



**OPINION 6**  
WILL BRITISH INDIANS  
BACK RISHI SUNAK ?

**WORLD 9**  
EX-CHINESE DEFENSE MINISTERS  
TO BE TRIED FOR CORRUPTION

**MONEY 10**  
SENSEX BREACHES  
79,000 LEVEL

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12 SPORTS

## President Murmu slams Emergency

PNS ■ DELHI

In the backdrop of a spate of entrance and job related examinations paper leaks, President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said the Government was fully committed to investigating the recent incidents and ensure that the guilty are punished.

Addressing the 18th Lok Sabha for the first time, Murmu said her Government was working to create an environment to enable youth of the country to dream big and realise their dreams. As she mentioned the steps taken by the Government on the education front, some Opposition members were heard shouting "NEET".

Speaking about the recent general elections, Murmu said the whole world is talking about successful completion of India's Lok Sabha polls. "The world is witnessing that the people of India have elected a stable Government with clear majority for a third consecutive term," she told the joint sitting of the two Houses of Parliament.

In her first address to a joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha after Prime Minister Narendra Modi began his third term, Murmu described the poll result as an endorsement of his Government's policies while ruing attempts to weaken people's faith in electoral process including EVMs, an apparent swipe at Opposition parties. It is like cutting the very branch on which "we all are sitting," she said.

A day after Modi and Lok



President Droupadi Murmu addresses the joint sitting of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, in New Delhi, on Thursday. The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha began on Monday and the 264th session of the Rajya Sabha will begin on June 27. PTI

Sabha Speaker Om Birla condemned the imposition of Emergency, Murmu too described in her speech the imposition of Emergency in 1975 as the "biggest and darkest chapter" of a direct attack on the Constitution and said the country triumphed over unconstitutional forces.

Opposition leaders, however, dismissed the President's address as a "script given by the Government" that was "full of lies" and also castigated the Government over the repeated mention of the 1975 Emergency. She said there is an "undeclared emergency" in the country and the Constitution is

being attacked under the Modi government.

With the Opposition questioning the 'intentions' of the NDA Government as regards Constitution making it a poll issue in the Lok Sabha polls, Murmu stressed the Government's unwavering faith in the Constitution and efforts to make it a part of "public consciousness". She slammed the Emergency as the "biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack" on the Constitution.

In her 50-minute address, the President highlighted the government's measures in a range of sectors, from economy, defence and farming to the

empowerment of different sections of society, and laid down its priorities in its third term, amid sporadic protests from opposition benches when she referred to issues such as paper leaks and matters related to the North East region.

Though she touched upon some of the things promised in the BJP's manifesto like bullet trains and health insurance for senior citizens, there was no mention of a few of the major highlights of the party's promises such as the Uniform Civil Code and one-nation-one-election. "Many such reforms have taken place in the last 10 years which are greatly benefitting the nation

today. Even when these reforms were being taken up, they were opposed and attempts were made to spread negativity," she added.

On paper leaks, she said, "If due to any reason there is obstruction in examinations it is not appropriate. Sanctity and transparency are a must in government recruitments and examinations."

There were incidents of paper leaks in some States earlier as well, the President said, stressing that there was need to rise above partisan politics and support the Government in taking strong steps at the national level. The President said Parliament has also made a strong law to check paper leaks and the Government is further working to reform the examination process.

Modi took to social media saying that President's address to both Houses of Parliament was comprehensive and presented a roadmap of progress and good governance. "It covered the strides India has been making and also the potential that lies ahead. Her address also mentioned some of the major challenges we have to collectively overcome to ensure a qualitative change in the lives of our citizens." In an apparent message to opposition parties, who are numerically much stronger than the previous two Lok Sabhas, Murmu pitched for healthy deliberations, saying opposition to policies and obstruction of parliamentary functioning are two different things.

Continued on Page 8

## India storm into T20 World Cup final

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

India enter T20 World Cup final crushing reigning champions England by 68 runs in the semi-final in Georgetown on Thursday night. England were skittled out for 103, chasing a target 172, thanks mainly to spinners Axar and Kuldeep.

Skipper Rohit Sharma showed how to bat on a pitch with low bounce as India did well to reach 171 for seven.

Virat Kohli perished early once early, trying to force the pace but Rohit (57 off 39 balls) found an able ally in Suryakumar Yadav (47 off 36) as the two powered India to a challenging total.

The keenly awaited fixture was impacted by intermittent rain with the start of play being delayed by one hour and 15 minutes. Another halt came when India were 65 for two in eight overs.

As many as 250 additional minutes have been allotted to the game but there is no reserve day.

Setting the benchmark for other batters, Rohit collected back-to-back fours in Topley's third over before applying pressure on England's premier spinner Adil Rashid after India reached 46 for two in the powerplay.

Rishabh Pant (4) was the second batter to be dismissed as he mistimed a flick to be caught at midwicket off Sam Curran.

Then came the engrossing match-up between

Rohit and Rashid where the Indian captain employed the reverse and conventional sweep to collect two fours from the leg-spinner's opening over.

Suryakumar Yadav was batting on 13 alongside Rohit when rain returned at the Providence Stadium, forcing the game to be paused for more than an hour.

The weather played spoilsport two balls after Suryakumar got inside the line to pick Jordan over fine leg for a maximum.

England used the leg-spin of Rashid and Liam Livingstone from both ends after the forced break but they could not stifle Rohit and Suryakumar.

The 13th over from Curran yielded 19 runs for India with Suryakumar smashing a couple of sixes and Rohit played a pick-up shot for a maximum that also brought up his second successive fifty.

The entertaining 73-run ended when Rohit was beaten by a googly from Rashid while attempting a slog. Following Curran's bumper 13th over, the next fours were quiet for India before Hardik Pandya (23 off 13) hit two flat sixes on either side of the pitch to push the innings forward. Ravindra Jadeja (17 not out off 9), sent ahead of Shivam Dube, got two crucial fours off Archer in the penultimate over while the latter's stay lasted only one ball. Axar Patel's six off Jordan in the final over took India past 170. The team scored 53 runs in the last five overs.



ROHIT EXCELS: 57 OFF 39 BALLS

## CBI makes first arrest in NEET case

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

On a day when President Droupadi Murmu talked tough on examination papers leak during her address in Parliament on Thursday, a series of development related to the raging controversy took place including the first arrest made by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in the NEET paper leak case.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has asked the National Testing Agency (NTA) to apprise it if there was a time limit for raising grievances regarding the OMR sheets provided to the candidates who appeared in NEET-UG 2024.

The Delhi High Court too sought response from the NTA to a petition by a NEET candidate alleging 'out of syllabus' question in the entrance examination. In another development, Opposition leaders under the banner of INDIA Bloc in its Parliament strategy meeting on Thursday evening decided to raise the NEET and NET paper leaks issue in both the Houses of Parliament on Friday.

Continuing their protests on Thursday, members of NSUI (Congress's students' wing) barged into the NTA office in Okhla, raising slogans of "shut down NTA". After taking over the investigation, CBI made its first arrests in the NEET-UG paper leak case in Bihar, detaining two individuals from Patna, identified as Manish Kumar and Ashutosh. Both were produced before a special court in Patna which sent them to judicial custody. The CBI has registered six FIRs in the NEET paper leak case.

Before the CBI arrests, the police had also taken at least nine person into custody in Bihar, Maharashtra and Delhi.

Continued on Page 8

## Rain over Northwest likely to intensify between June 28-30

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rainfall is likely to intensify over the plains of Northwest India with heavy to very heavy rain likely to lash various regions including the national capital, Punjab and parts of Rajasthan from between June 28 and June 30 June, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

This forecast comes as a welcome development promising relief from a rather long spell of intense heat that posed health risks to the people of all ages. The IMD announcement on Thursday said that heatwave conditions across the country have subsided.

Regionwise, the MET has forecast, fairly widespread to widespread light to moderate rainfall accompanied with thunderstorm and lightning very likely over Konkan and Goa, Madhya Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala &



Albert Hall Museum is reflected in the puddle after rain in Jaipur. PTI

Mahe, Lakshadweep, Gujarat state, Madhya Pradesh, Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh while scattered to fairly widespread light to moderate rainfall over Coastal Andhra Pradesh and Yanam, Rayalaseema, Telangana, Marathwada and Tamil Nadu, Puducherry & Karaikal during next five days.

## Free treatment for all above 70 yrs under Ayushman

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Addressing a longstanding gap in healthcare for the elderly, President Droupadi Murmu in her address to Parliament on Thursday, spoke about the free health services provided by the Government and reiterated the BJP's poll promise of providing Ayushman Bharat coverage to everyone.

"...the Government is going to take yet another decision in this area. Now all the elderly above 70 years of age will also be covered and get the benefit of free treatment under Ayushman Bharat Yojana," she said.

The Ayushman Bharat PMJAY is the largest publicly funded health insurance scheme in the world. It provides health cover of Rs 5 lakh per family per year for hospitalisation for secondary and tertiary care.

The expansion of the scheme to bring every Indian citizen aged 70 and above under the insurance cover will provide free treatment to those not covered under existing schemes like the Central Government Health Scheme and others.

According to a study, there has been a significant gap in healthcare coverage for the elderly with only 20 per cent of the people over the age of 60 years covered under health schemes such as CGHS, Employees State Insurance Scheme (ESIS), Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojna (RSBY), cooperative health insurance schemes, medical reimbursement from an employer or privately purchased health insurance.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced this during the manifesto's release in April before the Lok Sabha polls 2024, though the specific age bracket was not detailed in the manifesto's fine print.

It had also announced inclusion of all individuals from the transgender community besides senior citizens.

The government's Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme already provides coverage to 55 crores of the poorest people in the country, with the scheme being extended to the grassroots-level healthcare workers — the

Continued on Page 8

## Demand for 3 Deputy CMs in Karnataka takes new turn

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

Amid growing demand to have three more Deputy Chief Ministers in Karnataka, Chandrashekhara Swami of Vishwa Vokkaligara Mahasamsthana Mutt has openly asked CM Siddaramaiah to step down and hand over the position to DK Shivakumar.

Sources said the seer made this demand in the presence of both CM Siddaramaiah and DK Shivakumar during a public event, which was organised to mark the 51st birth anniversary celebration of Bengaluru founder Kempe Gowda.

In his address, Chandrashekhara Swami stated, "It is possible only if Siddaramaiah makes up his mind," requesting the present Chief Minister to consider the transition.

"I urge Siddaramaiah to appoint DK Shivakumar as Chief Minister of the state. Despite others having held this position, DK Shivakumar has not yet served as Chief Minister. I

Continued on Page 8

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# Picturesque, modern riverfront to come up at Kukrail river

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has initiated efforts to create a picturesque and modern riverfront along the banks of the river Kukrail in Lucknow, similar to the Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad following the revival of Kukrail. Last year, a dedicated committee had conducted a site inspection and tour of the Sabarmati Riverfront in Ahmedabad. The development of the Kukrail riverfront will be overseen by the Lucknow Municipal Corporation. To facilitate this, the municipal corporation has prepared a draft for the formation of a special purpose vehicle (SPV) which will be in the name of Lucknow Riverfront Development Corporation Ltd. The consultant is currently preparing the detailed project report (DPR) for the development of the riverfront along the river Kukrail, and it will soon be presented to the chief minister. In line with Chief Minister Yogi's vision, the goal has been set to revive the river Kukrail. Following his instructions, departments have been tasked with making the river Kukrail uninterrupted, clean and pollution-free. The objective is to prevent dirty drains from flow-

## 'Ensure large-scale tree plantation on the banks'

**Lucknow (PNS):** In keeping with the tree plantation mega campaign year 2024, an important meeting was organised in the commissioner's office auditorium on Thursday under the chairmanship of Divisional Commissioner Dr Roshan Jacob regarding the development of Kukrail river and plantation. On this occasion, Municipal Commissioner Indrajit Singh, Lucknow Development Authority Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi, DFO and Irrigation department officials along with related officers were present. A presentation of DPR prepared by LDA regarding the development of Kukrail river and tree plantation was presented before the divisional commissioner. She said that various plants should be planted on the banks of the river Kukrail. Panchvati and Aushadhi Vatika should also be developed. "After removing the debris, take the pH value and plant the

saplings as per the need. Saumitra Van and Shakti Van will be developed on Ayodhya Road on the banks of river Kukrail," she said.

During the meeting, the divisional commissioner said that plantation on a large-scale should be ensured jointly by various departments like Lucknow LDA, Municipal Corporation and Irrigation department up to a distance of 4:30 km of river Kukrail by making a system. "Awareness programmes should also be organised for plantations within the district. As per the intention of the government, plantation on the river site is to be done on priority basis. DFO should provide good quality plants to the departments concerned," she said, adding that all the departments concerned should ensure plantation of saplings after digging the pits on time.

To make the Kukrail pollution-free and revive it, the chief minister has instructed the

interception of 39 drains that flow into the river. In the first phase, work on tapping 17 drains is 95 per cent complete. The interception of 12 drains is ongoing and will be completed by the end of this month. In the second phase, 22 drains will be tapped to prevent 6 MLD of untreated sewage from entering the river Kukrail. In the third phase, to maintain a minimum water flow, a 40 MLD capacity STP (Sewage Treatment Plant) will be built to release treated effluent upstream into the river Kukrail. After demolishing illegal constructions on municipal land in Akbarnagar, the STP will be built on a 1.50-hectare plot. To ensure a continuous supply of water to the Kukrail, ponds will be built to revive the river's water sources and bodies within the forest area. In rural areas, the Rural Development department and the Lucknow Development Authority are working to revive water sources and bodies. The Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam (Urban) has proposed release of water into the river from a 40 MLD STP. Additionally, the Irrigation department will provide approximately 5 to 15 cusecs of water from the Sharda Nagar escape channel.

into the Kukrail, beautify the riverbanks, develop the site, and create a green belt.

# Man kills brother in Banthra, surrenders

**Lucknow (PNS):** With no remorse on his face, a man surrendered himself at a police outpost after axing his elder brother. Ashok Kori (35), to death over a dispute over cooking food in the Banthra area of Lucknow late Wednesday night. The 27-year-old accused, Sujit Kori, surrendered at the police outpost after committing the murder before he could be arrested by the police. During interrogation, it came to light that Sujit was angry after Ashok hurled abuses on him on finding he had not cooked food. The accused told the police that he was being treated as subhuman by his brother. According to the police, the confrontation between the siblings escalated when Ashok, a small ice-cream seller, returned home under the influence of alcohol and asked Sujit, who works as a labourer, to prepare dinner around 10 pm. "Sujit, who was also inebriated, refused to cook food and this led to a verbal altercation which turned fatal when Sujit, unable to control his anger, resorted to violence and fatally struck Ashok with an axe," police said.

# Southwest monsoon arrives in east UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

**Mosoon expected to arrive in Lucknow in next two to three days**

**Jaipur, Agra, Banda, Siddhi, Chaibasa, Haldia, Pakur, Patna, Maharajganj, Dehradun, Una, Pathankot and Jammu,"** he said. He said that conditions were likely to become favourable for further advance of southwest monsoon into some more parts of Rajasthan, remaining parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, some more parts of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Chandigarh and some parts of Haryana, some more parts of Punjab, remaining parts of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu during next 2-3 days. He pointed out that the monsoon trough line passes through eastern Uttar Pradesh. "Rains occurred in the Terai belt on Thursday. In Lucknow, the monsoon will arrive in the next two to three days and the prospects of the advancement of the monsoon in the state are good," he said. He said that heat wave conditions had totally dissipated in the state now. The Met department has

## Mosoon expected to arrive in Lucknow in next two to three days

already forecast a good amount of rainfall in both eastern and western UP this year in July and August. Relief Commissioner Naveen Kumar said that all preparations had been made regarding flooding. "Several meetings have been held and two video-conferences have been held by the chief secretary in this regard. Lightning alerts have been given to the districts till the grassroots levels and there is a protocol for this," he said. Kumar said that they were prepared for the cloud burst also but that was a unique incident which was predicted two to three hours before the cloud-burst. "We have completely heightened our alert system, early warning and command system. Because of the initiative of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, automatic rain gauge systems have been put up at several places," he said. The relief commissioner said that the other initiative which they had taken was that they had made municipal commissioners a part of the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA) from this year to manage urban flooding. "Last year urban flooding took place in Barabanki and Noida," he added.

# RLD eyes three seats in UP assembly bypolls

PRABHA SHANKER ■ LUCKNOW

The Rashtriya Lok Dal leadership may drive a hard bargain with the Bharatiya Janata Party on its claim on three UP assembly seats where by-elections are due to be held soon. This may put the BJP, which is a big partner in the National Democratic Alliance, in an uncomfortable position. After the conclusion of parlia-

mentary elections this year, 10 UP assembly seats have fallen vacant as the MLAs who represented them have been elected to the Lok Sabha. Sources in the RLD said the party leadership was eyeing assembly seats - Khair, Meerapur and Ghaziabad - to contest in the bypolls. They said these seats were Jat dominated and the RLD leadership was sure of winning them. "If the RLD wins these seats, its strength would reach 11 in the UP assembly and it would become a powerful alliance partner. In that case the RLD would, to some extent, have the power to play," the party insid-

ers said. They said if the RLD leadership succeeded in persuading the BJP to let it contest these three assembly seats in the bypolls, it would be a great diplomatic win for the RLD. The RLD leaders argued that the party had an edge on these seats as it was staking its claim saying as the Meerapur assembly seat fell vacant after party MLA Chandan Chauhan was elected to Lok Sabha from Bijnor. They said RLD had a good sway over Jats and Gujjars who had dominance in view of their numerical strength. "Besides, due to socio econom-

ic factors, these communities have a command over voters of other castes and cults," the RLD leaders claimed. The other assembly seat on which the RLD is staking a claim is Khair. It is a reserved seat in Aligarh and was won by BJP's Anup Valmiki who has been elected to the Lok Sabha from Hathras. It may be known that RLD's Bhagwati Prasad had contested from Khair in the 2022 assembly elections when RLD had an alliance with Samajwadi Party. Bhagwati Prasad, however, had lost to Anup Valmiki. Political analysts said the RLD sought to take help from the

BJP to broaden its bases and popularity among the Dalits in the west UP. Sources said the RLD was not behind in hard bargaining for seats whosever was its alliance partner. "It was very calculative when it cobbled an alliance with the SP in 2022 assembly elections and fell apart when the SP showed adamancy on sharing some of the seats," the political analysts said. RLD also plans to contest from Ghaziabad assembly seat which fell vacant after BJP MLA Atul Garg was elected to Lok Sabha. In 2022, the seat was contested by RLD-backed SP candi-

date Vishal Verma. RLD national secretary Anupam Mishra said party chief Jayant Chaudhary was holding talks with the BJP leadership and soon a decision would be taken. "We hope to get these three seats in our kitty. If RLD is strengthened the NDA will also be strengthened. We have a strong base in these constituencies and our candidates were in the second position in the 2017 UP assembly election," he said. Mishra said the RLD's popularity was soaring high in west UP under the leadership of Jayant Chaudhary.

# Dedicated sports arena planned for JMP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Yogi Adityanath government has launched a comprehensive revitalisation effort for Janeshwar Mishra Park in the state capital Lucknow. In alignment with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision, the Lucknow Development Authority has initiated plans for the development of a dedicated sports arena within the park. The action plan outlines a budget of Rs 10.16 crore for the completion of all development works. Located in Lucknow's Gomti Nagar Extension Scheme Part-1A, Janeshwar Mishra Park has long lacked a specialised sports arena, a gap keenly felt by visitors. In response, the Yogi government has meticulously crafted a detailed action plan aimed at enhancing the park's amenities. One of the unique aspects of the development works at Janeshwar Mishra Park is the integration of sports amenities. The amenities will include cricket and football grounds, alongside volleyball and tennis courts. All construction will adhere to environmental protection standards and other crucial guidelines, with a dedicated monitoring mechanism in place to uphold the high qual-

ity of every structure. To expedite the development of the sports zone in Janeshwar Mishra Park, the Lucknow Development Authority has initiated a two-bid process. This process aims to select an agency that will oversee and execute all related construction activities. The chosen agency will collaborate closely with LDA officials.

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IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE  
AT ALLAHABAD  
ORIGINAL JURISDICTION  
TESTAMENTARY AND INTESTATE  
JURISDICTION  
TESTAMENTARY CASE NO. 27 OF 2024  
IN THE MATTER OF  
THE GOODS OF  
Late Vandana Dinesh Singh Wife of Late  
Dinesh Kumar Singh Resident of Ward No.  
16, Azad Nagar, Kewatana, Jhansi, Prayagraj,  
District Prayagraj .....Deceased.  
Ashish Singh .....Petitioner.  
WHEREAS an application has been made by  
Ashish Singh Son of Shri Krishan Kumar  
Singh Resident of Ward No. 16, Azad Nagar,  
Kewatana Jhansi Prayagraj, Permanent  
Resident of Village - Sarwathkani, Post  
Sarwathkani, District Sant Ravi Da Nagar,  
for the probate of the will (or Letters of  
Administration to the estate) of Late Vandana  
Dinesh Singh deceased, who died at Ward  
No.16, Azad Nagar, Kewatana, Jhansi,  
Phulpur, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, 211019 on  
21.12.2022 AND WHEREAS, the 31 day of  
July, 2024 has been fixed for hearing of the  
said application. THIS CITATION is issued  
calling upon all persons claiming to have any  
interest to come and see the proceedings if  
they think fit before the grant of probate (or  
Letters of Administration). Given under my  
hand and the seal of the Court this 23rd day of  
May, 2024.  
DEPUTY REGISTRAR HIGH COURT,  
ALLAHABAD  
Ram Sajwan Mishra  
Advocate Counsel for the Petitioner.

**CLASSIFIEDS**

## NOTICE

I, Dr. Radheshyam Gond S/o Late Bengali R/o 2/671 Vivek Khand Gomti Nagar, Lucknow declare that my son's name has been wrongly written as Rohan in his school records. The correct name of my son is Rohan Kumar.

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Be informed that my son Ayush yadav- father's name MAHESH PRASAD YAVAD in High school Marksheet by mistake while in his other document show MAHESH PRASAD YADAV is the correct name. Correct name of father should be mentioned in the School Record of my son. Mahesh prasad yadav late Hariprasad Yadav, Janki Kheda, Bailgada, Malihabad, Lucknow

## NOTICE

My property No. 91 Block West Scheme No. 26 Deen Dayal Nagar Purana Kanpur, Kanpur Nagar's last three pages of original lease deed are enclosed map whose record No. 1178 dated 5.11.1980 and original power of attorney whose record No. 480 dated 10.12.2001 is registered with the Sub Registrar, Kanpur Nagar, which is lost somewhere, its use would be illegal. Dr. Neeraj Prakash, son of Dr. Gyan Prakash, wishes to mortgage the same with State Bank of India, 80 Feet Branch, Kanpur (Code 5927) for housing loan. We, Suresh Kumar Gupta and Manoj Gupta are the present owners of the property, for which I have registered LAR No. 20240000529678 dated 22-06-2024.

