



**CITY 3**  
MINISTERS ASKED TO ENGAGE WITH PUBLIC

**WORLD 6**  
ISRAEL RESCUES FOUR MORE HOSTAGES

**SPORT 8**  
SPOTLIGHT ON NY PITCH AS STEADY INDIA TAKE ON PAKISTAN

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## ALL EYES ON CABINET MAKER, HIS CREATION

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA/  
RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Head of the swearing in ceremony of Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi for the third consecutive term, a high level meeting of BJP top brass held at the residence of Amit Shah to finalise the composition of new Cabinet in the Modi 3.0. BJP national president JP Nadda and national general secretary BL Santosh attended the meeting. Sources said the BJP is likely to keep Home, Finance, External Affairs, Railways, Road and Transport, Law and Justice, Information Technology, and Education Ministries. The alliance partners are likely to get 12 to 15 Ministries. The NDA partners might not have some of their big demands met, despite speculations to the contrary. The JD (U) has asked for Railways and is persistently pressing on it. The TDP has asked for Information Technology, which it is likely to not get.

Telangana BJP may get four Ministries and JD (United) three seats each. Three of the four TDP leaders who may find a place in PM Modi's new Cabinet are - Ram Mohan Naidu, Harish Balayogi and Daggumalla Prasad. JD (U) has proposed the name of two senior leaders - Lalan Singh and Ram Nath Thakur. Lalan Singh was elected to the Lok Sabha from Bihar's Munger, while Ram Nath Thakur is a Rajya Sabha MP. Thakur is the son of Bharat Ratna recipient Karpoori Thakur. The JD (U) and TDP both are interested in funds for the



Preparations underway for the swearing-in-ceremony of the new Government, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi

development of Bihar and Andhra Pradesh respectively. The Tribal Affairs Ministry is likely to go with an NDA ally while the Ministry of Power may go with TDP or JD (U). From Shiv Sena Prataprao Jadhav name is being discussed. There is no indication yet on how many Ministers will be sworn in, though it is expected to be at least a 30-member strong Cabinet.

It is also being considered that in first round of Cabinet formation there would be one MP from major allies to be given Cabinet

berth. As per sources, JD (S), LJP (Ram Vilas), HAM, Shiv Sena, NCP, RLD and Apna Dal (S) could have one Minister each. From JD(S) HD Kumaraswamy, Jayant Chaudhary of RLD, Chirag Paswan of LJP (Ram Vilas) and Anupriya Patel of Apna Dal (S) may become Ministers. JD(S) is eyeing Agriculture Ministry. Bihar BJP and JD (United) will get equal number of ministries in view of next year Assembly polls in the State. Telangana BJP may get four ministries and Odisha can

get lion share of six to seven Ministries. Shah and Singh are seen within the party as a certainty in the new Cabinet, former Chief Ministers who have won the Lok Sabha polls like Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Basavaraj Bommai, Manohar Lal Khattar and Sarbananda Sonowal are strong contenders for joining the Government. BJP leadership had earlier met their National Democratic Alliance partners discuss their cabinet berths on Friday. Nadda, Shah held discussion with JD(U) chief and Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, TDP supreme N Chandrababu Naidu and Shiv Sena president and Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde. After discussing with allies, Nadda and Shah held discussions with senior BJP leader and outgoing Defense Minister Rajnath Singh.

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## Leaders of seven countries start arriving in Delhi



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived in New Delhi on Saturday afternoon to attend the swearing-in ceremony of Narendra Modi as Prime Minister on the evening of June 9. India on Friday formally announced that the leaders of seven countries from the neighbourhood and the Indian Ocean region will attend the ceremony. Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe, his Maldivian counterpart Mohamed Muizzu, Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Nepalese Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" will attend the ceremony, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). Modi is expected to hold separate meetings with the visiting leaders, it was learnt.

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Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge with party leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi during the extended Congress Working Committee meeting, in New Delhi

## CWC wants Rahul as LoP, he says let me sleep on it

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress Working Committee (CWC) on Saturday unanimously urged Rahul Gandhi to take on the mantle of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha to which he told the party's top brass that he will take a decision on it "very soon". At a meeting of the CWC, the party's highest decision-making body, chaired by Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and attended by Sonia Gandhi, Rahul and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, among others, the party's Lok Sabha polls showing was hailed but it was also decided that separate committees would be set up in States where the performance was not good or below expectations, to take corrective measures. Kharge said the Lok Sabha poll mandate is a "decisive rejection" of the politics of divisiveness and hate, and stressed that the INDIA bloc must continue functioning cohesively both inside and outside Parliament. Two

resolutions were unanimously passed by the CWC, including one requesting Rahul to assume the position of the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha. Asked if had agreed to take on the position, Congress general secretary K C Venugopal said Rahul took note of the sentiments of the CWC members and told them that he would take a decision on it "very soon". In the other resolution, the CWC congratulated the people for voting so powerfully to preserve democracy, protect the Constitution and enhance social and economic justice. "They have decisively rejected both the substance and style of governance over the past decade. The verdict of the people is not just a political loss but a personal and moral defeat for the Prime Minister who sought the mandate in his name and ran a campaign anchored in lies, hate, prejudice, divisiveness and extreme bigotry," the resolution alleged.

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## 'Premature to wish Modi yet'

Pakistan has said it is "premature" for the country to congratulate Prime Minister Narendra Modi for securing third consecutive term since the formation of Government was going on in India. These remarks by Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch came on Friday two days ahead of Modi's swearing-in ceremony. "We do not have any comments on their electoral process," Baloch said, adding that since the formation of Government was going on in India, it is "premature" to talk about congratulating the Indian Prime Minister.



## Sena's claim of UBT MPs crossing over 'baseless'

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

The Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) on Saturday rubbished as "baseless" a claim by Shiv Sena MP and Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's confidant Naresh Mhaske that at least two Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs were likely to support the NDA Government of Prime Minister-elect Narendra Modi who will be sworn into office on Sunday. Within hours after Mhaske went to town claiming that at least two MPs from the Uddhav Thackeray-led Sena "were in touch with his party" and may join the NDA, Shiv Sena (UBT)'s deputy leader Sushma Andhare mocked at the rival Sena MP saying: "Making such baseless claims does not augur well for the newly elected MP. If what he is saying is true, he should come out with the names of two MPs".

But, he should realise that there are already Ministerial aspirants like Prataprao Jadhav (Sena's newly elected MP from Buldhana constituency) whom Shinde will favour. Earlier in the day, Mhaske had refused to name the two Lok Sabha members "who were in touch" with the party, citing the anti-defection law. "Four more Sena (UBT) MPs would soon join these two MPs. Together, they would join MV our party," Mhaske had said. Leader of Opposition in the Maharashtra Assembly Vijay Wadettiwar of the Congress said: "Such ridiculous claims made by the ruling party leaders reflect their mindset of the ruling alliance. They have not understood the current political situation". "The Maharashtra Assembly elections are just a few months away. No MP will think of taking such steps at a politically crucial time like this. Mhaske should be aware of this. The MVA won the peoples' confidence and is fully united, so his comments are baseless," Wadettiwar said. In the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections, the Opposition MVA won 31 seats (Congress 14 — which include the support it has received from one Independent MP, Shiv Sena (UBT) — 9, and NCP (Sharad Pawar) — 8), while the ruling MahaYuti bagged 17 seats (BJP — 9, Shinde Shiv Sena — 7 and Ajit Pawar NCP-1).

## NEET grace marks fine but panel to review results: NTA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid allegations of inflation of marks in the NEET-UG medical entrance exam, the National Testing Agency (NTA) announced on Saturday that the Education Ministry has set up a four-member panel to review the grace marks awarded to more than 1,500 candidates.

The NTA denied any irregularities and said the changes made in the NCERT textbooks and grace marks for losing time at the examination centres were some of the reasons behind the students scoring higher marks.

"A high-powered committee has been set up to review the results of over 1,500 candidates. The four-member panel headed by a former UPSC chairman will submit its recommendations within a week and the results of these candidates might be revised," NTA Director General Subodh Kumar Singh said at a press conference on Saturday. The issue took a political turn with the AAP demanding a Supreme Court-monitored SIT probe into the alleged irregularities and the Congress alleging paper leaks, rigging and corruption have become an integral part of many examinations. The party also accused the BJP of cheating youngsters and playing with their futures. Indian Medical Association too has demanded as CBI probe on the allegations. The Maharashtra Government has sought immediate cancellation of



Photo: The Pioneer

last month's NEET exam, alleging that its results have caused injustice to the students from the state. Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin said the trends from the latest NEET results have once again vindicated the DMK on its stand opposing the exam and reiterated that the entrance test goes against social justice and federalism. There have been calls from several quarters for a re-exam alleging that the grace marks awarded to make up for the loss of time at six exam centres have led to the inflation of marks and tampered with the chances of other candidates. These centres are from Meghalaya, Bahadurgarh in Haryana, Dantewada and Balodh in Chhattisgarh, Surat in Gujarat and Chandigarh. Singh denied any paper leak and irregularities in the exam and reiterated that the integrity of the crucial test had been compromised. He further said awarding of grace marks has not impacted the

qualifying criteria of the exam and the review of results of the affected candidates will not impact the admission process. According to experts, the mark inflation in NEET UG 2024 result is expected to make securing a spot in medical school this year more difficult. Some aspiring students have turned to online platforms to demand the cancellation of the results and a re-examination. Asked about whether the exam will be re-conducted for certain students, the NTA DG said, it will be decided depending upon the committee's recommendations. "The idea is to ensure that students who lost time or other students are not at any disadvantage," he said. The result of the medical entrance exam was announced on June 4. Sixty seven candidates had shared the first rank in the exam including six from the same centre in Haryana. A record more than 24 lakh candidates had registered for the exam this year.

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## President, Modi condole death of doyen Ramoji Rao

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday condoned the demise of renowned media tycoon Ramoji Rao and said his contributions to the industry will be long remembered. Rao, who revolutionised the news and entertainment industry, died at a hospital in Hyderabad early on Saturday. He was 88. "With the demise of Shri Ramoji Rao, India has lost a titan of the media and entertainment sector," President Murmu said in a social media post. An innovative entrepreneur, Rao pioneered a number of ventures, including the Eenadu newspaper, ETV news network and Ramoji Film City, President Murmu said. "Honoured with Padma Vibhushan, he succeeded as his vision was essentially rooted in society. His contributions to this industry will be long remembered. My condolences to his family and well-wishers," she said. Prime Minister Modi expressed grief at the death of noted media personality Ramoji Rao, describing him as a visionary who revolutionised Indian media. Rao's rich contributions have left an indelible mark on journalism and the world of films, Modi said in a social media post, adding that through his noteworthy efforts, he set new standards in innovation and excellence in the media and entertainment world.

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## Nightbirds, hit the sack early for mental health, longevity

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Night owls, take note: Grandma was right all along about the benefits of an early bedtime, irrespective of your chronotype (the natural inclination of your body to sleep at a certain time). A new study has upended the traditional belief that aligning sleep schedules with one's natural sleep preference, or chronotype, is the best approach for mental well-being. The research shows that staying up late is linked to higher rates of mental health disorders, regardless of whether individuals are morning people or night owls. To safeguard mental health, researchers recommend turning off the lights by 1 a.m. Conducted by Stanford Medicine, the study analysed nearly 74,000 adults and found that the timing of

sleep itself plays a critical role in mental health. Surprisingly, the findings highlight that early bedtimes offer significant benefits for everyone, across all chronotypes. Published in Psychiatry Research, the study's senior author, Jamie Zeitzer, a professor of psychiatry and behavioral sciences, remarked, "We found that alignment with your chronotype is not crucial here, and that really it's being up late that is not good for your mental health. The big unknown is why." Renske Lok, a postdoctoral scholar in psychiatry and behavioural health, led the study, which presented unexpected results. Previous research by Zeitzer's team suggested that women with cancer who did not align their sleep with their chronotype had shorter lifespans. This led to an expectation that aligning sleep schedules with



chronotype would be beneficial. However, the new findings challenge this assumption. The researchers examined middle-aged and older adults in the United Kingdom, gathering data on their sleep habits, including their morning or evening preferences. Participants wore wearable accelerometers for a week

to track their sleep patterns, and their mental health status was assessed through health records, covering any mental or behavioural disorder listed in the International Classification of Diseases. Among the 73,880 participants, 19,065 identified as morning types, 6,844 as evening types, and 47,979 fell somewhere in between. The results were revealing: both morning and evening types who stayed up late exhibited higher rates of mental health disorders, including depression and anxiety. The study showed that night owls who adhered to their natural late schedules were 20 per cent to 40 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with a mental health disorder compared to those who adopted an early or intermediate sleep schedule. Likewise, evening types who went to bed earlier fared better in terms of

mental health, while morning types who went to bed later suffered less severely. The study also explored whether poor mental health led people to stay up late but found that late-night wakefulness itself was a significant risk factor for developing mental health issues. Harmful behaviours, such as suicidal thoughts, violent crimes, alcohol and drug use, and overeating, are more common at night, further exacerbating mental health risks. Strategies like getting morning sunlight and maintaining a consistent early routine could help shift sleep patterns, though changing one's chronotype remains difficult. "Biologically speaking, it's very much like a rubber band—you take a day off and you snap back to where your body wants to be," Zeitzer explained.

# 'LS poll mandate against inflation, unemployment'



AAP leader Sanjay Singh addressing mediapersons in Lucknow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The people's mandate in the Lok Sabha elections 2024 is against inflation, unemployment, Agnipath scheme for short-term enrolment in the Army, the alleged attempt to destroy the Constitution of India and the Bharatiya Janata Party's politics of hatred. This was stated by Aam Aadmi Party leader and UP in-charge Sanjay Singh at a press conference held at the party office in Gomti Nagar on Saturday. He said the BJP should take a lesson from the loss of seats in the recent election and it should bear in mind that the country cannot be run by hatred, ego and by devaluing social norms and ending Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes reservations. Singh hit out at the BJP, saying the saffron party which claimed to have brought Lord Ram was given an unceremonious farewell from Ayodhya. He also spoke of a portrait in which Prime Minister Narendra Modi's photo was bigger than that of Lord Ram. On the formation of the National Democratic Alliance government at the Centre, the AAP leader said the BJP was not loyal to anyone. He tried to drive a wedge between the NDA partners by saying that they should not give BJP total control of the government. "The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) is demanding the Lok

Sabha speaker's post. If they get it would do good. Or in past we saw the BJP's speaker expel 150 MPs during the previous regime. They will tweak the Constitution, break the small parties which are its allies and will gag their voice," he said. Singh said the INDIA bloc had decided to watch carefully the political activities and development and take appropriate action as per the need of time. "If the BJP does not support the TDP speaker then the INDIA bloc should decide its strategy," he said. The AAP leader said N Chandrababu Naidu had demanded special status for Andhra Pradesh while Nitish Kumar of Janata Dal (United) had demanded special package and special status for Bihar as a condition for remaining with the BJP. "The NDA government may last for one year, 13 months or 13 days. Modi is not as popular and acceptable as Atal Bihari Vajpayee was. So there is little hope of this NDA government lasting for its full term," he said. Singh thanked the AAP leaders and workers for their tireless efforts in garnering support for INDIA bloc candidates in UP even though the party was not contesting election in UP. He said a meeting of party workers and leaders would be held in Noida and also in Lucknow in the coming days. Later in the evening, Sanjay Singh met Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav.

# Detained by police after brawl with in-laws, man poisons self to death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Piqued at humiliation by in-laws and police detention following a brawl with them, a man allegedly consumed some poisonous substance to end his life in Madaion on Friday. The deceased, identified as Shubham Shukla of Bakshi-Ka-Talab, was found lying unconscious near Engineering College in his car around 4 pm on Friday. Initial reports said he consumed some poisonous substance after he had a talk with his wife, who was not ready to return home. He was later admitted to a private hospital where he died later. The Madaion inspector confirmed that the man died during treatment. "Shubham was detained at the police station following a complaint of violence given by his wife. He was booked under Section 151 of IPC and was sent to jail for breach of peace. He had beaten his wife while being in a drunken state at her house on the intervening night of June 3 and 4," the inspector said. Giving details related to the incident, his father Ashok Kumar Shukla said Shubham had gone to his wife's parental house to bring her back to their home on the intervening night on June 3 and 4. "At his in-laws' house, Shubham was beaten black and blue and humiliated. He was then detained and booked by the Madaion police as his wife had lodged a fake complaint against him. The police did not

cross-check the allegations," Ashok alleged. "Shubham's in-laws were against sending his wife to our house and this snowballed in a verbal spat," he said. Ashok added that Shubham was all alone while his brother-in-law Rajnish Tiwari, along with his friends, two of whom were identified as Ankit and Pradeep, attacked him and attempted to kill Shubham by choking his throat. "They then called the police and gave a fake application signed Shubham's wife in which she alleged that Shubham beat her while being in a drunken state. The police took him to police station and booked him before sending him to jail," he said. He said Shubham was released on bail and he talked to his wife while asking why she gave a fake complaint and later ended his life. "My son was feeling humiliated after he was detained by the police and he ended his life due to this," he alleged. The police sent the body for autopsy and started further investigations.

recover any suicide note. A police spokesman said Ashish's relative Pankaj of Mashalchi Tola got a call from one Arvind Yadav, who told him about Ashish's sickness and asked Pankaj to visit him. Pankaj reached Ashish's house and found the doors bolted from inside. "I knocked the doors repeatedly but there was no response from inside. I sought the help of the landlord and found Ashish hanging when the doors were opened," he said. The police sent the body for autopsy and started further investigations. Ashish lived with his nephew in the rented accommodation and worked with a private company. In another incident in Mall, an unmarried youth, identified as Mukesh Sahu of Hariapur village, allegedly ended his life. Police claimed that Mukesh killed himself due to frustration as he had been suffering from some disease for the last several days. According to the police, Mukesh worked as a labourer.

## MAN HANGS SELF

A 30-year old man was found hanging at his house in Madheganj police station area on Saturday. The deceased, identified as Ashish of Mashalchi Tola in the area, was found hanging from the ceiling with a *gamchha* tied around his neck. Police claimed Ashish committed suicide and added that he was an alcoholic. The police, however, did not

## THEFT

Thieves made off with cash and ornaments worth several lakh from two houses in Banthra on the intervening night of Friday and Saturday. House owners Kallu Rawat and Rajesh Yadav filed a joint police complaint. According to the FIR, the thieves decamped with ornaments from Kallu's house and Rs 30,000 and ornaments from Rajesh's house. The duo have yet to furnish details of the ornaments stolen to the police.

# Clean drains before monsoon: Jacob

Lucknow (PNS): A meeting was held on Saturday under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob to address the cleaning of the city's drains and drainage systems. Jacob emphasised the importance of cleanliness to prevent public diseases. She instructed the officers concerned to pay special attention to maintaining hygiene throughout the city. The divisional commissioner stressed that regular fogging and anti-larva spraying should be conducted in streets and neighbourhoods. "The dengue outbreak increases due to water accumu-

lation and stagnant water in places like fridges, coolers, tires, and pots. To prevent infectious diseases, a joint team from Lucknow Municipal Corporation and malaria department should be formed, and an awareness campaign be run in the streets and neighbourhoods. Bleaching powder must be sprayed while cleaning the drains," she said. Jacob instructed the LMC officials to undertake cleaning of drains and drainage systems on a war footing, especially in waterlogged areas, and to ensure regular fogging and anti-larva spraying. "The officer con-

cerned should personally monitor the cleaning of medium and large drains to prevent waterlogging during the rainy season," she added. She directed Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh to ensure that councilors take feedback on the cleaning of drains. "The pumping stations should function smoothly, and the areas around them should be properly cleaned," she said. She also provided toll-free numbers for residents to register complaints if their streets, neighborhoods, or drains are not cleaned: 9219902911, 9219902912, 9219902913, 9219902914, 1533.

# UP govt to set up waste-to-green coal plant in Noida

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government will set up a waste-to-green coal plant to address energy and waste management challenge in Noida. The plant will have the capacity of processing 900 TDP waste per day where electricity will be generated from waste. The project will hugely complement the Swachh Bharat Mission. The plant is expected to produce 200 tonnes of green coal and generate 1,000 MW of electricity on a daily basis. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has lauded this project for its role in supporting the Swachh Bharat Mission, ensuring uninterrupted power supply, and achieving the dream of a self-reliant India. This project, led by Macawber Beekay Private Limited (MBL), is India's largest green coal project. The plan for producing torrefied charcoal from waste began four years ago. NTPC Limited planned to make torrefied charcoal from municipal waste for about four years. Subsequently, its subsidiary, NTPC Vidyut Vyapar Nigam Limited, awarded the project to Macawber Beekay on an EPC (Engineering, Procurement, and Construction) basis. The total capacity of the green coal plant will be 900 TDP per day of waste management. With an input of 900 TDP municipal solid waste (MSW), the plant will produce

200 tonnes of green coal. Joint Managing Director of Macawber Beekay Gautam Gupta highlighted that this project is a key example of the 'Make in India' initiative. "We will establish the largest waste-to-green coal plant in Greater Noida with a capacity of 900 TPD. Our company has developed a leading solution to convert municipal solid waste into environment-friendly green coal. The indigenously developed technology transforms waste into a viable alternative to fossil fuels, addressing waste management challenges and revolutionising energy production," Gupta said. He highlighted that this solves the challenges of waste management. Benefits are achieved at every level by reducing coal-related costs, mining and health hazards associated with waste dumping.

# Yogi expresses grief at demise of Ramoji Rao

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed grief at the demise of Ramoji Rao, the chairman of Eenaadu media group and founder of Ramoji Film City, on Saturday. On his X handle, Chief Minister Yogi wrote, "I am saddened by the demise of Shri Ramoji Rao ji, founder and chairman of Ramoji Group. His contributions to the media & film industry and his legacy through the Ramoji Group have left an indelible mark. My thoughts and prayers are with the bereaved family. May Lord Ram give them all the strength to bear this monumental loss. Om Shanti!" Ramoji Group's founder, renowned film producer, and owner of Ramoji Film City, Ramoji Rao, breathed his last on Saturday morning. Ramoji Rao had been ill for a long time and was admitted to the hospital on June 5.

