it, it will create memories that will last a lifetime for the players and the nation." The final pits two undefeated teams with India seeking to reclaim the trophy they last won in the 2007 edition, and South Africa seeking to etch their name on a senior World Cup trophy for the first time. Gayle found it tough to predict a winner. "It is going to be so hard to call - with two teams who have played clean and aggressive cricket throughout the tournament," he said.

# India record highest-ever team total in women Test cricket

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India on Saturday recorded the highest team total in women's Test cricket, amassing 603 for six declared on day two of the one-off match against South Africa here. Australia held the previous record for the highest total -- 575 for nine declared -- which they posted against South Africa in Perth this February.

India surpassed that mark when Richa Ghosh hammered a four in the first ball of the 109th over bowled by Annerie Dercksen. Eventually, India declared at 603 for six in 115.1 over following the dismissal of Ghosh for 86. Much of the credit for the feat goes to Indian openers -- Shafali Verma (205) and Smriti Mandhana (149) -- who shared a stand of 292 -- the highest



opening partnership in women's cricket. India were also well served by Jemimah Rodrigues (55) and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur (69). On Day 1, India had finished on 525 for four, having posted the highest-ever single-day total in a Test match. They broke the previous record held by the Sri Lankan men's team -- 509 for nine -- against Bangladesh in Colombo in 2002.



# 12-time National champion Muddappa begins season on winning note

PTI ■ CHENNAI

India's fastest rider Hemanth Muddappa began his 2024 campaign on a positive note with a double win at the opening round of the MMSC-FMSCI Indian National Motorcycle Drag Racing Championship at the Madras International Circuit (MIC) at Irungattukottai on Saturday. Muddappa, who won the National drag titles a record 12 times, continued his successful association with team Mantra Racing, and the combination dished out another stellar performance in the first round, missing the triple by a whisker. He started with a hard-fought victory in 4-stroke 551 to 850cc Super Sport class clocking a blistering 8.630 seconds to edge out Hyderabad's Mohammed Riyaz, who timed 8.675 seconds. Altaf Khan, also from Hyderabad, came third.

The Bengaluru-based rider then took the start for the 851 to 1050cc Super Sport final run, but lost to Mumbai's Anvay Patil by eight hundredths of a second. Mantra Racing's Muddappa clocked 8.294 seconds to Patil's 8.286. Muddappa's teammate Sujan Prasad SP came third in 8.448s. But Muddappa was in his elements in the 4-stroke 1051 to 1650cc Super Sport class, where he logged a quick 08.063 seconds to take his second victory of the day. He beat Bengaluru's Mujahid Pasha (8.103s) and Aymaan Baig, who came third in 8.117s. Astride the Suzuki Hayabusa, the reigning champion in the Unrestricted class clocked 8.251 seconds for a tie with city-mate Pasha, who also clocked the same time but had a lesser reaction time, that was used to break the deadlock. Alimon Saidalvi came third.

# Sharma lies tied seventh in Italian Open golf

PTI ■ ROME

Indian golfer Shubhankar Sharma fired identical 68s in his first two rounds to be tied seventh in the Italian Open on the DP World Tour here. The Indian star, who is headed to the Olympic Games in August, had five birdies against two bogeys in the second round. In the first round, he had three birdies and an eagle against two bogeys. Sharma has had a modest season with a best of T-7 in Singapore Classic as his best and was T-16 at Hero Dubai Desert Classic, one of the marquee events on the Tour. The other Indian in the field Om Prakash Chouhan missed the cut with rounds of 72-71. Gunner Wiebe took a one-stroke lead into



the weekend after carding a second round 69 at Adriatic Golf Club. The American started the second day in a three-way tie for the lead on seven under after his first round of 64 but had to remain patient after a level par front nine,

with a bogey on the 17th, cancelling out a gain on the 15th. He made his second birdie of the day on the first hole, his tenth, and then birdied the par four fifth to move to two under on the day. The 35-year-old parred his final four holes to sign for a nine under par total after 36 holes, one stroke ahead of Germany's Jannik de Bruyn, who got a last minute spot into the event. One stroke further back on seven under are last week's KLM Open runner-up Marcus Kinhult, Denmark's Sebastian Friedrichsen, Adrian Otaegui of Spain and South African Brandon Stone. Canada's Aaron Cockerill and Sharma share the seventh spot on six under, while 14 golfers are tied for ninth place on five under par, including home favourites Edoardo Molinari and Andrea Pavan.

# Verstappen holds off McLaren challenge to take 3rd sprint race victory of season at Austrian GP

AP ■ SPIELBERG (AUSTRIA)

Max Verstappen held off an early attack by Lando Norris before pulling away from the two McLarens to comfortably secure his third sprint race victory of the year Saturday at the Austrian Grand Prix. Verstappen finished 4.616 seconds ahead of McLaren's Oscar Piastri to make it three wins out of three in sprint races this season, with Norris another 0.732 seconds back in third. Norris started second behind Verstappen and stayed glued to the Red Bull for the first few laps, using his DRS to attack the championships leader. Norris even managed to overtake Verstappen briefly on lap five after a daring move on the straight leading into a sharp turn, but the Dutch driver responded by quickly retaking the lead at the next corner. Norris ended up being overtaken by his teammate as well during that sequence, but Piastri could not seriously challenge Verstappen after that and the Red Bull driver gradually extended his lead over the 23-lap race. Verstappen said the key was to get out of the range of the McLaren's DRS system, which allows the chasing driver to reduce the drag by opening up



the rear wing of his car to get a burst of speed. "It was a good first lap but once the DRS opens it is very hard to get out of it, took a few laps," Verstappen said. "Few exciting battles as well but once we cleared the DRS I could do my own race. We have two cars pushing flat out making things difficult for me." The race was shortened by one lap after an aborted start led to the drivers having to make a second formation lap. The win extends Verstappen's lead over Norris by two points in the overall standings, with the defending champion now leading his rival by 71 points. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who is third in the overall standings, only managed to come seventh in the sprint race and dropped six points behind Norris. "A good race between us, especially with Max at the beginning was good fun," Norris said. "I don't think we had the pace to go for Max, he was too quick for us today."