# Agro, food-processing parks boosting farmer incomes, generating jobs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The establishment of 15 agro and food-processing parks in cities such as Varanasi, Barabanki, Bareilly, Saharanpur and Gorakhpur is significantly boosting farmer incomes and generating employment opportunities in Uttar Pradesh. Additionally, agro-processing clusters in Kanpur Dehat, Lucknow, Sitapur and Mathura are directly benefiting over 16,000 farmers. According to Invest UP, an agency formed to promote investment and industrial development in the state, the UP Global Investors Summit-2023 attracted 1,483 investment proposals worth Rs 81,309 crore in the food-processing sector. These proposals have the potential to create 2,90,531 jobs. As a result of the ongoing efforts by the state government, 980 proposals worth Rs 55,815 crore are currently being implemented. These projects are expected to generate over two lakh direct jobs. Invest UP is actively working to bring these proposals to fruition. Infrastructure and Industrial Development Commissioner and Agriculture Production Commissioner of UP, Manoj

Kumar Singh, stated that the incentives, subsidies and facilities provided under the Uttar Pradesh Food-processing Industry Policy are significantly contributing to investment and job creation in this sector. He emphasised that with 15 agro and food-processing parks, clusters, mega food parks, four agri-export zones, and 10 inland container depots (ICDs), UP is emerging as a hub for food-processing in India. The food-processing sector in UP received the highest number of investment proposals (432) for the comparatively industrially backward region of Purvanchal (eastern region). In comparison, Pashchimanchal, the western region of the state, received 316 investment proposals. Madhyanchal (central region) received 172 proposals and Bundelkhand received 60 investment intents in this sector. In Purvanchal, the food park in Karkhyaon, Varanasi, has seen significant investments. Parle Agro has invested Rs 174.3 crore, Banaskantha District Cooperative Milk Producers Union from Gujarat has invested Rs 135.53 crore, and BD Venture has invested

Rs 155.5 crore. Land has been allocated to 139 enterprises in this food park, with 91 units already operational, while 21 projects are under rapid implementation. Similarly, in Madhyanchal, the mega food park near Baheri in Bareilly district has allocated plots to 87 enterprises. Dairy Craft India is setting up a unit with an investment of Rs 116.38 crore. This mega food park is situated on 247.60 acres in Baheri, a town 40 kilometres from Bareilly on the Uttarakhnad border. Some prominent enterprises establishing units in the state's food-processing sector include Bejle Food, Bhartiyan Beverages, Bikanervala Foods, Balaji Wafers, Sahastrabahu Food Products, Fortune Rice and Udgam Logistics. With ample production of fruits, vegetables and other agri-products in the state, the development of these agro and food-processing parks, along with supportive policies, is set to revolutionise the agricultural landscape of UP. This will create extensive employment opportunities and contribute to the state's goal of becoming a trillion-dollar economy.

# Moradabad tense as men shoot at a family to kidnap daughters

**Lucknow (PNS ):** In a sensational case which resulted in communal tension in Moradabad, armed miscreants of a particular community opened fire at a family after they objected over the forcible attempt to kidnap two girls. The parents and a brother of the girls were critically injured and shifted to hospital. Soon after the incident, senior officers rushed to the spot with heavy police force and launched a hunt for the accused. In this incident, the family named Abdul, Suleman, Muslim and Aleshan and alleged that they entered the house of a farmer Sunil Kumar late on Wednesday night and started kidnapping his two daughters. When this was opposed, the four accused opened fire on three people and fled. After this incident, the atmosphere in the area has heated up. Even the DIG had to come to the spot. This incident took place in Shivpuri village of Mundapande police station, where farmer Sunil Kumar and his family were sleeping in their house on Wednesday night when Abdul, Suleman, Muslim and Aleshan suddenly entered their house.

Sunil alleged that these four people started taking away his daughters. When he opposed this, there was a scuffle between these people. But these four people shot at Sunil in the arm, his son in the chest and his wife in the thigh. This entire incident happened around 2:30 in the night. When there was a commotion, all four accused fled from the spot. Sunil Kumar also accused the accused of kidnapping his married daughter from her in-laws' house in Bahjoi. Sunil said that one of the accused Muslim had kidnapped his daughter and he found her a month later. He alleged that the Bahjoi police inspector did not take any action in the case even after taking Rs 50,000. After receiving the information, DIG Muniraj, SP City Akhilesh Singh Bhadoria also reached the spot. Sources said that Muslim was then arrested for kidnapping the girl and also sent to jail. In the meantime the girl was also married in Sambhal. Recently the accused was out on bail and the girl was also present with her parents when the incident took place.

# 9 out of 10 people breathe polluted air

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

According to the latest 'State of Global Air 2024' report, global data indicates that chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) is significantly impacted by air pollution worldwide. An estimated 500,000 deaths from COPD occur due to air pollution globally, which accounts for 13 per cent of all COPD deaths worldwide. Air pollution is a major cause of lung cancer in India. In 2021, about 1 in 5 global lung cancer deaths were due to air pollution, with India being a major contributor due to high levels of PM 2.5 pollution.

Dr Surya Kant, head of the Department of Respiratory Medicine, KGMU Lucknow, explained other health impacts of air pollution - respiratory problems such as asthma, throat pain, pneumonia, emphysema, bronchitis, etc. "Effects on the heart include increased risks of blood pressure and heart attacks. Those living near factories or in highly polluted areas experience red, burning, and watery eyes," he said. He said mental impacts included changes in mental states, irritability, restlessness,

and anxiety. "Effects on the liver and stomach include liver problems, gas, and stomach burning. Impacts on hair and skin include poor hair texture, hair fall, dandruff, wrinkles, eczema, skin allergies, rashes, and increased risk of cancer. Both male and female fertility are affected, with increased chances of miscarriage, premature delivery, and low birth weight. Children may face impediments to lung function and brain development, asthma, bronchitis, and breathing difficulties. The likelihood of cancer increases due to pollut-

ed air," he said. Dr Surya Kant mentioned that major sources of air pollution include transportation, industry, deforestation, insufficient tree planting, biomass fuel, and smoking. "There are two types of air pollution: primary pollutants and secondary pollutants. The major categories of air pollution are particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, sulfur oxides, carbon oxides, hydrocarbons, and ozone. Ozone in the stratosphere blocks ultraviolet rays, but human-made pollutants can damage it," he added.

**GOVT. OF ODISHA**  
**OFFICE OF THE CHIEF CONSTRUCTION ENGINEER**  
**RURAL WORKS CIRCLE: KEONJHAR**  
**Procurement Notice for Road Work under CMRL**  
**Identification No. NCB-03 / RWCKJR / 2024-25**  
**No. 2120 / Date: 26.6.2024**

- Name of the work :- Construction and Maintenance of road under CMRL in the District of Keonjhar.
- No. of work :- 01 (One) No.
- Estimated Cost :- As per Annexure in NIT.
- Class of Contractor (Eligible) :- As per Annexure in NIT.
- Period of Completion :- As per Annexure in NIT.
- Other details :-

Procurement Officer	Bid Identification No.	Availability of tender On-line for bidding		Last Date & Time of seeking Tender Clarification.	Date & Time of Opening of Tender in OJO S.E.N.E.R.W. Circle, Keonjhar	
		From	To		Technical Bid	Financial Bid
Chief Engineer, Rural Works Circle, Keonjhar	NCB-03 / RWCKJR / 2024-25	01	02	Dt.18.07.24 at 5.00 P.M.	Dt.19.07.24 at 11.00 A.M.	Will be Intimated later
		03	04			
		05	06			

Further details can be seen from the website: [www.tendersorissa.gov.in](http://www.tendersorissa.gov.in)

Chief Engineer, R.W. Circle, Keonjhar.

# Rule of law fundamental to good governance: Yogi

### Flags off upgraded PRV, distributes AC helmets

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Emphasising that the rule of law is fundamental to good governance, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated on Thursday that ensuring a secure and safe environment is crucial.

"The state bears the responsibility for maintaining security, and our police force excels in this duty," he added.

While flagging off the upgraded PRV in the second phase of UP-112 from his official residence, Yogi Adityanath mentioned that the demand for modernising the police force to meet contemporary needs had been long-standing.

"At the DG conference, the prime minister outlined a new vision for the directors general of police across the country, emphasising changes in the law and the concept of smart policing. He advocated for being strict yet sensitive, modern and mobile, alert and accountable, reliable and responsive, techno-savvy and trend-oriented. The UP Police have endeavoured to implement these principles fully," he said.

During the event, the chief minister also distributed air-conditioned helmets. He remarked that this initiative was part of a campaign to elevate the seven-year process of smart policing to new heights. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that in the last seven years, the UP Police have not only forged a new identity within the country, but also played a crucial role in reshaping Uttar Pradesh's image.

"In these seven years, the rule of law has been firmly established in UP. This adherence to the rule of law has made the police a symbol of respect and trust and has ushered in an era of development and employment in the state, opening up new possibilities for investment and business," he said.

The chief minister stated that after assuming office in 2017, his first administrative meeting revealed that while UP was the largest state in terms of population, it ranked only as the sixth-



largest economy. "With the establishment of the rule of law in the state, UP has risen to become the second-largest economy in the country and is now rapidly positioning itself to become the nation's largest economy," he added.

The chief minister emphasised that neglecting modernisation efforts, particularly in light of societal needs, would cause the police force to lag behind. "The most severe consequence of this would be jeopardising the safety of ordinary citizens. Restoring public trust, once lost, is a lengthy process," he remarked.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted that modern infrastructure has ushered in a new era in Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh has exemplified how the Global Investors Summit and groundbreaking ceremony should be conducted, he added. "This is not just a slogan; it is a reality. We recruited police officers through a transparent process, free from discrimination, and provided them with proper training," he remarked.

He added that the development process has extended beyond the major cities, as evidenced by the construction of modern police barracks in various districts. Numerous initiatives have been undertaken to modernise the police force. For example, a forensic institute for the UP Police Force was established for the first time, with courses commencing last year.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that efforts have been made to reduce the response time of UP-112 and increase the

number of PRV-112 vehicles. Over the past seven years, two-wheelers have been added alongside four-wheelers, enabling PRVs to reach streets and localities to better serve the public. "During the COVID-19 lockdown, UP Police's PRV 112 garnered significant attention. People witnessed the dedication of the police force, with two-wheelers accessing areas where four-wheelers could not reach," he said.

He also mentioned that the government has initiated an ambitious three-year programme to add 6,278 new four-wheelers and two-wheelers to the fleet of UP Police. This year alone, 1,778 vehicles will be integrated into the fleet.

Commending the Kanpur traffic police for their efforts to provide air-conditioned helmets for the welfare of their employees, Yogi said, "These helmets are manufactured by a Hyderabad-based company, with support from Afcons Infrastructure, through their CSR activities, for the Kanpur Metro project." The chief minister personally handed over a helmet to Kanpur Traffic Police constable Sagarav Tiwari. The chief minister stated that the heat broke new records during the last phase of election duty, resulting in dozens of deaths on a single day. He noted that the temperatures were exceptionally high during that period. Despite the intense heat, the UP Police continued to provide excellent facilities to the public. "Traffic police personnel stand at intersections, ensuring smooth traffic flow," he remarked and added, "Often,

these personnel faint or face unpleasant incidents while on duty. The introduction of AC helmets will alleviate some of these challenges." The chief minister commended the Kanpur police commissioner for their efforts in this regard. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted that when the commissioner of police of Kanpur served as ADG in Gorakhpur, he initiated the 'Safe City' effort. In response to the Supreme Court's directives regarding women's safety, the UP police launched Operation Trinetra from Gorakhpur in 2016. This initiative involved cooperation from the government, municipal bodies, development authorities, trade boards and the public, he added.

"We are witnessing the positive outcomes of this initiative," Chief Minister Yogi emphasised. "It has contributed to preventing incidents, and in cases where incidents occur, the police swiftly apprehend the criminals within hours. This underscores our effective combination of trained manpower and technology. Such programmes receive strong support from the public," he added.

Finance Minister Suresh Khanna, Minister of State for Agriculture Baldev Singh Aulakh, Chief Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra, Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Deepak Kumar, Director General of Police Prashant Kumar, ADG UP 112 Neera Rawat and others were present in the programme.

# CM emphasises need to extend expressway coverage in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has emphasised the need to extend expressway coverage in Uttar Pradesh to improve connectivity. He has sought proposals for four new link expressways and has instructed officials to prepare a detailed action plan after conducting a comprehensive study. The chief minister announced that the Purvanchal Expressway will be connected to the Agra-Lucknow Expressway, and the Ganga Expressway will link Farrukhabad and Jewar airport via two new link expressways. The construction of the Chitrakoot Link Expressway will also be expedited, with a goal to complete the Ganga Expressway by December 2024.

In a high-level meeting on Thursday, Chief Minister Yogi reviewed the ongoing and proposed expressway projects, industrial corridors and the defence industrial corridor, setting specific timelines for each. He stressed the importance of accelerating the development of industrial clusters along the expressways and making necessary changes in the bylaws of industrial development authorities to attract more investments. The Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor has seen investments amounting to ₹24,000 crore from major defence manufacturing companies across India and the world. The chief minister has directed officials to ensure that there are no delays

in land acquisition and compensation processes. He has also called for the review of memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed during the Global Investors Summit to ensure timely land availability and incentives. Chief Minister Yogi highlighted the unprecedented progress in road infrastructure over the past seven years, transforming Uttar Pradesh into an 'Expressway State'. He noted that the state, which had only two expressways in 2017, now boasts six, and the length of national highways has nearly doubled. He also reviewed the progress of the Gorakhpur Link Expressway, which will enhance connectivity for the

districts of Gorakhpur, Sant Kabir Nagar, Azamgarh, and Ambedkar Nagar. The Bundelkhand Expressway's connection to Chitrakoot was also prioritised to improve regional connectivity. To further enhance connectivity, Chief Minister Yogi proposed the construction of new link expressways from the Ganga Expressway to Jewar airport, and from the Agra-Lucknow Expressway to the Purvanchal Expressway. He instructed the preparation of detailed reports following preliminary studies and emphasised planting saplings along all expressways. Investment proposals from the Global Investors Summit are to be continuously reviewed, with immediate deci-

sions required to avoid delays in land allotment and incentive provision. The chief minister has called for updating the bylaws of industrial development authorities to reflect changing circumstances and facilitate investments. The development of private industrial parks is to be prioritised, with industrial development authorities arranging land for these projects. Additionally, the land acquisition process within the newly established Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority (BIDA) is expected to be expedited, alongside efforts to develop the multimodal logistics hub in Dadri and the multimodal transport hub in Boraki.

**राष्ट्रीय प्रौद्योगिकी संस्थान, कुरुक्षेत्र**  
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National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra invites online applications through Google Form for admissions in M.Tech (Left over seats of CCMT-2024, Self-Financed, Sponsored) and M.Sc. (Left over regular and Self-Financed seats of CCMN-2024) for the Academic Year 2024-25.

The Last date for submission of online applications is 25th July 2024. Application submitted without fee, incomplete or late will not be considered.

For more information kindly visit the Institute website: [www.nitkkr.ac.in](http://www.nitkkr.ac.in) under Admissions 2024.

Registrar /IC

## Yogi condemns SP leaders' remarks on Sengol

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, took his official 'X' handle to condemn the comments made by Samajwadi Party leaders on the Sengol.

He stated that the remarks revealed the ignorance of SP leaders and demonstrated their lack of respect for Indian history and culture. The comments of its top leaders on the Sengol are reprehensible. It shows their ignorance and also reflects the hatred of the INDI Alliance especially towards Tamil culture." He further wrote that the Sengol is a matter of pride for India and it is an honour that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given it the highest respect in Parliament.

Notably, SP MP RK Chaudhary recently made comments about the Sengol in a letter to the protest speaker.

## Govt committed to promoting MSME units: Brajesh Pathak

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak said here on Thursday that the state government was committed to promoting MSME units and for this it had also made changes in its policies. Addressing the Uttar Pradesh MSME Conclave organised by the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India (ASSOCHAM) in Lucknow on the occasion of International MSME Day, Pathak said that MSME products were an integral part of our lives. "MSMEs are the lifeline of not only the state but the country's economy and to promote them, the state government has made many changes in its policies," he said.

Pathak said that wherever industrialisation had not yet taken place in the state, be it Purvanchal, Bundelkhand or central Uttar Pradesh, the government had worked to take MSMEs forward in all those areas. "The government has created a conducive environment for business in the state," he added. Congratulating ASSOCHAM for organising the MSME Conclave, Pathak said that the UP government stood committed to the MSMEs. "If there are any suggestions from this conference, we will change the policies of our government and work together to take the state of Uttar Pradesh forward," he added. Stressing on the need for reforms in the agriculture sector, the deputy chief minister said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had emphasised on natural farming and called for less use of pesticides in farming. He said that excessive use of pesticides in agriculture had reduced the fertility of the soil.

# MSMEs backbone of global economy: CM

### Inaugurates Pledge Park in Jhansi, launches RAMP scheme

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that Uttar Pradesh is home to over nine million MSME units. In 2017, the state had the sixth-largest economy in India, but today, it has risen to second place, he added.

At an event held in the Lok Bhavan auditorium on International MSME Day on Thursday, Chief Minister Yogi emphasised the significance of MSMEs as the backbone of the global economy. "Economic growth has made UP a leader in employment generation. MSME entrepreneurs have been crucial in advancing the state's economy," he said, adding, "Uttar Pradesh is fortunate to have a long tradition of local artisans and craftsmen. However, the lack of proper incentives has led to a decline in the micro, small and medium enterprises sector in recent decades. By 2017, MSME entrepreneurs faced frustration and disappointment, and the state was lagging behind in economic and employment growth." Recognising that MSMEs are the second largest sector for employment generation after agriculture, Chief Minister Yogi mentioned that continuous efforts since 2017 have revitalised the MSME units. Today, this sector stands as the backbone of Uttar Pradesh's development, he remarked. Chief Minister Yogi stated, "Uttar Pradesh has successfully showcased its MSME products at the International Trade Show."

He announced that entrepreneurs will now have access to loans exceeding Rs 20,000 crore. Additionally, efforts have been made to revive struggling units under the RAMP scheme, and significant steps have been taken to elevate enterprises to new heights. With over nine million MSME units in the state, substantial progress has been made in branding, marketing, and promotion, he added.

He also mentioned that the newly inaugurated Rani Laxmibai Pledge Park in Jhansi is the 11th Pledge Park in the state. These parks are highly beneficial for private sector entrepreneurs.

The chief minister stated, "Uttar Pradesh had created a more favourable investment environment, with a strengthened rule of law and security system, which are crucial for industries." He emphasised the importance of MSMEs in this industrial environment. He also highlighted the ongoing development of a defence industrial corridor in the state, aimed at making the country self-reliant in defence production. An investment of 24,000 crore has already been implemented, he informed. Notably, the MSME policy was introduced in the state during the COVID-19 period, and the chief minister outlined its benefits, including the successful advancement of the flatted factory initiative. He also announced that, like last year, the International Trade Show will be held in September. Last year, the show attracted 70,000 buyers, and their number is expected to increase this year. The show provides an excellent opportunity to market the state's products effectively.

Chief Minister Yogi stated that the state government offers Chief Minister Udyam Bima to MSME entrepreneurs, with over

2.4 million registered entrepreneurs. This scheme provides up to Rs 5 lakh in benefits in case of a disaster. Additionally, under Chief Minister Yuva Udyam Vikas Abhiyan, steps have been taken to offer interest-free loans of up to Rs 5 lakh, aiming to support one million micro-entrepreneurs over the next decade. Extending his best wishes to all entrepreneurs on International MSME Day, the chief minister assured them that the government supports its entrepreneurs at every level.

On this occasion, Chief Minister Yogi initiated the disbursement of Rs 20,000 crore in loans by banks to MSME units. He also distributed loans to beneficiaries of the PMEGP, MYSY, ODOF and Mudra Yojana and handed out toolkits to recipients of the Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana, ODOF and KVIB. Additionally, he inaugurated the Pledge Park in Jhansi and launched the RAMP (Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance) scheme.

On this occasion, UP MSME Minister Rakesh Sachan, IJDC Manoj Kumar, Principal Secretary Alok Kumar, Sameer Ranjan Panda, dignitaries, handicraftsmen, artisans, bankers, entrepreneurs, and experts from across the state were present. On International MSME Day, the chief minister distributed toolkits to Vishwakarma Shram Samman beneficiaries Gurdeep Singh of Sitapur, Akanksha Gautam of Lucknow, Ruby Devi of Lucknow and Madhuri Sharma of Gorakhpur. Apart from this, Ranjit of Lucknow, Sanjay Kumar of Barabanki, and Kallu Kumhar of Lucknow were felicitated. Along with this, loans were provided to Pushp Kumar Singh, Sadhna Singh, Alok Kumar Gupta, Amit Singh, Devendra Kumar Mishra, Ramesh Narayan Dubey, Mohd. Adil Beg for various enterprises.

**SHUBHAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE CO. LTD.**  
 Corporate Office : 425, Udyog Vihar Phase IV, Gurgaon-122015 (Haryana)  
 Ph : 0124-4212530/31/32, E-Mail: [customercare@shubham.co](mailto:customercare@shubham.co) website : [www.shubham.co](http://www.shubham.co)

**NOTICE U/S 13(2) OF SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT 2002 (HEREINAFTER CALLED 'ACT')**

It is to bring to your notice that your loan account has been declared as NPA by secured creditor Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited having its registered office at 608 - 609, 6th Floor, Block - C Ansal Imperial Tower, Community Center, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi - 110028. (herein after called 'SHDFCL') and you are liable to pay total outstanding against your loan to SHDFCL. You are also liable to pay future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. Therefore, we hereby call upon you to discharge in full your liabilities to SHDFCL within 60 days from the date of this notice failing which SHDFCL will be empowered to exercise the power under Section 13(4) of the ACT. The details of borrowers and secured assets are as under:

S. No.	Loan Account No. Borrower(s) Name	Applicant Address	Demand Notice Amount & Date	Secured Asset
1.	OLKW2103000005035926 OLKW2303000005061025, Santosh Singh, Dilip Singh, Kamla Singh	616 / 272 Basant Vihar Colony Sitapur Road Madiyawan Sitapur Road, Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226021	Rs. 7,99,181/- & 21/06/2024	Part of House No.-616 / 272 built on Part of Plot No.-57 Part of Khaska No.-182 & 197 Min Situated at Samara Gaudhi, Basant Vihar Colony, Ward- Faizullaganj, Tehsil & Distt. Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226001
2.	OLKW2201000005043227, Rakesh Pandey, Reena Pandey	355 /242, Mohan Road Alamnagar Rajajipuram Near Kamla Convent School Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226017	Rs. 9,93,823/- & 21/06/2024	House No.355/242-Ka, situated at Alam Nagar, Ward- Alam Nagar Tehsil & District- Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh -226023
3.	OADR2204000005046738, OADR2206000005048419, Umesh Kumar Prajapati, Malti	16, Gopal Mohan Vihar Janakipuram Extension Mirzapur Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226021	Rs. 8,27,891/- & Rs. 3,21,680/- & 21/06/2024	Plot No. 3A, Part of Gata No. 84 Min, Situated at Mirzapur Pargana- Lucknow, Tehsil Bakshi Ka Talab Distt-Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226021
4.	OGPK2302000005058138, Mohammad Shakeel, Muskan Khatoon	51, Mirzapur Fertilizer Road Post-Jhungla Bazar Gorakhpur Brd Medical CLG Near Shiv Mandir Gorakhpur Uttar Pradesh -273013	Rs. 14,40,101/- & 21/06/2024	Arazi No.- 438GA, Mauza- Mirzapur, Tappa- Khuthan, Pargana- Haveli, Tehsil- Sadar, Gorakhpur Uttar Pradesh -273013
5.	OALB2307000005066521, Ruchi Srivastava	202/150 Bairahna Sant Ravidas Marg Prayagraj Uttar Pradesh -211003	Rs. 11,92,933/- & 21/06/2024	Part of Khaska No.- 29/2, Situated at Village - Keshavnagar, Pargana & Tehsil - Sadar, Distt- Prayagraj Uttar Pradesh -211012
6.	OLKO2307000005065598, Jitendra Kumar Sharma, Medha Singh	H.No. 12, K A M L Hariom Nagar 2 P.S. Madiyawan Naubasta Bhitoli Khurd Lucknow Ramlija Maidan Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226020	Rs. 24,93,842/- & 21/06/2024	House built on Plot no 26A Khaska no 205 situated at Village Sarokpur, Pargana & Tehsil Mahona Tehsil BKT Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226201
7.	OLKW2310000005074688, Vikas Gupta, Komal Gupta	Kn-45, Shekhpur Habbipur Near Kailthe Vihar, United School Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226017	Rs. 22,57,209/- & 21/06/2024	Plot No A-07, Part of Khaska no 385 Buhara Lalabagh, Parna City Dubbagha Tehsil and Distt. Lucknow, Lucknow Uttar Pradesh -226017

PLACE: GURGAON, DATE: 27-06-2024

AUTHORIZED OFFICER, SHUBHAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE COMPANY LTD.

**नगर विकास सहकारी बैंक लि., हरदोई**  
**नीलामी स्थल : नगर विकास सहकारी बैंक लि. 162, रेलवेगंज, हरदोई, फोन : 0582-235110**  
**नीलामी/बिक्री सूचना**

वित्तीय परिसम्पत्तियों के प्रतिभूतिकरण एवं पुनर्निर्माण और प्रतिभूति हित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम 2002 के अन्तर्गत बैंक के प्रभारधीन अचल परिसम्पत्ति की बिक्री। नगर विकास सहकारी बैंक, लि., हरदोई के प्राधिकृत अधिकारी के रूप में अधोहस्ताक्षरीकर्ता ने वित्तीय परिसम्पत्तियों के प्रतिभूतिकरण एवं पुनर्निर्माण और प्रतिभूति हित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम-2002 की धारा 13(4) के अन्तर्गत निम्नलिखित सम्पत्ति का सांकेतिक कब्जा ले लिया है। सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि बैंक की बकाया राशि की वसूली के लिए निम्नलिखित खाते में प्रभारित सम्पत्ति की नीलामी वित्तीय परिसम्पत्तियों के प्रतिभूतिकरण एवं पुनर्निर्माण और प्रतिभूति हित प्रवर्तन अधिनियम-2002 के अधीन " जैसा है जहाँ है" तथा "जैसा है जो भी है" के आधारे पर आयोजित की जायेगी।

**ऋणी का नाम एवं पता - 1.मै. छोटेलाल विक्रि फिल्ड पारदर्नर-प्रेमसागर विमलेश कुमार एवं अशोक कुमार** गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई 2. अशोक कुमार पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई 3. प्रेमसागर पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई 4. कृष्ण कुमार पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई 5. विमलेश कुमार पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई 6. **सम्पत्ति का मालिक**-कृष्ण कुमार पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई, अशोक कुमार पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई, प्रेमसागर पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई, विमलेश कुमार पुत्र श्री छोटेलाल गा. भीरीघाट पो. कछीना तह. सण्डीला जिला-हरदोई 1. **सम्पत्ति का विवरण**-खाता नं. 00366, गाटा नं. 26 ग्राम-समसपुर एरिया 1.0990 हे० स्थिति-समसपुर परगना बालामऊ सण्डीला-हरदोई आरक्षित मूल्य -रु. 37,80,000.00 (तीस लाख अस्सी हजार मात्र) धरोहर धनराशि- 10 प्रतिशत आरक्षित मूल्य का अर्थात् रु. 3,78,000.00 (तीन लाख अठहत्तर हजार मात्र) 1. **बकाया राशि जिसकी वसूली के लिए सम्पत्ति बेची जा रही है**-रु. 64,97,626.76 (बैसठ लाख सत्तानवे हजार छै सौ छब्बिस रु. छहत्तर पैसे मात्र) +दिनांक 01.06.2024 से ब्याज, खर्च, लागत प्रभार इत्यादि सहित आरक्षित मूल्य-रु. 11,20,000.00 (ग्यारह लाख बीस हजार रु. मात्र) धरोहर धनराशि-10 प्रतिशत आरक्षित मूल्य का अर्थात् रु. 1,20,000.00 (एक लाख बीस हजार रु. मात्र) नीलामी की तिथि व समय -06.07.2024, दोपहर 12.00 बजे से अपराह्न 3.00 बजे तक।

**नीलामी की तिथि व समय -06.07.2024, दोपहर 12.00 बजे से अपराह्न 3.00 बजे तक।**

2. **ऋणी का नाम एवं पता**-स्वयं प्रकाश पुत्र श्री गंगा प्रसाद 158, बंशी बिहार बालागंज चुंगी, लखनऊ। **सम्पत्ति का मालिक**-1. विशाल कुमार सैनी पुत्र स्व. स्वयं प्रकाश निवासी-158, बंशी बिहार बालागंज चुंगी, लखनऊ। 2. अभिषेक सैनी पुत्र स्व. स्वयं प्रकाश निवासी-158, बंशी बिहार बालागंज चुंगी, लखनऊ। 3. नमृता सैनी पुत्री स्व. स्वयं प्रकाश निवासी-158, बंशी बिहार बालागंज चुंगी, लखनऊ 4. श्रीमती राधा देवी पत्नी स्व. स्वयं प्रकाश निवासी-158, बंशी बिहार बालागंज चुंगी, लखनऊ। **सम्पत्ति का विवरण**-1. भूमि सं० 00155,702 खा/0.2080 हेका 1/4 भाग स्थिति ठाकुर नगर परगना-ओरगाबाद तह. मिथिख, जिला-सीतापुर। **बकाया राशि जिसकी वसूली के लिए सम्पत्ति बेची जा रही है**-रु. 41,28,625.00 (इकतालिस लाख अट्ठास हजार छह सौ पच्चीस रु. मात्र) + दिनांक 29.05.2010 से ब्याज, खर्च, लागत प्रभार इत्यादि सहित आरक्षित मूल्य-30,00,000.00 (तीस लाख मात्र) धरोहर धनराशि-10 प्रतिशत आरक्षित मूल्य का अर्थात् रु. 3,00,000.00 (तीन लाख मात्र) नीलामी की तिथि व समय -06.07.2024, दोपहर 12.00 बजे से अपराह्न 3.00 बजे तक।

3. **ऋणी का नाम एवं पता** - सीरम सिंह भदौरिया पुत्र स्वयं गीत राम नरेश सिंह, निवासी 9 अशरफ टोला एमजी मार्ग, जिला-हरदोई पिन कोड:- 241001 **सम्पत्ति का मालिक/बंधककर्ता**-श्रीमती उमा सिंह पत्नी श्री सीरम सिंह भदौरिया, निवासी-9 अशरफ टोला एमजी मार्ग सदर पुलिस चौकी के सामने अशरफ टोला, जिला-हरदोई, **सम्पत्ति का विवरण**-आवासीय संपत्ति का बंधक, खाता खतौनी नंबर-375 का मिलजुमला, मुखण्ड संख्या 24 भूमि का क्षेत्रफल 1250 वर्ग फिट, यानी 116.171 वर्ग मीटर, सीतापुर रोड बरगादी मगद, परगना-महोना तहसील- बखी का तालाब जिला- लखनऊ (उ०प्र०) जिसकी चौहद्दी- पूरब- मुखण्ड संख्या-45, पश्चिम- 25 फुट चौडा रास्ता, उत्तर- मुखण्ड संख्या- 25, दक्षिण- मुखण्ड संख्या- 23, बकाया राशि जिसकी वसूली के लिए सम्पत्ति बेची/नीलामी की जा रही है-16.01.2023 रु. 14,79,711.00(बैदह लाख उन्यासी हजार सात सौ ग्यारह रु. मात्र) + ब्याज एवं अन्य खर्च। **आरक्षित मूल्य**-रु. 11,20,000.00 (ग्यारह लाख बीस हजार रु. मात्र) धरोहर धनराशि-10 प्रतिशत आरक्षित मूल्य का अर्थात् रु. 1,20,000.00 (एक लाख बीस हजार रु. मात्र) नीलामी की तिथि व समय -15.07.2024, दोपहर 12.00 बजे से अपराह्न 3.00 बजे तक।

**सूचना दिनांक : 26.06.2024 स्थान : हरदोई प्राधिकृत अधिकारी**

नीलामी की शर्तें : नगर विकास सहकारी बैंक लि, 162, रेलवेगंज, हरदोई (उ.प्र.) शाखा से प्राप्त कर सकते हैं।

# Woman drowns two kids in canal, another missing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

After a dispute with her brother-in-law, a woman killed her two children by drowning them in a canal in Talhepur village under the Phaphund police station area of Auraiya district on Thursday morning. The police were still searching for her third child in the canal while the fourth child, frightened by his mother's act managed to escape from the spot and saved himself. On getting information the police rushed to the spot and sent the bodies of the two children for an autopsy. The police have arrested the murder accused mother. After the incident, tension prevailed in the village. The search of the third child in the canal is on with the help of divers. The accused was identified as Priyanka who had been arrested by the police. However, the identity of her deceased children could not be ascertained yet.



The police carry out a probe in Talhepur, village under the Phaphund police station in Auraiya

**SURVEY:** With the onset of monsoon season and in a bid to spread awareness about the rain water harvesting, the Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) has started survey of buildings through its junior engineers to ensure the installation of rainwater harvesting system atop their roofs

in the city. People who failed to get the system installed or active were liable for penal action. After survey, the KDA will send a list of such defaulters to the district magistrate recommending to impose a fine of Rs.25,000 per building on them towards compensation of the environment loss. In a press release issued on Wednesday, the KDA said that

under the prevailing norms, owners of all the residential/non-residential buildings constructed on over 300 sq metre area were required to instal rainwater harvesting system atop their roofs. If the systems were already installed by them, they were also required to carry out proper maintenance and cleaning of

the same before the start of monsoon season. They were also required to ensure that the system was in a working condition during the monsoon. If the system was not found in working condition, there was a provision to impose cash fine up to Rs 3 lakh on such building owners by the DM towards compensation of the environment loss, the release added.

# NEET paper leak case bigger than Vyapam scam: Digvijay

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Former Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh and Congress leader Digvijay Singh on Wednesday said that the NEET paper leak case is bigger than the Vyapam scam of Madhya Pradesh (MP). Singh had come here to participate in a meeting held near Geeta Niketan. He said that the NTA chairman should resign on moral grounds. Digvijay Singh said the the



Modi government is not going to last for very long. He said that all sections, including farmers, laborers, youth and students are angry with this government. Its effect was seen in the Lok Sabha elections. **BID TO PROVIDE RELIEF FROM TRAFFIC JAM:** In a bid to provide relief from the traffic jam the Prayagraj Commissionerate Police has prepared a new policy regarding the plying of autos and e-rickshaws. It will be imple-

mented soon. This is being done under the security plan in view of the Mahakumbh. According to DCP City Deepak Bhukar, there will be Unicode boards on the autos operating in the city like P-101 or F-125-180 or other numbers. When the Unicode numbers are distributed, the data of vehicle number, registration, driver's name, address, owner's name, address, mobile number, Aadhaar etc will be fed into the computer.

# Mishra: Drug abuse continues to be significant threat to global health

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The International Day Against Drug Abuse and illicit trafficking was observed at Central Hospital of North Central Railway (NCR) here. Chief Medical Superintendent (CMS) Prayagraj Dr SP Sharma presided over the awareness programme. Dr Kalpana Mishra Additional Chief Health Director, ACHD /Admin, said drug abuse continues to be a significant threat to global health and social well-being and through collaborating and giving priority to prevention and treatment, we can fight drug abuse and help people live happy and healthy lives.



Dr Rohit Kumar talked on the topic in detail with a PowerPoint presentation. He emphasised that by collective action and a commitment to evidence-based solutions, we can create a world where individuals are empowered to lead healthy, fulfilling lives. **BODY FOUND:** Tension prevailed after the body of a 38-year-old man was found lying in a dry pond near a brick kiln located in Barethi village under

Ultraon police station area on Wednesday evening. On receiving the information, the Ultraon police identified took the body into possession and sent it for the post-mortem examination. The family members created a ruckus alleging murder. Tanay Kumar alias Tipu son of Shyamal Bind, a resident of Barokhara Asepur village under the Handia police station area, used to work as a labourer at a brick kiln located in Barethi village. He was missing from home for three days. His family members had

searched for him at many possible places, including relatives, but he could not be found anywhere. Late on Wednesday evening, his body was found lying in a dry pond near a brick kiln located in Barethi. When the labourers working near the kiln came out for defecation, they were stunned to see his body. As soon as the information was received, a crowd of people from the neighbourhood also gathered at the spot. When the family members of the deceased Tanay Kumar alias

Tipu were informed about the incident, they also reached there. The victim's brother Nayan Kumar and other family members alleged that he had been murdered. The deceased was the third among five brothers. He had two sons and a daughter. His wife Ranjana Devi and mother Ramraji Devi are inconsolable. Ultraon police station in charge Pankaj Tripathi said the matter is being investigated. The cause of death will be known only after getting the post-mortem examination report.

# 25-yr-old woman's body found hanging

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The body of a 25-year-old married woman was found hanging from a noose inside a room in Phulpur here on Thursday. On getting information about the matter the police rushed to the spot, broke open the door and sent the body of the deceased for the post-mortem examination. On the other hand, the parents of the deceased accused the in-laws of

murdering her and hanging the body on the noose when their dowry demand was not met. The police have registered a case against five people, including her mother-in-law, father-in-law and husband, in this connection and started action. According to a report received here, Umashankar Patel, a resident of Khakhapur village under Raniganj police station area of Pratapgarh

district, married his daughter Reenu on February 25, 2023, to Ramesh Kumar, son of Lal Bahadur Patel, a resident of Saripur village under Phulpur Kotwali area. It is alleged that after her marriage, the in-laws used to harass Reenu every day for dowry. A panchayat was held several times but it yielded no result. Reenu's father, while giving a complaint at the Phulpur Kotwali in this con-

nection has accused the in-laws of strangulating Reenu to death when their dowry demand was not met. The police have registered a case in this connection. Inspector Phoolpur Deendyal Singh said that as soon as the information about the death of the woman was received, the police reached the spot and after breaking open the door, brought the body down and sent it for the post-mortem examination.

# Middle-aged man found dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A middle-aged man was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Gajner police area of Kanpur Dehat on Thursday morning. His profusely-bleeding body was recovered near Bahvalpur village on the Jhansi-Kanpur railway track. Prima facie investigation revealed that the man was fatally knocked down by a train while crossing the railway track. After identification, the police sent the body for ab autopsy.

hearing about the incident, his wife Chhoti Bitti fell unconscious. The trackman passing from there saw the body and informed the station master, Lalpur. On his memo, Gajner police inspector Dilip Kumar Bind rushed to the spot who, after investigation, sent the body for autopsy. He said the probe revealed that the man was killed after being knocked down by the speeding train while crossing the railway track.

the family members refused to accept her as their daughter-in-law, they decided to end their life. Manish Kumar (23) of Bardauli village under Kalpi Kotwali police area had affair with a 20-year-old of Sushil Nagar. Both used to talk about their marriage with each other which led to ire of their family members. Late on Wednesday evening, Manish took her to his village and informed his family members about his decision to marry her. When family members refused and asked them to go out from there, both decided to end their lives. Around 5 am on Thursday, they proceeded from the house and ended their lives under the wheels of a train near Chhaunk village in Kalpi Kotwali police station area. On getting information the police sent the bodies for autopsy. Prior to committing suicide, both tied their hands with a 'gamchha'.

**LOVESICK COUPLE COMMITTED SUICIDE**  
In another incident a love-sick couple committed suicide under the wheels of a train near Chhaunk village under Kalpi Kotwali police station area in Orai on Thursday morning. They were upset after their family members were not ready for their marriage. The youth had taken the girl to his village on Wednesday only where after



Actor Shweta Tripathi at the Ganga Ghat during the promotion of her upcoming series 'Mirzapur-Season 3' in Varanasi on Thursday.

# Students made aware of de-addiction at seminar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Drug addiction is especially fatal among teenagers and youth. Nowadays children are consuming drugs at a young age, which is a matter of great concern. Drugs have a direct effect on the brain, said Dr Abhinav Tandon, Associate Professor in the Department of Psychiatry, Motilal Nehru Medical College, while making the students aware of de-addiction at a seminar organised by the All India Women's Conference in Colonelganj here. Dr Tandon said people take drugs to overcome their sorrow or to get happiness. Whereas due to this, the amount of drugs taken gradually increases and their brain becomes frustrated. Mania, depression, anxiety and negative thoughts do not allow a person to live a normal life.

Standing Committee Member Dr Shanti Chaudhary said drug addiction affects physical and mental health. Once one gets addicted to drugs, it is very difficult to leave it. She warned the students about the ill-effects of drug abuse by giving examples of some people around them. Dr. Shanti Chaudhary said to avoid this one should follow a disciplined routine, exercise, yoga and meditation and one should have some hobby. Clinical psychotherapist Malvika Rao said children should be counselled from time to time. Children become frustrated due to excessive competition, unemployment and other social inequalities and if they are not given attention in time, then these children can get attracted towards drugs. On the occasion many students told their problems.

# Nadopasana musical concert held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The fifth Nadopasana Musical Concert jointly organised by the Ranjana Devi Sangeet Mahavidyalaya and Dhruvad Kendra, Kanpur, was held at the Merchants Chamber auditorium here. The event was sponsored by the Cultural Department, Uttar Pradesh; Uttar Pradesh Sangeet Natak Akademy and Life Insurance Corporation of India. The programme was chaired by Dr Devendra Kumar Tripathi, Secretary, Lalit Kala Academy, Lucknow, while Director, UP Sangeet Natak Akademy Dr Shobhit Kumar was the chief guest who inaugurated the event along with the special guests, Vishwanath Chaudhary, Pt Narendra Sharma, Swami Ramballabh Sharma, Pt Vinod Kumar Dwivedi and Ranjana Dwivedi (Directors, RDSM & Dhruvad Kendra Kanpur). Renowned musicians Dr Ashwani Dalvi, Pt Udai Bhavalkar, Pt Vinod Kumar Dwivedi, Rishi Shanker Upadhyay, Pratap Awadh, Amit Vishwakarma, Pt Harish Jha and Dr Shubham Verma also performed in the programme. Apart from scintillating performance by budding children in the age group of 5-10 years age in raag Bhupali, Dr



Ashwani Dalvi of Jaipur's presentation on 'Surbahar' enthralled the audience. Dr Sanjay Swarnkar and Preeti Shukla anchored the programme. The other dignitaries present on the occasion were renowned Dhruvad maestro Ayush Dwivedi, Dr Indra Mohan Rohatgi, Ashutosh Shukla, Swati Dwivedi, Anuj Dwivedi, Dr Adarsh Tripathi, Pt Shanker Lal Bhat and Dr Rajeshwari Daudiyal. **MISHAP:** An elderly man died while his grandson seriously injured when a speeding roadways bus hit their bicycle on Lucknow-Kanpur National Highway in Sohramaun police station area of Unnao on Thursday morning. After being hit by the bus, both the were seriously injured. The police admitted them to a hospital

# Cancer survivors share their recovery

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

On the occasion of the Cancer Survivors Month, the Regency Hospital here organised a gathering of cancer warriors who have successfully been cured after treatment in the hospital. The meeting was attended by prominent radiation oncologist from the hospital including Dr Ashish Raj Kulshrestha and Dr Narayan Pratap Singh. It was organised by the Department of Radiation, Regency Oncology Hospital. The programme was held at the Conference Hall of the hospital. The cancer warriors treated by these doctors, shared their stories of strength and how they defeated this terrible, life-threatening disease. Sharing his perspective on the occasion, Dr Ashish Raj Kulshrestha said, "In the journey of cancer treatment, the resilience of patients matters the most and their mental strength eventually enables them to overcome the disease. We are glad to be among some of the strongest individuals who have overcome this disease with their sheer grit and determination." "We are glad that the event was a success as both doctors and cancer survivors shared their views. A few peo-

ple suffering from the disease were also present and we hope they got all the strength and motivation to conquer this disease," said Dr Narayan Pratap Singh. "The hospital has state-of-the-art cancer treatment facilities, equipment and well trained professional today and our success is evident from our cancer warriors who defeat the disease every year. We salute their undying spirit", he said. The cancer survivors present at the meeting also shared their journey of survival and were felicitated by the faculty of the hospital. "It is very important to sensitize people about cancer. The very thought of this disease scares most people, but it can be defeated with timely diagnosis and quality healthcare. I am grateful and deeply indebted for life to the excellent team of doctors at Regency Hospital, for giving me a new lease of life. In this function, some children below the age of 10 years, who earlier had cancer, but are now completely healthy after treatment, also participated. The best part is reasonable treatment costs and post recovery support and follow-up. The hospital has the best facilities in the region and competes with some of the best institutes in the country," said Ramesh, a

cancer survivor who was treated at the hospital. **STARTUP MEET:** In a move to ignite innovation and entrepreneurship in agriculture, the Startup Incubation and Innovation Centre (SIIC) at IIT Kanpur and GB Pant University of Agriculture and Technology (GBPUA&T) co-hosted the "AgriTech Innovation and Startup Meet" at GBPUA&T, Pantnagar, Uttarakhand. The event featured key addresses from prominent figures in the agricultural innovation space. Dr Ajeet Singh Nain, Director of Research, GBPUA&T, Prof. Amitabha Bandyopadhyay, co-professor in charge, SIIC IIT-K, and Dr Amita Joshi, Deputy General Manager, BIRAC emphasised their commitment to support agritech startups from both the institutions throughout their journey from ideation and development to validation, regulatory compliance, market access by engaging with Farmers Producer Organisations (FPOs), among others. Dr Manmohan Singh Chauhan, Vice-Chancellor, GBPUA&T highlighted the significant potential of this partnership to uplift the agritech innovation ecosystem in the northern region of the country.