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Online Registrations/Admissions in B.Tech. (First year and Lateral Entry) in (AG, CH, CS, EC, EI, IT & ME), M.Tech. (CSE, ECE), MCA, B.Sc. (Hons.), CS, BBA, MBA, BBA(HA) & MBA(HA) in University campus are open. For more details visit official web portals [www.ccsuniversity.ac.in/scriet](http://www.ccsuniversity.ac.in/scriet), [www.ccsuniversity.ac.in/admission.php](http://www.ccsuniversity.ac.in/admission.php) or [www.ccsuforms.in](http://www.ccsuforms.in) or contact: 7579685819, 7579685826, 7579685832  
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Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized officer of ARYAVART BANK, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Securities Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the securities Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand notice in the account mentioned hereunder on the dates mentioned before the names calling upon the borrower and guarantor to repay the amount mentioned in the notices along with interest within 60 days from the date of receipts said notices. The borrower/legal heirs of borrower and guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notices are hereby given to the Borrower/legal Heirs of borrower and guarantor in particular and the public in general that the undersigned has taken the possession of the properties described here below in exercise of power conferred on him under sub-section 13(4) of the Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the dates mentioned against each property. The borrower/legal Heirs of borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property. Any dealing with the under noted property will be subject to the charge of ARYAVART BANK for the amount with interest and other charges etc. thereon. **The Borrower's/Guarantors attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets**  
Details of Properties whose possession has been taken are as follows:-

Name & Address of the Borrowers/Guarantors/Branch	Description of the properties	Am't. due as per demand notice Date Demand Notice Date of Possession
(1). Mr. Ravi Shankar Mishra s/o Ram Mishra (Borrower & Mortgagor) 625, Mohanlalganj Post-Mohanlalganj Mastemau Lucknow-226002	Residential Property: Plot of land Kharsra No.50 situated at Village-Atrauli, Pargana-Mohanlalganj, Tehsil-Mohanlalganj, Lucknow, As Per Sale Deed Dated 14.10.2016, TITLE HOLDER- Mr. Ravi Shankar Mishra S/o Sri Ram Mishra, Boundaries: EAST- Gata No. 51, WEST-Gata No. 48, NORTH- Gata No. 49, SOUTH-Gata No. 52 AREA- 770 Sq.mt.	Rs. 13,42,373.20 and interest thereon 07.03.2024 03.06.2024

Date : 09.06.2024 Place : Lucknow Authorised Officer

**इण्डियन ओवरसीज बैंक** INDIAN OVERSEAS BANK  
(भारत सरकार का उपक्रम) (A GOVERNMENT OF INDIA UNDERTAKING)  
RO: LUCKNOW CO: CHENNAI

**POSSESSION NOTICE [Rule 8(1)]**  
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Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of the Indian Overseas Bank under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice as detailed here in below calling upon the borrower to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic possession of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on mentioned Date. The Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charges of the Indian Overseas Bank for the amounts and interest thereon mentioned against account herein below. **The Borrowers/Mortgagors/Guarantors attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them, to redeem the secured assets.**  
Details as under:

Sr. No.	Name and Address of the Borrowers/Mortgagors	Description of the Immoveable Property	Date of Demand Notice Date of Possession
Branch-Aashiana Branch, K-716, Near Ashiana Crossing Lucknow-226012 E-mail: <a href="mailto:lob1629@iob.in">lob1629@iob.in</a>			
1.	Borrower:- Mr. Tushar Gupta and Sunaina Gupta both R/o EWS-242, Sector G Jankipuram, Sahara State Road, Jankipuram, Lucknow-226021 Guarantor:- Mr. Prashant Srivastava R/o No. 1/85, Vishesh Khand-1, Gomti Nagar, Near Police Station, Lucknow-226010	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Residential Flat No. 407, 4th Floor, Amanda Heights, Deva Road, Chinhat constructed on Kharsra No. 55 at Ganeshpur Rahmanpur, Pargana, Tahsil and Distt Lucknow developed by SKC Builders & Developers (P) Ltd. owned by Mr. Tushar Gupta and Smt. Sunaina Gupta wife of Mr. Tushar Gupta, Super built up area-1450 Sq.ft., Boundaries:-East- Flat No 405, West-Flat No 409, North- Plot of Other, South- Passage & Staircase	20.12.2023 05.06.2024 Rs. 34,23,918.63 +further interest at contractual rates & rests, charges etc.
Branch-Munshipulia Branch, D-2047, Himalaya Marg, Indira Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226016, E-mail: <a href="mailto:lob2087@iob.in">lob2087@iob.in</a>			
2.	Borrower:- Pradeep Kumar Singh, Address-529 D/P 039, Pragati Vihar, Kalyanpur West, Vikas Nagar, Lucknow-226022	Residential House Built on Plot Part of Kharsra No. 837, Total Area-1000 Sq.Ft. (out of Total of 2760 Sq.ft.) at Village Madiyaon, Sita Vihar Colony Lucknow-226022, in the name of Pradeep Kumar Singh, Boundaries:-North- Plot of Suman Tripathi, South- Part of Plot, East- Road 20 Ft. Road, West-Property of Others	03.01.2024 06.06.2024 Rs.34,45,049.37 +further interest at contractual rates & rests, charges etc.
Branch-Jhansi Main Branch(0665), 43-44, Azad Ganj, Subhash Market, Sipri Bazar, Jhansi, U.P. E-mail: <a href="mailto:lob0565@iob.in">lob0565@iob.in</a>			
3.	Housing Loan-Borrower:- Mr. Rajesh Sahu S/o Devi Das Sahu, Address H. No. 241, (old) /291 (New) Ward No. 25, Hirapur, Mauza-Gadiyagaon, Pratapapura, Behind Shiv Mandir, Nagra Jhansi Smt. Savita Sahu W/o Mr. Rajesh Sahu, Address H. No. 241, (old) /291 (New) Ward No. 25, Hirapur, Mauza-Gadiyagaon, Pratapapura, Behind Shiv Mandir, Nagra Jhansi Term Loan-Mr. Rajesh Sahu S/o Devi Das Sahu, Address H. No. 241, (old) /291 (New) Ward No. 25, Hirapur, Mauza-Gadiyagaon, Pratapapura, Behind Shiv Mandir, Nagra Jhansi	Double Storeyed Residential Situated at House H. No. 241, (old) /291 (New) Ward No. 25, Hirapur, Mauza-Gadiyagaon, Pratapapura, Behind Shiv Mandir, Nagra Jhansi, Admeasuring-49.17 Sq.mtr. and Covered Area- 529.12 Sq.ft. X02 (Both Floors) Owned by-Shri Rajesh Sahu S/o Shri Devi Das Sahu, Boundaries:- North- 4 ft. Wide Road, South- House of Shri Manoj, East- Railway Land, West-House of Smt Ram Kali (More Describe in Sale Deed No. 3931 Dated 01.08.2012)	03.12.2022 07.06.2024 Rs. 5,39,370.73 +further interest at contractual rates & rests, charges etc.

Date: 09.06.2024 Authorised Officer, Indian Overseas Bank

**CLASSIFIEDS**

**सूचना**

सूचित हो कि मेरे पुत्र यशरत्न शर्मा को मैं का नाम सुविचर जन्म प्रमाण-पत्र में रिखा नाम गलत दर्ज हो गया है। जबकि सही नाम दीपि शर्मा है। और पिता का नाम सुविचर है। कृपया कृपया इंस्टीट्यूट में राखरामों को गया है जबकि सही नाम राजू शर्मा है। भविष्य में मैं का नाम दीपि शर्मा व पिता का नाम राजू शर्मा के नाम से जाना जाए। राजू शर्मा 701, सिखा अपार्टमेंट, 32 केन्द रोड लखनऊ।

**NOTICE**

"I am married to Rohit Shukla on dt. 21-11-2008. After marriage I started my name as Pooja Shukla instead of Pooja Awasthi. Smt. Pooja Shukla W/O Rohit Shukla R/O Flat No.C-2/1002, Supertech EcoVillage-2, Sector-16B, Greater Noida West-201301"

**NOTICE**

I. Poonam w/o sub Bhujvir singh R/o H.N. 590P/432 Madhuban vihar colony, near SGPGI Lucknow, declare That my name has been wrongly mentioned as Poonam kumari in my husband's service record. But my correct name is Poonam vide Affidavit no. In-up72265561344429W dated 06-06-2024 as mentioned in my Aadhar card.

**NOTICE**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
Public in general is hereby informed that I, Deepa Singh, daughter of Shri Bachanu Singh, born on 07.03.1981 in Village-Hinaata, Post-Marihan, District- Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh-231210 took Sanyas at the age of 28 years and my Spiritual Master Jagadguru Shri Kripalu ji Maharaj changed my name as Sushree Dheeshwari Devi. I have also changed my previous name Deepa Singh to new name Dheeshwari Devi and new address as Kripalu Dham Mangarh, Kunda Harnaganj, District-Pratapgarh, Uttar Pradesh-232024 in my Aadhar Card, Identity Card and other documents, so that I may hereafter be called, known and distinguished not by my former name, but new name "Sushree Dheeshwari Devi".

# 10 more tyre crushers to prevent wrong-side driving

The Traffic department will soon install tyre crushers at ten more locations in the city, with the sites already identified. Newly-appointed Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Kamlesh Dixit stated that the two tyre crushers installed as a pilot project had achieved their intended purpose, receiving positive feedback from the public. "We are now installing more tyre crushers in areas with public demand and are in the process of purchasing the

equipment," he added. This initiative marks the first time the Traffic department has implemented tyre crushers to prevent commuters from driving on the wrong side of the road. The decision came after the department solicited suggestions from citizens to improve traffic flow, as many commuters driving on the wrong side caused congestion and accidents. A tyre crusher allows vehicles to pass if travelling in the correct direction, but it punctures the tyre if approached from the opposite side, immediately stopping the vehicle.

However, nearly a month after installation, the tyre crusher at the Barrage was found broken due to vehicles forcing over its teeth, bending and breaking them. Officials stated that they would replace it. "We will replace it. It is true that sometimes the public damages it, and we will post a traffic cone at points where they will now be installed to prevent damage," Dixit said. Meanwhile, the department is exploring other measures to alleviate traffic jams by observing potential one-way points in

the city. "Teams are already assessing points where one-way routes can be introduced and their potential impact," he said. Additionally, the department has worked on regulating e-rickshaws. "e-rickshaw owners were asked to fill out forms for registration, and a lottery will be held on June 11 to determine their routes. Unregistered e-rickshaws or those operating on unauthorised routes will be fined, curbing the excessive number of e-rickshaws on a single route," Dixit explained.

# Docs save life of girl eating her hair

Lucknow (PNS): Doctors at Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences (RMLIMS) successfully treated a 10-year-old girl suffering from trichotillomania, a hair-eating disorder. The girl from eastern Uttar Pradesh has been discharged from the hospital following her recovery. Dr Piyush Upadhyaya explained that the patient had a habit of pulling out and eating her own hair. "She began experiencing stomach pain, bloating, and vomiting. Although her parents knew about her hair-eating habit, they did not link it to her symptoms," he said. Dr Upadhyaya removed the hairballs from her intestine through endoscopy. "We advised that she receive counselling to prevent future hair eating. Children sometimes engage in this behaviour due to anxiety, though such cases are very rare," he noted. Medical experts explain that ingesting indigestible materials leads to the formation of bezoars, which are masses containing foreign material. Trichobezoar, a type of bezoar, is associated with hair-eating and primarily occurs in females under 30 years of age.

# New research initiative by LU

Lucknow (PNS): The University of Lucknow announced on Saturday the launch of its innovative Researcher-in-Residence programme, designed to foster international collaboration and enhance the intellectual vibrancy of its academic community. The initiative invites distinguished scholars from various disciplines and institutions worldwide to engage in cutting-edge research, share their expertise, and contribute to the academic environment at the University of Lucknow. "This initiative underscores the university's commitment to academic excellence and its role as a hub for intellectual exchange. The programme is designed to enhance the university's vibrancy, expand our international research network, and expose our students to international faculty. This will strengthen our academic value and improve our rankings in terms of internationalisation and academic reputation," Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai said. "The programme offers a unique opportunity for international faculty, scientists, and industry experts with a PhD or equivalent research experience to immerse themselves in the academic life of the University of Lucknow for a minimum duration of three months. This

initiative aims to create a collaborative environment where visiting researchers can work closely with local faculty and students, participate in seminars and workshops, and contribute to the university's research goals," LU spokesperson Durgesh Srivastava said. Applicants must possess a PhD or equivalent research experience and should be affiliated with recognised universities, colleges, institutions, or industries outside India. A well-defined research proposal, outlining the objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes of the proposed project, is required. Additionally, applicants must commit to teaching and mentoring at the University of Lucknow during their stay. Visiting researchers will have access to state-of-the-art laboratories, libraries, and other essential research facilities. The university will provide accommodation and a contingent grant to the visiting researchers. Researchers are expected to produce tangible research outputs, engage actively with the academic community, and participate in seminars and workshops. Applications will be accepted year-round and should be submitted at least six months prior to the proposed residency period.

# UPSRTC to recruit contractual drivers

Lucknow (PNS): In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision to improve transportation services and create more job opportunities, the Uttar Pradesh State Road Transport Corporation is set to recruit contractual drivers for various depots. Notable among these are Charbagh, Awadh, Kaiserbagh, Rae Bareilly, Suburban, and Haidergarh depots in the Lucknow region. In addition, interested candidates aspiring to become contractual drivers can contact the assistant regional manager's offices of these depots to submit their application forms. Selected candidates will receive a fixed amount based on kilometres driven, along with additional incentives. According to UPSRTC's Lucknow region manager RK Tripathi, individuals selected as contractual drivers will be compensated at a rate of Rs 1.89 per kilometre. Additionally, upon completing duty for 22 days and covering 5,000 kilometres, they will receive Rs 3,000 as incentive. Furthermore, upon fulfilling the stipulated two-year service requirement, individuals will receive a fixed amount of Rs 19,593, including allowances and incentives.

Ministers asked to engage with public, listen to their problems

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Following the disappointing results of the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath convened a crucial meeting of his cabinet colleagues on Saturday where he emphasised the need for ministers to actively engage with the public, listen to their problems, and work diligently to resolve the problems.

public. Ministers should go along with the public. We do not accept VIP culture," he stated. Yogi Adityanath also directed ministers to widely publicise the achievements of both the Central and state governments on social media. He stressed the importance of making public hearings and the CM helpline more effective, and called for the implementation of an e-cabinet system for cabinet meetings and an e-office system in all departments. Each department was tasked with contributing to the goal of making the state's economy reach one-trillion dollars. Ministers were instructed to review their progress according to the action plan and to

embark on regional tours soon. Additionally, the chief minister emphasised the need for meticulous review of budget allocations and expenditures, ensuring timeliness and quality in project execution. He also highlighted initiatives such as plantation drives, the 'School Chalo

Abhiyan', and communicable disease control efforts, urging ministers to ensure their success. Notably, Deputy Chief Ministers Keshav Prasad Maurya and Brajesh Pathak did not attend the meeting as they were in Delhi. They are expect-

ed to return to Lucknow following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's oath-taking ceremony.

This cabinet meeting, the first after the Lok Sabha election results, comes at a time when the Bharatiya Janata Party leadership is reportedly dissatisfied

with the outcomes in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP secured only 33 seats in the state, falling short of the pre-election claims of winning all 80 seats. This is a stark contrast to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, when the BJP won 62 seats despite an opposition alliance of Samajwadi

Party-Bahujan Samaj Party, and the 2014 elections where they secured 71 seats. Amid speculations of imminent changes, it is anticipated that a phase of reviews and restructuring will commence at both the government and organisational levels as soon as

the new government is sworn in at the Centre. The chief minister underscored the importance of striving for excellence in governance and accelerating stalled projects, reaffirming his commitment to the people and rejecting VIP culture.

Negative politics has ended, people's issues triumphed: Akhilesh

SP chief meets newly-elected MPs

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Claiming the success of caste-based PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) social coalition, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on Saturday said that negative politics has ended and the people's issues and concerns have triumphed. The Samajwadi Party also put up a hoarding at the gate of the party office, proclaiming Akhilesh Yadav as 'Ayodhya Ke Avadhesh'.

Yadav, and Afzal Ansari. After a string of poll reverses since 2017, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav has finally delivered with his party putting in its best-ever performance in the Lok Sabha elections to win 37 of the 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh and emerging the single-largest party in the country's most populous state where it reduced the ruling BJP to 33 seats from 62 in 2019. The SP emerged the third largest party in the country after the BJP and the Congress.

Talking to mediapersons after meeting the newly-elected MPs at the Samajwadi Party office here on Saturday, Akhilesh Yadav said: "This is a victory of INDIA and the strategy of PDA. The Samajwadi Party has emerged as the third largest party of the country. The party has got the support of the people in a big way."

Yadav and his party, leading the INDIA bloc in Uttar Pradesh, dealt the biggest blow to the ruling BJP nationally as it overtook the NDA with the SP-Congress alliance winning 43 seats. The NDA secured 36 seats in the state. The SP's previous best Lok Sabha poll performance was in 2004 when it had won 35 seats in Uttar Pradesh.

"At the same time, the responsibility of the 'Samajwadis' has also increased — like raising the issues pertaining to the public and keeping the interest of the public in mind, while putting up our views. The SP's endeavour in the parliament will be to serve the people at the maximum," he said.

In 2024, the SP's strike rate was the highest among the big parties as it won 37 of the 62 seats it contested, while the BJP could win only 33 of the 76 it contested in Uttar Pradesh. Among all the political parties in the country, the SP took the biggest leap with a seven-fold increase from its five-seat tally in 2019.

"Negative politics has come to an end, while positive politics has begun. The issues pertaining to people have triumphed," said Akhilesh, who has been elected to Lok Sabha from Kannauj. In the just-concluded Lok Sabha elections, the Samajwadi Party won 37 out of 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh, while its ally Congress won six seats. The BJP managed to win 33 seats, and its allies RLD and Apna Dal (Sonelal) two seats and one seat respectively. Aazad Samaj Party (Kanshi Ram) won one seat, while the BSP failed to win even a single seat.

In 2004, when the SP won 35 seats, its founder Mulayam Singh Yadav headed the government in Uttar Pradesh. Now, the party has achieved success despite having been out of power in the state for seven years. The SP attained a 33.59% vote share in 2024 as against 18.11% in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh. In the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly polls, the SP's vote share was 32.1% and the tally went up to 111 from 47 in 2017, laying the foundation for the 2024 performance.

Senior party leaders Shivpal Singh Yadav and Ramgopal Yadav were also present along with newly-elected MPs Dimple Yadav, Dharmendra Yadav, Aditya Yadav, Akshaya

cent, Kasganj at 99.86 per cent, Siddharthnagar at 99.84 per cent, and Ambedkar Nagar at 99.83 per cent. Conversely, districts with the least progress include Kanpur Nagar (72.24 per cent), Prayagraj (72.50 per cent), Varanasi (73.30 per cent), Chitrakoot (82.24 per cent), Balrampur (84.32 per cent), Meerut (87.46 per cent), Jaunpur (88.68 per cent) and Bahraich (91.13 per cent). Although significant progress has been made in these districts, they have been asked to complete the work by December.

Revenue dept expedites land record digitisation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Under the guidance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the Revenue department is working to expedite the digitisation of land records for the enhanced convenience of the general public. As a result of these efforts, ten districts in the state have nearly achieved 100 per cent completion in real-time khatani work. Among these top ten districts, four have attained full completion in real-time khatani, while the remaining six districts have surpassed the 99 per cent mark. Overall, real-time khatani work stands at an impressive 95.7 per cent completion rate, with even the least progressed districts achieving over 72 per cent completion.

These include the highest count of 854 villages in Prayagraj, followed by 391 in Jaunpur, 377 in Varanasi, 302 in Kanpur Nagar, 169 in Sitapur, 159 in Balrampur, 156 in Gorakhpur, 129 in Kheri, 125 in Fatehpur, 120 in Bahraich, 109 in Gonda, 107 in Kaushambi and 100 villages in Chitrakoot. These districts have also been instructed to complete the work by December.

The Revenue department will be able to make 100 per cent of the khatani digitally accessible in all districts by December 2024. Districts achieving 100 per cent completion of real-time khatani work include Shamli, Farrukhabad, Amethi and Kushinagar. Additionally, Sultanpur has achieved 99.94 per cent completion, Amroha and Moradabad at 99.91 per

cent, Kasganj at 99.86 per cent, Siddharthnagar at 99.84 per cent, and Ambedkar Nagar at 99.83 per cent. Conversely, districts with the least progress include Kanpur Nagar (72.24 per cent), Prayagraj (72.50 per cent), Varanasi (73.30 per cent), Chitrakoot (82.24 per cent), Balrampur (84.32 per cent), Meerut (87.46 per cent), Jaunpur (88.68 per cent) and Bahraich (91.13 per cent). Although significant progress has been made in these districts, they have been asked to complete the work by December.

Table with columns: Sr. No., CUSTOMER NAME, LOAN A/C NO., AMOUNT OUTSTANDING (IN RS.), DATE OF RECALL NOTICE, GROSS WEIGHT, NET WEIGHT. Includes sub-headers like B.O.: AASHIANA LUC UP, B.O.: AGRA [UP], etc.

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# Modi expresses gratitude to people of Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister-designate Narendra Modi recently became emotional when a group of local public representatives and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders handed him the certificate of victory. Modi registered his third consecutive win from Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency recently and is going to take oath as the prime minister for the third time on Sunday to lead the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government at the Centre.