# Malvika shocks Kristy to enter semifinals of US Open

PTI ■ FORT WORTH (US)

India's Malvika Bansod stunned Scotland's Kristy Gilmour in a thrilling three-game match to advance to the women's singles semifinals of the US Open Super 300 badminton tournament here. The 22-year-old from Nagpur, ranked 49th, registered a 10-21 21-15 21-10 win over Kristy, a 2014 Commonwealth Games silver medalist. Malvika had defeated Kristy at the Hylo Open in 2022 when the Scot shuttler had retired in the second game due to an injury. The Indian had lost



twice to Kristy in the past. The Indian, who had won the Azerbaijan International challenge this year, will face sixth seeded Japanese Natsuki Nidaira next. In men's singles, Priyanshu Rajawat produced a good show but couldn't get past fourth seed Lei Lan Xi of China, losing 21-15 11-21 18-21 in a quarterfinal match that lasted just over an hour. Second seed Treesa Jolly and Gayatri Gopichand lost 17-21 21-17 19-21 to Japanese sixth seed Rui Hirokami and Yuna Kato to also end their campaign in the last eighth round.

# Iga Swiatek calls herself a perfectionist and now she wants to improve on grass

AP ■ WIMBLEDON (ENGLAND)

Shortly after Iga Swiatek completed the most lopsided French Open final in 17 years, ceding a grand total of three games against an overmatched opponent to claim a third consecutive title in Paris, she was asked whether that represented a perfect performance. Swiatek's mind immediately went to what little went wrong in Court Philippe Chatrier that afternoon. "Obviously, I mean, I got broken at the beginning," she said, "so it wasn't maybe perfect." A few minutes later, Swiatek used the word "perfectionist" to describe herself, perhaps offering some insight as to how she is approaching Wimbledon, the grass-court major that begins Monday - and the only Grand Slam tournament where she hasn't been past the quarterfinals. "Overall, tennis is different on grass," said Swiatek, who was a junior champion at the All England

Club in 2018. "I'll just see and I'll work hard to play better there." The 23-year-old from Poland has won four of the past five trophies on the red clay at Roland Garros, capped by a 6-2, 6-1 victory against Jasmine Paolini for the championship on June 8. How does a player beat Swiatek on clay? "It's hard. You have to err very little. Match her intensity. Play deep shots. Try to be aggressive whenever there's an easier ball," said Paolini, who is now ranked in the top 10 but hardly looked that caliber in the final. "But it's not easy. It wasn't for me, and it's a challenge that is the most difficult thing in women's tennis at the moment. How to do it? I don't know." Swiatek also was the 2022 champion at the hard-court U.S. Open and made it to the Australian Open semifinals on that surface earlier that season. But she is just 9-4 on the grass of the All England



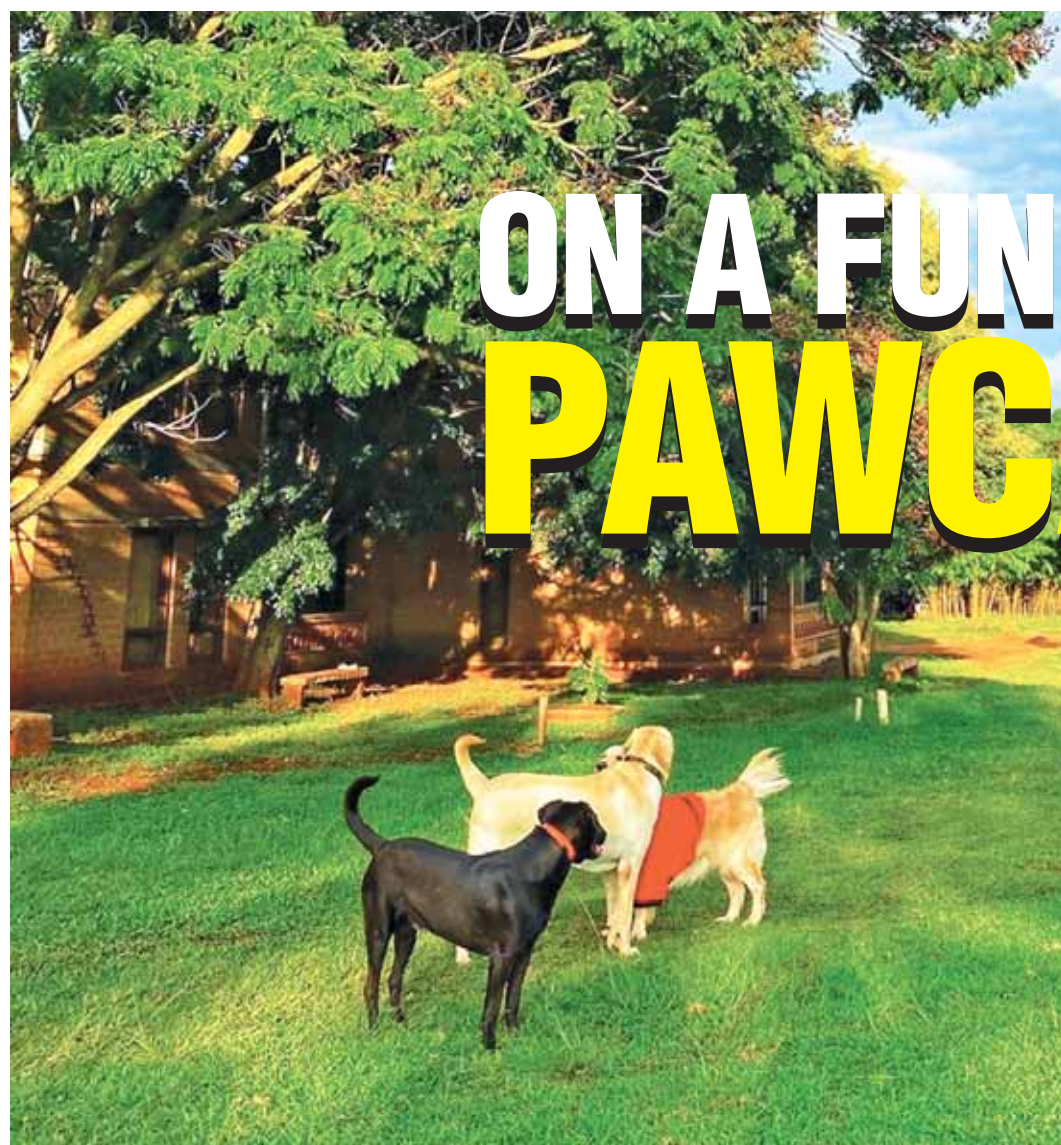
Club, by far her most winning percentage at a Slam. For someone who talks a lot about wanting to get "better and better," not to mention someone who wants to do things perfectly on and off the court, it would make sense if she wanted to improve at Wimbledon. Specifically, that might entail using her serve and her volleys to accumulate more easy points on the slick surface. As it is, there isn't much time spent on grass during the grind of the season, and Swiatek pulled out of a tuneup event on that surface after the French Open. She thinks - hopes? - that "competing every year at Wimbledon and practicing these couple of weeks makes you progress" on grass, and noted that while she at one point considered a training block on it during the offseason, her coach put a stop to that. During the victory against Paolini for the championship at Roland

Garros, Swiatek won 5 of 11 points when she went to the net. "You saw my one volley today that I was supposed get in - and it went out," Swiatek said. "So this will, for sure, stay in my head." That focus on what went wrong in order to make things go right in the future is simply part of who she is, with or without a racket in her hand. "When I do anything, I want to do it 100%. I think when you're a perfectionist, you are a perfectionist everywhere ... And sometimes not being able to let it go," Swiatek explained. "I'm working on it, and this is a tricky thing, because, for sure, it helps you to be better, but sometimes it can be huge baggage, as well. So it's good to manage it properly." When a reporter followed up by asking for an example or two of ways in which Swiatek finds herself wanting to be perfect away from tennis, she smiled and replied: "We're not (in) therapy, so, sorry."