Prof Amitabha Bandyopadhyay said, "The enthusiasm on display from the faculty and student members of GB Pant University was infectious. I am confident that this relationship will deliver the desired results for these two great institutions and the startup ecosystem of India and the country in general." Dr Ajeet Singh Nain, Director of Research, GBPUA&T, highlighted the far-reaching impact of this partnership by stating "This one-day workshop, in collaboration with IIT-K, continues our university's efforts towards innovation and excellence. We look forward to these deliberations laying a strong foundation for future advancements." Dr Amita Joshi provided valuable insights on funding opportunities available for agricultural startups through BIRAC, stressing on the importance of providing suitable institutional support and guidance to help startups test and validate their technologies. A key highlight of the event was the exchange of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between SIIC, IIT-K, and GB Pant University. This MoU establishes a framework for collaboration, facilitating technical guid-

ance and joint efforts to support startups. Prof Amitabha Bandyopadhyay from SIIC, IIT Kanpur, and Dr AS Nain from GBPUA&T exchanged the MoU during the event. The event provided a platform for startups from both universities to showcase their transformative ventures. Startups from SIIC, IIT Kanpur and GBPUA&T, presented their innovative technologies to the audience. This platform enabled interaction and potential collaborations between the startups and scientists, enabling a more robust agricultural entrepreneurship ecosystem in north India. A captivating panel discussion titled "Collaboration Avenues between IIT Kanpur and GB Pant University and Strategies to Boost Agricultural Entrepreneurship Ecosystem in North India" further fuelled the spirit of collaboration. The AgriTech Innovation and Startup Meet 2024 concluded on a high note, marking the beginning of a promising partnership between SIIC IIT Kanpur and GBPUA&T. This collaboration is poised to propel innovation, empower startups and contribute significantly to the development of impactful agritech solutions for a more sustainable future.

# Rahul takes umbrage at Speaker's Emergency reference

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi met Speaker Om Birla on Thursday and voiced his displeasure over the reference to Emergency made by the chair, saying it was "clearly political" and could have been avoided. It was a courtesy call during which Gandhi also raised the issue of Emergency being invoked by the Speaker in the House, Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal told reporters after the meeting in the Parliament House.

"It was a courtesy call. The Speaker declared Rahul Gandhi as the Leader of Opposition and after that, he along with other INDIA bloc partner leaders met the Speaker," he said. Asked whether Rahul discussed the issue of Emergency being raised in the House, Venugopal said, "We discussed so many things about Parliament functioning. Of course, this issue also came up."



"Rahul ji, as Leader of Opposition, informed the Speaker about this issue and said it could have been avoided from the Speaker's reference. That is clearly a political reference, it could have been avoided," the Congress leader said.

Separately, Venugopal also wrote to Birla, expressing the party's displeasure over the bringing of the resolution on the Emergency as his first task after assuming office. "I am writing this in the context of a very grave matter

impacting the very credibility of the institution of Parliament. Yesterday, that is 26 June 2024, at the time of offering felicitations on your election as Speaker Lok Sabha, there was a general camaraderie in the House as such occasions generate," he said in his letter to the Speaker.

"However, what followed thereafter, which is a reference from the Chair after your acceptance speech, in regard to the declaration of Emergency half a century ago, is deeply shocking. Making such a political reference from the Chair is unprecedented in the annals of the history of Parliament. This coming from the Chair as one of the 'first duties' of a newly elected Speaker assumes even graver proportions.

"I, on behalf of the Indian National Congress, express our profound concern and anguish over this travesty of Parliamentary traditions," Venugopal said in his letter to the Speaker.

Soon after his election as Lok

Sabha Speaker, Birla had on Wednesday set off a firestorm by reading out a resolution condemning the imposition of Emergency as an attack on the Constitution by then prime minister Indira Gandhi, an act that triggered vociferous protests by Congress member in the House.

Birla recalled that it was on June 26, 1975, that the country woke up to the cruel realities of Emergency when the Congress government jailed opposition leaders, imposed many restrictions on the media and also curbed the autonomy of the judiciary.

Rahul Gandhi's meeting with the Speaker was the first after he assumed charge as the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha.

He was accompanied by Samajwadi Party's Dharmendra Yadav and Dimple Yadav, DMK's Kanimozhi, NCP's (SP) Supriya Sule, RJD's Misa Bharti and TMC's Kalyan Banerjee, RSP's NK Premachandran and some others.

# Row after SP MP seeks removal of Sengol from LS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Samajwadi Party (SP) MP RK Chaudhary has triggered a controversy after he demanded that the sacred 'Sengol' -- a historic sceptre with a deep Tamil Nadu connection - be replaced by the Constitution in the Lok Sabha, prompting reactions from the Opposition and BJP leaders.

In a letter to pro-tem Speaker Bhartuhari Mahtab, Chaudhary called Sengol an "anachronistic symbol of monarchy" in a democratic India. Explaining his reasoning, Chaudhary stated, "Sengol means 'Raj Dand'. It also means 'Raja ka Danda'. After ending the princely order, the country became independent. Will the country be run by 'Raja ka danda' or the Constitution? I demand that Sengol be removed from Parliament to save the Constitution."

The BJP, meanwhile, has hit back at the Opposition over its 'sengol' offensive. "The Samajwadi Party earlier attacked and abused Ramcharitmanas and now Sengol, which is part of Indian culture and particularly Tamil culture. The DMK must clarify if they support this insult of 'sengol', a senior BJP functionary was reported as saying. Tamil Nadu BJP chief K



Annamalai questioned whether this was the INDIA bloc's collective stance on the issue and said that DMK's comments on the same are awaited. He said that the Sengol was in fact banished by former Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and reinstated to its rightful place by PM Narendra Modi. "We wish to educate the ill-informed Samajwadi Party MP that Sengol is a symbol of righteousness, which was banished by Pandit Nehru and is restored to its rightful place today by PM Narendra Modi," he wrote on X (formerly Twitter). The Tamil Nadu BJP chief further mentioned that the Sengol was reinstated in the New Parliament building in the presence and with the blessings of the Adheenams from Tamil Nadu. BJP spokesperson Shehzad Poonawalla questioned, "If it was a symbol of monarchy, then why did the first Prime Minister Nehru accept it? Was he accepting that symbol and monarchy?" LJP (Ram Vilas) MP Chirag Paswan also responded, asserting that Congress and

Congress-led governments have always tried to misrepresent historical symbols. "These people cannot do positive politics... They only engage in politics of division," he said.

Amid the controversy, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav explained that Chaudhary was highlighting that Prime Minister Narendra Modi did not bow before the Sengol after taking his oath in the Lok Sabha. He suggested that the PM, having bowed before the Sengol during its installation, might have forgotten to do so when taking the oath. Senior Congress leader and MP B Manickam Tagore echoed the Samajwadi Party MP on the 'sengol' row. RJD MP Manoj Jha and Lalu Prasad Yadav's daughter Misa Bharti also supported SP's MP on Sengol controversy.

The war of words between the Opposition and the BJP over Sengol, is not new. At the time when it was installed in the new parliament building, it had already turned into a bone of contention between the ruling side and a large section of the Opposition. The Opposition's 'sengol' strategy unfolds alongside the INDIA bloc's focus on the Constitution to challenge the third Narendra Modi government. Throughout this session, the Constitution has been prominently displayed at Opposition meetings.

# Govt to strengthen IITs, NITs, IIMs, AIIMS, says President

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Thursday said the government is aiming to strengthen institutions like IITs, NITs, IIMs and AIIMS and increase their numbers as per requirement. In her address to the joint sitting of Parliament, Murmu said that earlier students who studied in Indian languages faced an unfair situation but with the implementation of the new National Education Policy (NEP), the injustice has been removed.

"In the past 10 years, 7 new IITs, 16 IITs, 7 IIMs, 15 new AIIMS, 315 medical colleges and 390 universities have been established. It is the endeavour of the government to further strengthen these institutions and increase their numbers as per requirement," Murmu said. The president said the government is working towards establishing a digital university as well.

"Programmes like Atal Tinkering Labs, Start-up India and Stand-up India have helped improve the capacity of youth of the country. It is due to these efforts that today India has become the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world," she added.

Murmu noted that the government is creating an enabling environment for the youth of this country to dream big and realise those dreams.

"Earlier, the students who studied in Indian languages faced an unfair situation. With the implementation of the new National Education Policy, my government has been able to remove this injustice. Now students can take up engineering courses in Indian languages," she said.



Murmu cited self-attestation of certificates and abolishing interviews for certain categories of government job recruitment as key good governance initiatives of the government.

"In the last 10 years, every such obstacle which caused trouble to our youth has been removed. In the past the youth had to run from pillar to post in order to get their certificates attested. Now their self-attestation is sufficient. Interviews for recruitment into Group-C and Group-D posts of the central government have been abolished," the president said.

She said it is the continuous endeavour of the government to provide right opportunities to the youth of the country to demonstrate their talent.

"Whether it is competitive examinations or government recruitment there should be no reason for any hindrance. This process requires complete transparency and probity," Murmu said.

She said the Lok Sabha poll has been an election of trust in policy, intention, dedication and decisions.

Murmu said it has been an election of "trust in a strong and decisive government", "trust in good governance, stability and continuity" and "trust in honesty and hard work" among others.

"It is a stamp of approval for my government's mission of service and good governance undertaken in the past 10 years. It is a mandate that the work of making India a developed nation continues uninterrupted and India attains its goals," the president said.

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# Four per cent Indians lacked access to urban centres in 2020: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In 2020, only four per cent of India's population lacked access to an urban centre — a densely populated built-up area — and three per cent could access only towns within an hour of travel, according to a study published in the journal Nature Cities. The research, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, Italy, looked at over 30,000 urban centres around the world and, based on the number of people accessing them, classified them as one of four -- town, small city, intermediate city or large city.

While a town had about 20,000 people living there, accessing basic facilities, such as groceries and primary education, a large city housed more than a million people and offered the most diversified facilities, including an airport, according to the research.

Even with half the world's population living outside the urban centres, the authors found "substantial interconnectedness" as 92 per cent were able to access them in under an hour of travel, which could be seen as 'commuting distance'. Of the 92 per cent, 55 per cent were found to live in or near a town or a small city, while 37 per cent were found to live in or near an intermediate or a large city.

Further, in 2020, 41 per cent of the 7.8 billion world population could access multiple tiers (such as a town and a small city) within an hour's travel, while 57 per cent and 64 per cent (five billion) were able to



reach multiple tiers by traveling for two and three hours, respectively. However, many locations close to a town or a small city can also access a higher tier within an hour's travel and, therefore, the authors summed up that two-thirds of the people around the world (five billion) live within an hour's travel from either an intermediate or a large city providing more specialised services. They added that "large cities are less relevant than smaller ones in regard to engaging populations outside their urban core".

The study represented the "first systematic worldwide delineation of city-regions across multiple urban tiers," according to lead author Andrea Cattaneo, Senior Economist at FAO.

"This unprecedented dataset (spanning across 213 countries and territories) offers a powerful tool for understanding how societies are organised around urban centres, unlocking new insights for sustainable development strategies," Cattaneo said.

In a warmer world and with commuting on the rise, such studies are increasingly imperative for assuring energy-efficient and equitable transportation, as well as effective natural resource management," the lead author said.

# Six new Rajya Sabha members take oath

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Six newly-elected MPs from Bihar, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh took oath as members of Rajya Sabha on Thursday. Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar welcomed the new members. The first among those who took oath was Congress MP Akhilesh Prasad Singh (Bihar), followed by Sarfaraz Ahmad of JMM and Pradip Kumar Varma of the BJP (both Jharkhand). BJP leaders Banshilal Gurjar, Maya Naroliya and Balyogi Umeshnath also took oath as members of the Upper House. They represent Madhya Pradesh. All BJP members and the lone Congress members took oath in Hindi.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Leader of the House J P Nadda and Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge were present in the House during the oath-taking.

On the day Nadda was appointed leader of the upper House, the first day of the 26th session of the Upper House. "Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda has been appointed as the Leader of the House in the Council of States," Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar announced, amid thumping of desks. BJP had earlier decided to appoint Nadda as the leader of the



House and the same was conveyed to the Rajya Sabha. Later Modi introduced his Council of Ministers in the Rajya Sabha, amid clapping and thumping of desks.

The prime minister had introduced his Council of Ministers in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday after the election of the speaker.

Nadda, Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge and Congress leader Sonia Gandhi were among those present in the House. Thursday was the first day of the 26th session of the Rajya Sabha. The House met after President Droupadi Murmu addressed a joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament.

The President's address was also tabled in the Rajya Sabha. The House will pass a Motion of Thanks on the President's address after a discussion.

# NDA open to having Deputy Speaker in LS, say sources

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) is open to the idea of having a Deputy Speaker in the Lok Sabha, sources said on Thursday, stressing that a call on the matter will be taken later.

They said the NDA has not rejected the Opposition's claim on the post but criticised its insistence that its nominee should be given the position, saying such a precondition could not be considered during the speaker's election.

There was no Deputy Speaker during the previous Lok Sabha.

It may be noted the Government's efforts to reach a consensus on Om Birla's choice as the speaker fell through as the opposition INDIA Bloc insisted that it should be promised the position of his deputy as per 'convention'.

The NDA's brains trust had said that the opposition's demand can be considered when the election for the deputy speaker takes place but it should not impose any precondition.

# Desi firms met 70 per cent defence needs last year, says President Murmu

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Nearly 70 per cent of the total procurement of defence forces was sourced from domestic firms last year, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday, outlining the government's focus to boost production of critical military hardware within India.

In an address to a joint sitting of Parliament, Murmu said modernisation of the armed forces is essential for a strong India and that reforms in the military should be a continuous process to ensure that it maintains "supremacy" during wars.

Listing steps to boost domestic defence production, she said the reforms undertaken in the sector have resulted in India now manufacturing defence equipment worth more than Rs one lakh crore.

The president said the BrahMos missile deal with the Philippines has strengthened India's standing in the defence export sector.

"Modernisation of our armed forces is essential for a strong India. Reforms in our armed



forces should be a continuous process so that our forces maintain their supremacy during wars," she said. "Guided by this, my Government has introduced many reforms in the defence sector in the last 10 years. Reforms like CDS (Chief of Defence Staff) have given new strength to our defence forces," she said.

Murmu also highlighted the government's focus on boosting domestic defence industries and how it is working on developing two defence corridors -- one in Uttar Pradesh and the other in Tamil Nadu.

"It is a matter of joy for all of us that last year nearly 70 per cent of the total procurement of the defence forces has been sourced from Indian manufacturers only," she said.

"Our defence forces have decided not to import over 500 defence items. All these arms and defence related equipment are being procured only from Indian companies," Murmu noted. The president also talked about India's rising defence exports.

"In the last decade, our defence exports have increased more than 18 times to the level of Rs 21,000 crore," she said.

"The BrahMos missile defence deal with the Philippines has strengthened India's standing in defence export sector," Murmu said.

Two weeks back, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the government will work assiduously to increase the defence exports to Rs 50,000 crore by 2028-29 from current Rs

21,083 crore.

Under a 2022 deal, India is supplying three batteries of the missiles, their launchers and related equipment to the Philippines.

In April, India delivered the first batch of the missile to the Philippines.

The president mentioned various steps initiated by the government to make the defence sector self-reliant.

"The defence sector has greatly benefitted from the reforms in ordnance factories. More than 40 ordnance factories have been restructured into seven defence sector enterprises, resulting in improvement of their capacity and efficiency," she said.

"It is due to such reforms that India is now manufacturing defence equipment worth more than Rs one lakh crore," she added.

The value of defence production in 2022-23 crossed the figure of Rs one lakh crore for the first time, according to the defence ministry.

The president said the government has always given priority to the needs of the personnel in the armed forces.

# Loneliness raises risk of stroke among older adults

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Chronic loneliness isn't just tied to cardiovascular risks anymore; a new research shows it significantly increases stroke risk in older adults up to 56 per cent higher for those chronically lonely. This highlights the urgent need for targeted interventions to tackle this growing public health issue, particularly in India where the prevalence of loneliness among elderly has been found to be as high as 13.4 per cent, as per a survey. The present study by Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, published in eClinicalMedicine emphasises the importance of addressing loneliness to improve long-term health outcomes and prevent serious conditions like stroke.

"Loneliness is increasingly considered a major public health issue. Our findings further highlight why that is," said lead author Yeneeh Soh, research associate in the Department of Social and Behavioral Sciences. "Especially when experienced chronically, our study suggests loneliness may play an important role in stroke incidence,



which is already one of the leading causes of long-term disability and mortality worldwide." This study is one of the first to examine the association between loneliness changes and stroke risk over time. Using 2006-2018 data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS), the researchers assessed the association between changes in loneliness and stroke incidence over time. During 2006-2008, 12,161 participants--all adults ages 50 and above who never had a stroke--responded to questions on the Revised UCLA Loneliness Scale, from which the researchers created summary loneliness scores. Four years later (2010-2012), 8,936 participants who remained in the study responded to the same questions again. The researchers then placed the participants into one of four

groups according to their loneliness scores across the two time points: "consistently low" (those who scored low on the loneliness scale at both baseline and follow-up); "remitting" (those who scored high at baseline and low at follow-up); "recent onset" (those who scored low at baseline and high at follow-up); and "consistently high" (those who scored high at both baseline and follow-up). Among the participants whose loneliness was measured at baseline only, 1,237 strokes occurred during the follow-up period (2006-2018). Among the participants who provided two assessments of loneliness over time, 601 strokes occurred during the follow-up period (2010-2018).

"If we fail to address their feelings of loneliness, on a micro and macro scale, there could be profound health conse-

quences," said Soh. Dr. Jyoti Kapoor, Founder-Director and Senior Psychiatrist, Manasthali who is not related with this study too expressed concern that loneliness has significant effects on the brain, influencing various aspects of cognitive and emotional functioning. Acute loneliness can change the neurochemistry of the brain, turning off the dopamine neurons and causing some degeneration in the brain. Chronic loneliness often leads to elevated levels of stress, which in turn raises cortisol levels in the body. Persistently high cortisol can result in high blood pressure, a major risk factor for stroke, she added. The inflammation associated with chronic stress and the impaired immune response due to loneliness further exacerbates the risk of stroke, she added.

JR Gupta, from the Senior Citizens Council of Delhi, highlighted the alarming findings of the study, emphasizing how loneliness profoundly impacts health, particularly among older adults. He stressed the urgent need for increased attention and support for this critical public health issue, especially for those in their later years.



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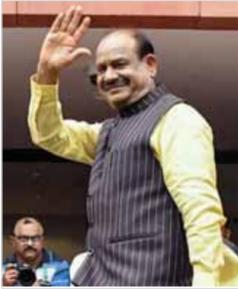
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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Steady leadership

Om Birla's re-election as Speaker of Lok Sabha reveals his calibre and his faith in democracy

Om Birla has been re-elected as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. This marks a significant chapter in parliamentary history. Birla's leadership has been characterised by impartiality, a deep commitment to democratic principles, and a steady hand in navigating the complexities of parliamentary proceedings. "Parliament is the temple of democracy. It is our duty to ensure that it functions efficiently and reflects the aspirations of the people," Birla stated. "I am committed to working with all members to ensure that the Lok Sabha continues to be a vibrant and effective forum for democratic deliberation." Om Birla, a seasoned politician from Rajasthan and a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), first assumed the role of Lok Sabha Speaker in June 2019. His re-election signifies a continuity of leadership essential for maintaining the stability and decorum of the lower house. It was indeed heartening to observe that his election was met with widespread support, not only from his party but also from various opposition factions.



This cross-party endorsement reflects Birla's ability to maintain neutrality and manage the house with a balanced approach, fostering an environment where diverse viewpoints can be expressed and debated constructively.

Om Birla's political journey began in the early 1990s, rooted in a commitment to public service and grassroots development. Representing the Kota-Bundi constituency in Rajasthan, Birla has held various significant roles in both state and central politics. As Speaker, Birla has championed initiatives to improve the transparency and efficiency of parliamentary procedures. He has been instrumental in modernising the Lok Sabha's functioning, introducing digital tools and processes to streamline legislative activities and enhance accessibility for the public. Birla's tenure as Speaker has not been without challenges. Birla has had his fair share of controversies. Om Birla has faced allegations of bias, with critics accusing him of partiality in parliamentary proceedings, favouring the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) by selectively allowing or disallowing debates on critical issues. Controversies have also arisen from his suspension of opposition MPs for disruptions, which critics argue is a harsh and selectively enforced tactic to suppress dissent. Additionally, Birla has been accused of adopting a high-handed approach toward opposition leaders, often curtailing their speaking time and limiting their opportunities to present viewpoints. Birla has also encouraged greater participation of women and young MPs, fostering a more inclusive and representative parliamentary process. Birla's re-election as Speaker of the Lok Sabha is a reflection of the trust and confidence that the members of the house have in his leadership. His ability to maintain neutrality, coupled with his dedication to upholding the dignity and decorum of the house, has earned him respect across party lines.

### PICTALK



Tourists enjoy during rains, at the Taj Mahal, in Agra

## Will British Indians back Rishi Sunak?

With the July 4 general election approaching, the key question is whether British Indians will rally behind Sunak and the Conservative Party



VIVEK SHUKLA

Will Rishi Sunak, Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister, remain in office after the upcoming general election on July 4th? Will Sunak's Conservative Party receive the votes of British Indians? Will the Labour Party also receive votes from the Indian diaspora? These are important questions indeed. According to the 2011 British census, there are approximately 1.5 million people of Indian origin in Britain, representing 2.5% of the country's total population. Indians are the largest immigrant group in Britain. They are relatively well-educated compared to other immigrant groups and are considered to be among the wealthiest in Britain.

Hinduja, Lakshmi Mittal, and Swaraj Paul are some prominent Indian-origin individuals who feature in the list of Britain's richest people. Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murthy, daughter of Infosys founder N.R. Narayan Murthy, were ranked 245th in the Sunday Times list of Britain's wealthiest individuals released in May. Historically, Indian immigrants in Britain have leaned towards the Labour Party. It was during the Labour government that India gained independence from British rule. However, recent surveys suggest a growing inclination towards the Conservative Party, the main rival to the Labour Party. Vinod Chavan, a writer residing in London since the 1970s, believes that Hindu voters in Britain may vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming elections.