Since the completion of Lok Sabha elections, Modi met the delegation from his parliamentary seat for the first time on Thursday evening. The public representatives and office-bearers of BJP reached Delhi from Kashi to hand over the certificate of victory from Varanasi Lok Sabha seat to Modi, who accepted it with respect, calling it the mandate of the people. Modi talked to the delegation members and enquired about the condition of Kashi. Modi also expressed gratitude to the people of Kashi through the local representatives.

Regional BJP president (Kashi) Dilip Patel said after the meet-



BJP leaders handing over certificate of victory from Varanasi Lok Sabha seat to PM-designate Narendra Modi in Delhi recently.

ing that Modi is the second Prime Minister in Indian history who will take oath as the prime minister for the third consecutive time after Pt Jawaharlal Nehru. "I along with public representatives and BJP office-bearers had the privilege of handing over the certificate of Lok Sabha elections 2024 to the MP elected for the

third time in a row from Varanasi Lok Sabha at the residence of caretaker PM", he said, adding that we all received the blessings of Modi. Apart from Dilip Patel, the others in the delegation included UP Ministers of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal and Dr Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu', Mayor Ashok Tiwari,

Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari, MLC Dharmendra Rai, district BJP president and MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, city party chief Vidyasagar Rai, Party's Lok Sabha seat convener and ex-MLA Surendra Narayan Singh Aude, and state BJP treasurer Manish Kapoor.

## BEd entrance exam today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The BEd entrance exam will be held on Sunday. For this 36 centres have been set up in Prayagraj. This time the Uttar Pradesh BEd Joint Entrance (UP BEd JEE) exam will be conducted by Bundelkhand University Jhansi.

The Prof Rajendra Singh (Rajju Bhaiya) State University has been made the nodal centre for this exam to be held in Prayagraj and Pratapgarh districts.

The examination centres will be monitored from here. The government inter aided and government degree colleges and aided colleges have been made the centres. A total of 16,300 candidates will appear in the exam here.

Similarly, the exam will be held at seven centres in Pratapgarh in which 3,500 candidates will appear.

Nodal officer of the entrance exam, Professor Vivek Kumar Singh said a total of 43 examination centres have been set up in both the districts. Security arrangements have been made. Two observers each will be deployed at each examination centre. A magistrate will also be present at every centre. Security arrangements have also been made by the local administration.



Newly elected BJP MP Manoj Tiwari offers prayers at the Kashi Vishwanath Temple, in Varanasi.

PTI

## SP, Cong for cleaning of drains before monsoon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Encouraged by recent parliamentary election results and showing unity, the workers of INDIA Bloc jointly led by former city chief of Samajwadi Party (SP) Vishnu Sharma and city Congress president Raghavendra Choubey met the Additional Municipal Commissioner Dushyant Maurya and handed over a memorandum to the latter on Saturday as the municipal commissioner was on leave. They demanded cleaning of drains in the city before the arrival of monsoon to avoid waterlogging. They also raised a protest at Nagar Nigam office.

They expressed their concern over delay in desilting of drain lines as the monsoon is expected to arrive in the area between June 20 and 25. They said due to the delay, the residents of Kashi may face waterlogging in the coming days.

According to them, there are 301 small and 118 big drains in the city, including the extended area but most of them have not been desilted yet. They alleged that the



SP, Congress leaders submitting a memorandum to Nagar Nigam officer in Varanasi on Saturday.

Nagar Nigam is publishing the works in the newspapers just by completing the formalities and misleading the public but the reality is not visible on the ground. Senior SP leader Pooja Yadav said though the festival of Bakrid is coming near but neither cleaning nor arrangements for containers have been made yet in the Muslim dominated areas of the city. The Nagar Nigam officer assured that all the drains of the city will be cleaned completely by June 20 before the

monsoon. Prominent among those present on the occasion were state SP secretary Raju Yadav, Vikas Yadav 'Bachcha', Congress corporators Haji Okash Ansari and Gulshan Ali, Dilip Kashyap, Haider Guddu, Shamim Ansari, Rahul Gupta, Ravi Jaiswal, Abdul Hameed, Murali Yadav, Hanuman Yadav, Amir Ahmed, Mohammad Mohsir, Pradeep Modanwal, Sandeep Sharma, Jalaluddin Ansari, Krishna Lal Gaud, Ramji Gupta, Arjun Sonkar and Roshan Vishwakarma.

## Auditorium at NCZCC to be inaugurated tomorrow

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The newly constructed ultra-modern auditorium will be inaugurated at North Central Zone Cultural Centre (NCZCC) on June 10. The chief guest, state Governor and NCZCC chairperson Anandi Ben Patel will inaugurate the auditorium at a function organised at 6 pm on Monday.

According to the centre's director Prof Suresh Sharma, the special guest of the function will be Amita Prasad Sarabhai, joint secretary of the Ministry of Culture. The auditorium has been constructed at a cost of approximately ₹3 crore. The 400-seater auditorium has been made eco-friendly. Special fire safety arrangements have been made here. The size of the stage has been expanded and made better for stage performances.

Meanwhile preparations have been made to reshuffle the station in charges, sub-inspectors and constables on a large scale in Prayagraj Police Commissionerate, sources said.

## DC inspects redevelopment works at Harishchandra Ghat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma inspected the redevelopment works being done at Harishchandra Ghat here on Saturday and directed to give priority to some changes in the proposed model so that for the convenience of the public. He also directed the officers and construction agency concerned to complete the ongoing works within the stipulated time period. This project is being constructed by JSW Foundation

(Jindal Group), whose implementing agency is Bridgetech Infravision. During his inspection, the DC gave various instructions and said the permission for transit mixer vehicle and other construction vehicle passes for expediting the progress of work during the day hours will be issued soon. He said after the construction of the complex, a 22 feet access road will be built for the visiting visitors. Besides, all transformers will be shifted to the roadside at the first floor

level of the building. He said a parapet wall will be constructed on the outer side (road side) at the first floor level behind which transformers will be placed on the roof. According to Sharma, sewer pumping station, DG panel and panel room will be shifted near the pre-determined toilet area and the toilet will be shifted near the STP pump panel room. Entry should be provided from the road side for sewer pumping station panel and DG room so that all

the work can be conducted from outside. All the existing trees should be preserved and platforms should be constructed for their protection, he said. The divisional commissioner also directed the officers to plant additional trees wherever possible to give a green look to the entire campus. Additional Municipal Commissioner Dushyant Maurya, Ambrish Mishra and Yogendra Srivastava of the implementing agency were also present during the inspection.

## Two killed in road accident

PTI ■ BHADOHI/BALLIA

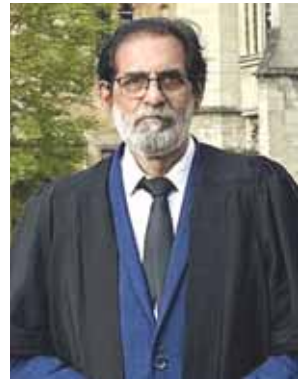
Two people, including a police head constable, were killed after being hit by a truck here on Saturday, police said. The incident occurred in the Narthua village, police said. Station House Officer (SHO) of the police station Sachinda Nand Pandey said, "A traffic head constable Manish Yadav

(39) and Dheeraj Saroj who were travelling in an autorickshaw were killed when a truck collided with them." "Four others travelling in the autorickshaw were injured in the accident and were rushed to the hospital," the station house officer said. The truck driver fled from the spot after the incident.

Police have sent the bodies for postmortem and have initiated an investigation. Meanwhile two people, including an Army personnel, were killed after their motorcycle was hit by a car in the Haldi area of Ballia district, police said on Saturday. According to the police the incident took place around 11 pm on Friday at Belhari

Dhala on National Highway 31. Army personnel Dhanji Yadav (35) and Arun Yadav (30), residents of Malikpura, were returning to their village when a car hit their motorcycle. Both of them died on the spot, a police officer said. The police have taken the car into possession and a case has been registered against its driver in this connection.

## BHU alumnus awarded IAS Shimla fellowship



BHU alumnus Prof RN Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Prof Ravindra Nath Singh, an alumnus of the Department of AIHC & Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has been awarded the prestigious fellowship at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla for a period of two years. During his tenure at IIAS, Prof Singh will be conducting research on the Harappan Archaeometallurgy of Northwest India: Emerging Historical Perspectives. Presently, Prof Singh is conducting research on Environmental Archaeology of Indus Civilisation as a Visiting Fellow at the Magdalen College, University of Oxford, for the Trinity Term 2024. He will join IIAS, Shimla, after the Trinity Term. Before joining the Magdalen College, University of Oxford as Visiting Fellow, Prof Singh was associated with the Department of Archaeology at the University of Cambridge as the Smuts Commonwealth Fellow for nine months during

2023-24. His work at Cambridge included significant contribution to the field of environmental archaeology, enhancing our understanding of how environmental factors influenced ancient civilisations, particularly the Indus Valley Civilisation. Prof Singh has been engaged in research in Harappan Archaeology, Archaeology of the Ganga Valley and in the field of Archaeological Science for four decades. His extensive research and field work have made substantial contribution to research of ancient civilisations and their interactions with environmental changes. His fellowship at IIAS, Shimla, is a recognition of his enduring commitment and invaluable contribution to archaeology.

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### APPOINTED

Dr Deepak Mishra, Associate Professor, Regional Institute of Ophthalmology, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has been appointed as the council member for the South Asian Academy of Ophthalmology (SAO). He earned this prestigious recognition because of his dedication and contributions to the field of ophthalmology. He will take charge of the 17th Annual Conference of SAO in Bhutan on September 21-23. Dr Mishra said that more than one-third of the global population lives in this region and it has its own problems in eye care. He will work in a coordinated way with other councils and office-bearers to uplift society and serve the people of this region.

## Emphasis on awareness about importance of biodiversity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

An environment awareness programme was conducted by the Army and NCC in DAV PG College here on Friday. Junior officers and soldiers of Army's 137 Ganga Task Force and junior officers of 5/89 Battalion NCC made the students aware on the occasion of International Environment Day and also pledged to protect the environment by planting a large number of trees. A seminar was also organised on the occasion. The Army officers said that International Environment Day is celebrated every year on June 5 as in 1972, the United Nations General Assembly was organised on the subject of human environment. During this discussion, the suggestion of World Environment Day was also given and two years later, it was also started being celebrated from June 5, 1974. In 1987, the suggestion of changing its centre came up and since then different countries are chosen for its organisation. Every year more than 143 countries participate in it and many government, social and business people talk about environmental protection, problems etc. A speaker said we should especially make people aware about the importance of biodiversity and the dangers caused by its absence by demonstrating the importance of protection of forests, culture, arts and crafts of life, music, clothing-food, importance of medicinal plants etc. Along with this, at the end



of the programme, saplings were planted in the playground and a pledge was taken to protect the environment. The awareness campaign was chaired by the acting principal of the college and Major in NCC, Prof Satyagopal. A large number of army personnel, NCC cadets etc, including Army Junior Officer Subedar Dal Bahadur Basnet and Green Peace Foundation President Rajesh Khushwa were present. Meanwhile, a group of children took out a roller skating rally from BLW Inter College to Cinema Hall in the premises of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) under the auspices of BLW Sansthan on Friday. It was a part of programmes being organised in view of World Environment Day. The

rally was flagged off by the chief guest, Senior Personnel Officer (Headquarters) and Sansthan vice-president Rajkumar Gupta and special guest and Public Relations Officer (PRO) Rajesh Kumar. Speaking on the occasion, Rajkumar Gupta said due to excess exploitation of the natural resources by the people in the present time in the name of modernisation and development, its ill effects are badly affecting our lives today. "If we are not careful even today, then the coming generation will pay a heavy price", he said, appealing to the people to become aware to stop exploitation of natural resources and plant trees. "The efforts made by the Sansthan for this are very commendable",

he said. On the occasion apart from roller skating instructors Akash Verma, Abhishek Sharma, Kalpana Kumari and Seema, residents of BLW and surrounding areas were also present and participated in the rally with the children. The trainees of the Roller Skating Academy which is run by the Sansthan participated in the rally wearing their roller skates. An Amla tree was planted in the campus by Sansthan secretary Alok Kumar Singh. Earlier, the guests were welcomed by Anand Rai and Ravindra Prasad Yadav. In the end the vote of thanks was proposed by Ramesh Chandra Jaiswal. Sansthan secretary was the coordinator of the entire programme.

## Youth dies after branch falls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A branch of mahua tree broke and fell on a man and his nephew who were sleeping inside a tent in Kukhudi under Manda police station area on Friday night. As a result the nephew, who had come to work on the railway track died on the spot while his uncle was seriously injured. The workers admitted the injured to a nearby hospital from where he was referred to the SRN Hospital. On getting information the police reached the spot and sent the body for the post-mortem examination. According to a report, Sanju (20), son of Indradev of Nadhira of Babhni police station of Sonbhadra, used to work as a labourer on the railway track by staying with his uncle Ramlal in Kukhudi village. Tents have been set up for about 50 labourers in Pandit Ki Bagh located in Kukhudi village. Around 2:15 am due to a storm, a thick branch broke from the mahua tree and fell on the tent as a result of which Sanju died on the spot and Ramlal was seriously injured. On hearing the cries, the fellow workers reached the spot, removed the broken branch and took the injured to the nearest hospital and after first aid, the injured was referred to the city. The police sent the body to mortuary for the post-mortem examination. The family members are inconsolable. The outpost in charge Vinay Singh said that the body has been sent for post-mortem examination and further action is being taken.

**ACTION ON:** After the murder of Atiq Ahmed-Ashraf, action is going on against IS-227 gang members and relatives. The Prayagraj Commissionerate Police has opened the history sheet of mafia Ashraf's brother-in-law Zaid Master and Saddam. Their historysheet was opened at Puramufti police station. As many as 15 cases have been registered against Saddam since 2015 and six against Zaid Master since 2009. Saddam is also an accused in the Umesh Pal murder case. Ashraf's brother-in-law Zaid Master and Saddam are residents of Hatwa village of Puramufti area. Zaid has been absconding since the Umesh Pal murder case. DCP Deepak Bhukar said a reward will soon be announced on Zaid who is wanted in a case of demanding ₹5 lakh extortion money from Sunni Waqf Board's Mutawalli. **ARRESTED:** The Shahganj police on being tipped off by an informer arrested Raees Ahmed of Hammam Gali Nakhass Kohna, Shahganj on Saturday with stolen goods. A Scorpio was recovered from his possession in which stolen goods were kept in three sacks including 50 rolling pins, 31 iron utensils, 16 sieves, 11 mousetraps etc. A few days ago, a businessman had lodged a case in Shahganj police station about theft taking place from his warehouse. The incident of theft was seen in the CCTV footage. On this basis, the police arrested an accused. Legal action is being taken against him. SHO Anil Rai said the accused used to spread terror by claiming to be a journalist.

# Group fighting in Congress over defeat of Muraleedharan

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

It is free for all in Congress in Kerala following its landslide win in the recent Lok Sabha election. The party won 14 out of the 16 seats it contested while its allies including Muslim League won the remaining four seats. The two seats where the party lost were Thrissur (K Muraleedharan) and Alathoor (Remya Haridas). The defeat of Haridas was in expected lines as her performance was lacklustre.



But Muraleedharan, son of former chief minister late K Karunakaran getting battered at Thrissur has sent shock waves across the party. Muraleedharan was shifted to Thrissur from Vadakara (where he had defeated Marxist strongman P Jayarajan in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll) to neutralize the setback suffered by the Congress as his sister Padmaja Venugopal had joined the BJP days before the announcement of the poll schedule. What led to Muraleedharan's shock defeat was the retaliation by the sitting member from Thrissur T N Prathapan who got furious

over the party action of denying the ticket to him despite the Congress leadership giving him the green flag to launch the campaign work. Prathapan who reportedly broke down on hearing the news just vanished from the battlefield and played havoc with Muraleedharan's poll prospects. Muraleedharan literally exploded with anger on hearing about his defeat and remained incommunicado till Saturday. Though KPCC president K Sudhakaran tried to pacify him, Muraleedharan has not moved an inch from

his stance. The reactions by leaders like Ramesh Chennithala, K C Venugopal, V D Sathishan and Sasi Tharoor were like adding salt to the wounds. All these leaders wanted Muraleedharan to be out of their way by 2025 assembly election as the latter is a string contender for the chief minister's gaddi. Though he is not a parliamentarian with the skills of a speaker and law maker, Muraleedharan was popular in some pockets in the State because of his uncompromising stance against the BJP. Sources close to K

Sudhakaran told The Pioneer that Muraleedharan was upset because of the back stabbing by leaders like Prathapan. "I am keeping away from public life for the time being and am not ready to face election immediately," Muraleedharan told reporters on Saturday. He also asked the media and party cadre not to vitiate the atmosphere by publishing hearsay. Sudhakaran said on Friday after his one-to-one meeting with Muraleedharan that the party was willing to go to any extent to make him happy. "Muraleedharan is a precious leader of the Congress and we will do anything to make him remain in the party," said Sudhakaran. The KPCC is likely to nominate Muraleedharan as the party candidate for Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency in the by poll if Rahul Gandhi decides to vacate the seat and retain Raebareilly in UP. Meanwhile the Thrissur District Congress Committee office saw two sections of leaders owing allegiance to Muraleedharan and Prathapan fighting it out in the open necessitating police intervention.

# J&K Government terminates services of four staff for involvement in anti national activities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

The Jammu and Kashmir Government on Saturday dismissed four employees, including two policemen and a teacher, for their involvement in anti-national activities. According to the official spokesman of the Union Territory administration, the activities of these employees had come to the adverse notice of law enforcement and intelligence agencies, as they found them involved in activities prejudicial to the interests of the State, such as involvement in terror-related activities.



Out of these four employees, 02 belong to the Police Department (Constables), 01 to the Education Department (Teacher), and 01 to the Jal Shakti Department (Assistant Lineman). According to the spokesman, "Abdul Rehman Dar, Selection Grade Constable in Police Department S/o Sonu Ullah Dar R/o Larmooch, Tral, District Pulwama, was involved in the commission of the offense of not only carrying illegal Arms and Ammunition from one place to another for their delivery to the terrorists but also providing camouflage uniform

cloth and other material to them, taking undue and criminal advantage of his being a member of the Police force". The spokesman said, "Ghulam Rasool Bhat, Constable in J&K Police S/o Jawaid Hyder Bhat R/o Lalgam, Tral, District Pulwama, was also involved in the commission of offence of carrying illegal Arms and Ammunition from one place to another for delivery to the terrorists. As Kote NCO in the Armory of a district, he was supplying ammunition and weapons to the terrorists for a long time. He was linked to the terrorist ecosystem, through a network of OGWs, who have been operating at the behest of terrorist outfits based in Pakistan".

Referring to the reasons behind dismissing the services of a school teacher the spokesman said, "Shabeer Ahmad Wani, Teacher in the Education Department S/o Mohammad Ashraf Wani R/o Bungam, Damhal Hanjipora, District Kulgam, has been an active member of Jamat-e-Islam (JeI), a proscribed separatist association having tangible links with a terrorist organization. He played a substantial role in strengthening JeI and creating a network of people among JeI sympathizers". The spokesman said, "various FIRs have been registered against him because of his direct involvement in inciting and leading an unlawful assembly of mob instigating

rioting and violence in D.H. Pora, during the 2016 unrest. He continues to be a hardcore OGW of banned terror outfits, in particular the HM and his affiliation has perpetually aided terrorist activities in and around Kulgam, collecting information for facilitating attacks, clandestinely". An employee of the Jal Shakti department identified as Anayatullah Shah Pirzada, Assistant Lineman in the Jal Shakti Department S/o Ab. Rashid Shah Pirzada R/o Watergam, Rafiaband, District Baramulla, was also dismissed from the services. The government spokesman said, Anayatullah Shah was a terrorist associate/OGW of Al-Badr Mujahideen, a proscribed terror outfit, and has worked covertly in a variety of ways to support the agenda of terrorists. He has direct association with dreaded terrorists like Yousuf Baloch and Tameem, who were the Commanders of Al-Badr Mujahideen, operating at different times in Kashmir. He has been involved in various FIRs about the recovery of satellite phones, hand grenades, etc communicating with the terrorists of Al-Badr Mujahideen based in Pakistan.

# JK now prepares for maiden Assembly polls

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Close on the heels of the announcement of the Lok Sabha poll results the Election Commission Authorities and the regional political parties have started preparations for the maiden Assembly polls in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.



The Election Commission of India is expected to take a final call on the timeline of much-awaited Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir in the coming weeks. The Apex Court had earlier set a deadline of September 30, 2024, to conclude the poll process in the region. The Election Commission gave the first indication in this direction after it decided to accept applications seeking allotment of 'common symbols' from registered unrecognized parties in the Union Territory with immediate effect. "The Commission has decided to accept applications seeking allotment of common symbols under Para 10B of the Election Symbols (Reservation & Allotment) Order, 1968, for the General Election to the Legislative Assembly of Union Territory of J&K with immediate effect," the EC statement read.

An official explained that under Para 10 B of the Election Symbols (Reservation & Allotment) Order, 1968, any registered unrecognized political party can apply for a 'common symbol' six months before the end of the term of a House. But since no Assembly is functional in J&K, the Election Commission (EC) has issued a press statement inviting applications for symbols. While recognized national and State parties have their 'reserved symbols', registered unrecognized parties must apply for one to field candidates. When free symbols are allocated to unrecognized parties, the Returning Officer allocates the remaining unclaimed symbols to Independents "on the spot". On the other hand, after studying the assembly-wise voting pattern in the recently concluded Lok Sabha polls the regional and National political parties have started preparing their poll strategies in the run-up to the Assembly polls. The Bharatiya Janta Party candidates who won both the Lok Sabha seats in the Jammu division had established a lead

across 29 out of 36 Assembly segments while the Congress party and the National Conference managed to garner majority votes from the seven assembly segments each in the Jammu division. In Kashmir valley, the National Conference garnered majority votes from at least 27 Assembly segments, the People's Democratic Party from five, and the Peoples Conference from the lone Assembly segment of Handwara. Abdul Rashid Sheikh, an Independent candidate from the Baramulla Lok Sabha seat, garnered sympathy votes from at least 14 Assembly segments. Rashid defeated former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah from the seat. It remains to be seen whether the new political formations will emerge in the Assembly polls or the pre-poll alliance partners Congress and the National Conference will take on the BJP and its proxies in the valley.