# the pioneer agenda

"Disease is an experience of a so-called mortal mind. It is fear made manifest on the body"  
— Mary Baker Eddy



## ON A FUN FILLED PAWCATION!

Indulge in exciting activities with your pets and make a holiday with them truly special, writes SHARMILA CHAND

Whether indulging in gourmet cuisine for your pets, celebrating their birthdays, pampering them with grooming sessions or participating in fun activities, there's something to enrich every experience during a vacation with furry members. There are a range of pet-friendly hotels and resorts that are more than happy to welcome you and your loyal companion. From luxury resorts to cozy retreats, these properties ensure complete comfort and are a haven both for you and your four-legged buddy.

### COMFORT MEETS LUXURY AT PRESIDENT, MUMBAI - IHCL SELEQIONS

Looking to celebrate your pet's birthday? Go for a Pawcation at President, Mumbai - IHCL SeleQions.

"We have curated a well thought out pet-friendly vacation concept known as Pawcations," says Afzal Khan, General Manager. "We understand that pets are cherished members of the family, and we strive to create a comfortable and enriching environment for them during their stay. Hence we provide pet-friendly amenities like plush pet beds and bedding, engaging toys, and a gourmet pet menu crafted by our culinary experts." Embracing a pet-friendly policy, the hotel team makes sure the guests' comfort is enhanced by offering the services of on-call pet caretakers, as per specific requirements. Moreover, if there is any health related issue, there is a specialist veterinarian on call. Not to forget pet grooming services with prior appointments, exclusive pet toiletries, and designated pet-friendly zones. "We not only organize elaborate party with delightful high tea and fun outdoor activities for furry birthday boys and girls but also make sure the service is professional with warmth and care. Our team undergoes regular comprehensive training programs to understand animal behavior, hygiene protocols, and proper handling procedures. We also invite external pet trainers and behaviorists to train our staff regularly, ensuring they are well-equipped to interact with pets and provide top-notch service. Hence, we take great pride in being a pet-friendly destination," concludes Khan with a smile.



### PAMPERING PETS AT 'OUR NATIVE VILLAGE ECO RESORT', BENGALURU

At 'Our Native Village Eco Resort', nestled in the serene village of Hesaraghatta, guests can indulge in a memorable vacay with the joy of bonding with their beloved pets amidst nature's embrace. "Whether exploring our sprawling grounds or immersing yourself in our cultural experiences, every moment promises a harmonious blend of luxury, responsible tourism and eco-conscious living, adhering to our pet-friendly policy," tells Antharaj A, The Operations Manager. He adds, "We get repeat guests who have enjoyed their staycation in seamless harmony with their furry companions. As a proud pet-friendly establishment, the retreat provides essential amenities, including a variety of dog foods, water bowls, leashes, floor mats, and cozy blankets. The sprawling grounds offer ample space for pets to roam freely amidst lush lawns and village paths, perfect for leisurely strolls and bonding moments." Designed with meticulous care, the dedicated pet bathing area combines comfort with rustic charm, ensuring a refreshing bath experience for furry companions. Specially prepared food ensures pets receive nutritious meals, supporting the commitment to sustainability by minimizing environmental impact. "Complete with all necessary amenities, the resort's natural charm

reflects our dedication to pampering pets just as we do for our human guests. While the guests rediscover childhood joys playing village games like gilli danda and kite flying, their pets act as best cheerleaders!" Antharaj says with a smile.

### DISCOVER PET-FRIENDLY RETREAT AT MYSA ZINC JOURNEY BY THE FERN

Pet parents looking to take a break and hit the road with their fur babies, look no further than MYSA Zinc Journey by The Fern, a premier resort located in Nani Devati, Gujarat. Renowned for its serene ambiance and top-notch amenities, this resort stands out as a haven for pet lovers, offering an exceptional blend of comfort, luxury, and pet-friendly hospitality. Naveen Vaishnav, Squad Champion at the Resort says, "Committed to pampering four legged guests, at MYSA Zinc Journey by The Fern, pets are warmly welcomed and cherished. Furthermore, the property offers a range of facilities, making this resort the ideal choice for travellers with pets. The resort offers 24 elegantly designed rooms and villas, each providing ample space for you and your pets to relax." Spread across 9 acres within the scenic Glade One Golf Resort, the resort features beautifully landscaped gardens and open spaces perfect for the four legged to explore and enjoy. For a leisurely stroll or a brisk walk, the serene pathways and green expanses offer a perfect retreat for their owners.

"At the resort we offer dedicated services and facilities that include comfortable bedding and special dietary options for your furry friends. Our chefs cook as per pets' liking and specifications, we don't have printed menus as we believe in curating for them. While your pets enjoy the outdoors, you can indulge in a variety of resort activities. From the challenging 9-hole Gary Player-designed golf course to rejuvenating spa treatments and a sparkling swimming pool, here is the unique blend of luxury and pet-friendly hospitality. Located just a short drive from Ahmedabad, this resort provides a tranquil retreat where you and your pets can relax and rejuvenate," adds Vaishnav.