This news could be a relief for Sunak and his Conservative Party. It's important to understand that when we talk about Indians in Britain, we also include those who have settled in the country from East Africa, the Caribbean Islands, and other places. Sunak's family settled in Britain from Kenya in the 1960s, although his ancestors originally hailed from Punjab. There is also a belief that a large number of Indian residents in Britain became supporters of the Conservative Party after



Narendra Modi became India's Prime Minister in 2014. Hindus comprise the majority of these supporters. The total Hindu population among Indians in Britain is over a million. Modi addressed over 60,000 people of Indian origin at a packed Wembley Stadium in London during his 2015 visit to Britain. Gujarati and Punjabi people were in the majority at that time. Boris Johnson, the then British Prime Minister, was known to proudly call himself 'India's son-in-law'. He was a unique son-in-law. His (second divorced) wife Marina Wheeler's mother, Deep Singh Kaur, was previously married to Sardar Daljit Singh, son of renowned contractor Sir Sobha Singh from New Delhi. Now, let's understand another subtle point. Not all Indian immigrants in Britain think alike politically or support any specific party. It is believed that most Indian Muslims and Sikhs may vote for the Labour Party. They are not fond of the close ties between the Conservative Party and Modi. From the 1960s to the 1980s, a significant number of Indian immigrants settled in Britain from Uganda, Kenya, and the Caribbean Islands. These communities viewed Labour as sympathetic to immigrants.



IN THE PAST 20-25 YEARS, A NEW WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS FROM INDIA HAS ARRIVED IN BRITAIN. THESE ARE DOCTORS, ENGINEERS, IT PROFESSIONALS, ETC. THEY ALL IDENTIFY THEMSELVES AS CONSERVATIVE PARTY VOTERS

They were particularly attracted to Labour's commitment to immigrants' rights, especially following the introduction of the Race Relations Act in 1965 by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Thousands of Indian immigrants came to Britain from Uganda after Uganda's cannibalistic president Idi Amin ordered the expulsion of all Indians from his country within 90 days in August 1972. A deeper analysis reveals that British Hindus have been leaning towards the Conservative Party since 2010. This trend includes wealthy and educated second and third-generation Hindus. In the past 20-25 years, a new wave of immigrants from India has arrived in Britain. These are doctors, engineers, IT professionals, etc. They all identify themselves as Conservative Party voters. The Indian diaspora's disaffection with the Labour Party did not happen overnight. It was triggered by Labour's 2019 resolution calling for "the right of self-determination" for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. This resolution led a large section of the Indian diaspora in Britain to distance themselves from the Labour Party. They saw it as direct interference in India's internal affairs. Meanwhile, Rishi Sunak

became Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister in 2022. This development deepened the bond between Hindus and the Conservative Party. It is still too early to say whether Hindus will vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming British general election.

However, for the first time, British Hindus have released a manifesto outlining their aspirations and expectations from the next government. They say they will only support those who endorse their demands. Hindus are the third-largest religious group in Britain. 29 Hindu organizations have so far endorsed this manifesto.

According to the manifesto, "Hindus are the backbone of the British economy. Our contribution to the country's economy is disproportionately high. We are one of the most law-abiding communities. Yet, anti-Hindu hate is on the rise in the country." One of their key demands is for their safety. Will the Hindu votes be split or go to the Conservative Party? Will the Labour and Conservative parties consider the manifesto of the Hindu organizations?

(The writer is Columnist and ex-Information Officer, UAE Embassy, New Delhi; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

#### OM BIRLA RE-ELECTED AS LS SPEAKER

Madam — The re-election of NDA nominee Om Birla as Lok Sabha Speaker, following a voice vote, comes as no surprise. Unlike his first term in 2019, where he was elected unopposed, this time, elections were necessary. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to retain familiar faces in key ministries during his third term underscores his administration's commitment to continuity. Om Birla's reappointment makes him the first leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party to be re-elected as Lok Sabha Speaker twice in over two decades. In a democracy, elections are essential and should be welcomed. The position of Lok Sabha Speaker traditionally requires broad support to ensure the smooth functioning of the House. When a Speaker is elected with bipartisan support, it significantly enhances the role's prestige. Opposition in an election does not necessarily indicate a lack of trust. As Om Birla embarks on his second term, he faces the challenge of surpassing his previous performance, which saw a record number of MP suspensions. While no single party can be blamed, it is evident that all parties will need to exhibit greater maturity and understanding this time.

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

#### AFGHANISTAN REACH SEMIFINALS!

Madam — Giant Australia is out of the T20 World Cup 2024 semifinals, while Afghanistan has secured a place, demonstrating the unpredictable nature of cricket and sports. No one can foresee the winner or loser; sometimes, luck plays a significant role. If Bangladesh had won, Australia might have advanced to the semifinals. We often hear quotes like 'well-coordinated team effort'; 'try and try again, you will win at last'; 'rise from the ashes like a phoenix' and 'focus on the issue and proceed in an organized and scientific manner.'

Today, we witnessed these principles in action by Afghanistan's well-coordinated

#### Dynamic Opposition in Parliament



The swearing-in ceremony for Members of Parliament at the 18th Lok Sabha was noteworthy, with the opposition members prominently holding mini copies of the Constitution while taking their oaths. Leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav, Avadesh Prasad, and Rakibul Hussain were seen holding these mini constitutions as they swore in as elected MPs. This gesture underscores the opposition's commitment to active governance and to reminding the government of its constitutional responsibilities.

By swearing with the Constitution in hand, the opposition members are enhancing their personal commitment to the nation. Their duty is now twofold: to fulfill their roles as MPs and to safeguard constitutional values, reminding the government of its duties. Time will tell who upholds these values. Meanwhile, it is encouraging to see a dynamic opposition in the Indian Parliament to provide a robust counterbalance to those in power. Kirti Wadhawan, Kanpur

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

cricket team. Their success is a beacon of hope in a world often characterized by substandard and duplicitous behaviors such as wars, violence, and negative activities. The world can learn about peaceful coexistence from two sources: Mahatma Gandhi's India and friendly, cooperative sports teams like Afghanistan's. Yes, indeed!

PVS Sreelekha | Secundrabad

#### SEDENTARY LIFESTYLE

Madam — Almost 50 per cent of adults in India engaged in insufficient levels of physical activity in 2022, according to a study published in the Lancet Global Health journal. Far more women in India (57 per cent) were found to be insufficiently physically active, compared to men (42 per cent), in line with trends across the South Asian region, the study found. The insufficient levels of physical activity in women in the region were, on average, 14 per cent higher than those in men, it said. The South Asian region also ranked the second high-

est in terms of adults being insufficiently physically active after high-income Asia Pacific region, an international team of researchers, including those from the World Health Organization (WHO), said.

This was up by 5 per cent, from 26.4 per cent of adults worldwide insufficiently engaged in physical activity in 2010. In India, a little over 22 per cent of the adults engaged in insufficient physical activity in the year 2000, while in 2010, close to 34 per cent of the adults were insufficiently physically active, the researchers found. They projected that in 2030, 60 per cent of the adults could be insufficiently engaging in physical activity, should current trends continue. This is indeed a cause of concern. India had 101 million diabetics, 315 million people with hypertension, 254 million with obesity, and 185 million with high levels of LDL cholesterol.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

## India's assertive foreign policy and global aspirations

From bolstering defence capabilities to fostering regional cooperation, India under Modi's leadership navigates a complex geopolitical landscape

Prime Minister Modi's foreign policy initiatives have consistently underscored India's assertiveness and strategic clarity from his first term in 2014 to his current third term in 2024. This period has seen India take decisive actions such as the Balakot Airstrike in 2019 and the banning of TikTok, aimed at countering China and safeguarding national interests. These measures have not been welcomed by neighboring states like China and Pakistan, particularly in light of incidents such as the Galwan clash in 2020, which resulted in the loss of Indian soldiers and prompted a bolstering of border security and a significant increase in the defense budget from approximately Rs 4,73,378 crores in 2020 to Rs 6,21,540 crores presently. This heightened defense spending underscores India's unwavering commitment to national development and security. Underpinning Modi's governance is the vision of a 'Viksit Bharat 2047' (Developed India), with ambitions to elevate India to the rank of the world's third-largest economy. Since 2014,



India has advanced from being the 10th largest economy to the 5th largest, showcasing potential for further growth. The Viksit Bharat agenda prioritizes boosting manufacturing industries, evidenced by substantial subsidies totaling \$28 billion across 14 sectors and an additional \$10 billion allocated to the semiconductor industry. This economic expansion surpasses historical parallels, outstripping even Britain's colonial economic hegemony. India's aspirations extend to securing a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, a move contested primarily by China. Despite these challenges, India is forging independent diplomatic pathways, exemplified by the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) involving India, Japan, the United States, and Australia. While debates on the Quad's efficacy persist, its role in ensuring Indo-Pacific security and countering Chinese influence remains pivotal. Additionally, India is strengthening regional ties through initiatives like BIM-STEC and expanding BRICS to include UAE and Saudi Arabia, key oil suppliers, thereby enhancing its global stature and influence. Modi's foreign policy approach is characterized by a nuanced engagement in global politics, leveraging soft power to augment India's international standing. The 'Neighbourhood First'

policy, emphasized during Modi's third term inauguration, exemplifies India's commitment to fostering regional cooperation. High-profile visits and agreements, such as those with Bangladesh, underscore the policy's success in enhancing regional connectivity and economic collaboration. Beyond tangible policy actions, Modi's government champions India as a 'Vishwaguru' (World Teacher), invoking the country's ancient heritage and cultural legacy. This narrative not only promotes India's soft power but also influences global discourse on geopolitics, art, culture, and values originating from India's ancient civilization. India's advocacy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family) at international forums like the G20 reinforces its role as a leading soft power and positions it closer to superpower status. Modi's third term inauguration signifies a continued assertiveness in foreign policy, aimed at securing India's strategic interests while fostering global partnerships.

(The writer is a researcher; views are personal)



PUSHKAR PRIYADARSHI



## FIRST COLUMN

## TOWARDS BETTER TIES WITH BANGLADESH

Sheikh Hasina's visit highlights Bangladesh's pivotal role as a strategic partner for India



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

The new Indian Government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is back to its foreign policy agenda, which it has carefully curated in the past decade. Mr Modi was in Italy to attend the G7 meetings as a special invitee, within days of his swearing-in. His swearing-in ceremony was in itself a statement of the stated policy focus of Neighbourhood First.

The swearing-in ceremony was attended by leaders from almost all Southeast Asian countries and, some from the Indian Ocean region. Significantly Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was back in India, within a month of her attending the swearing-in ceremony, to further strengthen the bilateral relations. The focus of the meeting as highlighted by Prime Minister Modi during the joint briefing with Sheikh Hasina was "Today we have prepared a futuristic vision for cooperation in new areas. Youth of both countries will benefit from the agreement reached on cooperation in a lot of areas such as Green Partnership, Digital Partnership, Blue Economy, Space, India Bangladesh 'Maitri Satellite' will give new heights to our partnership. We have kept in our focus-Connectivity, Commerce and Collaboration." Bangladesh is an important strategic partner for India, not just due to the intimate geographical boundaries, and the shared culture and language, but also as an important corridor connecting India's Northeast to the Bay of Bengal. Prime Ministers of both countries Sheikh Hasina and Narendra Modi have been at the top job for more than a decade now.

They have developed a working relationship, that is hard to match, underscored by the ten meetings these leaders had in the last five years. Both Prime Ministers jointly inaugurated the India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline on 18 March in a virtual format. PM Sheikh Hasina also participated in the Inaugural Session of the Voice of the Global South Summit on 11 January 2023 and the second Virtual Voice of the Global South Summit on 17 November 2023. Bangladesh and India share nearly 4000 km of the international border, security of which is an important pillar of the relationship for keeping a check on the drug trade, smuggling, fake currency, human trafficking, and movement of criminals or terrorists.



As an upgrade to the security partnership, India and Bangladesh have over the years worked on a defence cooperation framework. The recent visit of Bangladesh's PM saw both countries put a special focus on enhancing the defence partnership. In his statement PM Modi highlighted "...on further strengthening our defence cooperation, from defence production to modernisation of armed forces. In the Indian Ocean region, we have a common perspective. We welcome Bangladesh's decision to join the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative. We will continue our cooperation in other regional and international forums, including BIMSTEC."

The strongest pillar of the India-Bangladesh relationship is economics. Bangladesh is India's biggest trade partner in South Asia and India is the biggest trade partner for Bangladesh in Asia. The bilateral trade between the two countries is nearly \$16bn. Besides the much sought-after Ilish fish from Padma River, Bangladesh exports nearly \$2 billion in goods to India, which is the highest in Asia. In the past few years, an aggressive China has tried to take over some of the traditional space, reserved for India in bilateral relationships, through its opaque infrastructure projects. This has been resisted by India by upping the infrastructure partnership and bringing Bangladesh closer towards the Indo-Pacific geopolitical worldview, than a South East Asian outlook. It helps to align Bangladesh with India's multilateral partners such as Australia, Japan, South Korea and beyond in the Middle East. PM Sheikh Hasina's visit as the first state guest of India, under Modi 3.0 is an important reinforcement of the strong bonds between the two neighbours.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

## Macron's calls for snap polls to thwart ultra right

This strategic manoeuvre aims to disrupt the growing momentum of the far-right National Rally and prevent further erosion of his political standing



NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA

Macron's Election Gambitby Nilantha Ilangamuwa Emmanuel Macron, the youngest president in French history, is known for taking risks, as evidenced by his recent call for snap elections to avoid further humiliation after a significant defeat in the European Union Parliamentary Elections, where his main contender garnered over 50% of the votes. This move, the first since 1997, invokes Article 12 of the French Constitution, allowing the president to end the Assemblée Nationale's term early, thus advancing the end of the current five-year term from 2027 to 2024. The new parliamentary elections are set for June 30 and July 7, catching many of Macron's allies off guard. France is at a crossroads. As former Prime Minister Lionel Jospin once mentioned, "Politics is not about morality, it's about efficiency." Throughout French history, there have been five notable instances of snap elections.

In 1962 and 1968, Charles de Gaulle dissolved the Assemblée Nationale following a motion of no confidence and widespread protests, respectively, securing significant victories both times. François Mitterrand used snap elections in 1981 to secure a Socialist majority and again in 1988 to address political "cohabitation." Jacques Chirac's 1997 snap election gamble backfired, leading to a left-wing coalition victory. Currently, Macron faces low approval ratings and a paralyzed parliament, with the National Rally (Rassemblement National or RN) capitalizing on the situation. By calling for snap elections, Macron aims to confront the populist movement and disrupt their momentum, leveraging the more challenging two-round system of French national elections compared to the single-round European elections. Marine Le Pen and RN president Jordan Bardella, the party's candidate for PM, are gearing up for the snap elections, which will have higher stakes compared to the European elections. Macron, aiming to dramatize the choice facing the French, challenged voters in a televised address, asking if they truly want to be governed by the far right.

What exactly is the 'far right', a term frequently echoed in European politics? Often, it's a convenient label used to obscure the significant failures of so-called neo-liberals. When individuals dare to address real societal issues on the ground, rather than fabricating crises to vilify "designated enemies" like Vladimir Putin, they are often hastily labelled as "far-right" or conservative. Instead of accurate representation, this knee-jerk reaction by warmongers, fueled by Western media, reflects bias. Recent events in France, where President Macron's centrist coalition faced electoral setbacks, highlight this skewed narrative. The term "far right" is wielded without nuance, disregarding the diverse ideological spectrum and legitimate concerns championed by these movements. The shifting landscape of French politics challenges outdated perceptions. Parties like Marine Le Pen's National Rally are not accurately depicted as "far-right"; instead, they signify a redefinition of mainstream conservatism. Their platforms, focusing on issues such as controlled migration and national defence, resonate with many voters disenchanted with traditional leadership. Understanding these complexities demands a departure from simplistic labels and a recognition of Europe's evolving political dynamics. While Marine Le Pen may not



mirror Trump's trajectory in France, it's crucial to acknowledge the significant support they garner from the public, despite mainstream media's continued misrepresentation. Blaming perceived evils is often easier than confronting one's own side's failures.



MACRON'S LEADERSHIP IN THIS MATTER HIGHLIGHTS HIS DEDICATION TO UPHOLDING NATO'S FOUNDATIONAL PRINCIPLES AND PRESERVING ITS STRATEGIC DIRECTION IN THE FACE OF EVOLVING GLOBAL CHALLENGES

In this context, polarized politics in France are teaching a new lesson about the deceptive nature of labelling certain movements as "far right" to deflect attention from the failures of neoliberalism. Unlike the European elections with a 50% turnout, local watchdogs asserted that the national elections could see 70% voter participation, potentially mobilizing moderates and reviving the anti-populist front. Macron's team believes voters will scrutinize RN's policy proposals, particularly as the autumn session promised censure motions likely to collapse Prime Minister Gabriel Attal's government. As per the London Guardian, Macron's gamble may yield three outcomes. First, he might recover his majority, although this seems unlikely given his unpopularity and the normalization of the "far right" across Europe. Second, the National Rally could win a majority, leading to an unprecedented cohabitation with a populist right-wing parliament, which Macron might see as a chance to highlight their governance shortcomings. This scenario poses significant risks as an RN-controlled parliament would handle crucial domestic policies, potentially clashing with Macron on issues like immigration and national security, while creating tensions with Brussels due to RN's nation-first policies. The third scenario, considered most probable by analysts, is that RN increases its seats but fails to gain an absolute majority, resulting in a splintered parliament and potential deadlock. Macron may seek alliances with the mainstream centre-right or centre-left, but success is uncertain. This fragmented parliament could lead to increased political instability.

However, one cannot forget that it was Macron who stood firm against NATO's proposal to establish a liaison office in Japan, marking a significant division within the alliance on the eve of a crucial summit. Macron's decisive opposition reflects his insistence that NATO should not stray from its original North Atlantic focus, particularly amid escalating tensions with China.

His resolute stance accentuates France's commitment to maintaining the alliance's core principles, despite pressure to expand its reach into Asia.

Macron's leadership in this matter highlights his dedication to upholding NATO's foundational principles and preserving its strategic direction in the face of evolving global challenges. Macron's recent interview with Le Parisien sheds light on evolving European attitudes towards Ukraine, acknowledging the potential necessity for ground operations in the future. This represents a significant policy shift amidst rising tensions between NATO and Russia. Macron's acknowledgement of the need to prepare for all scenarios, including ground interventions, signals a departure from previous official denials and underscores the increasing seriousness of the situation in Ukraine. Additionally, France's plan to send Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets adds a tangible dimension to the discussion, indicating a more assertive stance from France and its European allies in response to the ongoing conflict.

This regional tension exacerbated France's already unstable domestic political situation, leading to a humiliating defeat for Macron and bolstering Le Pen's populist narrative. According to local media outlets, the political parties in France held emergency talks to explore potential alliances at the beginning of this week following the announcement of a snap legislative election. The unexpected and risky decision to hold elections soon could potentially shift major polit-

ical power, undermining Macron's presidency three years before its scheduled end. Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire emphasized the high stakes, calling it the most consequential parliamentary election in decades.

This could potentially impact on warmongering President of the European Commission, and France would sooner lose its interest in involving in the Ukraine War, while more focus on domestic issues. RN leaders, including Jordan Bardella, the party's candidate for prime minister, and Marine Le Pen, the party's parliamentary leader, are strategizing to capitalize on their recent success. Bardella expressed his readiness to build a large majority, while the divided French left, comprising hard-left LFI, Communists, Socialists, and Greens, also held talks to forge a united front against the populist right.

Despite the populist right's strong performance in the European elections, analysts suggest that an outright RN majority in the parliamentary elections is unlikely, as voters often use European elections to express dissatisfaction with the incumbent government. The president aims to rally these voters in response to the populist right surge, despite concerns from within his party and criticisms from other political figures. Macron described his decision as an act of confidence in the French people's ability to make the best choice for the country, emphasizing the need for a clear majority to govern effectively. His previous successes in presidential elections were aided by a "Republican front" that unified various political groups against the populist right, a strategy that was not extended to parliamentary elections, costing him a majority. The upcoming elections will test whether he can restore this principle and rally other political groups to prevent the Le Pen clan from gaining control.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan journalist and author; Views are personal)

## India-Arab green strategic partnership: Pioneering sustainable development

This initiative highlights the shared commitment of the two countries to foster a greener and more resilient future

The India-Arab Green Strategic Partnership represents a collaborative initiative aimed at enhancing sustainable development and combating climate change. In today's world, where environmental concerns hold significant global importance, the Green Strategic Partnership between India and Arab countries stands out as a beacon of collaboration and innovation.

**Historical and Cultural Context:** India's historical ties with Arab countries stretch back centuries, rooted in cultural exchanges, ancient trade routes, and shared values. Today, this relationship goes beyond cultural affinity to encompass strategic economic partnerships and mutual geopolitical interests. The



PADMALOCHAN DASH

Green Strategic Partnership builds on this foundation by integrating environmental sustainability into the bilateral agenda, reflecting a modern approach to diplomacy in our changing world. **Objectives and Strategic Imperatives:** At its core, the partnership seeks to harness the strengths of both India and Arab countries in advancing green technologies, renewable energy solutions, water man-

agement practices, and climate resilience strategies. India, as a rising global player in renewable energy deployment and innovation, offers practical solutions to the challenges faced:

**Renewable Energy Leadership:** India excels in renewable energy technologies like solar photovoltaic and wind power. This aligns well with Arab countries' goals to diversify their energy mix away from fossil fuels. For example, India's collaboration with the UAE has seen investments in solar parks and wind energy projects, demonstrating tangible outcomes of this partnership. **Water Security and Management:** Water scarcity poses a critical challenge for both regions, exacerbated by

climate change and rapid urbanisation. India contributes practical solutions through its expertise in sustainable water management practices. Initiatives like community-driven water conservation and wastewater treatment can be adapted and shared with Arab countries facing similar challenges.

**Climate Change Mitigation:** The impacts of climate change require urgent mitigation efforts. India has committed to ambitious targets under the Paris Agreement, focusing on renewable energy deployment and emissions reduction. Collaborative projects with Arab countries aim to implement climate-resilient infrastructure. **Sustainable Urbanisation and Biodiversity Conservation:**

As urban populations grow, sustainable urban planning becomes crucial to reduce environmental footprints and improve quality of life. India promotes green building standards, urban green spaces, and effective waste management practices through initiatives like the Smart Cities Mission. Collaborative projects with the UAE in sustainable urban development integrate renewable energy solutions and eco-friendly infrastructure.

**Energy Efficiency:** Improving energy efficiency is key to reducing carbon footprints and enhancing energy security. India's initiatives like the Perform, Achieve, and Trade (PAT) scheme for industrial energy efficiency offer practical models for collaboration.

Through knowledge exchange and technology transfer, India supports efforts to optimise energy consumption and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

**Green Finance and Investment:** India's experience in issuing green bonds and establishing green funds, alongside initiatives like the National Clean Energy Fund (NCEF), provides pathways for financing renewable energy, energy storage, and sustainable infrastructure projects.

**Technological Innovation:** Collaboration in research and development (R&D) is crucial for advancing green technologies. India's vibrant start-up ecosystem and research institutions contribute to innovations in areas such as green hydrogen production and bat-

tery storage technologies. Joint innovation hubs and technology parks facilitate technology transfer and accelerate the adoption of sustainable innovations. Despite its potential, the Green Strategic Partnership faces several challenges:

**Geopolitical Dynamics:** Diverse geopolitical interests and regional conflicts among Arab countries and India may impact the partnership's cohesion and operational effectiveness. India's role as a neutral mediator and advocate for collaborative solutions helps navigate geopolitical complexities and build trust among partner countries.