# Mamata to hold meeting with newly elected TMC MPs, senior party leaders

PTI ■ KOLKATA

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will hold a meeting of senior TMC leaders and newly elected LS MPs on Saturday to decide the party's strategy in the Lok Sabha.

The TMC maintained its dominance in the state as Banerjee led her party to a resounding victory by bagging 29 of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state, whereas the principal opposition BJP was down to 12 and the Congress to one seat. Apart from Lok Sabha MPs, Rajya Sabha MPs and district presidents will also attend the meeting. "The party supremo has convened a meeting of our newly elected MPs on Saturday. During the meeting, the role and strategy of the party in the Lok Sabha will be discussed. The party might also decide on who will be the leader of the TMC party in Lok Sabha," a party leader said. In the last Lok Sabha, 75-year-old TMC MP Sudip Bandopadhyay was the leader of the party in the lower house of the parliament. Bandopadhyay has retained his Kolkata North Lok Sabha seat for the fourth consecutive term. "Apart from the strategy for the Lok Sabha polls, the seats where the party lost will also be discussed," the TMC leader said.

# Old is gold: Dilip Ghosh's cryptic message amid disgruntlement in Bengal BJP

PTI ■ KOLKATA



nearly 1.38 lakh votes in the Bardhaman-Durgapur seat. Ghosh had earlier said that it was now established that sending him to contest from his old constituency of Medinipur to a fresh one "was a mistake". He was relocated from his winning seat of Medinipur to Bardhaman-Durgapur, a seat where the battle against the TMC was perceptively tough. Ghosh replaced sitting MP SS Ahluwalia in Bardhaman-Durgapur. Ahluwalia, in turn, was moved to Asansol. The party's sitting MLA from Asansol Dakshin seat, Agnimitra Paul, replaced Ghosh in Medinipur. All the three BJP candidates were trounced by their TMC counterparts in the recently concluded elections. On Friday, Ghosh questioned the choices made by the state BJP leadership, particularly in relocating experienced leaders like him and former Union MoS Debasree Choudhury from their constituencies to unfamiliar ones.

After questioning the rationale behind relocating established leaders like him from winnable constituencies to challenging electoral battlegrounds, senior BJP leader Dilip Ghosh on Saturday put out a social media post, sparking speculations of 'old versus new' debate in the party's West Bengal unit. In a cryptic message, Ghosh posted on X, "Old is Gold." Ghosh had earlier said that it was mistake by the party to sideline old guards and the poll debacle was waiting to happen as newcomers and inexperienced leaders were calling the shots. BJP's Lok Sabha tally in the state dipped to 12 in this election from 18 in 2019, when Ghosh was the BJP state president. The saffron party had targeted to win 30 of the 42 seats this time. Ghosh was defeated at the hands of TMC's Kirti Azad by

# Shrikant elected as leader of Shinde Sena Parliamentary party



T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde's son and three-time MP Dr Shrikant Shinde was on Saturday elected as leader of the Shiv Sena Parliamentary Party (SSPS). The 37-year-old orthopaedic surgeon-turned-politician, Dr Shinde was elected to the Lok Sabha for the third time from Kalyan. At a meeting held in New Delhi which was attended by Shiv Sena's seven newly-elected seven Lok Sabha MPs and its Rajya Sabha MP Milid Deora, Dr Shinde was elected unanimously as the SSPS leader. Among the Shinde Sena MPs, Dr Shinde has had the maximum number of terms in Lok Sabha.

In the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Dr Shrikant Shinde trounced Vaishali Thackeray-Rane of Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT). In the 2014 and 2019 elections when he had contested from the undivided Shiv Sena, he had defeated Anand Panjane and Babaji Patil, both from undivided Sharad Pawar-led NCP. Of the 15 seats it had contested in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena won seats. The seven newly elected Shinde Sena MPs are: Ravindra Waikar (Mumbai North-West), Dr Shrikant Shinde (Kalyan), Nareesh Mhaske (Thane), Shrirang Barne (Maval), Dhairyashil Mane (Hatkanankle), Sandipan Bhumre (Aurangabad) and Prataprao Jadhav (Buldhana).

# ALL EYES ON... Leaders of seven countries...

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According to sources, impending changes within the BJP's organisation will also be on the mind of its brain trust in finalising the names of ministers from the party. Nadda's term was extended due to the Lok Sabha polls, and organisational imperatives will be an important consideration for the party as the poll results have sent signals that all may not be well within its vast machinery. This opens the possibility of some seasoned hand being sent to the party and Nadda being given a berth in the Government, the sources said. The BJP is keen to send out a message of continuity and ward off any impression of political vulnerability following its surprising below-par show in the Lok Sabha polls as its seat tally fell to 240 from 303, considerably short of the majority mark of 272. The BJP won 240 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, but fell 32 short of the majority mark. The four allies whose support is critical for the BJP to reach the majority are Naidu's TDP, which has won 16 seats, Kumar's JDU (12), Eknath Shinde's Shiv Sena (7) and Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party-Ram Vilas (5).

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Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Kumar Jugnauth, his Bhutanese counterpart Tshering Tobgay and Vice-President of Seychelles Ahmed Afif have also accepted India's invitation to grace the swearing-in ceremony, it said. Hasina arrived in New Delhi on Saturday afternoon. Afif is scheduled to reach the national Capital on Saturday. The other leaders will arrive on Sunday. The invitation to Muizzu assumes significance as it comes amid frosty ties between India and the Maldives. The ties between India and the Maldives ties came under severe strain since November last year when Muizzu, known for his pro-China leanings, took charge as Maldivian president. Within hours of his oath, Muizzu had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. The Indian military personnel were replaced by civilians earlier this month. According to PTI from Male, Muizzu said on Saturday he would be honoured to attend Prime Minister Modi's

swearing-in ceremony and his first visit to India for the historic event would demonstrate that bilateral ties are heading in a "positive direction". This will mark the pro-China president's first official visit to India since assuming office on November 17 last year. Unlike his predecessors, who made the first port of call to New Delhi after assuming office, Muizzu had travelled to Turkey first and to China for his first State visit in January. Munu Mahawar, India's Higher Commissioner to the Maldives, presented the letter of invitation to the President during a courtesy call at the President's Office. At the call, the High Commissioner extended greetings from Prime Minister Modi, stating that the Prime Minister is looking forward to having the President attend this momentous ceremony marking his third swearing-in as Prime Minister of India, the statement said. The President expressed his gratitude to the Prime Minister for the invitation, adding that he would be honoured to attend this historic event.

# NEET grace marks fine...

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The concerns raised by the candidates through the writ petitions and representations about loss of examination time was ascertained and 1,563 candidates were compensated for the loss of time, and the revised marks of such candidates vary from -20 to 720 marks. Amongst these, the score of two candidates also happens to be 718 and 719 respectively due to compensatory marks," the official added. The NTA had on May 5 claimed that the distribution of wrong question papers at an exam centre in Rajasthan led to some candidates walking out with the papers. The agency had denied any leak of the question paper. A day later, the NTA had reiterated that the reports claiming question paper leak in the medical entrance exam NEET-UG are "completely baseless and without any ground", and every question paper has been accounted.

# CWC...

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The verdict of the people is clearly against the undermining of democracy and democratic institutions that has taken place since 2014, it said. In his opening remarks at the meeting, Kharge asserted that while celebrating its "revival", the party should pause a little as it did not perform to its abilities and expectations in some states. "Further, we could not repeat our

# President, Modi condole death of doyen Ramoji...

From Page 1

Former Vice President M Venkaiah Naidu, TDP Chief N Chandrababu Naidu, Union Minister G Kishan Reddy, Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, former Telangana CM K Chandrasekhar Rao and several other leaders condole the death of Ramoji Rao. Venkaiah Naidu said Ramoji Rao set a new trend in every field he worked. Ramoji Rao's service to Telugu language and culture will be remembered forever, he added. Revanth Reddy termed Ramoji Rao's death as a "great loss" to the Telugu newspaper and media industry. The Chief Minister, who is in Delhi to attend CWC meeting, directed state Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari to conduct Ramoji Rao's funeral with official honours. Chandrababu Naidu said Ramoji Rao left an indelible impression on the lives of Telugu people. Ramoji Rao's demise is a loss not just to the state but the country, he said.

performance in states where we had previously done well in Vidhan Sabha elections and formed the Government," he said. Separate discussions on each such State will be held soon, the Congress chief said. "We have to take urgent remedial measures. These are States which have traditionally favoured the Congress, where we have opportunities which we have to harness not for our own advantage but for the benefit of our people. This exercise I propose to hold very soon," he said. Kharge further said whether

the party is in power or not, its work continues amongst people "24 hours, 365 days", and raise their issues. "People have spoken against the dictatorial and anti-democratic ways of the ruling party. It is a decisive rejection of the politics of the last 10 years. It is rejection of the politics of divisiveness, hate and polarisation," Kharge said. "I want to draw your attention to the fact that wherever Bharat Jodo Yatra went we saw an increase in the vote percentage and number of seats for the Congress party," he said. especially for the field of journalism and film. His contribution as a pioneer in adding unique features and practices in his chosen field will be long remembered. "We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and also countless admirers and pray the almighty to bestow 'sadgati' to the departed soul," he added. The Editors Guild of India condole the death of its former president Ramoji Rao, the founder of Eenudu daily and the ETV network.

# Israel rescues 4 more hostages

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israel said on Saturday it rescued four hostages who were kidnapped in a Hamas-led attack on October 7, in the largest such hostage recovery operation since the war with Hamas began in Gaza. Heavy fighting raged in central Gaza, where the hostages were rescued, and at least 55 people, including children, were killed in multiple attacks Saturday as people fled for safety, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The army said it rescued Noa Argamani, 25; Amir Meir Jan, 21; Andrey Kozlov, 27; and Shlomi Ziv, 40, in two separate locations in a complex special daytime operation in the heart of Nuseirat in central Gaza. Argamani has been one of the most widely recognized hostages since she was abducted from a music festival in southern Israel. The video of her abduction was among the first to surface, images of her horrified face widely shared — Argamani detained between two men on a motorcycle, one

arm outstretched and the other held down as she screams "Don't kill me!" Her mother, Liora, has stage four brain cancer and in April released a video pleading to see her daughter before she dies. Hamas killed about 1,200 people and kidnapped some 250 hostages during the October 7 attack, which triggered the Israel-Hamas war. About half were released in a weeklong cease-fire in November. Israel says more than 130 hostages remain, with about a quarter of those believed dead, and divisions are deepening in the country over the best way to bring them home. The rescue comes as international pressure mounts on Israel to limit civilian bloodshed in its war in Gaza, which reached its eighth month on Friday with more than 36,700 Palestinians killed, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between fighters and civilians. Seeking a breakthrough in the apparently stalled cease-fire negotiations between Israel and

Hamas, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will return to the Middle East next week. Palestinians are facing widespread hunger because the war has largely cut off the flow of food, medicine and other supplies. UN agencies say over 1 million in Gaza could experience the highest level of starvation by mid-July. Saturday's operation is the largest recovery of alive hostages since the war erupted, bringing the total of rescued captives to seven. Two men were rescued in February when troops stormed a heavily guarded apartment in a densely packed town, and a woman was rescued in the aftermath of October's attack. Israeli troops have so far recovered at least 16 bodies of hostages from Gaza, according to the government. Defence Minister Yoav Gallant called Saturday's rescue "a heroic operation" and said the army will continue fighting until all the hostages are returned. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is facing growing

pressure to end the fighting in Gaza, with many Israelis urging him to embrace a deal announced last month by US President Joe Biden, but far-right allies threatening to collapse his government if he does. Argamani spoke by phone with Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Netanyahu. In an audio message released by the government, Netanyahu is heard asking Argamani how she's feeling and said he hasn't given up on the hostages. She tells him she is "very excited", saying she hasn't heard Hebrew in so long. Her friend, Yonatan Levi, reacted to the news with a sense of disbelief. "Wow. Don't know what to say. So excited such a crazy reality. So happy now and joyful," Levi said. The rescue comes as Israel is intensifying operations across central Gaza, where the hostages were rescued. The bodies of the dozens of Palestinians killed on Saturday were taken to Al-Aqsa Hospital, where they were counted by Associated Press reporters.

# Man assaults Danish PM, arrested

AP ■ COPENHAGEN (DENMARK)

A man who reportedly assaulted the Danish Prime Minister in central Copenhagen will appear in a pre-trial custody hearing on Saturday, authorities said. Police confirmed "there has been an incident" with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen on Friday and that a 39-year-old man was arrested. They didn't provide further details and it wasn't clear if Frederiksen was hurt. The man is expected to arrive at 1100 GMT at the Copenhagen District Court in Frederiksberg, a municipality enclave within the Danish capital. The prime minister's office told the Danish state broadcaster DR on Friday that Frederiksen was "shocked" by what happened. Two eyewitnesses, Anna Ravn and Marie Adrian, told the daily BT that they saw a man walking toward Frederiksen and then "pushing her hard on the shoulder so she was shoved aside." They stressed that the premier did not fall down. Another witness, Kasper Jorgensen, told the Ekstra Bladet tabloid that a well-dressed man, who seemed part of Frederiksen's protection unit, and a police officer took down the alleged assailant. Soren Kjaeargaard who was working at a



Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen

local bar on Kulturvet Square where the incident happened told the BT that he saw Frederiksen after the incident and she had no visible injuries to her face but walked away quickly. Politicians in the Scandinavian country and abroad condemned the reported assault. Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson said that "an attack on a democratically elected leader is also an attack on our democracy", while Charles Michel, president of the European Council, condemned on X what he called a "cowardly act of aggression". European Union parliamentary elections are currently underway in Denmark and the rest of the 27-nation bloc and will conclude on Sunday.

Frederiksen has been campaigning with the Social Democrats' EU lead candidate, Christel Schaldemose. Media reports said the attack was not linked to a campaign event. Violence against politicians has become a theme in the run-up to the EU elections. In May, a candidate from Germany's centre-left Social Democrats was beaten and seriously injured while campaigning for a seat in the European Parliament. In Slovakia, the election campaign was overshadowed by an attempt to assassinate populist Prime Minister Robert Fico on May 15, sending shockwaves through the nation of 5.4 million and reverberating throughout Europe. Frederiksen, 46, is the leader of the Social Democratic Party and has been Denmark's prime minister since 2019. She has steered Denmark through the global COVID-19 pandemic and a controversial 2020 decision to wipe out Denmark's entire captive mink population to minimize the risk of the small mammals transmitting the virus. Assaults on politicians in Denmark are rare. On March 23, 2003, two activists threw red paint on then-Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen inside the parliament and were immediately arrested. Foreign Minister Per Stig Moller also suffered some splashes that day.

# Ukrainian attacks leave 28 dead in Russian-occupied regions

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Russia-installed officials in the partially occupied Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Luhansk said Ukrainian attacks left at least 28 people dead as Russia and Ukraine continued to exchange drone attacks overnight into Saturday. A Ukrainian attack Friday on the small town of Sadove in Ukraine's partially occupied Kherson region killed 22 and wounded 15 people, Moscow-backed governor Vladimir Saldo said. Russian state news agency Tass cited Saldo as saying that Ukrainian forces first struck the town with a French-made guided bomb, then attacked again with a US-supplied HIMARS missile. He said Ukrainian forces had "deliberately made a repeat strike to create greater numbers of casualties" when "residents of nearby houses ran out to help the injured". Further east, Leonid Pasechnik,

the Russia-installed governor in Ukraine's partially occupied Luhansk region, said Saturday that two more bodies had been pulled from the rubble following Friday's Ukrainian missile attack on the regional capital, also called Luhansk. Russian state news agency Interfax cited regional authorities as saying this brought the death toll to six. Pasechnik also said 60 people were wounded in the attack. Pasechnik declared Saturday a day of mourning in the region, with public events cancelled. Ukraine did not comment on either assault. Meanwhile, drone attacks between Russia and Ukraine persisted. Ukraine launched a barrage of drones across Russian territory overnight Friday, Russia's Defence Ministry said Saturday. Twenty-five drones were reportedly destroyed over Russia's southern Kuban and Astrakhan regions, the western Tula region, and the Moscow-

annexed Crimean peninsula. On Saturday morning, officials said air defences for the first time shot down Ukrainian drones over the North Ossetia region in the North Caucasus, some 900 km (560 miles) east of the front line in Ukraine's partially occupied Zaporizhzhia region. Russia's Ministry of Defence said that one drone had been destroyed, whereas regional Gov. Sergei Menyailo reported three downed drones over the region. Menyailo said that the target was a military airfield. Ukrainian air defence overnight shot down nine out of 13 Russian drones over the central Poltava region, south-eastern Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions, and the Kharkiv region in the northeast, Ukraine's air force said Saturday. Dnipropetrovsk regional Gov. Serhiy Lysak said the overnight drone attack damaged commercial and residential buildings.

# Russia puts former Ukrainian PM on its wanted list

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia has put former Ukrainian Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko on its wanted list, Russian state media reported, citing the Interior Ministry's database. Russian state news agency Tass said Tymoshenko was listed as wanted on unspecified criminal charges. She reportedly joins Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and his predecessor, Petro Poroshenko, on the same list, which also includes scores of officials and lawmakers from Ukraine and NATO countries. Tymoshenko and her Batkivshchyna (the Fatherland) party did not immediately comment Saturday. Mediazona, an independent Russian news outlet, reported that both Zelenskyy and Poroshenko had been listed since at least late February. Among others on the list is Kaia Kallas, the prime minister of NATO and EU member Estonia.

# Pakistan, China agree to upgrade CPEC

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chinese President Xi Jinping in their meeting have affirmed consensus on the upgradation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and advancing high-quality development of the multi-billion dollar project in the second phase. The two leaders held an in-depth discussion at the historic Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Friday during the five-day official visit of Sharif which began on June 4. The two leaders were accompanied by the ministers and senior officials. This was the first meeting of Sharif with President Xi since assuming office in 2024. According to the state media, the two leaders showed consensus on up-gradation of the CPEC and advancing the development of the mega pro-

ject in the second phase. The CPEC, which connects Gwadar Port in Pakistan's Balochistan with China's Xinjiang province, is the flagship project of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The BRI is seen as an attempt by China to further its influence abroad with infrastructure projects funded by Chinese investments across the world. China has also invested billions in various power projects and road networks in Pakistan under the USD 65 billion CPEC plan, but the implementation of various projects has slowed in recent months. Associated Press of Pakistan reported that Prime Minister Sharif briefed President Xi on Pakistan's policies for economic reform and sustained growth, industrial development, agricultural modernisation and regional connectivity and the critical role played by the CPEC in Pakistan's

development. The prime minister recalled the historic visit of President Xi Jinping to Pakistan in 2015 when the CPEC was formally operationalised, marking a new chapter in the bilateral relationship. He asserted Pakistan's commitment to high-quality development of the CPEC and to foster synergy between the development strategies of the two countries through close coordination. Commending President Xi's Belt and Road Initiative and Global Development Initiative (GDI), the prime minister underscored that as the flagship project of BRI, the CPEC had significantly contributed to Pakistan's socio-economic development. He underlined that the government's agenda for people-centric, socio-economic development resonates with the concept of 'shared prosperity' embraced by China.

# 'Indian voters proved West wrong about democracy'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Prominent Indian-American leader Jasdeep Singh Jasee said the recently concluded polls in India have not only highlighted the robust electoral process in the country but also sent a powerful message to the world about the resilience and vibrancy of its democracy. Despite a wave of scepticism from the Western media regarding the integrity of India's democratic processes, the results have decisively dispelled such doubts, Sikhs for America leader Jasdeep Singh Jasee told PTI in an interview. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to take oath for a third consecutive term, a first in over 60 years. Singh, who was in Punjab for two weeks during the general elections, said that the allegations appearing in the west of a compromised Election Commission and malfunctioning voting machines have been proven baseless, underscoring the legitimacy and fairness of the elections in the country. "The people of India, through their votes, have demonstrated that they prioritise the nation's overall development. Indian democracy has emerged more mature and it has strengthened as a result of the latest elections," Singh said. Responding to a question on Punjab, Singh said the elections have further debunked allegations of human rights violations and curbs on freedom. Showing the inclusiveness of India's democratic framework, he said that Amritpal Singh, a radical pro-Khalist separatist, participated and won the poll from jail. Additionally, the son of Beant Singh, who assassinated Indira Gandhi, also contested and won, Singh said. Barring for the prime minister's leadership for its "fast-track development in India", Singh said, "There is optimism that Modi's third term will bring stability and further economic development. The relationship between the United States and India would continue to improve."



Pope Francis cheers at children during an audience with members of choirs from different countries in the Paul VI Hall at The Vatican on Saturday. AP/PTI

# Musk: Looking forward to doing 'exciting work' in India

PTI ■ NEW YORK

American tech billionaire Elon Musk has said he is looking forward to his companies doing "exciting work" in India, as he congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his historic election victory. Modi will be administered the oath of office on June 9, his third consecutive term as Prime Minister. "Congratulations @narendramodi on your victory in the world's largest democratic elections! Looking forward to my companies doing exciting work in India," Musk, 52, said in a post on X on Friday. Responding to Musk's post, Prime Minister Modi said: "Appreciate your greetings @elonmusk." Modi said the talented Indian youth, the country's demogra-

phy, predictable policies and stable democratic polity would continue to provide the business environment for all its partners. The congratulatory message came two months after the CEO of the electric carmaker Tesla and microblogging platform X in April postponed his proposed visit to India due to "very heavy Tesla obligations". Musk — who was expected to be in India on April 21 and 22 and scheduled to meet Prime Minister Modi — later wrote on X that he is looking forward to coming to India later this year. In June last year, Musk met with Modi during the latter's US visit and stated that he planned to visit India in 2024 while expressing confidence that Tesla would enter the Indian market soon.