### BONDING IN A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

Nestled amidst the serene landscapes of Taj Fort Aguada Resort & Spa, Taj Holiday Village Resort & Spa and The Yellow House, lies a haven not just for humans but also for their beloved furry companions. Embracing the bond between pets and their owners, we proudly declare ourselves a pet-friendly resort, where wagging tails and happy barks are as much a part of the atmosphere as the rustling of leaves and gentle lapping of waves. "As the pet's comfort is paramount, we provide cozy & comfortable beddings to ensure their good night's sleep. Offering a range of soothing amenities such as gentle shampoo, conditioner, and nourishing paw and nose butter - these products are carefully chosen to keep your pet looking and feeling their best throughout their stay. Beyond physical comfort, we cultivate a nurturing environment where every aspect of your pet's experience is thoughtfully considered. Our dedicated staff is trained to provide attentive care and ensure that all pets receive personalized attention and affection, says Sanchita Banerjee Rodrigues, MarCom for North Goa Resorts. Fitness is of utmost importance. Whether it's a leisurely morning walk or an evening romp under the setting sun, the scenic surroundings provide the perfect backdrop for the pets to stay active and happy. "Understanding that pets thrive when they can engage in physical activities, we offer a variety of opportunities for them to stay active and happy amidst our scenic

surroundings. Whether it's a leisurely morning walk along our lush trails or an energetic romp during the enchanting sunset hours, every moment outdoors is tailored to keep pets healthy and stimulated. Providing designated areas where they can engage in interactive play and socialize with other furry companions under the watchful eye of our attentive staff. These supervised activities not only keep pets physically fit but also mentally stimulated, ensuring a well-rounded experience during their stay." When it comes to pets' dining, Chef Nishant Diwakar Executive Sous Chef of Taj Fort Aguada being a pet parent himself takes keen interest in designing and planning of the pet menus of Taj North Goa Resorts. He firmly believes as important a balanced diet is to us humans, our furry friends require the same amount of attention. We provide specially curated menu for them to get the perfect amount of nutrient & a tasty treat. From dishes made with bacon & chicken bones to drool over to waffles made of yoghurt, banana & pumpkin. The team goes beyond basic sustenance to provide culinary experiences that enhance their stay and contribute to their overall enjoyment.

### A PERFECT GETAWAY WITH PETS!

At Bengaluru Marriott Hotel Whitefield, there are special pet fiestas and brunches that create memorable moments for pets and owners alike. For long-staying guests, there is a unique touch of companionship—a small fish in a pot to keep them company. "At our hotel, we pride ourselves on providing an immersive experience with cozy beds, engaging toys, and meticulously sanitized play areas, creating a haven for our four-legged guests," tells Anjali Naik, Director of Sales and Marketing. She adds, "Pets have access to our dining outlets and lush lawns, where they can relax and play freely. Our exclusive pet menu offers health-centric, salt-free options for their dining pleasure. Our commitment to creating a pet-friendly environment goes beyond mere accommodation, offering a truly immersive and delightful experience for both you and your beloved companion." —Sharmila Chand is an author and independent journalist who writes on Travel, Food and Lifestyle



# FROM THE PEN OF A GROUNDED POET

It is important to note that Neerada is as much a Nature poet as she is a people's poet, says SWATI PAL

How many of us have had to be admonished for things not being aligned? The books in our book case in the days when books were bought and read? The clothes in our cupboard? The shoes in the closet? How many of us were ticked off at school perhaps for the tie being askew or the pair of socks not climbing up at the same place on each leg? Or the writing in our notebooks being asymmetrical? For the better part of my childhood and those of my friends, there was a constant, relentless push and shove towards alignment and well, we certainly rebelled at it as young people! A part of me still does and thus when I chance upon a poppy flower for example, in a neat bed of chrysanthemums in the college gardens, I cannot deny that my heart lights up with joy at this break in the order of things!

So when I was invited to read and speak on this utterly delightful collection of poems called 'Alignment' by Neerada Suresh, I cannot deny that my interest was instantly piqued by the title and I immediately read the title poem. Rohan Kaul's home and his partner, Promilla simply came alive by the word picture painted by Neerada Suresh in her rib tickling comparisons between the state of the house in the absence and presence of Rohan. There is a certain glee in the air when Rohan is away as things lie unaligned and unfettered; the same things, to quote, *But when Rohan Kaul is in, Newspapers stand stacked, Compressed, breathing in. Shoes align themselves Awed, open mouthed.*

Paintings, curtains, Cushions, sofas All tell a tamed tale. The fact is that while alignment is not only, politically speaking an important credo that nations strive for and while it may have its merits, alignment can often come at great cost. It may be the cost of freedom, it may be about being 'tamed' as Neerada put it; it may leave us in gaping fear and thus 'open mouthed'. The hope perhaps lies in Promilla who, as the poem ends with *defies A certain kind of alignment.*

Don't let the light and bubbling language deceive you, this poem has far greater implications if we read it closely and it is this deceptive mirth that the

poem has which makes the poem, like many others by her, such a joy to read. Neerada is a grounded soul. Her poems reflect that and she makes poetry out of the ordinary quirky eccentricities and foibles that fill all of our lives. A poem that really clicked with me is *Of Lists*. It has that elegant humour that seems to be a characteristic trait of Neerada's, the wonderful ability to laugh at one's self. It begins with the declaration *I am one For lists.*

And then, with great good humour she narrates how fishing out her list from her bag full of things makes the list redundant as she involuntarily lists from memory and then she swears, *Under my breath Now to list down A set of instructions How not to forget Getting across The list you make.*

I cannot recall the uncountable times that I have had to strip my entire bag to find a list and then found it much later. It is such a relatable experience and that is what endears the reader to Neerada's poetry, the sheer relatability of the experiences.

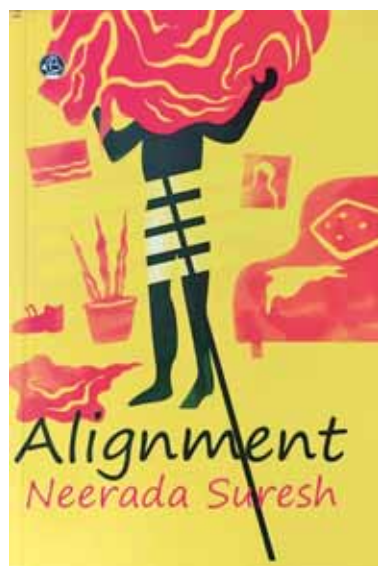
Life and the times as we live them are the focus of Neerada's poetry. We talk for example about how communication between people now is held ransom by the cell phone. Neerada converts our trite conversations into a poem which she entitles, *The New Normal.*

*New normal is Sitting side by side On a sofa With no eye contact Chatting of this and that* These are the first few lines and the poem ends with the sad fact that the new normal is: *And at all times Not facing each other But thumb twitching On the mobile through Inane vicarious clips Of far and near ones And total strangers Never once glancing Directly or even sideways Smiling at each other.*

Modes of communication or rather the language of communication comes up again in another poem called *Version 3.0* where the poet talks about her journey from the deep south up north 'travelling light with nothing/more than

father told him about Dev and his docile nature. Quite obviously Neena's father believed it to be the significant trait suitable for her pampered daughter. As Neena entered Dev's life and his house after her wedding, it was bustling with Dev's family. Neena was immediately overwhelmed by the sheer