**Technological and Financial Barriers:** Scaling up renewable energy projects and adopting advanced environmental tech-

nologies demand substantial investments and technological advancements.

**Policy Alignment:** Harmonising national policies, regulatory frameworks, and institutional capacities is crucial for seamless collaboration and effective implementation of joint initiatives across borders.

India advocates for policy coherence through dialogue platforms such as the International Solar Alliance (ISA) and bilateral strategic dialogues, facilitating alignment on climate goals and regulatory standards.

(The author is an ICSSR-Post Doctoral Fellow, School of National Security Studies, Central University of Gujarat. The views expressed are personal)

# AIADMK stages hunger strike as hooch toll in TN touches 63

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ CHENNAI

The Opposition AIADMK led by former Chief Minister Edappadi Palaniswamy staged a day-long hunger strike at Chennai to condemn the DMK Government's failure to take action against bootleggers in the State in the backdrop of the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy that saw 63 tippers losing their lives. The AIADMK members were suspended from the Legislative Assembly by the Speaker when they tried to raise the hooch tragedy issue in the House. The Speaker had declared that they would not be allowed to attend the House for the remaining period of the current session. All those who staged the hunger strike wore black shirts, a customary mark of protest by the Dravidian politicians. EV Ramasamy Naiker, the founder of the Dravidian movement always preferred black colour which the civilian society consider as inauspicious.

J Jayavardan, former MP, who staged the hunger strike along with Palaniswamy, told media persons that though his party



has been alerting the State Government and the chief minister M K Stalin about the rampant bootlegging business and demanded a discussion on the issue, chief minister M K Stalin and the DMK rejected their pleas. "Had the Government listened to us and ordered a crack down on illicit liquor brewing a tragedy of this magnitude would not have happened," said Jayavardan. But TKS Elangovan, senior DMK leader, who is a former MP, said that the AIADMK's objective is to create confusion and chaos. "They need publicity to convince the people that they are still around. The DMK had a detailed discussion in the House while the opposition party wanted to throttle the issue," said Elangovan. Karunapuram in Kallakurichi

which bore the brunt of the hooch tragedy wears the look of a ghost village with every by lanes and colonies having turned into a major graveyard. "The DMK Government opted to shun our request for a discussion in the House to save their party leaders who have major interest in bootlegging," said another former AIADMK Minister. Karunapuram in Kallakurichi which bore the brunt of the hooch tragedy wears the look of a ghost village with every by lanes and colonies having turned into a major graveyard. "The DMK Government opted to shun our request for a discussion in the House to save their party leaders who have major interest in bootlegging," said another former AIADMK Minister.

# Maha debt shoots up 16.5 per cent to ₹7.11 lakh crore during 2023-24

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a clear reflection of the poor fiscal management by the Eknath Shinde-led MahaYuti Government and the previous regimes, Maharashtra's debt position has shot up further to a staggering Rs 7.11 lakh crore during 2023-24. As per the Economic Survey of Maharashtra 2023-24 tabled on both the Houses of Maharashtra Legislature on Thursday, the State's debt position stood at Rs 7,11,278 crore (revised estimates) as on March 31, 2024, while the interest due was Rs 48,578 crore. The debt stock of the State increased by 16.5 per cent during 2023-24 over the previous year when Maharashtra's debt position was Rs 6,29,235 crore. The state's debt position has risen from Rs 4,51,117 crore during 2019-20 to Rs 7,11,278 -- which involves an increase of Rs 2,60,161 crore. The debt was Rs 4,51,117 crore during 2018-19, Rs 5,19,086 during 2019-20, Rs 5,76,868 during 2021-22 and Rs 6,29,235 and during 2022-23. The Economic Survey was tabled in the Maharashtra Legislature a day ahead of the



presentation of the State Budget for 2024-25 on Friday. Along the lines of the Indian economy which grew by 7.6 per cent during 2023-24, the State economy -- as per the advance estimates also expected to grow by 7.6 per cent. During 2023-24, the 'Agriculture & allied activities' sector is expected to grow by 1.9 per cent, 'Industry sector' is expected to grow by 7.6 per cent and 'Services' sector is expected to grow by 8.8 per cent for the State. As per the advance estimates, nominal (at current prices) Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for 2023-24 is expected to be Rs 40,44,251 crore and real (at constant 2011-12 prices) GSDP is expected to be Rs 24,10,898 crore. The Per Capita State Income for 2022-

23 is Rs 2,52,389 as against Rs 2,19,573 for 2021-22. The revenue receipts of the State are expected to be Rs 4,86,116 crore for 2023-24 (revised estimates) as against Rs 4,05,678 crore for 2022-23. The tax and non-tax revenue (including central grants) for 2023-24 (revised estimates) are Rs 3,96,052 crore and Rs 90,064 crore respectively. Actual revenue receipts during 2023-24 up to February were Rs 3,73,924 crore (76.9 per cent of revised estimates). The revenue expenditure of the State is Rs 5,05,647 crore as per 2023-24 (revised estimates) as against Rs 4,07,614 crore in 2022-23. Actual revenue expenditure during 2023-24 up to February was Rs 3,35,761 crore (66.4 per cent of revised estimates).

# Minister replaces words colony, Oory with nagar, society in SC/ST areas

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

A day prior to his resignation As Minister for Welfare of Scheduled Castes and Tribes K Radhakrishnan, the senior CPI (M) leader, issued an order changing the names of all SC/ST residential areas in the State from colony and Ooru (Malayalam for settlement) to Nagar. According to Radhakrishnan, the only CPI(M) member from the State who was elected to the Lok Sabha, the name colony sounds derogatory and hence it was being changed to a fashionable term like Nagar and Society. It is not known whether the SC/ST settlements would get any kind of benefit with the change in name. The condition of these colonies is pathetic as the houses are all in a dilapidated state. The South West Monsoon has already claimed lives of a dozen people as many houses collapsed in landslides, heavy winds and torrential rains. Radhakrishnan also said that residents in these colonies are reluctant to tell that they stay in colonies. But in neighboring Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, houses in colonies are owned by the elite class and an

address in any of the colonies is a status symbol. The houses or apartments in Saibaba Colony in Coimbatore command a premium of Rs four crore while those in Bangalore is patronized by upper middle class section. The only menace faced by residents in this locality is that of monkeys. The Defense Colony in New Delhi does not need any introduction to people who have visited the locality even once. "We do not have any issues with the name Colony. Though it is a remnant of the colonial masters who ruled the country for more than hundred years, the name is here to stay," said Pravin Pillai, a Chennai resident and entrepreneur. According to Chandran and Pazhani, who reside in two separate colonies in Ernakulam district, it is not the name that matters. "The government should provide us with safe and strong houses instead of changing name from Colony to Nagar. The houses built with Kerala Government funds do not last even one Monsoon," said Chandran. Though school drop outs, both of them are intelligent enough to ask what's in a name.

# Indian Army remembers Manekshaw

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ NILGIRIS

It has been 16 years since Field Marshal S H F J Manekshaw left the scenic Nilgiri and this world for his rendezvous with the Maker. The Station Headquarters, Wellington, home to the Defence Services Staff College and the elite Madras Regimental Centre organized a wreath laying ceremony on Thursday morning at the Zoroastrian Cemetery, Ooty, as a mark of respect to Sam Manekshaw, independent India's first Field Marshal. It was on June 27, 2008, Sam

Bahadur, as he was addressed in reverence by officers and soldiers alike, breathed his last at Coonor, where he settled down post-retirement. The Field Marshal was 94 when he expired after a brief illness. He had built a beautiful house, Stevka, at Coonor, a place which was dear to his heart. Those who interacted with Sam Manekshaw even once will never forget him thanks to his friendly and charming demeanor. A raconteur par excellence, he was a treasure house of knowledge, anecdotes and history, especially military history. A World War II veteran, Sam Manekshaw had been

honored with Military Cross for his brilliant leadership qualities in Burma Front. The credit for leading Indian Army to a scintillating win against Pakistan in the 1971 too goes to Manekshaw. The Pakistan challenge was destroyed and demolished by India under the leadership of General Manekshaw, who was the Chief of Staff of the Indian Army. The defeat of Pakistan resulted in the birth of a new nation by name Bangladesh. The President of India honored General Manekshaw with Padma Vibhushan and within months he was promoted as Field Marshal.

# 12 Opp MPs found guilty of misconduct in last House Session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Privileges Committee of the Rajya Sabha on Thursday held 12 Opposition MPs, including the AAP's Sanjay Singh, guilty of misconduct for disrupting House proceedings last August and cautioned them to desist from such behaviour in future. In the report tabled in the Upper House of Parliament on Thursday, the privileges panel held AAP MP Sanjay Singh guilty of disregarding the directions of the Chairman. It has accepted Singh's unconditional apology in the matter and recommended revocation of his suspension after considering that the punishment suffered by him was sufficient. The AAP MP was suspended from the Rajya Sabha on July 24, 2023, through a motion, for the breach of privilege on account of wilfully disregarding the directions of the chair, repeatedly violating rules of the house and casting aspersions on the leader of the House. "The committee concludes that the 12 members, namely Sanjay Singh, Shaktisinh Gohil, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Sandeep Kumar Pathak, Naranbhai J. Rathwa, L Hanumanthaiah, Syed Nasir Hussain, Kumar Ketkar, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham, Ranjeet Ranjan and Imran Pratapgarhi are held guilty of serious transgression of privileges and commission of contempt of the Council of States. "The committee, accordingly, recommends that no action is warranted against Kumar Ketkar, Naranbhai J Rathwa and L Hanumanthaiah who have since retired from membership of the council. "That Sanjay Singh, Shaktisinh Gohil, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Sandeep Kumar Pathak, Syed Nasir Hussain, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham, Ranjeet Ranjan and Imran Pratapgarhi should desist from indulging in such misconduct in future and scrupulously adhere to exemplary conduct and optimize their performance in the House," the panel said in its report. "The Committee requests the Chairman of Rajya Sabha to consider discontinuance of the suspension of Sanjay Singh without waiting for the Council to re-assemble for the ensuing Session."

Pathak, Naranbhai J. Rathwa, L Hanumanthaiah, Syed Nasir Hussain, Kumar Ketkar, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham, Ranjeet Ranjan and Imran Pratapgarhi are held guilty of serious transgression of privileges and commission of contempt of the Council of States. "The committee, accordingly, recommends that no action is warranted against Kumar Ketkar, Naranbhai J Rathwa and L Hanumanthaiah who have since retired from membership of the council. "That Sanjay Singh, Shaktisinh Gohil, Sushil Kumar Gupta, Sandeep Kumar Pathak, Syed Nasir Hussain, Phulo Devi Netam, Jebi Mather Hisham, Ranjeet Ranjan and Imran Pratapgarhi should desist from indulging in such misconduct in future and scrupulously adhere to exemplary conduct and optimize their performance in the House," the panel said in its report. "The Committee requests the Chairman of Rajya Sabha to consider discontinuance of the suspension of Sanjay Singh without waiting for the Council to re-assemble for the ensuing Session."

# First batch of Amarnath pilgrims reach Jammu

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Undeterred by recent incidents of terrorist violence across the Jammu region, several hundred pilgrims from different parts of the country on Thursday checked in at the Jammu-based Yatri niwas before embarking on this year's Amarnath yatra early Friday morning. The first batch of pilgrims was accorded a red carpet welcome at the base camp amid unprecedented security arrangements. While waiting their turn at the security checkpoint before entering the base camp, 'Shiv Bhaktis' chanted religious slogans 'Jai Bhole' and 'Har-Har Mahadev'. Pilgrims appeared upbeat and applauded overall yatra arrangements at the base camp. Speaking to The Pioneer, Raman Vishwakarma from Chattarpur in Madhya Pradesh said, "I am undertaking the yatra for the first time". He said, "We are not worried about the recent incidents of terror attacks on pilgrims in the region. Our security forces are deployed in large numbers to protect us and ensure our safety during the yatra period". Another pilgrim, Premlata from Jaipur said faith drives them towards the Amarnath



cave shrine. "We are upbeat and have full faith in Lord Shiva. Rahul, a resident of Uttar Pradesh, performing the yatra for the seventh time said adequate arrangements have been made for the pilgrims along the yatra route. "I have no worries on my mind. I am confident the security forces deployed along the yatra route are fully equipped to ensure a smooth yatra this year". Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha is scheduled to flag off the first batch from Jammu in the few hours of Friday. He also reviewed the preparations of Shri Amarnath Ji Yatra at a high-level meeting at Pahalgam. The Lt Governor discussed the deployment of police and security personnel, doctors & nursing staff, duty officers, relief and rescue teams,

and sanitation staff on the yatra routes. "Pilgrims are the brand ambassadors of Jammu Kashmir. Greater synergy between all stakeholder departments, Police, security forces and service providers will ensure the best arrangements for the hassle-free pilgrimage," the Lt Governor said. Meanwhile, the Director General of Army Air Defence reviewed Air Defence Security along LoC and AD deployment in Kashmir valley, to ascertain the operational preparedness. Chinar Corps posted on X (earlier Twitter), "The Director-General commended the troops for upholding the highest standards of combat readiness, significantly boosting the morale of the troops and ensuring round-the-clock vigil".

# Demand for 3 Deputy CMs in Karnataka ...

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Believe it is within Siddaramaiah's power to make this decision, and I request him to fulfill this request," he said. Echoing similar remarks, Channagiri Congress MLA Basavaraju V Shivaganga urged the party to make Shivakumar the chief minister "and then they can make a dozen people deputy CMs; there won't be any objections". "Party high command will decide regarding more DCMs, let them (ministers making the demand) be made DCMs if required, we have no objections... We have seen Siddaramaiah as CM for five years (in the previous tenure) and in this tenure too we have seen him as CM for one-and-a-half years; all legislators have cooperated. It has been a practice in our party that the KPCC president becomes CM, but due to certain developments things changed this time," he said. When told that the CM post is not vacant, he said, "It is not vacant, similarly the DCM post is also not vacant. The post is occupied (by

Shivakumar)... Under Shivakumar's leadership as KPCC president, we have won nine Lok Sabha seats this time, for one last time. Making Shivakumar the chief minister will further benefit the party." Reacting to Shivaganga's statement, Minister Rajanna said he is entitled to his opinion in a democracy, and ultimately it is the party that will decide if Shivakumar has to be made the chief minister. Earlier, reacting to the demand to have three more deputy chief ministers in Karnataka, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had said the decision of the Congress high command is final. Some of the ministers have been pitching for DCM posts to be given to leaders from Veerashaiva-Lingayat, SC/ST and minority communities. Currently, DK Shivakumar from the Vokkaliga community is the only deputy chief minister in the Siddaramaiah cabinet. "Whatever the high command decides is final," Siddaramaiah told reporters in response to a question. A section within the Congress is said to be of the

opinion that the statement by ministers seeking three more DCM posts was part of a plan by Siddaramaiah's camp to keep Shivakumar in check, amid talks that he might seek the chief minister's post after two-and-a-half years of this government's tenure. The alleged move apparently seeks to also counter Shivakumar's influence both in the government and party. Cooperation Minister KN Rajanna, Housing Minister B Z Zameer Ahmed Khan, Public Works Minister Satish Jarkiholi and a few others -- all considered close to Siddaramaiah -- once again raised the pitch earlier this week for three more deputy CMs. The Congress had decided that Shivakumar will be "the only" deputy CM amid stiff competition between him and Siddaramaiah for the chief minister's post after the assembly election results in May last year. Seemingly expressing his displeasure over the ministers' demand, Shivakumar, who is also the state Congress chief, on Tuesday said the party would respond appropriately.

# FREE TREATMENT...

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ASHA and Anganwadi workers -- in the interim budget. Originally launched by Arun Jaitley, the then Finance Minister, during the FY19 Union Budget, under the Ayushman Bharat scheme, hospitalisation costs, supports pre- and post-hospitalisation, medication, and more than 1,929 medical procedures including major surgeries and follow-up treatments are included. This initiative operates paperless and cashless at a vast network of public and private hospitals, ensuring broad and accessible coverage. Moreover, it covers the cost of follow-up care and treatment to ensure full recovery. President Murmu during her address in Parliament also spoke of another key project of the government in the healthcare sector -- Jan Aushadhi Kendras, a network of generic drug stores that offer medicine sometimes costing 50 per cent to 90 per cent less than the branded versions available in the market.

# CBI makes first arrest in NEET case

**From Page 1**

Continuing their protests on Thursday, members of NSUI (Congress's students' wing) barged into the NTA office in Okhla, raising slogans of 'shut down NTA'. After taking over the investigation, CBI made its first arrests in the NEET-UG paper leak case in Bihar, detaining two individuals from Patna, identified as Manish Kumar and Ashutosh. Both were produced before a special court in Patna which sent them to judicial custody. The CBI has registered six FIRs in the NEET paper leak case. Before the CBI arrests, the police had also taken at least nine persons into custody in Bihar, Maharashtra and Delhi. These included an aspirant who said he and a few others had got a copy of the question paper a day before the exam. According to officials, Manish Kumar and Ashutosh Kumar allegedly provided safe premises to the aspirants before the examination where they were given leaked papers and answer keys. The two men had been called by the agency for questioning on Thursday and they were arrested after that. The agency in its preliminary investigation found that Ashutosh Kumar had allegedly taken 'Learn Boys Hostel and Play School' in Patna on rent from where the Economic Offence Unit of Bihar Police had recovered half-burnt question papers of National

Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (Undergraduate). The central probing agency has also found that Ashutosh Kumar knew that the premises was being used for providing question papers to NEET aspirants. About Manish Kumar, they said, that he allegedly struck deals with candidates who were ready to pay money for getting the question papers in advance. He then brought these candidates to the hostel where they were provided with the paper and the answer key, they said. A vacation bench of Justices Manoj Misra and SVN Bhatti of the Supreme Court, which issued notice to the NTA on a fresh plea filed by a private coaching centre and few NEET candidates, tagged the petition with the pending matters and listed it for hearing on July 8. Senior advocate R Basant, appearing for the coaching institute and the candidates, submitted that a few students, who have appeared for the examination, have not got the OMR sheets. The bench at the outset pointed out to Basant as how can a private coaching institute file an Article 32 petition in the Supreme Court and what kind of fundamental rights of the institution are affected. Counsel appearing for the NTA submitted that the OMR sheets have been uploaded on the website and given to the candidates. The bench asked him whether there is any time limit for raising the grievance of OMR

sheets. The NTA counsel said that he needs to take instructions and sought listing of the petition along with the pending matters. "We will file a short reply by then to the query," he said. Basant pointed out that there is no set procedure or time limit to raise the grievance and therefore as an interim relief the candidates are seeking grant of OMR sheets. The bench then issued notice and tagged the petition with the pending matters while asking the counsel for NTA to file a short written reply to the court's query on time limit. In a related matter, the Delhi High Court has sought the stand of the NTA on a petition by a NEET candidate alleging 'out of syllabus' question in the entrance examination. The petitioner claimed one question in the physics section was based on 'radioactivity' when 'radioactivity topic' was not a part of the syllabus for this year's NEET-UG. The petitioner also alleged a 'manifest error' with respect to another question for which NTA declared the 'incorrect option' as the right answer. The NEET-UG is conducted by the National Testing Agency (NTA) for admissions to MBBS, BDS, AYUSH and other related courses in government and private institutions across the country. This year's examination was conducted on May 5 at 4,750 centres in 571 cities, including 14 abroad. Over 23 lakh candidates appeared for the test.

# Prez Murmu slams Emergency

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Opposition leaders, however, dismissed the President's address as a "script given by the Government" that was "full of lies" and also castigated the Government over the repeated mention of the 1975 Emergency. They said there is an "undeclared emergency" in the country and the Constitution is being attacked under the Modi government. With the Opposition questioning the 'intentions' of the NDA Government as regards Constitution making it a poll issue in the Lok Sabha polls, Murmu stressed the Government's unwavering faith in the Constitution and efforts to make it a part of "public consciousness". She slammed the Emergency as the "biggest and darkest chapter of direct attack" on the Constitution. In her 50-minute address, the

President highlighted the government's measures in a range of sectors, from economy, defence and farming to the empowerment of different sections of society, and laid down its priorities in its third term, amid sporadic protests from opposition benches when she referred to issues such as paper leaks and matters related to the North East region. Though she touched upon some of the things promised in the BJP's manifesto like bullet trains and health insurance for senior citizens, there was no mention of a few of the major highlights of the party's promises such as the Uniform Civil Code and one-nation-one-election. "Many such reforms have taken place in the last 10 years which are greatly benefitting the nation today. Even when these reforms were being taken up, they were opposed and

attempts were made to spread negativity," she added. On paper leaks, she said, "If due to any reason there is obstruction in examinations it is not appropriate. Sanctity and transparency are a must in government recruitments and examinations." "There were incidents of paper leaks in some States earlier as well, the President said, stressing that there was need to rise above partisan politics and support the Government in taking strong steps at the national level. The President said Parliament has also made a strong law to check paper leaks and the Government is further working to reform the examination process. Modi took to social media saying that President's address to both Houses of Parliament was comprehensive and presented a roadmap of progress and good

governance. "It covered the strides India has been making and also the potential that lies ahead. Her address also mentioned some of the major challenges we have to collectively overcome to ensure a qualitative change in the lives of our citizens." In an apparent message to opposition parties, who are numerically much stronger than the previous two Lok Sabha, Murmu pitched for healthy deliberations, saying opposition to policies and obstruction of parliamentary functioning are two different things. Murmu also said the three new criminal laws, which are slated to come into force from July 1, will provide justice rather than punishment, which was the mindset during the British regime. She said the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya

Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam 2023 will speed up the judicial process. These laws, enacted last year, are set to replace the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act respectively. When the country is becoming free of the colonial mindset in different aspects, this is a big step in that direction, she said. "It is also a real tribute to our freedom fighters." Union Home Minister Amit Shah had said in Parliament last year that the new laws will give priority to providing justice in place of the outgoing British laws that gave primacy to penal action. "These three Bills are made by Indians, for Indians and by an Indian Parliament and marks the end of colonial criminal justice laws in India," he had said.