His proposed visit had raised expectations that he would announce plans for electric car maker Tesla to set up shop in the country, along with his satcom venture Starlink. It was also expected that Musk would announce plans for Tesla to set up its manufacturing unit in India and investments could be to the tune of billions of dollars to help forward for selling Tesla electric cars in India at the earliest. Musk's plan to visit India in April came on the heels of the government announcing a new electric vehicle policy, under which import duty concessions will be given to companies setting up manufacturing units in the country with a minimum investment of USD 500 million, a move aimed at attracting major global players like Tesla.

# Macron, Biden hope to move past trade tensions

AP ■ PARIS

President Joe Biden is being feted by French President Emmanuel Macron with a state visit Saturday as the two allies aim to show off their partnership on global security issues and move past trade tensions. Biden and Macron attended ceremonies marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day on Thursday and met separately the following day with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Paris. The leaders both used those engagements used to underscore the urgent need to support Kyiv's fight against Russia's invasion. But Macron and Biden have often chafed at the pace of support for Ukraine, especially as the United States, by far the largest contributor to Kyiv's defense, was forced to pause aid shipments for months while congressional Republicans held up an assistance package. The state visit began with a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe,

including a wreath-laying at France's tomb of the unknown soldier, and a military parade along the Champs-Élysées leading to the Élysée Palace, where the two will hold official meetings and deliver public statements. Later, there is a state dinner at the palace for Biden and his wife, Jill. Biden hosted Macron in December 2022 at the White House for the first state visit of his presidency as the COVID-19 pandemic receded. Jill Biden flew back to Paris aboard a US government plane after spending Friday in Delaware to support their son, Hunter Biden, who is standing trial on federal gun charges. As the president's trip draws to a close, the far right is likely to emerge as one of the biggest winners in Sunday's European Parliament election while Macron's pro-European Union movement is flagging. A top French official said Macron and Biden have a friendly and warm relationship and stressed that the US pres-

ident is spending five days in France, reflecting the importance he attaches to the visit. The official spoke anonymously, in line with customary practices for Macron's office. The official said the US presidential campaign was not a factor in the discussion. Macron hosted then-President Donald Trump, the presumptive Republican nominee this year, for Bastille Day in 2017, and he came to Washington for a state visit in 2018 before their relationship soured. US and French officials said Ukraine would be at the top of Saturday's agenda, but the centerpiece of the weekend event would be the strength of the alliance, fortified at Normandy 80 years ago, but with roots far deeper. "It's probably a good thing for us to remember that we didn't win our independence either without some foreign help or foreign assistance, specifically from France," White House national security spokesman John Kirby said Friday.

Max Bergmann, a former US State Department official who leads Europe research at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said the US-French relationship is strong despite occasional disagreements. "There's always tension in Franco-American relations because the French try to do stuff," he said. "They're bold, they throw up proposals, and that leads to some friction when we push back." For example, he said, France proposed putting Western trainers on the ground in Ukraine, leading to questions of whether this is "really giving Ukraine a major, tangible benefit" or has the "potential to be escalatory and dangerous." Regarding Macron, Bergmann said, "he's the one that pushes the boundaries and throws up ideas." Kirby said the two leaders would have an announcement Saturday on deepening maritime law enforcement cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. They also were to discuss economic and cli-

mate challenges. While praising the Biden administration's commitment to supporting Ukraine, Macron said earlier this year that Europe must become "capable of defending its interests, with its allies by our side whenever they are willing, and alone if necessary," arguing the continent should rely less on the US for its own defense. He also warned Western powers against showing any signs of weakness to Russia as he repeatedly said that sending Western troops into Ukraine to shore up its defense should not be ruled out. The leaders were also set to discuss their efforts to bring about a cease-fire to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, as the US and Israel await Hamas' response to a Biden-promoted cease-fire proposal that would allow a surge of humanitarian assistance into the territory. Macron is expected to raise US trade practices that he has often criticized, including the Inflation Reduction Act, which favors American-made climate tech-

nology such as electric vehicles. Macron said the US, like China, has "decided not to respect the rules of global trade" by shoring up protections and subsidies while Europe's industry remains open and is stuck in overregulation. The French official said Europe has to defend European interests, after watching the US do the same with its own, but said Macron hopes to find a mutually acceptable outcome. Gary Hufbauer, nonresident senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said trade with China is a sticking point between the US and Europe, particularly France. The US has been more eager to restrict trade, particularly regarding technology. Biden is also moving toward tariffs on Chinese electric vehicles and batteries, which could affect European cars that include Chinese parts. Overall, Hufbauer said, "Europe wants to maintain much more trade with China than the US wants."



French President Emmanuel Macron, center right, stands with US President Joe Biden, First Lady Jill Biden and Brigitte Macron, right, during a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe on Saturday in Paris. President Joe Biden is being feted by French President Emmanuel Macron with a state visit Saturday, as the two allies aim to show off their partnership on global security issues and move past trade tensions. AP/PTI

# England loses to Iceland in last friendly before Euro 2024; host Germany beats Greece

AP ■ LONDON

England was booed by some of its own fans after losing 1-0 to Iceland on Friday in its last friendly before the European Championship, while host nation Germany recovered from a goal down to beat Greece 2-1.

Jón Dagur Thorsteinnsson left defender John Stones standing as he scored for Iceland in the 16th minute to bring back memories of one of England's lowest points of recent years, its 2-1 elimination by Iceland at Euro 2016.

England created few clear-cut chances against Iceland and nearly conceded a second goal when a promising Icelandic counterattack ended with Thorsteinnsson slipping as he shot.

"We learned a lot and we know the performance wasn't good enough," England manager Gareth Southgate told broadcaster Channel 4. "Equally we needed the game; there's a lot of players that we're managing their minutes and it was obviously a disjointed and disappointing performance and we didn't show enough character." England, which beat Bosnia-Herzegovina 3-0 on Monday, gets its tournament under way June 16 against Serbia in Group C.

Germany needed substitute Pascal Gross' 89th-minute goal to secure the win over Greece a week before it opens Euro 2024 against Scotland in Munich.



Georgios Masouras gave Greece the lead in the 34th on the rebound after goalkeeper Manuel Neuer failed to hold a shot from Christos Tzolis. Arsenal forward Kai Havertz leveled in the 56th when he shot on the turn and it went in off Manolis Siopis.

After Benjamin Henrichs sent a shot off the bar in the 83rd, Germany finally took the lead when Gross hit a fierce shot from outside the box.

With a flat first-half performance and a late recovery, the win over Greece continues a mixed bag of form for

Germany, which beat France and the Netherlands in friendlies in March but has also lost to Japan, Turkey and Austria within the last 12 months.

Neuer's error for the Greece goal came shortly after Germany coach Julian Nagelsmann confirmed he was cutting Stuttgart goalkeeper Alexander Nübel as he finalized the 26-player squad for the tournament. Barcelona's Marc-Andre ter Stegen and Hoffenheim's Oliver Baumann are the two other goalkeepers in the squad.

Nagelsmann committed in March to

having Neuer as his first-choice goalkeeper for Euro 2024, even though injuries meant the Bayern Munich goalkeeper only played his first game under Nagelsmann for Germany in Monday's 0-0 draw with Ukraine. Also Friday, Poland beat neighbor Ukraine 3-1 with three goals in the opening 30 minutes and Scotland drew 2-2 with Finland after giving up a 2-0 lead. Romania failed to beat one of Europe's smallest nations, Liechtenstein, in a 0-0 draw. The Czech Republic cruised to a 7-1 win over Malta.

# Indian women go down 2-4 to Germany, suffer seventh consecutive loss in FIH Pro League

PTI ■ LONDON

The Indian women's hockey team could not break its sequence of half-a-dozen consecutive losses in the FIH Pro League, losing to Germany 2-4, its seventh consecutive defeat in the tournament here on Saturday.

The Indians squandered a two-goal advantage when Sunelita Toppo and Deepika scored excellent field goals in the opening quarter to give the Harendra Singh-coached side the best chance to break the jinx.

Sunelita (9th) and Deepika (15th) scored superb field goals to give India a huge morale-boosting 2-0 lead but soon saw it being cancelled out by Germany's Viktoria Huse, who converted penalty corners in the 23rd and 32nd minutes to bring her team on level terms. Stinne Kurz (51st) then converted a penalty corner before Jule Bleuel scored a field goal in the 55th minute to pile on more misery on the Indians.

The latest defeat comes after India had lost all their four matches against Belgium and Argentina in Antwerp last month and then succumbed to defeats against Germany (1-3) and Great Britain (2-3) here last weekend.



Stung by half-a-dozen losses over the course of a fortnight, India started much better on Saturday with Lalremsiami leading the way in the initial minutes.

The veteran forward first created some space to drag the ball into the circle and then took a powerful shot at the goal, only for German goalkeeper Julia Sonntag to thwart it in the nick of time.

The Indian midfield then set up a perfect ball for an unmarked Sunelita in the ninth minute as the teenaged midfielder put it across Sonntag to give world No.5 India the lead.

Deepika then gave a proper lesson on how to score on the counter when she deftly snatched the ball in the midfield and ran forward with

Vandana Katariya for company.

Vandana drew Sonntag out before relaying the ball to Deepika who tapped it in with ease just two seconds before the end of the first quarter.

However, German penalty-corner specialist Viktoria converted two penalty corners, one each in the second and third quarter, as India's lead evaporated.

Deepika made some good runs into the circle in the second half, but was unable to time her shots for maximum impact.

The last quarter of play was a story of complete domination for German forwards who unleashed a barrage of attacks to overpower the Indian defence. India will play Great Britain in their last Pro League match on Sunday.

# Carlos Alcaraz will play Alexander Zverev in first French Open final for each

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz started poorly and fell behind early in his French Open semifinal against Jannik Sinner. Later, as both dealt with cramps under Friday's afternoon sun, Alcaraz trailed by two sets to one.

By the end of the latest installment in this burgeoning rivalry between two young, talented players, an engaging five-setter that lasted 4 hours, 9 minutes, Alcaraz actually had accumulated fewer total points, 147-145.

That, of course, is not the score that matters. And Alcaraz, who says he takes pleasure from challenges, ultimately persevered, pulling out a 2-6, 6-3, 3-6, 6-4, 6-3 victory over Sinner to get to his first final in Paris. It made the 21-year-old from Spain the youngest man to reach a Grand Slam title match on three surfaces.

"You have to find the joy (while) suffering. That's the key — even more on clay, here at Roland Garros. Long rallies, Four-hour matches. Five sets,"

Alcaraz said. "You have to fight. You have to suffer. But as I told my team many, many times, you have to enjoy suffering."

He won championships at the U.S. Open in 2022 on hard courts and at Wimbledon in 2023 on grass.

Now the No. 3-seeded Alcaraz will face No. 4 Alexander Zverev of Germany on the red clay Sunday. Hours before his 2-6, 6-2, 6-4, 6-2 semifinal victory over No. 7 Casper Ruud of Norway, Zverev's domestic abuse case in Berlin ended, because he reached an out-of-court settlement with his accuser, a former girlfriend.

When a reporter tried to follow up on the topic, Zverev said: "We move on. I never, ever want to hear another question about the subject again. That goes out to everybody." Ruud started well, but then began to fade, and he was handed some pills by a doctor during a third-set changeover. Ruud, who said afterward he had a stomach problem, looked listless and stopped chasing some shots, a shell of

the player who leads the tour in match wins this season and has been the runner-up at majors three times - including in 2022 and 2023 in Paris.

Zverev finally broke through at Roland Garros after bowing out in the semifinals each of the past three years. This will be his second Grand Slam final: He blew a two-set lead and lost in five against Dominic Thiem at the U.S. Open in 2020.

"I was not mature enough. I was maybe too much of a kid still," said Zverev, who is now 27. "I didn't know what the occasion means."

This will be the first French Open men's final without Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic or Roger Federer since 2004. Djokovic was the defending champion in Paris, but he withdrew before the quarterfinals after tearing the meniscus in his right knee and had surgery this week. Because he failed to get back to the final, he will drop from atop the ATP rankings, allowing Sinner to rise a spot from No. 2, despite his defeat on Friday.



"Obviously disappointed how it ended, but it's part of my growing and the process," said Sinner, who won the Australian Open in January for his first major trophy. The 22-year-old Italian showed up in Paris with a lingering hip injury that forced him to sit out the clay-court tournament in

Rome last month. Alcaraz missed that event, too, because of a right forearm issue that he said made him afraid to hit his booming forehands at full force. Both men experienced physical problems in the third set. Alcaraz's right hand began to cramp. Sinner had his right

forearm and left thigh massaged by a trainer during changeovers. It brought to mind last year's French Open semifinals, when Alcaraz got off to a terrific start against Djokovic but then dealt with full-body cramps that rendered the remainder of the match anticlimactic.

He and Sinner are seen as the future of men's tennis. The present isn't too shabby, either. Even though this was not necessarily the most aesthetically pleasing of their nine head-to-head meetings - Alcaraz leads 5-4 - and they combined for 102 unforced errors, there were moments of brilliance that generated dueling clap-accompanied chants of each man's first name from the Court Philippe Chatrier crowd.

In the fifth set, with shadows covering more than half the court, Alcaraz moved out front by sliding until he could reach across his body to snap a backhand passing winner for a break point. A forehand winner - one of his 30 in the match - made it 2-0 at the 3½-hour mark, earning a yell of "Vamos!" from his coach, 2003 French Open champion Juan Carlos Ferrero. Soon, it was 3-0, and Alcaraz was on his way.

Both players walloped the ball with such force that the ball-off-strings thuds elicited gasps from spectators in the middle of points. Sinner, his rust-colored shirt a few shades darker than the clay, came out ready at the start of the match, barely ever missing, gliding more than grinding along the baseline, stretching his long limbs to get to nearly everything Alcaraz offered. Alcaraz, his right arm covered by a white sleeve, would deliver a powerful shot to a corner, punctuated with a grunt, and Sinner would somehow get to it, flip it back and draw a mistake. Sinner led 4-0 and it took Alcaraz 20 minutes of striving to simply place a "1" beside his name on the scoreboard. The second set began inauspiciously for Alcaraz, who fell behind 2-0. Here's how Alcaraz came through: He came up with a 32-23 edge in winners over the last two sets.

With his strokes, somehow, gaining zest, and the fans, somehow, getting louder, Alcaraz advanced at a tournament he grew up watching on TV at home in Spain as his countryman Nadal piled up a record 14 titles.



# Bose, Ranawade, Lalchungnunga not in India's 23-member squad for away match against Qatar

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Indian football head coach Igor Stimac on Saturday named a 23-member squad without the defensive trio of Mohun Bagan veteran Subhasish Bose, Mumbai FC's Amey Ranawade and Lalchungnunga of East Bengal for its away World Cup Qualifier against Qatar on Tuesday. This will be India's first match after the retirement of Sunil Chhetri, who made his last international appearance in a frustrating goalless draw against Kuwait in their second-round World Cup Qualifier at Salt Lake Stadium on Thursday.

Stimac chose to give Jay Gupta the debut as both Bose and Ranawade started on the bench and did not get any minutes in their match against Kuwait.

Lalchungnunga, however, was not named in the Indian team list against Kuwait. India have five points and are behind table-toppers Qatar who have 13 in the Group A standings. Afghanistan and Kuwait have five and three points, occupying the third and fourth places respectively.

While Qatar have sealed their third-round berth, the other three teams, including India

and bottom-placed Kuwait, have a chance to make the cut.

Kuwait will face Afghanistan at home in their concluding second-round clash.

India must win against the two-time Asian champions Qatar to make their maiden appearance in the third round of Asia's top-18 teams. A point will be enough for the Blue Tigers if the Afghanistan versus Kuwait tie also ends in a draw.

However, a defeat in Qatar will end India's hopes of progressing, irrespective of the other result. The Blue Tigers will travel to Doha from Kolkata on Saturday evening.

## INDIA SQUAD

**Goalkeepers:** Gurpreet Singh Sandhu, Amrinder Singh, Vishal Kaith.

**Defenders:** Anwar Ali, Jay Gupta, Mehtab Singh, Narender, Nikhil Poojary, Rahul Bheke. **Midfielders:** Anirudh Thapa, Brandon Fernandes, Edmund Lalrindika, Jeakson Singh Thounaojam, Lallianzuala Chhangte, Liston Colaco, Mahesh Singh Naorem, Nandhakumar Sekar, Sahal Abdul Samad, Suresh Singh Wangjam.

**Forwards:** Manvir Singh, Rahim Ali, Vikram Partap Singh, David Lalhlansanga.

# F1 leader Max Verstappen hit by smoky battery problem in Canadian Grand Prix practice

AP ■ MONTREAL

Formula 1 points leader Max Verstappen left the track early with his Red Bull machine smoking, while Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso had the fastest lap Friday in the second free practice at the Canadian Grand Prix. After Circuit Gilles Villeneuve was hit by heavy rain, lightning and hail before the first practice session, Verstappen returned to the garage four laps into the second session after a run on dry tires. Red Bull said the smoke was caused by a battery issue.

"It's not ideal, I would have liked to drive more laps," Verstappen said. "It's definitely not how I would have liked to get on in FP2 but I think it's

more important to figure out what actually happened and what kind of implications that will have for this weekend and the rest of the year."

Alonso had a fast lap of 1 minute, 15.810 seconds. Mercedes driver George Russell was second at 1:16.273, and Aston Martin's Lance Stroll, the lone Canadian in field, followed at 1:16.464.

"It was a tricky Friday for everyone," Alonso said. "But it could be like this for qualifying and the race, so it's still very useful information. The right decision can gain you five seconds, wrong decision and you're out of the race."

Earlier, McLaren's Lando Norris had a lap at 1:24.435 after the downpour delayed the first practice. Ferrari's Carlos



Sainz was second, followed by teammate Charles Leclerc. Lightning, heavy rain and hail rolled through a little more than an hour before the practice start time. Sauber driver Valtteri Bottas attempted to form a snowball out of the large pieces of hail that filled the paddock.

"Today was definitely an odd one," seven-time season champion Lewis Hamilton of Mercedes said. "It was literally summer this morning, then it rained hailstone. I can't even remember the last time I saw hailstone but they were huge. Then sunny again, really hot and humid, and then raining

again." Event organizers asked spectators to leave the grandstands amid the inclement weather while police shut down the bridges accessing Notre Dame Island.

The storm subsided roughly 15 minutes before the expected start time and the site was reopened to fans. The drivers didn't hit the wet track until 22 minutes into the session as groundcrews worked to clear the water, but conditions remained less than ideal. Sauber driver Zhou Guanyu triggered a red flag five minutes later when he aquaplaned and clipped the wall at Turn 5 before grinding to a halt. Several other drivers, including Bottas and Stroll, slid off course and into the grass during the session.

# Anshu Malik settles for silver in Budapest

PTI ■ BUDAPEST

Indian woman wrestler Anshu Malik could not match the skills of her 21-year-old Chinese rival Kexin Hong in the final, bowing out tamerly to settle for a silver in the 57kg category of the Budapest Ranking Series here.

Competing against the No.1 ranked Chinese, Anshu lost 1-12 on technical superiority against the Hangzhou Asian Games bronze medalist in the 53kg category.

India's Antim Panghal had earlier fought hard to settle for a silver in the 53kg category, while star wrestler Vinesh Phogat lost to Jiang Zhu of China 0-5 in the quarterfinals in the 50kg category.

Anshu started with an incredible bout against Anastasia Nichita of Moldova, winning 6-5 on points to secure a place in the semifinal. With Nichita leading 5-4 and just 19 seconds remaining on the clock, Anshu scored a takedown on the edge to claim a 6-5 lead to win the close contest.

She then overcame the challenge of world champion Zhang Qi 2-1 on point to secure a title showdown with another Chinese.

But Hong proved far too superior for the Indian, taking a 4-1 lead in the opening round before asserting her class in the second round and taking an unassailable lead with 11 seconds still remaining on the clock.

India's only male wrestler to qualify for the Paris Olympics, Aman Sehrawat had earlier won a silver on the opening day losing 1-11 on technical superiority to Japan's Rei Higuchi.

# Praggnanandhaa beats Nakamura; Carlsen wins Norway Chess

PTI ■ STAVANGER (NORWAY)

Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa ended his campaign on a positive note by defeating American Hikaru Nakamura in the finale to sign off third even as world number one Magnus Carlsen won the Norway Chess tournament here.

Carlsen walked away with prize money of 7,00,000 NOK (Around USD 65,000 reserved for the winner) for ending with 17.5 points in the unique tournament that ensured that each round had a winner either through Classical time control or Armageddon if the game ended in a draw.

Nakamura finished second on 15.5 points despite losing to Praggnanandhaa, who concluded third on 14.5 points. Praggnanandhaa can be happy with the fact that he defeated the top three ranked players in the world in one of



the strongest ever tournaments. He had beaten Carlsen and Caruana under Classical time control earlier in the tournament and his win against Nakamura ensured that he became the first player ever to beat the top three. The fourth place went to Alireza Firouzja (13.5 points) who accounted for reigning world champion Ding Liren of China. The Iranian turned Frenchman also won under the Armageddon, leaving Liren at the

bottom of the standings behind Caruana who finished on 10 points for the fifth place in the six-players double round-robin tournament. In the Women's section, Wenjun Ju had no trouble securing the top spot at the expense of compatriot Tingjie Lei. The Chinese won with 19 points in all coming from three wins under Classical time control.

Anna Muzychuk finished second on 16 points, 1.5 points ahead of Lei who in turn was two points clear of R Vaishali. Koneru Humpy on 10 points was a distant fifth ahead of veteran Pia Cramling who tallied eight points in all. The final round was not devoid of excitement. Carlsen delivers on demand and he did just that yet again against Fabiano Caruana.