**ALIGNMENT**  
Author:  
Neerada Suresh  
Publisher: DC Books  
Price: ₹199



poem which makes the poem, like many others by her, such a joy to read. Neerada is a grounded soul. Her poems reflect that and she makes poetry out of the ordinary quirky eccentricities and foibles that fill all of our lives. A poem that really clicked with me is *Of Lists*. It has that elegant humour that seems to be a characteristic trait of Neerada's, the wonderful ability to laugh at one's self. It begins with the declaration *I am one For lists.*

She makes you laugh and cry as well, sometimes together. One such poem is *When my brother fell sick* in which the poet describes her brother who was bedridden after a botched up eye surgery. She writes about his courage, *He still smiles as always.*

*Not once did he Lament this plight, foul mouth The surgeon or contemplate Suing. Resigned at once To a possible, partial vision In his bad eye, pacified His wife, my raging sisier in law. His expressive eyes Now inscrutable Behind the dark glasses. But his smile had the same texture and tinge Of the smile he sported When Mother died And he lingered by her one last time.* The poem is such a beautiful reminder that warriors are not found only on the battlefield; there are many who soldier on heroically confronted by the vicissitudes of life. The brother you read about will surely capture your heart and become your hero.

One of the characteristics of Neerada's poems in 'Alignment' is that there is a lot said through implication which is sometimes sensuous and can get your heart beating a bit faster. For example, in the poem *Delete*, the poet writes about *Your unsolicited Picture on FB And she goes on to say, The familiar contours Of your face Traced out a trillion times Through summer and winter Stood out embossed On my finger tips.*

This is such striking comment upon the way in which so much in our relationships with people, so much of our identity, so many of our needs, are determined by the fluency with which we speak different languages. But are we accepted because we speak the required language or do we remain strangers divided by our regional differences, not explicitly stated but always there? Do we, in turn, become one with the region of our profession or adoption or do we still dream of lands we associate most with the tongue that comes easiest and naturally to us, our mother tongue? These are questions to think about. Neerada makes you think.

*The best option now For the photo shopped version, Press delete To wipe out that sting Of dormant memories Off my fingertips.* This is a brilliant use of synesthetic imagery and one can literally feel the tingling in the tips of one's fingers. A poem that ends with a delightful twist is *Chrysanthemums* where the unnamed 'he' always came when the chrysanthemums bloomed and he always asked if they were dahlias or marigolds, and the poet says *Too polite to correct She'd smile- a wide smile*

*Her lashes lowered and The chrysanthemums paled Into insignificance.*

*The evening Stretched to its elastic limits Catapulted into night. What she didn't know was That he had always known They were chrysanthemums.* There is the sweetness of romance in these lines that is unmistakable and so appealing; one can almost imagine the whole scene played out in one's head. Tea I carries the same fragrance of romance very delicately framed, implied through such lines as *While I made tea On a rusty stove He stood watching Leaning by the door When Mother died, I like the cut of your dress As though it were a cue To turn the stove on to sim And let the simmering within Come to a boil.*

Coming back to the pictorial quality of the poems, a reason why many of the poems in fact can be almost dramatically played out in the imagination is the kind of detailing that Neerada works into her poems. Take the poem *Of Haystacks*. This entire poem is literally painted with an eye for the minutest of details and it reads *The cotton tree stood In its slender trunk With its bursting pods Of parachuting blobs As the turbaned, earth hued Cart man, cushioned On bales and bales Of golden yellow straw Came swaying, swinging Whistling to the orchestra of The hoof clicking clap dance Of the ambling bullocks.*

Colour, sound, movement all seemed fused almost like a motion picture being played out on the printed page. And of course the symbolism, the personification is discernible, as is the use of alliteration in the swaying swinging, cart cushioned, clicking clap. This lends a wonderful rhythmic motion to the scene and has been really cleverly used. Again, in *The Breadfruit Tree*, the poet describes the tree, *We didn't make much Of the breadfruit tree That stood sentry like*

*By the boundary wall Spilling its bickering spread Over the neighbour's roof Dropping yellow leaves Plopping crow eaten messy fruits* Like I said, the tree, pretty much like the haystacks in the previous poem, comes to life in the mind's eye.

If brevity is the soul of wit, Neerada really aces it in her short poems, two of which are *Absence* and *Sorrows*. *Absence, Distance Were surefire Terminators Of whatever was Between us I thought, But they Like rings in trees Add girth, depth Linking the past With the present, Casting shadows Of decay Into the future*

Direct and simple, the simile is so apt and new- the rings on the trees and the passage of time. It's important to note that Neerada is as much a Nature poet as she is a people's poet. In *Sorrows* she says, *Sorrows Like a newborn Arranged itself In my arms Purring in content As if to say Never let me go For the reward Of great truths To be reaped And revealed In the future.*

Those who carry their sorrows with them will feel that the poem is made for them. But that's the magic of Neerada's pen, she will make her readers feel that the people, places, thoughts and experiences are theirs that she writes about. Read her, you will feel at home.

— Swati Pal, Professor and Principal, Janki Devi Memorial College, University of Delhi, has been a Charles Wallace; John McGrath Theatre Studies and Fulbright Nehru fellowship, scholar. She has published on theatre, creative and academic writing, education and translates from Hindi to English. In *Absentia* is a collection of her poems

# Journey to an expanded self awareness

The book opens in the present-day scenario, where a rather unsure Loveena of mid-thirties is boarding a train to Pathankot.

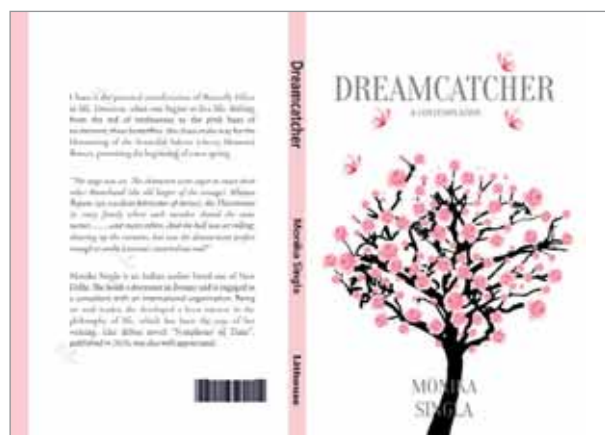
Her already raw senses are over burdened by the onslaught of experience of a train station environment.