# Ex-Chinese defense ministers to be tried for corruption

## Expelled from Communist Party

PTI ■ BEIJING

Two former Chinese defence ministers, Wei Fenghe and his successor Li Shangfu, who worked under President Xi Jinping's watch were on Thursday expelled from the ruling Communist Party and are set to be prosecuted in what was regarded as the worst scandal to hit the People's Liberation Army. The Communist Party headed by Xi, has expelled Gen. Wei, 70, and Gen. Li, 66, for alleged corruption and launched prosecution proceedings against them after investigations reportedly found both of them indulged in corruption, separate official announcements said. The year 2023 will also go down as the worst year for Chinese ministers as three of them including for-

mer Foreign Minister Qin Gang besides Wei and Li disappeared from public view. Li, who went missing last year following an investigation into alleged corrupt practices, was expelled from the party on Thursday for serious violation of Party discipline and the law, the state-run Xinhua news agency reported. A similar announcement said Wei too was expelled from the party and to be prosecuted. Wei served as Defence Minister from 2018-23 and Li barely served a few months as his successor. Li, a Chinese aerospace engineer who headed the People's Liberation Army's all-important Rocket (Missile) Force and was personally picked up for the top defence post by Xi himself, went missing last year, sparking speculation that he

was being investigated for corruption and indiscipline. Both served as State Councillors, the top post in the party and as a member of the Central Military Commission (CMC), the overall high command of the PLA headed by Xi. Both were deprived of their qualification as a delegate to the 20th CPC National Congress, according to a meeting of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. Li is among dozens of top PLA Generals either sacked or punished for corruption since Xi assumed power in 2012. His sacking followed a major shakeup in the PLA Rocket (missile) Force in which its commander Li Yuchao and political commissar Xu Zhongbo along with others, were replaced without any official explanation. Their summary dismissals sent

shockwaves among the Chinese officialdom besides raising questions over the process of selection of officials for key jobs by Xi. In a similar announcement, the CMC's disciplinary and supervisory agency launched an investigation against Li and Wei. The investigation found that they seriously violated political and organisational discipline. They sought improper benefits in personnel arrangements for themselves and others, took advantage of their posts to seek benefits for others, and accepted a huge amount of money and valuables in return. Media reports here last month said Wei, whose prolonged absence from the public has sparked speculation about his fate, was reported to be politically safe after his name figured in the tributes paid to a senior Chinese legislator who passed away.

# Police clash with protesters in Kenya as military patrols streets

AP ■ NAIROBI

Kenyan police on Thursday clashed with protesters in Nairobi before planned protests against a contentious finance bill, despite the president's decision not to sign it after the plans sparked deadly chaos in the capital and saw protesters storming and burning part of the parliament building. Protesters who said last week that they would march to the State House on Thursday say they still don't trust President William Ruto, who has said the tax hikes would be withdrawn and budget cuts would be made. Police have hurled tear gas canisters at groups of protesters attempting to congregate within the central business district. The military has been patrolling the city despite a Wednesday court order that suspended their deployment to support police during the protests. Deputy President Rigathi Gachagua on Wednesday urged the young protesters to call off planned protests and give dialogue a chance. The leaderless movement began online with young people demanding

that legislators reject the proposed tax hikes. It later morphed into calls for the president's resignation after the bill was passed. On Tuesday, thousands of protesters stormed Kenya's parliament, burning parts of the building and sending lawmakers fleeing. Police opened fire and at least 22 people were reportedly killed in the chaos. Activists were divided about the agenda of Thursday's protests. One protester, Boniface Mwangi, urged others to peacefully march to parliament road where protesters were killed to pay their respects. "Invasion of the State House isn't a solution," he wrote on X. But Francis Githo, one of the many activists mobilizing for the protests online, insisted that young people should march to the State House. Activists and others warned that the stakes were higher than in past protests, because Ruto vowed on Tuesday to quash unrest "at whatever cost". Analyst Javah Bigambo told The Associated Press that the discontent is partly because Kenyans don't trust the president to implement the austerity measures he

announced on Wednesday. "Kenyans still have a problem with the economy and wastage in government," he said. Bigambo said Ruto's U-turn should be a "lesson on humility" as his initial reaction on Tuesday was "not stately and full of emotions" further agitating protesters. He said the government should win back the populace by opening dialogue channels and ensuring a consultative budgeting process. Businesspeople in Nairobi were standing guard outside their shops on Thursday to prevent looting and vandalism, which took place during Tuesday's protests. Major roads leading to key government buildings, including parliament, have been blocked. Outside Nairobi, protests have been reported in Mombasa, Kisumu, Migori and other major towns. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Wednesday spoke with Ruto, thanking him for taking steps to reduce tensions. "The Secretary underscored the importance of security forces demonstrating restraint and refraining from violence and encouraged prompt investigations into allegations of human rights abuses," a statement read.

# Lawyer accuses Prince Harry of destroying documents

London (AP): An attorney for the publisher of The Sun tabloid Thursday accused Prince Harry of engaging in "shocking" and "extraordinary" obfuscation by destroying evidence it was seeking in his lawsuit claiming that the newspaper violated his privacy by unlawfully snooping on him. Attorney Anthony Hudson said at High Court that the Duke of Sussex had deliberately destroyed text messages with the ghostwriter who penned his bestselling memoir, "Spare." A lawyer for Harry said News Group Newspapers was engaging in a "classic fishing expedition" by seeking documents they should have sought much sooner for a trial scheduled in January. "NGN's tactical and sluggish approach to disclosure wholly undermines the deliberately sensational assertion that the claimant (Harry) has not properly carried out the disclosure exercise," his attorney, David Sherborne, said in court papers. "This is untrue. In fact, the claimant has already made clear that he has conducted extensive searches, going above and beyond his obligations."

# UK PM Sunak tries to override betting scandal in election campaign

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said he is "furious" about the scandal engulfing some of his Conservative Party candidates betting on the date of the general election, to be held on July 4, as the campaign entered its final week on Thursday. In the last televised debate before the polls on Wednesday night, Britain's first Prime Minister of Indian heritage went head-to-head with Labour's Keir Starmer and was clearly in attack mode as he challenged the Opposition leader eyeing his job over target issues such as taxes. "Mark my words," the 44-year-old prime minister said, pointing at Starmer, "your taxes are going up if he is in charge." Immigration was also high on the agenda, with both leaders trading blows over a lack of clear policy to tackle soaring illegal migrant figures, with Sunak cautioning voters to not "surrender



the country's borders to Labour. While the overall media verdict was in his favour as he managed to hold firm during a large share of the fiery contest, the betting scandal continued to dominate the arguments. "You have to lead from the front on issues like this. When one of my team was alleged to have been involved and investigated by the Gambling Commission, they were suspended within minutes, because I knew it made it really important to be swift," said Starmer, with reference to the suspension of a

Labour candidate who is under investigation by the gambling watchdog for betting against himself winning. "The Prime Minister delayed and delayed and delayed until eventually he was bullied into taking action," the 61-year-old Starmer said. Sunak, who told the audience that he was "furious" and "frustrated" over the allegations, has also had to suspend two of his Tory candidates who are under investigation following an internal inquiry. "It was important to me that given the seriousness and the sensitivity of the matters at hand that they were dealt with properly, and that's what I've done," he stressed. It came as four protesters were arrested on suspicion of trespassing on the grounds of Sunak's constituency home in North Yorkshire, while he was away on the campaign trail. North Yorkshire Police said it had arrested the men "within one minute of them entering the

grounds" of Sunak's home near Northallerton. The prime minister thanks the police for their swift response to keep him and his family safe. As this is a live police investigation, further queries should be directed to the relevant police force," a Downing Street spokesperson said. The arrests are connected to a protest by campaigners from Youth Demand. It describes itself as a group of young people who want "the Tories and the Labour Party to commit to a two-way arms embargo on Israel, and to stop all new oil and gas licences". In the final week of the election campaign, both leaders will try and focus on some of the key swing constituencies starting with the Midlands region of England. Labour has held a firm 20-point lead in all pre-poll surveys over the incumbent Tories throughout the campaign, making this a tough election for the governing party which has been in office for 14 years.

# Calm returns to Bolivia after apparent coup attempt

AP ■ LA PAZ

Calm returned to Bolivia's capital on Thursday after troops led by a top general stormed the presidential palace, then quickly retreated, tumultuous scenes that threatened to pitch the long-troubled South American democracy into chaos. The nation of 12 million watched in shock and bewilderment Wednesday as Bolivian military forces appeared to turn on the government of President Luis Arce, seizing control of the capital's main square with armoured personnel carriers, crashing a tank into the palace and unleashing tear gas on protesters who flooded the streets. The country's army chief, Gen. Juan Jose Zúñiga, addressed a scrum of TV reporters from the palace, vowing to "restore democracy," replace the cabinet, and free political prisoners. But as opposition leaders condemned the apparent coup attempt, it became clear that the

coup had no meaningful political support. Arce refused to relent and named a new army commander, who immediately ordered troops to stand down, ending the rebellion after just three chaotic and head-snapping hours. Hundreds of Arce's supporters rushed the square outside the palace, waving Bolivian flags, singing the national anthem and cheering. "Here we are, firm, in the presidential palace, to confront any coup attempt," Arce said after facing down Gen. Zúñiga, calling on Bolivians to mobilize in defense of democracy. Authorities swiftly arrested Zúñiga as his soldiers retreated from central La Paz, crushing the apparent coup attempt and defusing the latest crisis in a country wracked by a bitter political rivalry and economic crisis. "Their goal was to overturn the democratically elected authority," Government Minister Eduardo del Castillo told jour-

nalists in announcing the arrests of Zúñiga along with an alleged co-conspirator, former Navy Vice Adm. Juan Arce Salvador. The short-lived rebellion followed months of mounting tensions between Arce and his one-time ally, former President Evo Morales. Bolivia's first Indigenous president, Morales remains a global leftist icon and towering figure in national politics years after mass protests that prompted him to resign and flee in 2019 — an ouster his supporters view as a coup. Since returning from exile, Morales has staged a dramatic political comeback. Threatening to challenge Arce in 2025 primaries, Morales has sparked an unprecedented rift in their ruling socialist party. The feud has paralysed efforts to resolve a spiralling economic crisis, with the country's foreign currency reserves diminishing, its natural gas exports plummeting and its currency peg collapsing.

# Rise in hate speech against minorities in India raises concern: Blinken

Washington (PTI): There has been a "concerning increase" in anti-conversion laws, hate speech, and demolitions of homes and places of worship for members of minority faith communities in India, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said. In his remarks at the release of the annual State Department report on international religious freedom, Blinken said on Wednesday that at the same time, people around the world are also working hard to protect religious freedom. The report stated that senior US officials continued to raise concerns about religious freedom issues with their Indian counterparts in 2023. "In India, we see a concerning increase in anti-conversion laws, hate speech, demolitions of homes and places of worship for members of minority faith communities. At the same time, people around the world are also working hard to protect religious

freedom," the secretary of state said. Ten of 28 states have laws restricting religious conversions for all faiths. Some of these states also impose penalties specifically against forced religious conversions for the purpose of marriage, the 2023 Report on International Religious Freedom stated for India. During the year, some members of religious minority groups challenged the government's ability and willingness to protect them from violence, investigate crimes against mem-



bers of religious minority groups, and protect their freedom of religion or belief, it stated. India has previously rejected the US state department's annual human rights report on the country, saying they continue to be based on "misinformation and flawed understanding". "Motivated and biased commentary by some US officials only serves to undermine further the credibility of these reports," the Ministry of External Affairs said last year. "We value our partnership with the US and will continue to have frank exchanges on issues of concern to us," it said. In this year's report, the US state department said that Christians and Muslims were arrested under laws banning forced religious conversions, which religious groups said in some cases were used to harass and imprison members of religious minority groups on false and fabricated charges or for lawful religious practices.

# 21 children set to exit Gaza in first medical evacuation since early May

AP ■ KHAN YOUNIS

Twenty-one critically ill children were set to exit Gaza on Thursday in the first medical evacuation since the territory's sole travel crossing was shut down in early May, Palestinian officials said. The nearly nine-month Israel-Hamas war has devastated Gaza's health sector and forced most of its hospitals to shut down. Health officials say thousands of people need medical treatment abroad, including hundreds of urgent cases. Family members bid a tearful goodbye to the children as they and their escorts left the Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis bound for the Kerem Shalom cargo crossing with Israel. It was not clear where they would receive treatment. The Israeli military body that coordinates civilian affairs in Gaza did not



immediately respond to a request for comment. The Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt, the only one available for people to travel in or out, shut down after Israeli forces captured it during their operation in the city early last month. Egypt has refused to reopen its side of the crossing until the Gaza side is returned to Palestinian control. Six of the children were

transferred to the Nasser Hospital from Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City earlier this week. Five have malignant cases of cancer and one suffers from metabolic syndrome. That evacuation was organised by the World Health Organisation, which could not immediately be reached for comment. At a press conference at Nasser Hospital on Thursday, Dr. Mohammed Zaqout, the head of Gaza's hospitals, said the evacuation of the 21 children was being done in coordination with the WHO and three American charities. Zaqout said over 25,000 patients in Gaza require treatment abroad, including some 980 children with cancer, a quarter of whom need "urgent and immediate evacuation." He said the cases included in Thursday's evacuation are "a drop in the ocean" and that the complicated route through Kerem Shalom and into Egypt cannot serve as an alternative to the Rafah crossing. At Nasser Hospital earlier on Thursday, many of the families appeared anxious. Most relatives had to stay behind, and even those allowed to accompany the patients did not know their final destination. Nour Abu Zahri wept as he kissed his young daughter goodbye.

# Stella Assange thanks lawmakers for WikiLeaks founder's freedom

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Stella Assange thanked the Spectrum of lawmakers who campaigned for her husband, WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, to be freed during her visit Thursday to Australia's Parliament House, where political leaders differed over how welcome the convicted felon was in his homeland. "Julian is overjoyed and so grateful to the Australian people, to the members of Parliament and to the government and also the opposition who came together to voice the need for his release," Stella Assange said. Assange has made no public comment since he arrived in Australia on Wednesday after pleading guilty to obtaining and publishing U.S. military secrets in a deal with U.S. Justice Department prosecutors that ended his 14-year legal battle for freedom.



The Bring Julian Assange Home Parliamentary Group began with a few federal lawmakers in 2019 and expanded to 47 — one of five of the total in Canberra — as a consensus grew that the prosecution over WikiLeaks' release of almost half a million documents relating to the U.S. wars in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2010 had taken too long. His lawyers now want to swing that public and

political support behind a campaign to have Assange's conviction pardoned. "President (Joe) Biden or any subsequent president absolutely can and, in my mind, should issue a pardon to Julian Assange," lawyer Barry Pollack said. But while Australian lawmakers largely agreed that the time had come for Assange to be brought home, they disagreed on whether he deserved the same level of support as Australians recently released from arbitrary detention in China, Iran and Myanmar thanks to government intervention. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has been credited with the diplomatic coup that enabled Assange to be released from a London prison to travel to Northern Mariana Islands, a U.S. commonwealth in the Western Pacific where he pleaded guilty to a single charge under the Espionage Act.

# Sanjana Thakur's short story wins UK Commonwealth Prize

London (PTI): Sanjana Thakur, a 26-year-old writer from Mumbai, beat competition from over 7,359 entrants worldwide to be named the winner of the GBP 5,000 Commonwealth Short Story Prize 2024 in London on Thursday. Sanjana's story entitled 'Aishwarya Rai' takes its name from the famed Bollywood actress to reimagine and reverse the traditional adoption story. The literary magazine 'Granta' has published all the regional winning stories of the 2024 Commonwealth Short Story Prize. "I cannot express how wholly honoured I am to be the recipient of this incredible prize. I hope I continue writing stories that people want to read," said Thakur. "For my strange story — about mothers and daughters, about bodies, beauty standards, and Bombay street food — to find such a global audi-

ence is thrilling. Thank you, thank you, thank you," she said. "I've spent 10 out of 26 years living in countries not my own. India, where I'm from, is simultaneously strange and familiar, accepting and rejecting. Writing stories is a way for me to accept that Mumbai is a city I will long for even when I am in it; it is a way to remake 'place' in my mind," she added. Her story revolves around a young woman, Avni, who chooses between possible mothers housed in a local shelter. The first mother is too clean; the second, who looks like the real-life Aishwarya Rai, is too pretty. In her small Mumbai apartment with tooth-thin walls and a too-small balcony, Avni watches laundry turn round in her machine, dreams of stepping into white limousines, and tries out different mothers from the shelter. One of them must be just right, she thinks.

# Experts warn that 755,000 people at risk of famine in war-torn Sudan

AP ■ CAIRO

International experts portrayed a grim picture for war-torn Sudan in a report Thursday warning that 755,000 people are facing famine in the coming months, amid relentless clashes between rival generals. The conflict has created a hunger catastrophe at a scale not seen since the Darfur conflict in the early 2000s, senior United Nations officials said. The latest findings come from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, or IPC, an initiative first set up in 2004 during the famine in Somalia that now includes more than a dozen UN agencies, aid groups, governments and other bodies. The report said that 8.5 million people are facing extreme food shortages after 14 months of conflict in Sudan, and that hunger has spread to the capital, Khartoum, and Jazira

province, once Sudan's breadbasket. The northeastern African country descended into chaos in April last year when simmering tensions between the country's military, led by Gen. Abdel-Fattah Burhan, and a notorious paramilitary group, the Rapid Support Forces, commanded by Gen. Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, exploded into open fighting in Khartoum and elsewhere in the country. The devastating conflict has killed more than 14,000 people and wounded 33,000 others, according to the United Nations, but rights activists say the toll could be much higher. The conflict created the world's largest displacement crisis with more than 11 million people forced to flee their homes. Human rights experts working for the United Nations said that both warring sides used food and starvation as a war weapon.

The report on hunger said people facing the highest level of starvation in the coming months are in 10 provinces, including Khartoum; the Darfur and Kordofan regions; and the provinces of Blue Nile and Jazira. The number was zero in June 2023 and it surged to 755,000 over the past year, it said. "The conflict has not only triggered mass displacement and disruption of supply routes, market systems and agricultural production, it has also severely limited access to essential humanitarian assistance, exacerbating an already dire situation," the report said. Another 8.5 million people are classified in the second worst level of starvation, or Phase 4, meaning that the risk of hunger-related death is rapidly increasing, the IPC report said. Those people are facing extreme food shortages, acute malnutrition and excessively high disease levels, it added.

# Sensex breaches 79,000 level, Nifty 24,000 peak for 1st time

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark while Nifty scaled the 24,000 peak for the first time on Thursday as buying in blue-chip stocks like Infosys, Reliance and TCS helped markets extend gains to the fourth straight day and close at lifetime high levels. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 568.93 points or 0.72 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 79,243.18 amid the expiry of monthly contracts in the derivatives segment. During the day, it zoomed 721.78 points or 0.91 per cent to hit the new lifetime peak of 79,396.03. The Nifty ended at a fresh record high of 24,044.50, rising 175.70 points or 0.74 per cent. Intra-day, it soared 218.65 points or 0.91 per cent to hit the all-time peak of 24,087.45. Among the 30 Sensex companies, UltraTech Cement jumped over 5 per cent after the country's leading cement maker said it will acquire a 23 per cent stake in its Chennai-based rival India Cements Ltd, in a deal estimated to be around Rs 1,885 crore. Gains in Infosys, TCS and Reliance Industries drove the benchmark indices to record-high levels. "The benchmark indices exhibited bullish momentum, buoyed by



expected revival in the IT sector and consolidation in the cement industry. However, the broader market remained sideways due to valuation concerns and FII selling owing to rising US bond yields," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said. NTPC, JSW Steel, Tata Motors, Bharti Airtel, Power Grid, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Tech Mahindra were also among the major gainers. Larsen & Toubro, Sun Pharma, Nestle, HDFC Bank and Maruti were among the laggard. "The markets traded

positively for the fourth consecutive session, gaining over half a per cent, continuing the current uptrend. After a flat start, the Nifty edged higher amid volatility and crossed the new milestone of 24,000. Most sectors aligned with this movement, with IT and energy among the top gainers," said Ajit Mishra - SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd. In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.17 per cent while smallcap index declined 0.57 per cent. Among the indices, power jumped 1.74 per cent, IT

rallied 1.65 per cent, while teck (1.59 per cent), utilities (1.29 per cent), telecommunication (1.18 per cent), commodities (0.82 per cent) and auto (0.70 per cent) also advanced. Financial Services, industrials, realty and capital goods were the laggards. The Nifty hit the 23,000 mark on May 24 this year. The BSE Sensex had breached the 78,000 level on June 25. Analysts said most sectors recorded gains, with IT and energy among the top gainers. Broader indices showed mixed results as midcap index closed in the green while smallcap index lost over half a per cent. In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled lower. European markets were trading on a mixed note. US markets ended in positive territory on Wednesday. Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 3,535.43 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.84 per cent to USD 85.97 a barrel. The BSE benchmark climbed 620.73 points or 0.80 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 78,674.25 on Wednesday. The Nifty went up by 147.50 points or 0.62 per cent to settle at a record closing peak of 23,868.80.

# GST suppliers giving post sale discount have to take undertaking from clients: CBIC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Suppliers giving post-sale discounts through credit notes under GST will have to ensure that the client gives an undertaking or a CA certificate stating that the ITC availed on the discount value has been reversed, the CBIC has said. Currently, there is no mechanism to track whether the Input Tax Credit (ITC) on such discounts has been reversed or not. Till the time a functionality is made available on the common portal to enable the suppliers as well as the tax officers to verify the reversal, the supplier may procure a certificate from the recipient of the supply, issued by the Chartered Accountant (CA) or the Cost Accountant (CMA), certifying that the recipient has made the required proportionate reversal of ITC at his end in respect of such credit note issued by the supplier. In cases, where the amount of tax (CGST+SGST+IGST and including compensation cess, if any) involved in the discount given by the supplier to a recipient through tax credit notes in a financial year does not exceed Rs 5 lakh, then instead of CA/CMA certificate, then the supplier will have to get an undertaking from the client recipient. Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said the



circular has a retrospective effect, impacting all demands on this issue since 2017. Taxpayers engaged in litigation on this point can leverage this clarification for relief. "Going forward, this will significantly benefit the industry by clarifying the process for issuing credit notes. The circular mandates obtaining CA/CMA certifications or self-certifications for smaller transactions, which increases the documentation burden and necessitates updates to accounting systems. This circular demands meticulous compliance but promises long-term benefits in terms of predictable and streamlined GST operations," Mohan said. EY Tax Partner Saurabh Agarwal said these documents, with a unique ID number, serve as proof for audits and ensure consistent application

of GST rules on post-sale discounts. This would help in resolving the disputes between the tax department and the businesses. In a separate circular, Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) clarified that ITC is available to insurance companies in respect of motor vehicle repair expenses incurred by them in case of reimbursement mode of claim settlement. "In cases where the garage issues two separate invoices in respect of the repair services, one to the insurance company in respect of approved claim cost and second to the customer for the amount of repair service in excess of the approved claim cost, input tax credit may be available to the insurance company on the said invoice issued to the insurance company subject to reimbursement of said amount by insurance company to the customer," it said. However, if the invoice for the full amount for repair services is issued to the insurance company while the insurance company makes reimbursement to the insured only for the approved claim cost, then, the input tax credit may be available to the insurance company only to the extent of reimbursement of the approved claim cost to the insured, and not on the full invoice value.

# Rupee rises 13 paise to close at 83.44 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated 13 paise to settle at 83.44 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, supported by a positive trend in equity markets and favourable domestic macroeconomic profile. Forex traders said the strength of the American currency in the overseas market and US dollar demand from oil marketing companies capped sharp gains for the local unit. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.56 and hit the intraday high of 83.43 against the greenback during the session. It finally settled at 83.44 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 13 paise from its previous close. On Wednesday, the rupee depreciated 14 paise against the US dollar and settled at 83.57. The Indian rupee appreciated on bond-related foreign inflows ahead of their inclusion in the JP Morgan debt index, said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Domestic markets touched fresh record highs with the Nifty breaching the 24,000-mark for the first time, supporting the domestic currency.