After a regulation draw in the Ruy Lopez as white Carlsen reserved his energy for the final Armageddon and his Queen pawn opening ensured a

tangible advantage as the game progressed.

The Norwegian won in the Queen and pawns endgame after 52 moves when his passed pawn in the centre was about to become a new Queen.

Praggnanandhaa took his chances in the middle game arising out of a London system and did not regret as Nakamura was on the backfoot right from the word go. Unleashing a king side attack the Indian romped home in just 31 moves.

**Results final round men:** Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 17.5) beat Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 11.5) 1.5-1; R Praggnanadhaa (Ind, 14.5) beat Hikaru Nakamura (Usa, 15.5) 1.5-1; Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 13.5) beat Ding Liren (Chn, 7) 1.5-1.

**Women:** Wenjun Ju (Chn, 19) beat Tingjie Lei (Chn, 14.5) 3-0; Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 16) beat Koneru Humpy (Ind, 10) 1.

# SPOTLIGHT ON NY PITCH AS STEADY INDIA TAKE ON WOUNDED PAKISTAN

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Confident and well-adjusted India would look to capitalise on an unpredictable Pakistan's vulnerable state and lack of familiarity with the tricky conditions here when the traditional rivals lock horns in their eagerly-awaited T20 World Cup clash on Sunday. The marquee game, which is expected to draw the biggest crowd of the tournament so far, will be held at the newly constructed 34,000-seater Nassau County International Cricket Stadium at the Eisenhower Park on the outskirts of the city. Heading into this high-profile contest, the 22-yard pitch remains a major talking point, having already faced significant criticism for its unpredictability, which the ICC has officially acknowledged. In the six innings of the three matches hosted at the stadium so far, teams have surpassed the 100-run mark only twice. Some former players have wondered aloud whether the low-scoring conditions would be of any help in selling cricket to the American market

through the showpiece. The four drop-in pitches at the venue, laid in April under the supervision of Adelaide Oval groundsman Damian Hough, are yet to settle down properly. The uneven bounce of the surface has also raised safety concerns for the batters, especially after Indian skipper Rohit Sharma was hit on his shoulder, forcing him to stop batting during the tournament-opener against Ireland on June 5. "I don't know what to expect from the pitch to be honest. We will prepare as if the conditions are going to be like this (for Pakistan game). This is going to be a kind of game where all XI of us will need to contribute," Rohit had said after the game against Ireland. A day after India's game, the ICC had to release a statement, addressing the growing concerns surrounding the pitches prepared for the New York-leg of this T20 World Cup. "The ICC recognise that the pitches used so far at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium have not played as consistently as we would have all wanted," the statement read.

The Pakistan team, however, is yet to acclimatise to the conditions at Nassau Stadium. They arrived in New York on Thursday night following their shocking defeat to tournament debutants USA and took the next day off. As a result, Babar Azam and his squad have had limited time to adjust to these challenging conditions, which could be a disadvantage heading into this crucial encounter. And a defeat against India could significantly complicate their qualification prospects. Against Ireland, the Indian think-tank left out left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep Yadav from the playing XI and opted for an extra specialist fast bowler. On Sunday, the strategy is expected to remain the same, particularly as the match is expected to be played on an unused centre turf. South Africa and Netherlands are playing a game at the Nassau stadium on June 8 but on a different track. However, given Kuldeep's recent form and his favourable match-ups against Pakistani batters, especially Babar, the team management might



consider including him. If so, one out of Axar Patel or Ravindra Jadeja may have to sit out. The batting is more or less settled with Rohit and Virat Kohli expected to continue as

openers and Rishabh Pant taking the No.3 slot. Pakistan, on the other hand, would be hoping to get their act together after the opening shock.

Their legendary unpredictability was on full display against the USA, who pipped them in the Super Over for a memorable win. Babar blamed the loss

primarily on bowlers but what he cannot afford to overlook is the underwhelming performance of the team's batters, including him. The captain consumed 43 deliveries for his 44, which is nowhere close to being a decent strike rate in the shortest format. He would be hoping to do better. And with conditions helpful for seamers as pointed out by India pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah after the Ireland game, it won't be a surprise if the lethal version of Pakistan's bowling attack led by Shaheen Afridi decides to show up on Sunday and put the team's campaign back on track. **STRINGENT SECURITY MEASURES:** Following an ISIS terror threat received at the start of the tournament, stringent security measures have been enforced by local authorities to ensure the safe conduct of this high-profile contest. Nassau County Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder, in recent media interactions, emphasised on the extensive arrangements, likening them to presidential-level security. "The scale and magnitude of the security for this India-

Pakistan match will be more compared to when we hosted the USA President Barack Obama some years ago," Ryder said. He also confirmed the involvement of officers from Nassau County Police, Suffolk County, New York State, as well as agencies including the FBI, Homeland Security Investigations, and US Customs and Border Protection in the comprehensive security arrangements for the game.

## SQUADS:

**India:** Rohit Sharma (c), Hardik Pandya, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Yuzvendra Chahal, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj. **Pakistan:** Babar Azam (c), Abrar Ahmed, Azam Khan, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imad Wasim, Mohammad Abbas Afridi, Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Rizwan, Naseem Shah, Saim Ayub, Shadab Khan, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usman Khan

## WI in search of batting mojo vs Uganda



PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

Co-hosts West Indies will look to shake off their batting rustiness and come in their element when they face Uganda in a Group C T20 World Cup clash here. The pre-tournament favourites and two-time former champions suffered a scare chasing a modest 137 before they scraped to five-wicket win over minnows Papua New Guinea in their opening match. On a difficult pitch that required patience and application, West Indies batters kept playing recklessly and found themselves half the side down for 97 with just four overs remaining. It was then left to Roston Chase (42 not out) and Andre Russell (15 not out) to safely take them home and avoid an embarrassment. Against a team who are coming on the back of morale boosting win over Papua New Guinea, West Indies will have to exercise some caution especially with the bat. Nicholas Pooran has been their most standout batter in the recent past and the wicketkeeper-batter will have responsibility to stay at the crease till the end. On conditions that have assisted the bowlers, pacer Alzarri Joseph and left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein who were impressive in the previous match will look to give early breakthroughs.

Uganda have happy memories of bowling out Papua New Guinea for 77 at this venue but their batting will be in the spotlight as they struggled in the chase before securing a tense three-wicket win in the penultimate over. **TEAMS (FROM)** **West Indies:** Rovman Powell (c), Alzarri Joseph, Johnson Charles, Roston Chase, Shimron Hetmyer, Jason Holder, Shai Hope, Akeal Hosein, Shamar Joseph, Brandon King, Gudakesh Motie, Nicholas Pooran, Andre Russell, Sherfane Rutherford, Romario Shepherd. **Uganda:** Brian Masaba (c), Simon Ssesazi, Roger Mukasa, Cosmas Kyewuta, Dinesh Nakrani, Fred Achelam, Kenneth Waiswa, Alpesh Ramjani, Frank Nsubuga, Henry Ssenyondo, Bilal Hassun, Robinson Obuya, Riazat Ali Shah, Juma Miyaji, Ronak Patel. **Match starts:** 6am IST. **SCOTLAND FACE OMAN, AIM TO CONSOLIDATE TOP SPOT:** Scotland will start as firm favourites against Oman in a Group B clash at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in North Sound, Antigua, which will be hosting its first match of the tournament on Sunday. After their washout against England in their opener that gave both the teams one point each, the Scotland secured a five-wicket win against Namibia in what turned out to be a tense 156-run chase.

The result mean that Scotland now have the opportunity to go up to five points which might complicate the Super Eight qualifying scenarios for tournament heavyweights England and Australia who lock horns later on Saturday. Only top two teams make the Super Eight. Australia and Namibia have two points each sitting behind Scotland, while England are second from the bottom with one point from one match. While skipper Richie Berrington has been in form leading their chase with an unbeaten fifty, he would hope that their top-three George Munsey, Michael Jones and Brandon McMullen start to fire. Oman have lost both their matches putting up ordinary shows with the bat and it would be too much of an ask for them to turn things around. **TEAMS (FROM)** **Oman:** Aqib Ilyas (c), Zeeshan Maqsood, Kashyap Prajapati, Pratik Athavale, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Mohammad Nadeem, Naseem Khushi, Mehran Khan, Bilal Khan, Rafiullah, Kaleemullah, Fayyaz Butt, Shakeel Ahmad, Khalid Kail. **Scotland:** Richie Berrington (c), Matthew Cross, Brad Currie, Chris Greaves, Oli Hairs, Jack Jarvis, Michael Jones, Michael Leask, Brandon McMullen, George Munsey, Safyaan Sharif, Chris Sole, Charlie Tear, Mark Watt, Brad Wheel

## Spirited Afghans clip Kiwi wings, secure 84 runs upset win in T20 World Cup

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

A determined Afghanistan rode on splendid spells from their skipper Rashid Khan and left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi to stun an under-prepared New Zealand by 84 runs and make a strong case for a Super Eight berth in the T20 World Cup here. Chasing a tricky 160 at the Providence Stadium here, 2021 runners-up New Zealand were shot out for a lowly 75 in an innings that lasted a mere 15.2 overs with only Glenn Phillips (18) and Matt Henry (12) managing double-digit scores. The decision to bowl after winning the toss backfired on the Black Caps as the Afghans relied on openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz's 56-ball 84 and Ibrahim Zadran's 44 off 41 to post a reasonably good total of 159/6 in the low-scoring tournament. Gurbaz was expectedly adjudged player of the match for his knock. The triumph was a reminder of

Afghanistan's first big upset win in 2016 when they defeated West Indies by six runs in Nagpur after restricting the eventual winners to 117/8 in their defence of 123/7. Farooqi, who snared five wickets for nine runs against Uganda, returned figures of 17/4 off his 3.2 overs, including the match-sealing dismissal. Rashid was also lethal as he collected the prized scalp of Kane Williamson (9 off 13) with his first ball. He finished overall figures of 17/4 off his four overs. It took Afghanistan to four points from two matches, having earlier beaten Uganda by 125 runs. The West Indies and Uganda occupy the next two spots, while Papua New Guinea and New Zealand are the last two teams who haven't opened their accounts. Afghanistan next face PNG on Friday, while NZ will be up against the co-hosts West Indies on Thursday. "One of the greatest performances from us in T20



cricket against a big team," said Afghan skipper Rashid Khan terming it a "great team effort." "The way Ibrahim and Gurbaz started again... The wicket was not easy. They did not throw away their wickets. "Great win for Afghanistan and it is a privilege to be leading this side and winning against NZ." Williamson acknowledged that Afghans "outplayed them." "To get a total like that on a fiddly surface, they kept

Farooqi followed it up with the wicket of the dangerous Devon Conway in his next over as the Kiwi wicketkeeper-batter chipped a catch to short extra cover. He ended his dream spell of 3-0-17-3 taking the wicket of Daryl Mitchell who edged a back-of-a-length delivery that angled in to have New Zealand reeling at 30/3 inside five overs. The skipper, who also took 4/17, then weaved his magic after the power-play further pegging New Zealand back when he struck off his first delivery, dismissing his counterpart Williamson for 9 with a Gulbani Naib taking a smart catch at slip. The NZ top four batting card at that moment read a sorry 0, 8, 9, 5 by Allen, Conway, Williamson and Mitchell in that order. Rashid cleaned up Mark Chapman (4) with a delivery that kept a little low and crashed into the stumps. Half the Kiwi side was back in the dugout for 43 in nine overs.

## Focussed on our own skills rather than opposition: Rashid Khan

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

Rashid Khan always wanted his teammates to have faith in their own abilities instead of fretting over their opposition's strengths and he was ecstatic that it's exactly what they did during Afghanistan's memorable 84-run victory over New Zealand in the T20 World Cup game here. Defending 159, Afghanistan shot out New Zealand for 75 with left-arm seamer Fazalhaq Farooqi and the skipper himself decimating the opposition with four wickets apiece. "Now, we need to beat the teams with our own skills rather than think about the opposition and that's the only thing I have been telling the guys like just make sure we look into our skills," Rashid said during the post-match presentation ceremony. For Rashid, it is the effort that matters more than the results as he believes that

if a team is good enough, results take care of itself. "It doesn't matter whoever we play, it's more about how good you are, how good you're going to play and what type of energy you are coming with into the ground and that for me is very important. "I don't care about the result a lot to be honest. I care more about the effort we put, that's something which gives me lots of pleasure." In the last year's ODI World Cup, Afghanistan famously stunned England, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, while in the 2016 T20 World Cup, they secured a memorable win over eventual champions West Indies. "We haven't had those victories in T20 World Cups. We had in ODI, but in T20, I feel like this was one of the best performance from the guys," said the skipper who starred in his masterful bowling act of 4/17.



Rahmanullah Gurbaz blasted 80 from 56 deliveries while fellow opener Ibrahim Zadran added 44 from 41 to

give them a flying start. In reply, left-arm seamer Farooqi, who claimed five wickets against Uganda on Monday, grabbed 4/17 from just 3.2 overs, matching his skipper's bowling figures. "It's not just about a single guy...It's a great team effort, the way Gurbaz and Ibrahim started the innings. For Afghans, cricket is their biggest source of joy and Rashid was thankful to the fans, who don't care about time difference when the national team's match is aired live. "They don't miss our games. We play at 3am, 4am or 1am, they're always up. Not only in Afghanistan, all around the world, wherever they are, they're going to watch the game. They don't miss the game. "Cricket is a biggest source of happiness back home. And I'm very sure this will give them so much to enjoy, to celebrate this victory," he said.

## Simulation on uneven tracks: Rohit ignores blow and trains hard along with Kohli

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Rohit Sharma was struck on the thumb by a throwdown but didn't seem perturbed as Indian batters put in additional hours at the nets to counter the uneven bounce that might help Pakistan's pace attack during their marquee T20 World Cup clash here on Sunday. Rohit, while facing left-arm throwdown specialist Nuwan Senewiratne, got hit on his left thumb by a delivery that lifted from the back of a good length area. The Indian skipper looked in discomfort but shrugged it off as he continued to bat on.

Rohit was then seen moving to the other end of the pitch to face the throwdowns. The drop-in tracks at the Nassau County cricket ground have copped a lot of flak for the uneven bounce as balls are flying thick and fast from length due to wide cracks which are being rolled to create an even-bounce strip. The Indian bowlers had a field day bowling out Ireland for 96 but Rohit and the senior pros know that against Shaheen Shah Afridi, Mohammed Amir, Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah, the challenge will be very different.

And hence, the coaching staff made three of the six drop-in practice strips at the Cantigue Park in Long Islands into abrasive ones with cracks to ensure proper match-simulation for top-order batters. The Indian team's determination to dominate on tracks with dual bounce was evident if one cites an example of South African nets in the morning session on same tracks. While Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje sent down their thunderbolts, none of the top Proteas batters wanted to risk getting injured ahead of the game against the Netherlands.



In contrast, their Indian counterparts embraced the testing conditions, using them to prepare for the

upcoming challenge of facing the Pakistani attack on tracks where teams haven't crossed the 100-run mark in four out

of six innings. There were no half-measures for the Indian skipper, Virat Kohli and others during a three-hour afternoon session where they faced Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, Khaleel Ahmed and Mohammed Siraj. Kohli, Pant and Suryakumar Yadav were the first Indian batters to hit the nets. They faced the likes of Arshdeep, Bumrah, Siraj, Khaleel along with the throwdown specialists who were hitting the hard length on a consistent basis. For the batters, the focus was on negotiating the uneven bounce which was very much

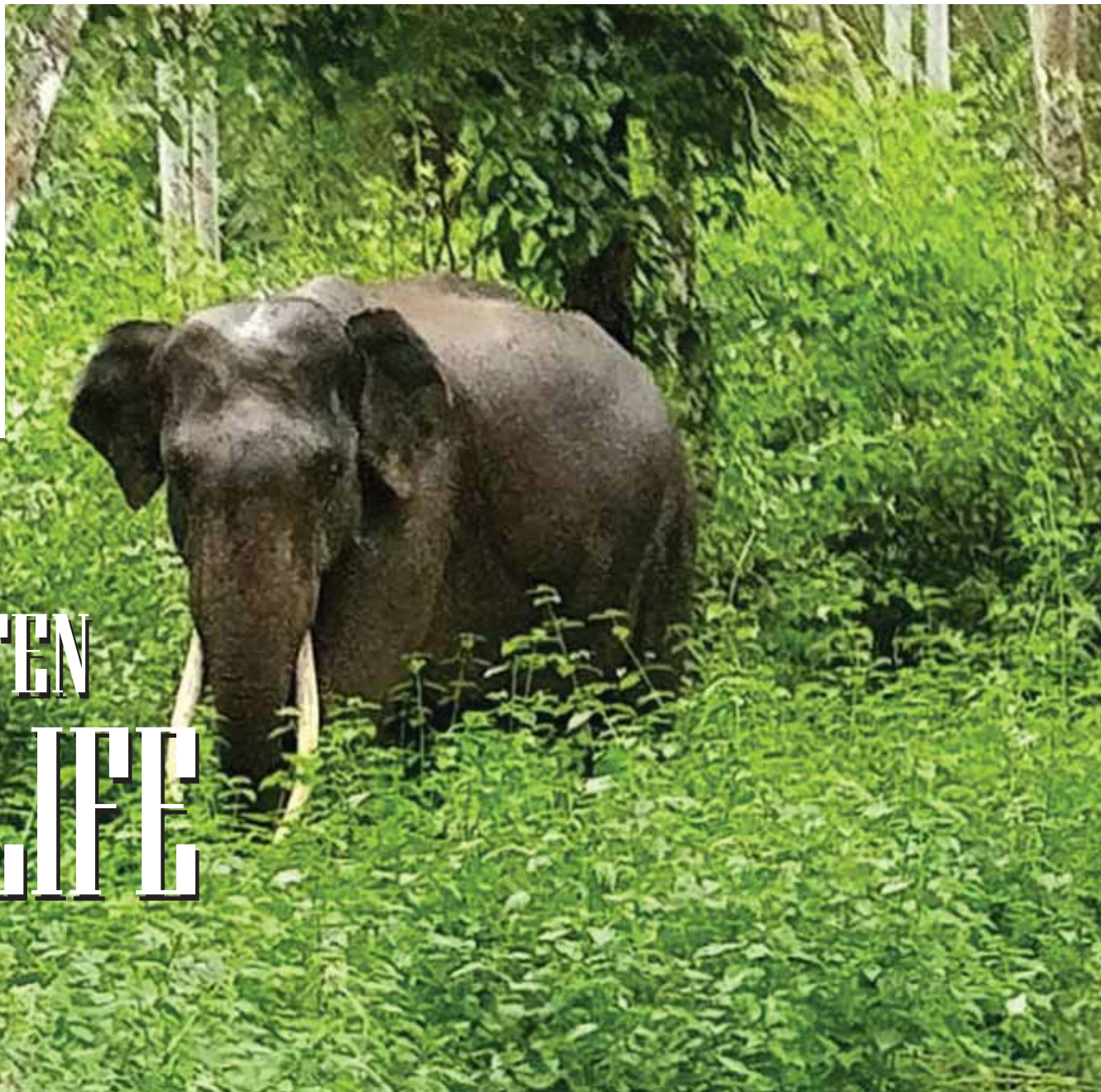
evident on those practice pitches. **KULDEEP'S MATCH-UP AGAINST PAKISTAN:** Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav has a fantastic match-up against Pakistani batters as one has seen in 50-over games but whether India would want to throw him in the middle in place of an Axar Patel remains to be seen. If one looked at Babar Azam, his strike-rate against orthodox left-arm spinners is only a shade over 112 and hence Axar's dart-like deliveries on leg-middle could be very effective. Kuldeep, who was surprisingly not picked in the

playing XI in India's tournament opener against Ireland, had a long workout at the nets along with other spinners like Axar, Ravindra Jadeja and Yuzvendra Chahal. Against spinners, the batters were seen playing quite a few cross-batted shots like sweeps and reverse-sweeps. As the nets session drew to a close, Jadeja and Shivam Dube took their turns batting, with Kohli joining them for his second stint of the day. The practice concluded with a team bonding session, as players relaxed and enjoyed a game of football, fostering a lighter atmosphere.

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"If you can reach out and touch and love and be with wildlife, you will forever be changed, and you will want to make the world a better place."  
— Terri Irwin



# INVASIVE SPECIES THREATEN WAYANAD WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

Senna spectabilis planted with good intentions has become an ecological nightmare, swiftly overtaking large areas of the sanctuary. Its unchecked growth not only threatens biodiversity but also triggers a chain of ecological and economic repercussions, affecting both wildlife and local communities

Approximately one-fifth of the Earth's surface is threatened by invasive species. These biotic invaders, benefiting from rapid reproduction and a lack of natural predators, outcompete native species for vital resources like food, water, and habitat, posing a significant threat to biodiversity and ecosystem stability.

The Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary (WWS), nestled in the heart of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR), is a biodiversity hotspot, brimming with a rich variety of flora and fauna. The sanctuary serves as a habitat for a substantial population of Asian elephants, along with over 3,700 documented species of plants and animals. Spanning an area of 344.44 km<sup>2</sup>, the sanctuary is comprised of four distinct ranges: Sulthan Bathery, Muthanga, Kurichiat, and Tholpetty. Each range, with its distinct characteristics, adds to the rich tapestry of the WWS, making it a vital and vibrant hub of ecological diversity. However, this ecological paradise is under severe threat from several invasive species, including *Senna spectabilis*, *Lantana camara*, and *Acacia* species. This is particularly noticeable in the case of *Senna spectabilis*, which has proliferated aggressively throughout the WWS and beyond, affecting the NBR and the corresponding ecological continuum of three southern Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka. A decision made in good faith by the forest department in 1986 to plant *Senna spectabilis*, an ornamental tree with striking yellow flowers, has morphed into an ecological disaster. Little did one know, that this tropical American tree had a notorious history of invading continents, including parts of Asia, Africa, and Australia. By the time the mistake was realized, *Senna* had stealthily spread into many parts of the sanctuary. It expanded from covering less than 16 km<sup>2</sup> in 2013-2014 to 89 km<sup>2</sup> in 2019 and now stands at a staggering 123.86 km<sup>2</sup>. Considering the total area of the sanctuary is 344.44 km<sup>2</sup>, *Senna* has already engulfed 35% of it. If this trend is not curbed, the entire sanctuary could be swamped within a decade, turning it into a dense *Senna* forest.