Yet her insecurities are deep seated in her psyche and are result of the generational trauma she endured during her growing up years by the hands of her equally tormented mother Neena, reviews **DEEPAK KUMAR JHA**

The ("Dreamcatcher") is the story of Loveena, the protagonist of the book who is a sensitive soul. It beautifully narrates the journey through her trials and tribulations, her realisations, her pains and her metamorphosis and an ultimate 'coming of age' which leaves her in a state of expanded awareness of self as well as her surroundings and people there in. Author Monika has orchestrated her sound knowledge of literature, language and the subject & object to bring on paper the story of a child Loveena, till she finds solace passing through life's labyrinth, unfortunately all nurtured in close walls of her family. The just published book revolves around Loveena's mother Neena who attained motherhood through Loveena after a long wait of ten years. Neena's intensity

thus shifted to being extra protective about her daughter from the negativities of the world. Having brought up in a rather affluent and rich family, she desires nothing less for her daughter. And even though Loveena had both her parents-Neena and her father Dev, it was her mother and mother's stories which were to carve her life and make her the person that she would become. And the story's trajectory thus turns to Loveena's mother Neena's life.

Neena's husband Dev was a victim of his own sense of helplessness for his lack of understanding the business of Neena's father and inability to take it up for posterity, even though he was the sole son-in-law the family had. His job as an assistant professor of history in the university projected him as most suitable boy for Neena, when a friend of Neena's



father told him about Dev and his docile nature. Quite obviously Neena's father believed it to be the significant trait suitable for her pampered daughter. As Neena entered Dev's life and his house after her wedding, it was bustling with Dev's family. Neena was immediately overwhelmed by the sheer

**DREAMCATCHER**  
Author:  
Monika Singla  
Publisher: ISPCK  
Price: ₹295



of people and was unable to adjust to this new environment which was totally unlike her solitary and exclusive upbringing in an affluent household. Sensing Neena's hesitation and reservations, Dev's family too accepted her into their family but without completely absorbing her into their lives. So, even though

Neena was married into Dev's family she could never truly become a part of it. Dev's detachment or lack of desire to correct this situation further acerbated the relationships. Troubled relations with in-laws, Dev's indifference clubbed with an anguishing wait of ten years to attain motherhood further fed Neena's sense of mistrust and suspicions and her belief that the world was a dangerously bad place. Loveena who was born as a happy child with a calm, pleasing, innocent disposition was always eager to embrace everybody, never earned approval for her behaviour from her mother. Neena always dismissed these traits as incompatible with the ways of world. Thus, growing up, Loveena's world protected by her mother, remained confined within the four walls of the palatial house with the house help Babli as a constant companion who

too gets married leaving behind a void in Loveena's life. Finally, Loveena finds her suitor in Sanand and her engagement to him was greeted as the most welcome news by everyone later on which did not worked due to triggers of Neena's fears. For Loveena this incident proved to be the one which augmented her belief in Neena's words that world is a bad place. Her father Dev too gone followed by passing of Neena. Loveena finally married, not to start a family but only to drown the haunting hollowness of her soul into joys and laughter. Vikram was a colleague of Loveena and the only thing she knew about him was that he was a divorcee with two grown up kids. Soon this too developed a marital conflict. Unable to handle this situation any longer Loveena decides that she needs to get

respite from her choppy life that and decides to leave the house and Vikram. She goes looking for solitude in a place away from all her life challenges a long time back. Her tumultuous relationship with Vikram's place was when she had shunned everything to cross over into next phase of her life. She was now ready to go meet Vikram as a new person. But this time she isn't running away. This time she is running towards meeting life head-on.

# TANGRA TALES

Kolkata, Bengalis the world over, and Tangra, share a very special culinary heritage and culture, going far back in history. **SHOBORI GANGULI** got to relive the bond at the Westin Gurgaon recently



Most people familiar with the trademark Chinese cuisine of Kolkata would know about Tangra. An erstwhile tannery on the eastern outskirts of then British Calcutta, soon to become famous as the city's Chinatown, this tiny colony was populated by Hakka origin Chinese folk who came to India to work in the tanneries, their craft and art soon to become synonymous with the finest leather accessories in the subcontinent. The womenfolk worked home kitchens to supplement meager household incomes. Today, the tanneries are all gone but Tangra has left its signature on a cuisine now globally known as Hakka Chinese. Recently, I had the fortune to relive some childhood memories of anniversaries and birthdays most often spent at some restaurant or the other in Tangra, wolfing down Golden Fried Prawns, Chicken dimsums, Hakka noodles, prawns sauted in garlic and red chillies, the list goes on. The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi, hosted a



CHEF HO CHI MING

nine day culinary pop up aptly called Tales of Tangra which promised an "explosion of flavours" from Kolkata's Chinatown. The event featured a specially curated menu by Guest Chef Ho Chi Ming from The Westin Pune Koregaon Park. By sheer geography, one can easily identify the unique Kolkata-Chinese culinary bond, the two regions in such close physical proximity, underlining the very special nature of the food not be found anywhere else in the world despite Tangra's journey as an Oriental cuisine beyond the frontiers of Bengal. The menu at Westin was indeed meticulously planned by the Chef to capture the essence of this legendary fusion cuisine, tracing its roots back to an era long ago when Chinese immigrants in then Calcutta, blending their traditions with Indian culture to script and create Chinatown's culinary

proress. Unfortunately, none of that history now remains, except in the hands of home and professional chefs, who still keep the history of Chinatown resonating with contemporary approaches, and of course, special twists given to recipes long lost. While Chef Ho did put up a great show with his Scallion Crepes, Homestyle Taro Cakes, Kari Fish Dumplings, Sweet and Sour Prawns, Four Season Green Beans, Crispy Chilli Garlic Potatoes, Tangra style authentic Hakka noodles, the menu had a huge vegetarian accent. With the world turning to vegetarianism each passing day, this is only understandable. But one fervently hopes that Hakka Chinese seafood will always have its patrons surviving in some corner or the other in the world. Chef Ho's passion for Asian cuisine was apparent in the innovations he brought to each dish. His approach, affability and commitment to authenticity were truly welcome. Chef Amit Dash, Multi Property Executive Chef for The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi said, "We are



excited to host Chef Ho Chi Ming and present Tales of Tangra to our patrons. This pop-up is a tribute to the rich cultural tapestry and culinary excellence of Tangra and a testament to our commitment to continue offering our guests diverse and exceptional dining experiences." The soups ranged from Manchow, Assorted Vegetables, Ginger, Cilantro Broth, Hot and Sour soup, non vegetarian bits like prawns and chickens were only add-ons. Personally, I feel a soup or broth must stew in its original juices and not be relegated to add-ons for a vegetable broth. It makes a critical culinary difference in terms of taste, texture and aromas. All in all, it felt good to taste a bit of Tangra far away from its original shores of Kolkata right in the heart of Delhi. Long live Tangra's signature Hakka cuisine.