A 2021 study has revealed that the Asian elephant, a significant inhabitant of the sanctuary, is aiding the spread of the invasive *Senna spectabilis*. The elephant's dung provides a fertile environment for the *Senna* seeds to sprout, with a single pile of dung found to contain



BKP SINHA



ARVIND K JHA

“A SINGLE SENNA POD HARBOURS OVER A HUNDRED SEEDS, AND A MEDIUM-SIZED TREE CAN YIELD AT LEAST ONE LAKH SEEDS. THE INVASIVE NATURE OF THE SENNA SPECIES HAS HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE LOCAL ECOSYSTEM. IT HAS DISPLACED NATIVE VEGETATION BY MONOPOLIZING THE AREA AND INHIBITING THE GROWTH OF SPECIES LIKE GRASS, BAMBOO AND SEVERAL OTHER MINOR FOREST PRODUCE



approximately 2000 seeds. The study also found other mammals, such as the chital and the Indian crested porcupine, contributing to the spread of *Senna*. The researchers observed that the fruiting period of *Senna* trees in the summer coincides with a high concentration of elephants in Wayanad due to their seasonal migration. This synchronicity could potentially expedite the plant's dispersal across the landscape, particularly in micro-habitats commonly inhabited by elephants.

A single *Senna* pod harbours over a hundred seeds, and a medium-sized tree can yield at least one lakh seeds. The invasive nature of the *Senna* species has had a significant impact on the local ecosystem. It has displaced native vegetation by monopolizing the area and inhibiting the growth of species like grass, bamboo and several other minor forest produce.

The *Senna* tree employs a unique method of colonizing its surroundings. It releases specific substances, known as allelochemicals, either directly onto the target plants or indirectly into the surrounding soil. These allelochemicals interfere with the normal growth processes of other plants, providing the *Senna* tree with a competitive advantage. The dominance of the *Senna* tree has significant implications for the livelihoods of rural and tribal people who rely on non-timber forest produce, like amla or gooseberry, for sustenance. Many edible items like berries, mushrooms, and wild tubers, which were once a significant part of the tribal diet, are gradually disappearing from the forest.

The bitter leaves and irritating bark of *Senna* do not find favour with herbivores resulting in a decline in their numbers in the area. This has had a cascading effect on the region's tiger population, which has decreased from 120 in 2018 to 84 in 2023. The scarcity of prey in the *Senna*-dominated areas is believed to be driving tigers to migrate in search of richer hunting grounds. Similarly, elephants are moving into areas outside the forests in their quest for food and water. Unfortunately, this has led to increased human-elephant conflicts, resulting in a backlash against the preservation efforts of elephants. The ecological disruption has had an unexpected benefit for local communities. With fewer wildlife incursions, settlements near the jungle have seen a significant drop in crop damage and cattle lifting incidents. The data from the past three years shows a downward trend in compensation claims



by farmers for crop raids. In the fiscal year 2021-22, there were 734 cases of crop damage reported in the border agrarian hamlets of WWS. This figure fell to 475 in 2022-23, and in 2023-24, the number has further decreased to just 93 cases. Similarly, cattle lifting cases have also seen a decline, from 83 cases in 2021-22 to a mere 19 in 2023-24. While the decrease in human-wildlife conflict might be viewed as a positive development by those seeking to address this issue, the underlying causes warrant serious concern. Locals like Mr. Stanley Augustine, a member of the Biodiversity Management Committee of Poothadi village, find these changes deeply troubling, particularly from the standpoint of the rural economy. The area is witnessing a worrying decline in agricultural productivity and an increasing trend of farmers abandoning their paddy fields. The forests too are under mounting pressure. The real challenge, therefore, lies in re-establishing equilibrium in the WWS while simultaneously securing the future of the human communities in the area. In response to these challenges, the Forest Department has launched an initiative known as the 'Senna Eradication and Forest Regeneration

Project'. The project, supported by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development, has a budget of Rs 5.31 crore. The initiative is currently being implemented in the Kurichiat and Muthanga forest ranges, to eradicate *Senna* from 1,672 hectares. To further support this initiative, the sanctuary authorities are exploring partnerships with the newsprint industry, taking inspiration from Tamil Nadu. The state government there has allowed the Tamil Nadu Newsprint and Papers Ltd (TNPL) to extract invasive trees like Wattles and *Senna* for paper production. In return, TNPL compensates the Forest Department and employs various extraction techniques, attempting to turn an ecological challenge into an opportunity for resource utilization. In some areas, invasive plants, including *Senna*, are being repurposed to manufacture furniture. *Senna*, in particular, is valued as a timber source for making lightweight furniture and other wooden products. There is hope that policy changes could permit the extraction of *Senna* from forest areas and its subsequent sale outside. Such changes could potentially motivate the local community to actively participate in clearing the forest of this invasive plant.

The process of removing the *Senna* tree, however, is fraught with challenges. Traditional methods such as uprooting, girdling, and herbicide application for eliminating *Senna* from the area are labour-intensive, costly, and environmentally damaging. Uprooting large *Senna* trees could disturb the soil, leading to erosion, especially in hilly areas that receive high rainfall.

Techniques like girdling and felling can inadvertently harm non-target species. Moreover, the use of herbicides may contaminate water sources and negatively impact the area's biodiversity. Additionally, the resilience of the *Senna* tree is evident in its ability to regenerate from lateral roots, which complicates its eradication. Given these challenges, it is clear that innovative and sustainable strategies are needed to manage and ultimately remove the *Senna* species while simultaneously assisting the re-establishment of local species.

As we forge ahead, conservation measures must be holistic, encompassing not only the immediate environs of the sanctuary but also the larger watersheds and catchment areas that feed into the rivers. This holistic approach is particularly significant for Wayanad, the source of the Kabini River. The health of this river is essential for sustaining the lives and livelihoods of communities across Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu. Notably, initiatives are in progress to increase the flow of the Kabini River—a major tributary of the Kaveri River—to address the issue of water scarcity in Bengaluru.

The situation in Wayanad is a stark reminder of the domino effect triggered by the introduction of invasive species. The ecological and economic ramifications are far-reaching, impacting not just the wildlife within the sanctuary but also the lives and livelihoods of communities dwelling in its vicinity and beyond. The fight to save Wayanad is a race against time. If immediate and decisive action is not taken, the future of this biodiversity hotspot and the well-being of the millions who depend on it hang in the balance. Wayanad's plight serves as a cautionary tale, urging us to prioritize rigorous scientific evaluation before introducing any new species in an area and to act swiftly and collaboratively in the face of ecological threats posed by invasive species.

(The writers are Former Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, UP and Maharashtra; views expressed are personal)



# DISCOVER THE DESERT SERENGETI AND ENCHANTING ISLAND OF BUTTERFLIES

Sharjah creates a 'la African Safari' in the Desert and its commitment to nature shines at Al Noor Island, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

Sharjah, a jewel in the crown of the United Arab Emirates, boasts a captivating terrain that marries the charm of golden deserts with the allure of pristine coastlines along the Arabian Gulf. The landscape is punctuated by rolling sand dunes, tranquil oases, and rugged mountains that rise in the eastern region, creating a picturesque backdrop to its vibrant cityscape. Sharjah's climate is characterized by its arid nature, with hot summers that see temperatures soar, and mild, pleasant winters that offer a refreshing respite. The gentle coastal breeze, coupled with the serene desert air, weaves a unique atmospheric tapestry, making Sharjah a place of both stark beauty and subtle elegance. However, it lacks the lush green vegetation and abundance found in tropical climates. Yet, this absence is masterfully compensated by human ingenuity, as nature is carefully crafted and enhanced through thoughtful intervention.

Sharjah has been a beacon of cultural heritage in the region. However, not many people know its commitment towards nature. In fact, it has one of the rarest treats around the world to showcase which has never tried elsewhere on the large scale. Sharjah's commitment to preserving nature and promoting biodiversity is exemplified through its innovative projects, notably creating Serengeti and Sawana in the heart of the desert and organising the African Safari in the desert. As if that was not enough it also has a full-on nature conservation project at in Al Noor Island which hosts thousands of species of plants and birds and has a unique Butterfly House. These initiatives reflect Sharjah's dedication to balancing development with sustainability and fostering a deep respect for the natural world.

## A 'LA AFRICAN SAFARI' IN THE DESERT

Sharjah's African Safari, set against the backdrop of the Arabian Desert, is a testament to the emirate's vision of creating unique and sustainable tourism experiences. This ambitious project recreates the diverse ecosystems of Africa, providing a sanctuary for a wide range of species in an environment that mirrors their natural habitats. The African Safari in Sharjah is not just a tourist attraction; it is a conservation effort aimed at protecting endangered

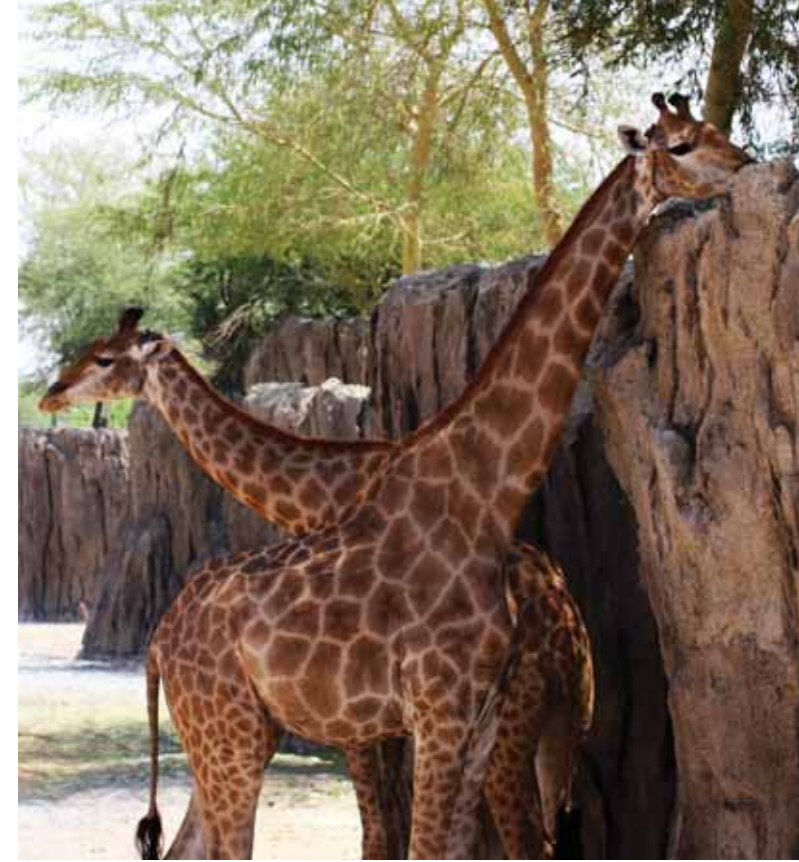


species and educating the public about wildlife and ecosystems. The park hosts animals such as giraffes, zebras, elephants and various species of antelope, living in conditions that closely resemble their native habitats. This approach ensures that the animals can exhibit natural behaviours, contributing to their well-being and offering visitors an authentic experience. Sharjah's African Safari employs sustainable practices to minimise its environmental footprint. This includes the use of renewable energy sources, water conservation techniques, and eco-friendly infrastructure. The park also engages in breeding programs for

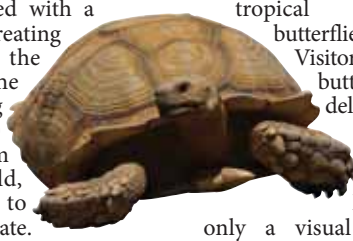
endangered species, playing a crucial role in global conservation efforts. By fostering a connection between visitors and wildlife, the safari park encourages a greater appreciation for the natural world and the importance of its preservation.

## AL NOOR ISLAND: WHERE SERENITY AND ART COME TOGETHER

Nestled in the heart of Khalid Lagoon, Al Noor Island is a testament to Sharjah's vision of blending nature, art, and culture. Since its opening in 2015, this picturesque island has become a beloved destination for both locals and



tourists, offering a serene escape and a feast for the senses. Al Noor Island is more than just a park; it is an embodiment of Sharjah's commitment to enhancing the quality of life through innovative public spaces that foster a connection with nature and the arts. Al Noor Island spans 45,470 square meters and is adorned with a rich variety of flora, creating a verdant oasis in the middle of the city. The island's landscaping features over 70,000 plants and trees from around the world, carefully curated to thrive in the local climate. This lush greenery provides a habitat for diverse wildlife, including numerous bird species that find sanctuary on the island. The meticulously maintained gardens offer visitors a tranquil environment to unwind and connect with nature.



## The Butterfly House

One of the island's crown jewels is the Butterfly House, an architectural marvel that houses over 500 exotic butterflies. The structure itself, designed with intricate latticework inspired by Islamic art, is a sight to behold. Inside, the climate-controlled environment mimics tropical conditions, allowing butterflies to flourish year-round. Visitors can walk among the butterflies, witnessing their delicate beauty up close and learning about their life cycles and ecological importance. The Butterfly House is not only a visual delight but also an educational experience, emphasizing the significance of conservation.

## Art Installations and Sculptures

Al Noor Island is dotted with stunning art installations and sculptures, seamlessly integrating art with nature. These pieces,

created by renowned artists from around the world, add a layer of cultural richness to the island. Notable installations include the "OVO" art sculpture, a glowing egg-shaped structure that symbolizes rebirth and renewal, and the "Torus" sculpture by David Harber, which captures the interplay of light and shadow.

The island caters to visitors of all ages with its well-designed children's playground and exercise facilities. The playground is equipped with safe, modern equipment that encourages imaginative play, while the exercise stations offer adults a chance to stay active in a scenic setting.

## Night Illumination

As the sun sets, Al Noor Island transforms into a magical landscape illuminated by artistic lighting. The island's pathways and installations glow with soft, colourful lights, creating an enchanting atmosphere. This nighttime transformation offers a unique experience, making evening visits to the island particularly memorable.

Al Noor Island exemplifies Sharjah's dedication to sustainability and environmental preservation. The island employs eco-friendly practices, such as using solar energy for lighting and maintaining a commitment to water conservation. These efforts ensure that the island remains a green and sustainable haven for future generations.

Al Noor Island also plays a vital role in community engagement and education. It regularly hosts workshops, guided tours, and cultural events that promote environmental awareness and appreciation for the arts. These programs aim to foster a sense of responsibility and connection to the natural world among visitors.

Al Noor Island as its African safari is a shining example of Sharjah's innovative approach to nature conservation with cultural enrichment. This serene oasis offers a retreat from the hustle and bustle of city life, inviting visitors to explore its lush landscapes, admire its art installations, and engage with its diverse flora and fauna. Through Al Noor Island, Sharjah demonstrates its commitment to creating spaces that nurture the soul, inspire the mind, and promote a sustainable future. Whether you're a nature lover, art enthusiast, or simply seeking peace and tranquility, Al Noor Island is a destination that promises to captivate and inspire.

# Bookmark these boutique destinations for a summer getaway

BY RUPALI DEAN

## STERLING PARK, KALIMPONG

Where? Ringkingpong Rd, Kalimpong, Khasmahal, Kalimpong, West Bengal. Nestled in the scenic mid-range of the Himalayas, at a lofty 4,100 feet above sea level lies Kalimpong—a perfect fusion of serene mountain vistas and vibrant cultural encounters, offering an enchanting getaway for those in search of an unforgettable holiday experience. This cultural hub, blending influences from Indian, Chinese, Nepalese, and Tibetan traditions, provides a captivating and immersive retreat.

Perched atop a hill with a panoramic view of the snow-capped Himalayan peaks, Sterling Park Kalimpong resides in a historic edifice once owned by the Maharaja of Dinajpur, allowing guests a peek into a majestic bygone era. The vistas of Mt Kanchenjunga and other majestic peaks like Pandim and Narsingh, alongside the historic Jelep-la and Nathu-la Passes, resonate with old tales of the Silk Trade Route winding through Lhasa to Tibet. This mountain retreat, situated away from the urban hustle of downtown Kalimpong, exudes an aura of old-world charm with its colonial-era architecture adorned with intricate woodwork, vintage furnishings, and spacious verandahs, transporting guests



back to a nostalgic age. The lavishly appointed rooms and suites boast breath-taking views of the majestic Himalayas, creating a perfect sanctuary for relaxation. Guests can unwind on the cosy patio, indulge in the finest Darjeeling tea, or revel in the tranquillity of the lush courtyard surroundings. The signature restaurant, Kokomendo, beckons visitors with a diverse array of Indian, Continental, Chinese, Nepalese, and Tibetan delicacies. Together with Sterling Park Kalimpong, Darjeeling, and Gangtok Orange Village, they form a delightful mountain circuit in the Eastern Himalayan foothills, promising an

unforgettable journey for nature and culture enthusiasts alike.

## BAREFOOT BUNGALOW, CHAMBA

Where? Buranskhanda, Chamba-Mussoorie Road, Buranskhanda, Dehradun, Uttarakhand.

Set amidst the enchanting Himalayan landscape, Barefoot Bungalow, a luxurious 3-bedroom homestay in Buranskhanda, offers a sublime escape from the routine of daily life. Located just 25 kilometres from the renowned hill station of Mussoorie, this serene refuge captures the essence of tranquillity and natural beauty in the Garhwal Himalayas.



At the heart of Barefoot Bungalow lies a deep commitment to hospitality, where a dedicated team of professionals ensures that guests are pampered and well looked after. This pet-friendly haven features a personal butler and a talented in-house chef named Arjun, who delights guests with delicious home-cooked meals. The cosy wooden interiors create a warm hill station ambiance, perfect for creating memorable evenings by the bonfire, accompanied by live music performances or the inviting glow of an indoor fireplace. Guests at Barefoot Bungalow can indulge in a culinary delight at the glasshouse restaurant, where they

can watch their meals being freshly prepared in a live kitchen setting. The expansive 14,000-square-foot private garden, embellished with ponds and meticulously landscaped, provides a lush sanctuary for relaxation and reflection. And to top it all off, sweeping views of the majestic snow-capped Himalayan range serve as a breath-taking backdrop to this picturesque retreat.

## ONENESS, RISHIKESH

Where? Rishikesh, Badrinath Highway, Byasi, Uttarakhand. Cocooned within a Lower Shivalik mountain valley, 30 kilometres away from Rishikesh, this resort is

a harmonious blend of river, flora, and fauna, inviting guests to embark on a mesmerizing journey where nature's wild beauty takes centre stage and showcases a diverse array of Sal, Haldu, Figs, and Mulberry trees, forming a biodiverse sanctuary. This lively mountain retreat encourages visitors to immerse themselves in the wilderness, surrounded by monkeys, langurs, wild cats, the elusive Black Bear, and the captivating Scarlet Minivet. It's commitment to ecology shines through in the careful planting of 30,000 saplings of over 50 medicinal plants, fostering a flourishing ecosystem that embodies the ethos of the resort.

As the Ganges flows below, resonating with the sacred energy of Devprayag, spirituality becomes intricately woven into the fabric of Oneness. Guests can luxuriate in unparalleled comfort within the Luxury Cottages, each intricately designed to provide a unique and immersive stay. From the spacious and finely appointed rooms to the breath-taking views of the gardens and mountains, every aspect has been thoughtfully curated to offer an unforgettable escape. Beyond being just a resort, on offer is an immersive journey.

Engage in a variety of inclusive activities, ranging from leisurely beach moments to captivating stargazing sessions. For our younger guests, an array of kid's activities awaits. Furthermore, optional activities such as Fun Family Float and Memory Plantation present distinctive and memorable experiences. Go for an adventure intertwined with the allure of unspoiled wilderness. Your expedition commences with experienced guides guiding you through a brief hike, unveiling the untouched beauty of the Lower Shivalik mountains. The path then seamlessly transitions to a unique river crossing experience via a raft, adding a touch of thrill to your sojourn.

(Awarded the 'Best food writer in the country' by the Indian culinary forum, WACS and the Ministry of Tourism, Rupali Dean writes on food and travel)

**GAJRAJ RAO**, the Newgen method actor, redefines the cinematic experience by performing even non-descript roles with élan. This journey explores the nuances of his method acting, writes **GYANESHWAR DAYAL**

# THE METHOD HIS MADNESS

Gajraj Rao, a name that resonates with authenticity and a deep understanding of character portrayal, has carved a niche for himself in the Indian film industry through a blend of meticulous method acting and a rich repertoire of roles. Rao's journey from the sidelines to the spotlight is a testament to his dedication, perseverance, and exceptional talent. Gajraj Rao's foray into acting was marked by a series of small but significant roles that gradually built his reputation as a reliable character actor. Born in Durgapur, Rajasthan, Rao's initial years in the industry were filled with struggles and uncredited roles. His career began in the late 1990s, with minor roles in films and television. However, his ability to imbue even the smallest roles with depth and realism did not go unnoticed. Rao's breakthrough came with the 2018 film *Badhaai Ho*, where he played Jeetender Kaushik, a middle-aged man who discovers his wife's unexpected pregnancy. The film's success catapulted Rao into the limelight, earning him critical acclaim and several awards. His portrayal of Jeetender Kaushik was lauded for its warmth, subtlety, and humor, marking a significant shift in the perception of middle-aged characters in Indian cinema. What sets Gajraj Rao apart is his approach to method acting. Rao's dedication to his craft involves deep immersion into his characters. He often spends extensive time understanding the background, motivations, and nuances of the roles he portrays. This approach allows him to deliver performances that are both authentic and relatable. Method acting, a technique pioneered by Konstantin Stanislavski and later popularized by Lee Strasberg, emphasizes the psychological and emotional aspects of character development. Rao's use

of this technique involves drawing from his own experiences and emotions to bring a character to life. His preparation often includes detailed research, observing people with similar backgrounds to his characters, and even adopting their mannerisms and speech patterns. Rao's impact on modern Indian cinema extends beyond his performances. He represents a shift towards more realistic and nuanced storytelling in Bollywood. Films like *Shubh Mangal Zyada Saavdhan* and *Lootcase* further showcase his versatility, moving away from stereotypical depictions to more layered and authentic characters. In contemporary cinema, method actors like Gajraj Rao are redefining the narrative. They are moving away from the star-centric approach to one that values story and character depth. This trend is visible in the rise of content-driven films and web series that focus on everyday stories and real-life issues. And the time is ripe for such experiments. "Twenty years back I, Pankaj Tripathi, Nawazuddin Siddiqui and many others could not imagine of getting a significant role. Hindi cinema is more democratic and character

driven and gives chance to everyone," says Rao. Method actors today are increasingly collaborating with directors and writers to develop well-rounded characters. They are involved in the creative process from the early stages, contributing to script development and character arcs. This collaborative approach results in performances that are not just believable but also deeply engaging. While method acting is rewarding, it is also challenging. The emotional toll of deeply immersing oneself in a character can be significant. For Rao, balancing the intense preparation required for his roles with his personal life is a constant challenge. However, his passion for acting and his commitment to his craft continue to drive him forward. "I have theatre background where script is very important which all of us cherish. Then we prepare for the role meticulously. What viewers see on the screen is culmination of that preparation," Looking ahead, Gajraj Rao's journey seems poised for further success. With the increasing popularity of OTT platforms and a growing

audience for nuanced storytelling, actors like Rao are likely to find even more opportunities to showcase their talent. His upcoming projects are eagerly awaited by fans and critics alike, who expect nothing short of brilliance from this seasoned actor. Gajraj Rao's journey as an actor is an inspiring tale of perseverance, talent, and the power of method acting. His contributions to Indian cinema have paved the way for more realistic and relatable storytelling. As he continues to explore new horizons, Rao remains a beacon of authenticity and excellence in the world of acting, embodying the transformative power of method acting in modern cinema. In the film *Maidaan*, Gajraj Rao excels in his role by bringing a nuanced depth and authenticity that enhances the movie's historical and emotional landscape. The film, directed by Amit Ravindernath Sharma, chronicles the golden era of Indian football from 1952 to 1962, focusing on the life of Syed Abdul Rahim, the coach who led the Indian team to remarkable victories. Rao portrays a pivotal character whose support and conflict with the protagonist add layers to the narrative, showcasing his ability to seamlessly blend into the historical setting while delivering a performance that is both compelling and resonant. His meticulous approach to embodying his character contributes significantly to the film's overall impact, making *Maidaan* a captivating tribute to a lesser-known yet glorious chapter of Indian sports history.



Photo: Pankaj Kumar/Pioneer

**WHAT SETS GAJRAJ RAO APART IS HIS APPROACH TO METHOD ACTING. RAO'S DEDICATION TO HIS CRAFT INVOLVES DEEP IMMERSION INTO HIS CHARACTERS. HE OFTEN SPENDS EXTENSIVE TIME UNDERSTANDING THE BACKGROUND, MOTIVATIONS, AND NUANCES OF THE ROLES HE PORTRAYS. THIS APPROACH ALLOWS HIM TO DELIVER PERFORMANCES THAT ARE BOTH AUTHENTIC AND RELATABLE**

## Reflections on Acting, Challenges and Audience Influence

**MAHESH THAKUR** shares insights into his illustrious acting career, spanning television and cinema. From memorable roles to industry evolution, he reflects on the challenges and successes that have shaped him as an artist. In a conversation with **SAKSHI PRIYA**, he also opens up about his recent show *Aangan Aapno Kaa*, shedding light on his experience playing a father's role in this heartwarming project

**What motivates you to continue acting and how do you view the role of the audience in your career?**

I get the audience's love and reaction. Being an actor means experiencing the audience's reactions, which keep me going. They encourage me to do better. I would say it is the audience that inspires me to act.

**Among the numerous characters you've portrayed, which role has been the most memorable for you and why?**

I think a role that is very different from my personality would be Tej Singh Oberoi from *Ishqbaaz*. That character is nothing like me and I had to create a persona that was really nasty, cunning and thought differently. It's a really interesting character that I played, so I would definitely give credit to that role. Generally, the roles I play are similar to my personality and I feel that's not very challenging but the role in *Ishqbaaz* was challenging. Playing the honorable Prime Minister Narendra Modi was also challenging because it is difficult to embody a character who is very much in the public eye. Another challenging role was playing Sadhu Vaswani. All these characters are memorable because they are different from who I am.

**You've often played positive characters. Did you relish the opportunity to portray a villain in *Ishqbaaz*, and how did you approach that transformation?**

First of all, in television, we have very different ways of working. The episodes and scripts come on set, so we don't have time to

do much homework. My basic approach in the initial days when I worked on any television character, which is very different from the rest, is to do a lot of reading. I read one to six episodes, and once I am done with reading, I try to get into the character and experiment with different voice modulations in my own space. I try taking pauses when delivering dialogues and ensure that I don't repeat certain expressions. In *Ishqbaaz*, my character was so negative that I didn't want my kids to watch it, as they were very young at that time.

**What have been some of the biggest challenges and successes in your acting career and how have they shaped you as an artist?**

One of the biggest challenges in my acting career was transitioning to television. When I started doing daily soaps, I realised that you put in just as much hard work as you do in films but it's for one telecast. After that, it's gone and often forgotten. As actors, we used to be very particular about giving a fantastic shot, striving for perfection. However, in television, you don't have much time. You get only a few minutes and maybe 4 to 5 takes to get the shot right. No matter how perfect a shot I gave, there was always room for improvement, but in television, it often goes unnoticed because it airs only once and then it's long gone. This was a learning experience for me, helping me understand that, at the end of the day, actors are a product of the writing and direction. It's not just about the actor. Many actors in the

industry think it's all about them, believing that their performance alone makes a movie or show a hit. But that's not true. It's teamwork that makes a project successful. TV has taught me humility as an actor. It made me realise that while an actor might attract the audience for the initial viewing, it's the combined effort of the entire team that makes a lasting impact.

**You've seen the television industry evolve over the years. How do you think it has changed, and what are your thoughts on the current trends in TV shows and content?**

Yes, definitely. The sensibility has changed. Audiences are now more open to rich subjects and they have a say in what they want to see. You can't disregard the audience today. You have to be very careful. People always try to bifurcate between whether a film is for villagers, town people or two-tier towns. I think that divide is disappearing. We have to ensure that the content generated is not just to cater to one segment, as the divide is reducing between these three categories, thanks to the internet. Everyone now has access to all sorts of content. So, as a content creator, you have to keep everyone in mind, not just a single type of audience.

**Looking back on your time working with Sridevi, is there a specific scene or moment from *Malini Iyer* that stands out in your memory?**

Sridevi Ma'am was and will always be a legend because she was one of the first heroines where movies were made if she said yes to a project, like



*Chandni, Lamhe*, and all these beautiful films she was a part of. No matter how much I say about her or praise her, it will always be less.

**Recently, you are working on a project, *Aangan Aapno Kaa*. How has your experience been playing the father's role in this project?**

I am playing the character of a dad, and it's great. As I said, you need a good team of actors, and we have a very good team here,

especially my daughter, with whom I am very close and interact with often. There are always lots of hugging scenes, giving love, and treating them like babies, so we have to get into a very comfortable zone. Even on the set, they call me Papa instead of Mahesh Ji, and I am good with that. They are very sweet co-actors.

**What was your experience like working on *Dil, Dosti Dilemma*, especially considering the**

**fantastic team of women involved, from the director to the producer?**

*Dil, Dosti Dilemma* was great fun because we had a fantastic team filled with women, from the director to the producer. It was nice seeing all the women coming into action and working so brilliantly as a team. I enjoyed my time in *Dil, Dosti Dilemma*, and it was shot beautifully. The story was one of the simplest out there on the streaming platform. You can watch it and have a great time with your loved ones. It was an extremely sweet story, and I just loved working on the project.

**How do you approach acting in different mediums like films, television and web series? Do you have a preference among these mediums?**

An actor is always an actor; they should not choose any medium. The only difference between TV and film is not that much. The major difference between working in front of the camera and on stage is significant. When you go on stage, there is a difference in working in front of the camera. In front of the camera, you have to take care of lights, know which dialogue to say and when and work with the cameraman, co-actors and director, so there are lots of things happening in one shot. It's pretty complicated for a person who starts straight in TV and film because lots are happening on sets. When you do a stage, it's all about you. You forget your line, you're supposed to carry on; you are not supposed to stand blank on the stage because you have a live audience watching you. So, that's more challenging,

I feel, for actors working on stage because it's all about dialogue delivery, trying to work on body language, so much is happening on stage that it's more of a challenge rather than working in the medium of TV and film. Acting on TV and film is also challenging but not as challenging as the stage. Also, if you're good on stage, it doesn't mean you can be good in front of the TV and camera because you have to control your expression and not go too loud because TV is a subtle medium. One thing I learned about the theatre is that in theatre, you have to pronounce your words; you cannot speak loudly. The last person sitting on the back bench in the auditorium should be able to listen to you. It's not about raising your voice; it's literally pronunciation which goes right up to the end.

**Many actors look up to your career. What piece of advice would you give to someone just starting out in television acting?**

To all the new actors, hang in there. Hanging in doesn't mean losing your patience, balance or giving up. This is one of the most difficult professions you could choose. If you have multiple choices, I would say let acting be the last one you go for. But if you are going for it, then be resilient. You have to be there because you never know when the right break will happen for you and when things will start working in your favor. Don't give up. If you are an actor, you should think about it as always being an actor; otherwise, you will never get anywhere. So, choose your profession wisely.



**YOUR WEEK AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



**ARIES** March 21-April 19

This week promises a blend of prosperity and challenge. Financial gains are anticipated from multiple avenues, boosting your earnings. However, a busy schedule and possible travel for work might lead to stress. Expect a twist of sudden changes as the week progresses. Embracing a mindset of detachment from unproductive ties can enrich your life, leading to greater depth and fulfillment. Towards the week's close, you might find yourself driven by a strong urge to acquire wealth and possessions, although these might not hold substantial value. Caution is advised against starting new projects now, as impulsive actions could lead to setbacks. Staying optimistic will be a challenge, but maintaining a positive outlook is crucial to navigate through any negativity.

**Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour White**  
**Lucky day Monday**



**LEO** July 23-Aug 22

This period heralds a time of divine favor and blessings, making you the focal point of your own narrative filled with joy, marvel, and revitalization. You will find harmony across your mental, spiritual, and physical states. Expect your standing to be positively influenced during this time. A surge of bravery, optimism, and creativity will infuse your days, and you'll find relief in concluding longstanding matters. You are on the brink of embracing new perspectives and opportunities that promise a brighter future. Anticipate changes that might include new routines, dietary plans, employment, or even acquiring a new vehicle. Embrace the possibility of novel experiences and ventures. The conclusion of the week promises familial happiness and the potential for significant commitments or collaborations, fostering a sense of fulfillment on both emotional and spiritual fronts.

**Lucky number 6 | Lucky colour Black**  
**Lucky day Sunday**



**SAGITTARIUS** Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, delve into the profound realm of inner resilience. Rather than succumbing to the sway of emotions, you are invited to cultivate a grounded spirit and composed demeanor. This strength stems from the depth of your character and empowers you to navigate through complexities with a clear heart, stripping away any deceptions. During this period, you may find inspiration and guidance from a wise individual, often a woman known for her deep understanding and sharp intuition. Consider embracing her insights or emulating her approach as you chart your path forward. Additionally, this is an opportune moment for spiritual awakening. Engage in mindfulness practices such as meditation or yoga, and reconnect with your spiritual beliefs. Let go of mere fantasies and fleeting dreams; the journey ahead calls for your undivided focus and authentic presence.

**Lucky number 17 | Lucky colour Off White**  
**Lucky day Monday**



**TAURUS** April 20-May 20

This week presents an excellent opportunity to harness your inherent creativity to generate income. You possess a unique strength bestowed upon you, allowing you to turn your visions into reality. Positive developments are expected from the decisions you make. Your diverse abilities to articulate every thought clearly will leave a lasting impression on those around you, signaling a prosperous period ahead. Mid-week, you may encounter some temporary constraints causing delays in your activities. However, your perseverance and resolve will guide you through, keeping you on track toward your objectives. Expect some encouraging news from abroad. By the end of this week, you will find both financial stability and emotional satisfaction.

**Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Red**  
**Lucky day Wednesday**



**VRIGO** Aug 23-Sep 22

This week, you'll find yourself making firm decisions regarding both your home life and career. Your resilient nature will empower you to tackle life's hurdles with bravery. You may encounter disagreements and personality clashes, which will require a thoughtful approach to resolve. It's a time for reevaluating outdated beliefs and customs, inviting transformation in various areas such as work, living arrangements, and personal relationships. You might face some health challenges or overwhelming stress. Feeling a pull towards deepening your inner life will be significant during these trying moments. As the week progresses, a shift towards positivity will occur. You'll start feeling more at ease, healthier, and financially stable, leading to an overall sense of satisfaction and a desire for a more comfortable lifestyle. Your compassionate nature will drive you to support those in need.

**Lucky number 9 | Lucky colour Indigo**  
**Lucky day Friday**



**CAPRICORN** Dec 22-Jan 19

This week promises to be a whirlwind of activity, touching on every facet of your life. It kicks off with a focus on home-related matters. For those unattached, significant commitments loom on the horizon. As the week progresses, expect some travel opportunities to arise. Your professional life will consume much of your time as you strive for excellence in your craft, working tirelessly toward your aspirations. Additionally, a joyful family event, possibly welcoming a new member, may occur. By the week's end, the fruits of your labor will become apparent, with a notable improvement in your financial situation. Job seekers can anticipate receiving a promising offer from a prestigious company. It's a period to savor success and feel content.

**Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Jade Green**  
**Lucky day Tuesday**



**GEMINI** May 21-June 20

This week promises abundant reasons for joy. Life feels vibrant, and your journey is brightly lit by optimism. An uplifting energy seems to accompany you in all your endeavors, attracting others with your ability to spotlight the positive aspects of life and bring warmth to those around you. Midweek may bring a few challenges that could shake your composure, but rest assured, these are merely fleeting shadows. Soon, you will experience a renewed sense of fulfillment as if a benevolent force is aligning things in your favor. You'll likely notice significant advancements in your endeavors, marveling at the extent of your efforts towards achieving your goals. Expect improved outcomes in ongoing projects and a surge in recognition, possibly leading to opportunities that expand your horizons.

**Lucky number 5 | Lucky colour Green**  
**Lucky day Tuesday**



**LIBRA** Sep 23-Oct 22

This week brims with opportunity and creativity. Your enthusiasm will surge, compelling you to embrace challenges with confidence. An inspiring thought or vision may captivate you, indicating you're on a successful trajectory, adept at managing both personal and professional obligations. Midweek brings moments of joy with family gatherings and celebrations, enhancing your emotional well-being. Significant achievements such as home renovations, celebratory events in honor of familial accomplishments, or exciting career developments like new roles or projects will contribute to your contentment. You'll find the environment charged with positive energy, making every moment enjoyable. By week's end, your resolve and strength serve as a beacon of inspiration, reflecting your successful endeavors.

**Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Yellow**  
**Lucky day Wednesday**



**AQUARIUS** Jan 20-Feb 18

This week, you will find yourself embracing life with grand enthusiasm and a sense of accomplishment. Expect to see substantial progress in your professional endeavors, accompanied by significant financial rewards that you might indulge in generously. Family demands will be met with your usual kindness and generosity, adding to your joy. Your partner may have some additional expectations during this period, yet you'll address these with openness and affection. Happiness within the household will be palpable, particularly through achievements or milestones reached by younger family members. However, some of you may experience a need for extra attention to your health, as emotional fluctuations or physical concerns could briefly disrupt your equilibrium. Remember to prioritize your well-being amidst the bustling activity.

**Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Mustard**  
**Lucky day Friday**



**CANCER** June 21-July 22

This period marks a crucial phase where your efforts lay the foundation for future outcomes. Progress might unfold gradually, yet your perseverance will ensure significant achievements. Harness your inner strength to tackle necessary tasks effectively, earning recognition and appreciation for your diligence. Your diverse skills will come to the forefront, drawing admiration for your resilience and drive. Your role as an inspirational force will uplift those around you. Effective communication will enhance your rapport with both peers and leaders, fostering a harmonious work environment. As the week concludes, a fresh wave of innovative thinking will enhance your projects, boosting your productivity in your professional pursuits. Additionally, you will experience a vibrant zest for life, enhancing both your personal joy and interpersonal connections. Embrace this time to relish and enrich your experiences.

**Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Lavender**  
**Lucky day Thursday**



**SCORPIO** Oct 23-Nov 21

Despite your consistent efforts across various fronts to secure a job, it seems that success remains elusive for now. Your dedication and drive are evident, but it appears financial gains might be challenging to come by this week. However, do not lose hope. As the days pass, promising opportunities are expected to emerge, potentially leading to significant achievements. You'll find support from influential figures in your life, such as family elders, who are eager to see you succeed. Remember, patience will be your greatest ally during this period. Maintaining a solid foundation in your endeavors will eventually lead to favorable outcomes. Stand firm as you approach the final steps towards your goal, for success is on the horizon, promising long-lasting benefits and broader opportunities.

**Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Purple**  
**Lucky day Saturday**



**PISCES** Feb 19-March 20

This week promises an increase in material well-being, inviting a deeper search for inner peace. You may find yourself drawn to reflective practices like yoga and meditation. Expect to devote time to hosting meaningful ceremonies that uplift the spirit. However, the week may also present challenges in your personal relationships, possibly causing friction or misunderstandings with a close partner. Such moments could lead to feelings of dissatisfaction and a sense of being emotionally drained. It's crucial now to clarify your aspirations and focus on the positive aspects of your circumstances. Viewing situations from a more optimistic perspective can prevent feelings of sadness and help you navigate through negativity with courage and resolve. Stay determined and use this period to strengthen rather than lose spirit.

**Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Brown**  
**Lucky day Thursday**

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**ASTROTURF**  
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

# Can we reshape our destiny?

We begin life with high hopes and aspirations, bubbling with energy, and carrying a mind-set that would know no limits, as if nothing is beyond reach. Like a free bird, free from any geographical limitations, unhindered, we all wish to make it to our dream destination. But when faced with hard realities of life, and not being able to make it to the desired destination, we realise that life does not necessarily move to our asking. We then come under pressure and often resign to fate. But a few among us, unfazed by such challenges, make history. The question now is: Were those who created history so destined? Or that they could make it because they sincerely worked towards that end? Well, it is difficult to digest that history can be created by choice. But then focused efforts by choice and discrimination could lead to making history. Provided, such an endeavour ends up serving a meaningful purpose for the society at large. Let us first examine how our destiny is formed. It needs to be appreciated here that human beings enjoy the

exclusive privilege to guide their action by choice and discrimination. That however, is something like a double edged sword, as it carries equal probability of use and misuse. And there is nothing like a free lunch in life. We shall have to bear with the consequences of the choices made. We, thus, get trapped into a circuitous web of cause-effect chain. Following this very script, every happening is the culmination of doings in the past. And how we negotiate with the callings of the present, sets the ground on which future stands. This is the premise on which the concept of destiny works. If we look at this scheme of things on its face value, it would mean that our life is fated. Naturally arises the question: How can we escape the consequences of our own doing? If, however, we look deep into the founding principle on which the concept of destiny stands, it will come out that we are not helplessly fated beyond the scope of reprieve. The choice option itself enjoins upon us with the freedom to make conscientious choice intended to not simply overcome the carryover effect



of past doing. Also raise our awareness level through fresh educative inputs, which in turn, may help reshape the course of destiny afresh. The paradox, however, is that

seldom are people found ever using this option. But those few who used their choice option in this very spirit, were the ones who could make history. For, even in the event of failure, they

did not lose their nerve. They rather maintained calm and poise, geared up afresh, reaffirmed their resolve, and then made a fresh bid in right earnest towards the designated task. But not without identifying their inadequacies, which they acknowledged and then strived to overcome. They then, explored beyond the known, and equipped themselves adequately to strike upon even uncharted territory. So said swami Vevekanand: "The history of the world is the history of few men who had faith in themselves. Faith calls out divinity within you; you can do everything. You fail only when you do not strive sufficiently to manifest infinite power within." Truth remains that in so far as a being's making is concerned, potentially we carry immense mind-power, which if unfolded in full, would know no limits. The irony, however, is that being bound by cause-effect chain, we carry a very strong legacy from the past, which includes previous birth. That preconditions our mind one way or the other, depending on what sort of individual specific experiences one would have had. The

imprints of these experiences that mind carries from the past, defines the unique character of a being. And that finds reflection by way of our inherent mental propensities – desire trends, likes & dislikes, prejudices and obsessions, habit & attitudes, and even virtues & attributes. That clouds our vision. Consequently, we fail to access full landscape of our mind. So, in effect, our mind-power gets compromised. It needs to be appreciated here that the choice option available with us very much enjoins upon us with the privilege to self-reflect and identify our inborn fault-lines. If we acknowledge them, and then consciously work upon to free our mind from all such limitations, the best in us will emerge. This is what swamiji's above quoted statement implies. Even astrology can prove handy in identifying our inborn traits and with a fair amount of precision. *The issue continues...* The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com