## Disappointing Service Mars Fine Dining Experiences



**PAWAN SONI** ventures to The China Kitchen at Hyatt Regency, New Delhi, famed for its peking Duck. While the star dish impressed, but the experience is marred by inattentive services

I recently visited The China Kitchen at Hyatt Regency New Delhi, renowned for its exquisite Peking Duck, which I consider among the best in the National Capital Region. Some might argue that Hakkasan in Mumbai outshines it, but my personal experiences at Hakkasan in Abu Dhabi and a pop-up at Shangri-La Delhi didn't include the duck, so I can't compare. Nonetheless, my recent dining experience at The China Kitchen, despite the superb duck, left me dissatisfied, primarily due to subpar service. The evening began on a sour note with a lackluster welcome. We received no warm greetings or guidance to our table, and no one offered us menus or water, despite the sweltering Delhi summer. The absence of hospitality was in stark contrast to the standards one expects at a 5-star property. When we ordered our first dish, a gomaï salad, I specifically requested extra sesame dressing on the side, a preference I had made clear to the server. However, the salad arrived without the extra dressing and was neither cold nor flavorful, lacking the acidity and vibrant tastes I anticipated. The China Kitchen could learn a thing or two from China Garden, which excels at this dish in the city. Fortunately, the other dishes like chicken shao mai dumplings, edamame dim sum, and honey chilli lotus roots were much better. Yet, the service remained mechanical and impersonal. There were no smiles, no proactive plate changes, and no clearing of the



table. Even the chef who came to carve the duck remained silent, possibly due to a language barrier, but a smile would have gone a long way. The hostess who prepared the pancake rolls also wore a stony expression while she stood near our table for some time preparing the pancakes. Despite enjoying most of our meal, we quickly finished and left, paying over Rs18,000 (including a 10% service charge) without any drinks. I contemplated asking for the service charge to be waived but refrained, considering how dependent the staff might be on these tips. I was particularly disappointed when my request for duck salt and pepper was denied because we had ordered only half a duck, a decision that seemed unnecessarily rigid. A little more flexibility and hospitality could have made all the difference, especially when very few order it. Attentive and friendly

service could have transformed our dining experience. Even though the food was largely enjoyable, the lack of warmth and attention overshadowed it. Similar was our experience just a day prior at Pullman hotel where a friend hosted his daughter's

birthday party at their all-day dining restaurant Pluck. Orders were mixed up, a sparkling wine cork flew in the air missing the patrons without any apology from the server, prawns vanished from the buffet spread, and orders either took a lot of time or were

completely missed. Something has happened to that smiley and polite star hotel service, especially after COVID. Fresh batches are seeing fewer takers, most experienced staff have either left the industry or are moving abroad for better wages and work

conditions. What remains is the new service levels. Either we will get used to it or start paying them the wages they truly deserve to retain deserving candidates. — Author is a food critic and founder of the Big F Awards. He can be reached at Pawan.Soni@indianfoodfreak.com



**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week, you'll find yourself in a cheerful state of mind, enjoying a sense of fulfillment and contentment. Expect a swift victory of some kind, such as a successful outcome in a competition or interview, where your dedication and strategic planning will be rewarded. You'll experience a surge of prosperity coupled with spiritual growth. Any previous limitations or obstacles you faced will start to fade away, enhancing your sense of liberation and tranquility. There's a hint of upcoming travel, possibly international, that could enrich your experiences. Midweek brings a period of relaxation; you may choose to step back from certain activities during this reflective phase. In the coming weeks or months, you'll find opportunities to resolve disputes or engage in significant discussions.

Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Maroon  
Lucky day Friday



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

Last week was a whirlwind of activity for you, balancing both home and work with remarkable determination. Your methodical approach ensured that everything was handled without compromising the quality, allowing you now to step back and enjoy a well-deserved break. It's a time to savor the results of your diligence. As you've managed to uphold both your professional and personal commitments successfully, you find your environment more supportive and harmonious. Your capabilities in handling relationships and business matters have not only strengthened your stature but have also set you as an inspiration for others. This period marks a significant opportunity for growth in your ventures, and any work-related travel could bring back rewarding outcomes, boosting both your professional standing and familial pride.

Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Mint  
Lucky day Thursday



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, you may find yourself on a quest for fairness in various areas of your life. However, the journey won't be straightforward, as it is marked by conflicts and confrontations. You might experience feelings of restriction, both mentally and physically, leading to a sense of demoralization and irritation. Amidst this chaos, with opposing forces at play, it becomes crucial to focus on maintaining balanced health habits and making discerning choices that favor personal well-being. Assume accountability for your actions and interactions, thoughtfully considering the advantages and disadvantages. Despite these obstacles, a sense of triumph is within reach. You'll navigate through this tough phase, emerging better equipped to handle future challenges. As the week concludes, opportunities for new beginnings or travel may arise, promising resolution to issues related to relationships or personal assets.

Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Ivory  
Lucky day Friday



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week brings a focus on emotional expression and deep connections. You naturally wear your heart on your sleeve, showcasing your emotions openly, which will enhance the bonds in your relationship. Expect a surge of closeness and mutual understanding with your partner, reinforcing your emotional ties. Additionally, this period is marked by potential gains in wisdom and the possibility of influential learning opportunities or mentorships that can guide you through significant life decisions. Your ability to articulate your thoughts impressively will serve you well, making you feel effective and acknowledged in your endeavors. High-ranking professionals can anticipate recognition and accolades. It's a pivotal time where your choices will significantly shape your journey, emphasizing the importance of focused decision-making.

Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Magenta  
Lucky day Monday



**VIRGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

At this moment, you stand at a pivotal juncture, faced with the need to make an important decision quickly. This period proves favorable for professionals like doctors and judges, who are likely to achieve recognition in their fields. A disciplined approach is essential to master the challenges ahead. You might face some health concerns and feelings of frustration; however, remember to appreciate the positives in your life. As the week progresses, expect a subtle shift that brings equilibrium. You'll experience renewed energy and a brighter outlook. Peace and joy will follow, enhancing your personal achievements. Support from others will play a key role in your accomplishments, leading to tangible rewards. Expect to receive what is rightfully yours, reinforcing a sense of justice and fulfillment.

Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Coral  
Lucky day Tuesday



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

You are entering a phase that calls for relaxation and recuperation. Embrace the serenity and strength this period offers. If you've recently experienced physical or emotional challenges, this is a time for healing. Soon, you may encounter a scenario requiring critical thinking, where clarity and understanding will emerge. Stay observant, as resolving such matters can be complex, possibly leading to confusion or a standstill. However, the latter part of the week promises a shift towards positivity. You may find yourself contemplating a new endeavor that demands quick action and courage. This is your moment to shine—step forward confidently and tap into your innate ability to navigate exciting challenges. There may also be joyful personal developments, possibly related to family expansion. Harness this burst of creativity and enthusiasm to maximize your opportunities.

Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Mustard  
Lucky day Monday



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week, your emotions may feel overwhelming, potentially overshadowing your usual judgment. Minor household issues could escalate, causing significant stress and leading you to seek solace away from worldly concerns. You might find yourself pondering drastic changes in your personal life, which could divert your focus from day-to-day duties. However, this period of turmoil is only temporary. As the week progresses, your previous endeavors will start to bear fruit. Recent investments are likely to yield substantial rewards. It's crucial to shake off any lingering confusion and gain a clearer perspective on your life's direction. This might involve stepping back from your typical patterns of thought and behavior to explore new ideas and perspectives. Such shifts will not only enhance your performance but also guide you toward a more balanced and impartial outlook.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Lavender  
Lucky day Wednesday



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

You often seek harmony, elegance, and the finer things in life, yet sometimes these seem just out of reach. Recently, you may find yourself overwhelmed by fears and worries, grappling with sleep disturbances, feelings of guilt, and emotional distress. Despite these challenges, it's important to remember that not all is lost. There's a gleam of hope, a fresh perspective or opportunity on the horizon that can help you emerge from this phase. Around the middle of the week, expect a surge of positive news—perhaps a heartfelt gesture or a new opening that could enhance your relationships and bring you emotional and physical strength. Stay patient; with time, the clouds will clear, and stability will return.

Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Indigo  
Lucky day Wednesday



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week presents a mix of challenges and opportunities, weaving through periods of emotional intensity and conflicting desires. You might start the week feeling a dip in financial stability, as incoming resources could be inconsistent. It's essential to navigate this time with patience, recognizing that this phase is only temporary. Engaging in meditation, yoga, or creative pursuits could prove beneficial in restoring your balance and helping you navigate through these turbulent times. Adopting a measured approach in your interactions, especially with those in senior positions, will be crucial. Avoid letting impulsive reactions disrupt the harmony and progress you've achieved thus far. Stay grounded and cautious, steering clear of misguided beliefs, and consider refreshing your perspective to better face the challenges ahead.

Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Forest Green  
Lucky day Friday



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This week, you may notice a significant shift in your demeanor, transitioning from a reflective and intense state to a more affectionate and nurturing one. Those in leadership roles, particularly at the helm of large organizations, might find their natural empathy tested as they encourage independence in others. Your loyalty remains unwavering to those you hold dear, yet it's wise to remain cautious with boundaries. By mid-week, your creativity and imagination could soar, allowing you to delight in a blend of fantasy and reality. This inner transformation will likely bring you a sense of fulfillment, enriching both your material and spiritual life, leaving you feeling content and joyful. Embrace these changes as they come, viewing them as opportunities for personal growth and deeper connections.

Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Peach  
Lucky day Sunday



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

A shift in location or a new beginning is on the horizon, bringing with it a rise in your current standing or role. You're prepared to embrace challenges to achieve your goals, driven by a restless desire for progress and excitement. A new, intense romantic or artistic connection might soon make its way into your life. As the week progresses, expect an influx of joy, achievements, and possibly some thoughtful gifts, enhancing friendships and personal contentment. A sense of nostalgia may wash over you, prompting reunions with old friends and family members. A positive energy surrounds you, rejuvenating your spirit. Signs point towards harmonious domestic life, with potential celebrations like home renovations or family gatherings, allowing for meaningful moments with those you cherish.

Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Rust  
Lucky day Sunday



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week marks a transition as you move away from a challenging phase, feeling a sense of relief and lightness. Family matters will take precedence, demanding more attention amidst less than ideal circumstances. You might find yourself at a crossroads, having held on to a situation that no longer serves your well-being, and it's time to embrace change. This moment holds considerable weight in determining your future; the decisions you make now are crucial. Challenges may arise from unresolved issues or lingering negative feelings towards someone. The coming days offer a chance to address and settle these conflicts, paving the way for healing and growth. Embrace your natural instincts and creativity to navigate through this. By week's end, a significant breakthrough promises to reignite your enthusiasm and determination, bolstering your spirit to pursue your aspirations boldly.

Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Cherry Red  
Lucky day Thursday

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**GURUSPEAK**  
SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

# Do you pray?



where you are. Unless you are lit in devotion to the Divine, your life will remain restless. In devotion, longing will arise in you. And when there is longing, true prayer happens by itself. Be sincere in your prayers. Do not try to outsmart the Divine. The mind has the tendency to forget the Divine. What type of time do you give the Divine? Usually, you give the leftover time; when you have nothing else to do, no guests to attend to, no parties to attend to, you go to the Divine. This is not quality time. Give prime time to the Divine. You will be rewarded. If your prayers are not answered, it is because you have never given quality time. Four types of people go to God. One, is those who seek the truth (knowledge and freedom). Two, the wise ones (gyanis). Three, the ones who seek material comforts (wealth). Four, the ones who are in misery. The wise one does not pray for something. His life itself is a prayer. If at all you have to pray for something, pray for the happiness of all the people in the world. 'Loka Samastha Sukhinou Bhavantu' (May Everybody Be Happy). — He is a Spiritual Guru

Prayer is a vital tool to improve your life. Wherever you can put your effort, put it. Where you cannot, pray for it! Whatever you do, know that a Higher Power has the final say and you can tap that power through your prayers. You don't need any special qualifications or abilities to pray. Whether a fool or a wise person, whether rich or poor, anybody can pray. Prayer doesn't mean just sitting and chanting some words. It's about being in that serene, calm, and meditative state. That is why, in the Vedic tradition, dhyana (meditation) is done before prayer as well as afterward. When the mind is focused, the prayer becomes far more powerful. Prayer is the cry of a soul. To whom you pray is not important. Whereas religion puts words to the prayer, and adds symbols and rituals to it, the prayer itself transcends them. It happens on the subtle level of feelings; and feelings transcend words and religion. The act of praying itself has the power to bring transformation. When you pray there should be total

involvement. If the mind is preoccupied elsewhere then that is no prayer at all. When there is pain, there is more involvement. That's why people turn to prayer when they are in pain. Prayer happens when you feel grateful or when you feel utterly helpless. In either case, your prayers will be answered. When you feel helpless, prayer happens by itself. That's why in Hindi we say 'Nirbal toh Balram'. If you are weak, God is your strength. Prayer is that moment when you come in touch with your limitations and your boundaries. In today's fast-paced world, people often pray out of fear and greed. Usually, when you love something, you want to possess it and you pray for it. True prayer, however, is just the opposite of wanting to possess. It's about honouring and offering everything to the Divine. Honouring brings devotion and leads to surrender. Devotion brings a healing touch to life. Devotion and faith are at the core of a sincere prayer. A true prayer can't happen without devotion and faith. Having faith is to realize that God's protection is there for you. Devotion is inner flowering. Devotion starts from