# Budget to accelerate pace of reforms, take many historic steps: President

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The first budget of the newly-formed NDA government next month will take "many historic steps" as well as accelerate the pace of economic reforms and lay a roadmap for 'far-reaching policies' and 'futuristic vision' of the government to make India the world's third largest economy, President Droupadi Murmu said on Thursday. In her first address to the joint sitting of Parliament since the constitution of the 18th Lok Sabha, she outlined the economic vision of the NDA government as well as highlighted achievements in the past decade under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. A stable government with clear majority is "a mandate that the work of making India a developed nation continues uninterrupted and India attains its goals", she said. The new government under Modi is to present a full Budget for the fiscal year

2024-25 (April 2024 to March 2025) next month which is likely to lay down priorities in matters of taxation and policy as well as reform agenda for the near term. "This budget will be an effective document of the government's far-reaching policies and futuristic vision," she said. "Along with major economic and social decisions, many historic steps will also be seen in this budget," she said without elaborating. "The pace of reforms will be further accelerated in tune with the aspirations of people of India for rapid development," she said. With the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) retaining power for a third consecutive term, analysts are expecting broad policy continuity, with the government continuing to prioritise infrastructure capex, improvements to the business environment, and gradual fiscal consolidation.

The President said the resolve to 'reform, perform and transform' has made India the fastest growing economy in the world and the nation has risen to become the 5th largest economy from being the 11th ranked economy. From 2021 to 2024, India has grown at an average rate of 8 per cent annually. "India has achieved this growth amidst the global pandemic and despite ongoing conflicts in different parts of the world. This has been made possible due to reforms and major decisions undertaken in the national interest in the last 10 years," she said, adding India alone is contributing 15 per cent of the global growth. Now, the government is striving to make India the 3rd largest economy in the world, she said. "Achieving this goal will also strengthen the foundation of a developed India." "During the phase of unstable governments in the country

that lasted several decades, many governments, even if willing, were neither able to bring reforms nor take critical decisions. The people of India have now changed this situation by their decisive mandate. "Many such reforms have taken place in the last 10 years, which are greatly benefiting the nation today. Even when these reforms were being taken up, they were opposed and attempts were made to spread negativity. But all these reforms have stood the test of time," she said. Highlighting the reforms, she said to save India's banking sector from collapsing, the government brought banking reforms and made laws like Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code which have made the country's banking sector one of the strongest banking sectors in the world. "Our public sector banks are robust and profitable today. Profits of public sector banks



have crossed Rs 1.4 lakh crore in 2023-24, which is 35 per cent higher than last year. The strength of our banks enables them to expand their credit base and contribute to the economic development of the nation. The NPAs of public sector banks are also continuously decreasing," she said. While SBI is earning record profits and LIC is stronger

than ever, GST collections for the first time ever crossed Rs 2 lakh crore in April. Giving sneak preview to priorities of the government, Murmu said the government is giving equal importance to all the three pillars of the economy - manufacturing, services and agriculture. Production-linked incentive (PLI) schemes and ease of doing business have

contributed to increasing investments and employment opportunities on a large scale. "Along with the traditional sectors, sunrise sectors are also being promoted in mission mode. Be it semiconductor or solar, be it electric vehicles or electronic goods, be it green hydrogen or batteries, be it aircraft carriers or fighter jets, India is expanding in all these sectors," she said. The government is also making continuous efforts to reduce the cost of logistics. It is also strengthening the services sector. Simultaneously, investments in green industries are being increased, leading to an increase in green jobs. Stating that India is emerging as a leader in every sector from IT to tourism and from health to wellness, she said this is creating a large number of new opportunities for employment and self-employment.

The President said in the last 10 years, the government has placed great emphasis on every aspect of the rural economy. Agro-based industries, dairy and fishery-based industries are being expanded in villages. Cooperatives have been accorded priority. "A major problem of small farmers is related to storage. Therefore, my government has commenced work on a scheme to create the world's largest storage capacity in the cooperative sector," she said. Under PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi, more than Rs 3,20,000 crore have been disbursed to farmers. Policies, she said, were focused on making India more self-reliant and increasing farmers' income through increased exports. The President said the government believes that there should be healthy competition among the states to attract investors from all over the world.

# 25% of new hires are married women; nearly 70% of workforce are women: Foxconn

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Apple iPhone maker Foxconn has informed the government that 25 per cent of its new hires are married women and its safety protocol, which requires all employees to avoid wearing metal irrespective of gender or religion, is not discriminatory, sources said. In an informal note shared with the government after reports suggested it is not hiring married women, Foxconn stated that such stipulations are not part of its policy and these claims may have been made by those individuals who were not hired, sources said. They added that such media reports malign the fast-growing Indian manufacturing sector. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour and Employment on Wednesday has sought a detailed report from the Tamil Nadu labour department on the issue of married women not being allowed to work at the Foxconn India Apple iPhone Plant, as reported by the media. "Foxconn had clarified that 25 per cent of the latest hires are married women. This would mean nearly one-third of the total women are married. This ratio compares favourably to any factory in this sector currently



operating in India," one of the sources said. The Foxconn factory currently has about 70 per cent women and 30 per cent men and the Tamil Nadu plant is the largest factory for women employment in the country with the total employment having touched 45,000 workers during peak periods, they said. The company has also informed that the discussion around Hindu married women being discriminated against for wearing metals (ornaments and jewelry) is "entirely slanted" and wearing metal in such factories is a safety issue, a fact well recognised by both the industry and the government. "Any person wearing metals - man or woman - regardless of their status (single or

married) and their religion (Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh etc.) are required to remove metals while working in the factory," the source said quoting the company's informal note. For safety reasons, no one wearing metal is allowed to work on the shop floor and this is a prevalent practice in several industries. According to sources, the company has stated that the media report is based on anecdotal comments by 5-10 people or potential job seekers. These comments likely came from candidates who did not get the job or no longer work at Foxconn. No immediate comments were received from Foxconn in response to an email query sent to the company on the matter.

# Infosys' CEO Parekh settles insider trading case with Sebi; pays ₹25 lakh

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

IT giant Infosys' MD and CEO Salil Parekh has settled with markets regulator Sebi a case pertaining to alleged violation of insider trading norms after paying Rs 25 lakh. He allegedly failed to put in place "adequate and effective systems" of internal control to ensure compliance for preventing insider trading, according to an order passed by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi). The case emerged from Sebi's investigation between June 29,

2020, and September 27, 2021, in the matter of alleged insider trading in the scrip of Infosys. The regulator probe found that certain information which was Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSIS) had not been considered as such by Infosys. The latest ruling came after Parekh proposed to Sebi to settle the alleged violations "without admitting or denying the findings of fact" through a settlement order. "In view of the acceptance of the settlement terms and receipt of settlement amount by Sebi, the specified

proceedings initiated against the applicant (Parekh) vide Show Cause Notice dated August 3, 2023, are disposed of in terms of ... The settlement Regulations," Sebi said in its order passed on Wednesday. The case relates to a partnership announcement between Infosys and US-based asset manager Vanguard in July 2020. Under the deal, Infosys was required to provide a cloud-based record keeping platform to Vanguard. The partnership, between Infosys and Vanguard,

considered as an expansion move for the IT firm, fell under the ambit of Unpublished Price Sensitive Information (UPSIS) requiring compliance with insider trading norms. However, the information had not been considered as such by Infosys. Under the insider trading rules, the CEO and MD of a listed company is responsible for putting in place an adequate and effective system of internal control to ensure compliance for preventing insider trading. In its order, Sebi noted that Salil Parekh was the CEO and

MD of Infosys at the time of the announcement of the strategic partnership between Infosys and Vanguard and Sebi's investigation concluded that by not complying with the rule, Parekh allegedly violated insider trading rules. In September 2021, the Sebi passed an interim order in September 2021 against two entities for prima facie violation of the provisions of insider trading rules in the context of alleged insider trading in the scrip of Infosys. Following this, a confirmatory order was passed in December 2021.

# Project to develop Film City in Noida speeds up

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The project to develop Noida International Film City, led by filmmaker Boney Kapoor's Bayview Projects LLP in collaboration with Bhutani Group, on Thursday advanced significantly. After winning the bid with a promising 18 per cent revenue share offer to the Uttar Pradesh Government, Kapoor and his team have signed a concession agreement with the Yamuna Expressway Industrial



Authority (YEIDA). This agreement allows them to proceed with the development of the Film City on a sprawling 1,000-acre site near Noida. The signing ceremony,

attended by Kapoor, Ashish Bhutani, and senior YEIDA officials including CEO Arun Vir Singh, marks a crucial milestone. The initial phase of development will cover 230 acres, focusing on creating world-class infrastructure for the film and media industry. The project, estimated to cost Rs 1,510 crore, emphasizes a strategic blend of commercial and industrial zones within the Film City to foster economic growth and cultural development in the region.

# Video commerce offerings gain traction, Indians spent over 2 mn hours video shopping: Flipkart

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Homegrown e-commerce platform Flipkart on Thursday said video as a format is rapidly gaining adoption and Indian customers have spent over 2 million hours on its video commerce offerings in the past one year. India is one of the top consumers of internet data, and with Indian consumers becoming increasingly tech-savvy and digitally inclined, the video commerce in the

country promises great potential. According to Flipkart Indians have spent over 2 million hours on its video commerce offerings, from June 2023 to May 2024. Tier 2 and tier 3 regions comprised 65 per cent of overall video commerce engagement, mostly in categories like fashion, beauty, personal care, home decor and furnishing. The maximum viewership clocked on a single live commerce video was 1.4 million, it added.



## HIL will help identify talent for national team: VR Raghunath

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Dragflick icon VR Raghunath said the upcoming Hockey India League will play a vital role in unearthing players who have the potential to contribute to the national team in future. Making a return after seven years, the tournament, featuring eight men's and six women's teams, will be held across December 2024 and February 2025. "The league will play a major role in identifying the talent for the national team. Players like Manpreet Singh and

Harmanpreet Singh were picked up from HIL. This is a platform for the domestic players to showcase their skills," Raghunath said in a release from the organisers. Hockey India has invited players and support staff from top 15 teams in the world for this event, and Raghunath said it will give a chance for domestic players to learn from experienced pros. "Several young players will be brushing their shoulders with top-quality international players from Europe, Australia and South America. "It will be an opportunity for

them to understand how top players play and how they think about the game and the work that goes into it," he said. Raghunath also praised HI's move to start an exclusive women's league from this edition of the HIL. "Our women's team has been doing well for the past few years. The Hockey India League will be a great motivation for the players. "Through HIL, young players who don't have much access to hockey, will get a chance to showcase their skills and impress the selectors," he added.

## Chennaiyin FC rope in Lalrinliana Hnamte for three years



PTI ■ CHENNAI

Chennaiyin FC on Thursday drafted in talented central midfielder Lalrinliana Hnamte on a three-year contract ahead of the ISL 2024-25 season. The 21-year-old has thus become the third midfielder to join the Marina Machans after Lukas Brambilla and Jitendra Singh ahead of the upcoming season. The Mizoram-born Hnamte is one of the brightest talents of Indian football. He made his Indian Super League (ISL) debut at the age of 18 for East Bengal in 2021. Welcoming Hnamte to the club, head coach Owen Coyle said: "With the ability he possesses we haven't seen as

many as we should've in the league. He's a fantastic young boy who will offer something different to our midfield options." Before joining Chennaiyin, Hnamte was part of Mohun Bagan Super Giant for three seasons. He won the Durand Cup (2023), the ISL title (2023) and the League Shield (2024) with them. "I'm very excited and grateful to be part of this amazing club and I can't wait to play in front of the fans. I will give absolutely everything I have to help this team win," said Hnamte. Hnamte has made 43 appearances in the ISL, spending more than 1300 minutes on the field. In the last season, he recorded an impressive passing accuracy of 83 percent in 13 matches.



## Unprecedented: Over 30 dope sample collection officers at National Inter-State C'ships

PTI ■ PANCHKULA (HARYANA)

A huge posse of more than 30 dope control officers (DCO) from the NADA have descended here for sample collection from the athletes taking part at the National Inter-State Championships, the final Olympics qualifying event, and they have been instructed to do target testing also. Usually, dope samples of the medal winners are also collected at big events like the national championships, and the unprecedented number of DCOs present at the Tau Devi Lal Stadium is expected to lead to a large sample size. The DCOs have mostly come from New Delhi where the National Anti-Doping Agency head office is located. "I can't tell much, but we have a big team here because it's the most important domestic event of the year as it's the final Olympics qualifying event in athletics," one of the officers, who can't be named for obvious reasons, told PTI on Thursday. "We are also doing target selec-

tion of athletes for collection of samples. That much I can tell." Even athletes who finished third or below at the heat races in the morning session of the opening day on Thursday were seen being asked by the DCOs to sign the receipt of notification form and agreement to undergo the test. The NADA team landed here on Wednesday, a day before the start of the championships. A source also said there was out-of-competition collection of samples, which would mean that it was done on Wednesday. The officers refused to divulge the exact or the possible sample size. Meanwhile, 100m national record holder Manikanta Hoblidhar of Karnataka made a shock exit in the preliminary round after finishing fifth in his heat race with a time of 11.10 seconds. His national record stands at 10.23s. Gold medal contenders Gurinder Singh of Punjab, Amlan Borgohain of Assam and Animesh Kujur of Odisha won their respective heats easi-

ly to make it to the semifinals. In the women's 100m, Assam's Hima Das, who is yet to attain full fitness after an injury, finished sixth in her heat with an unimpressive time of 12.69 seconds. The men's and women's 400m races saw a depleted field as some of the top runners pulled out to concentrate in the mixed 4x400m relay race in which India is hoping for a last minute qualification for the Paris Olympics. The initial entry list had the likes of Jyothika Sri Dandi, Subha Venkatesan and MR Poovamma among women and Muhammed Anas Yahiya and Amoj Jacob but they did not run the individual quarter-mile event. But still, Kiran Pahal of Haryana stole the limelight in the women's 400m preliminary round with the fastest time of 52.33 seconds. In men's high jump, national record holder Tejaswani Shankar and Sarvesh Kushare made the finals after finishing first and second in the qualifying round with identical heights of 2.10m.

## Kvaratskhelia's Georgia upsets Ronaldo's Portugal 2-0 to reach the last 16 at Euro 2024

AP ■ GELSENKIRCHEN (GERMANY)

A pre-game chat with Cristiano Ronaldo inspired Khvicha Kvaratskhelia and Georgia to one of the biggest upsets in European Championship history, beating Portugal 2-0 and advancing to the last 16. Georgia's No. 7 has admired Ronaldo for years and had spoken before the game of how much he wanted his hero's shirt. He got it, along with a goal and a slice of soccer history, on a frustrating night for Ronaldo and Portugal. "Before the match there was a meeting and he wished me success and it was so much for me because I would never imagine that he would come to me and say something to me," Kvaratskhelia said in translated comments. "I realized that I could do and we could do so many things today because it gave me inspiration." For Napoli forward Kvaratskhelia, the win even surpasses his club's historic Italian title last year. "This is the best day in my life because it was more difficult to do it with the Georgian team than with Napoli," he said. A banner at the Georgian fans' end of the stadium said "Believe," and they did. The Georgians needed a win to reach the knockout stage at Euro 2024 and got their opening goal after only 93 seconds. Georges Mikautadze intercepted a poor pass and set up Kvaratskhelia to score with a low shot. António Silva gave away the ball before the first goal and gave away a penalty for the



second, tripping Luka Lochoshvili inside the penalty area. Mikautadze hit the spot kick low and past Portugal goalkeeper Diogo Costa in the 57th minute. Georgia advanced in its debut at a major tournament as one of the best third-place teams. Portugal had already qualified from Group F after winning its first two games. The Georgians will next face Spain on Sunday in Cologne, while Portugal plays Slovenia on Monday in Frankfurt. Slovenia is another defense-first team and it upset Portugal 2-0 in a March friendly. Ronaldo is still without a goal at Euro 2024. He felt he deserved a penalty in the first half and kicked away a water bottle when he was substituted in the 66th minute. Ronaldo was given a yellow card for his protests after his penalty appeal was turned down. He wanted the decision after his shirt was pulled in the area by Lochoshvili as a cross came in. No foul was given. With Portugal already qualified, Ronaldo was one of only three players kept in the lineup from the previous 3-0

win over Turkey, along with Costa and midfielder João Palhinha. Portugal created little in the second half as Georgia's defense sat deep, but the 2016 champions had chances in added time. Goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili kept Georgia's two-goal lead intact with saves from Nelson Semedo and Diogo Dalot, while Francisco Conceição narrowly missed the target. Portugal coach Roberto Martinez criticized "very inconsistent" video reviews but denied his team had underestimated Georgia. "This was a game where Georgia was playing to be part of history and we didn't match their intensity," he said. At the final whistle, Georgia's players sprinted off the bench to embrace Mamardashvili in a huddle and leapt with joy in front of their raucous fans. Turkey beat the Czech Republic 2-1 in the other group match. The Turks also advanced while the Czechs were eliminated. Georgia's victory also eliminated Hungary, which finished third in Group A.

## Belgium advances to last 16 at Euro 2024 after 0-0 draw, Ukraine eliminated

AP ■ STUTTGART (GERMANY)

Belgium got the best out of a 0-0 draw at the European Championship, advancing to the last 16 while Ukraine became the first team with four points in a group to be eliminated. The downside for the Belgians at Euro 2024 is they will next face France and Kylian Mbappe on Monday in Duesseldorf. "We go to win. We are here and qualified for this Euro to be part of the best teams. Now, we face a top team." Belgium coach Domenico Tedesco said. "That's why we qualified, otherwise we could stay at home. These are the games we're looking for, and everything is possible." All four teams in Group E finished with four points.

Romania ended up first, followed by Belgium and Slovakia. Ukraine was last on goal difference. Romania and Slovakia drew 1-1 in Frankfurt and both advanced to the knockout stage. Playing at Euro 2024 against the backdrop of Russia's invasion, Ukraine came agonizingly close to advancing and will finish with more points than at least one of the four best third-place teams. The 3-0 loss to Romania in the team's opening game proved to be decisive. "In the last two games, we showed the character of our nation. But this is life, you make some mistakes, but then it's important how you react," Ukraine coach Serhiy Rebrov said. "I'm very proud of the players. Of course, everyone is



unhappy with the result, but there are no questions for the players." There was nearly a different ending when Ukraine substitute Ruslan Malinovskyi tried to score directly from corner late in the match. Belgium goalkeeper Koen Casteels managed to save the

effort at the near post. The third-ranked Belgians had another scare when Georgiy Sudakov ran into the box but shot right at Casteels. Belgium, which lost to Slovakia in its opening game, struggled to get its offense going again with Romelu Lukaku failing to make the

most of his team's best chance in the first half. The Belgian fans booed their players at the end of the game at Stuttgart Arena, while Ukrainian supporters, who earlier held up a banner of a fallen soldier named Nazariy Hryntsevich, showed their appreciation to the national team. "We wanted to bring them joy, to make them proud. We left it all on the field, but it wasn't enough," Ukraine defender Oleksandr Tymchyk said. Belgium will likely need to improve against France, which was the runner-up at the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. While the French have also been unconvincing, Belgium was expected to advance with ease from a group without any of the traditional European soccer powerhouses.

## Fueled by feeling insulted, Romania draws 1-1 with Slovakia to send both into Euro 2024 round of 16

AP ■ FRANKFURT

Romania coach Edward Iordanescu deftly insulted by that pre-game chatter he called "shameful" of possibly contriving a low-key draw against Slovakia to send both teams into the European Championship knockout round. It did indeed end 1-1 on Wednesday and Romania finished atop of Group E - ahead of favored Belgium - but not in the way those pundits throwing shade had predicted. And Iordanescu let them know about it after a high-energy game played in severe weather which had wild mood



swings, and earned his team a round-of-16 meeting with the Netherlands. "There is some people that should apologize to us," Iordanescu said, criticizing some of the commentary

earlier in the week. "They should have waited to see and then judge us. So this was shameful." "They throw this garbage to us, not just the team but to our fans. We showed we have character," the Romanian coach said, in the only answer in English of his news conference. The quirk of the 24-team Euros format is that Groups E and F playing on the final day of the group stage have an advantage. They know the result they need to be assured of being among the four best third-place teams who must advance to the last-16 bracket. At the start of play Wednesday, all four teams were on three points before

Romania and Slovakia drew in Frankfurt at the same time as Belgium was held 0-0 by Ukraine, which was eliminated. Romania topped the group on the tiebreaker of more goals scored than Belgium, and both had a better goal difference than third-place Slovakia. "Nobody could say my team didn't play to win for the 90 minutes," Slovakia coach Francesco Calzona said. Both Iordanescu and Calzona were right to feel vindicated one day after questions at pre-game news conferences about the option of a contrive a low-energy draw to get the point both needed.

## Sreeja attributes recent wins to mental and physical strength, aims to carry momentum to Olympics

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian's top-ranked women's table tennis player Sreeja Akula credits her enhanced mental and physical strength over the past two years for her stunning victories against higher-ranked players as she hopes to carry this momentum into the Paris Olympics. Sreeja created history last week by becoming the first Indian table tennis player to win a WTT Contender singles title and on Tuesday she became the country's top paddler with a career-high ranking of 24. "For the last two years, I have been working a lot on improving my mental strength and I think that is the first aspect where I have improved, especially in 2024. I am mentally well prepared to play



against any opponent, whoever it is," Sreeja said in an interview with Ultimate Table Tennis. "I have also been working a lot on my strength and conditioning, especially to prevent injuries, and to

improve my agility on the table. I think that has made a lot of difference in my game. "I have also worked a lot on my first ball attack against the push. I have tried to be more consistent in attacking that ball and I can see these three

aspects have brought a lot of change in my game," she said. Sreeja would be participating in both the team and individual events and is definitely high on confidence as she has hit a purple patch this year. "It's my debut Olympic Games but I think I am well prepared for it. I just want to play my best in whichever event I am playing and just want to create the maximum number of upsets." Both Indian men's and women's teams have secured a historic qualification in the team event at the Paris Olympics. In 2022, Sreeja had teamed up with Sharath to win the mixed doubles gold in her first-ever Commonwealth Games appearance in Birmingham

## Gukesh beats Deac Bogdan-Daniel in Superbet Classic chess

PTI ■ BUCHAREST (ROMANIA)

Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh started off on a positive note, beating Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania in the first round of the Superbet Classic chess tournament here. Set to challenge reigning World Champion Ding Liren of China later this year, Gukesh got a bit lucky in the middle game as the both players missed a tactical nuance but the Indian emerged on top soon after to give his campaign a positive start in his first classical game since winning the Candidates tournament. The other Indian in fray R Praggnanandhaa tried hard but had to settle for a draw against Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan in a keenly-contested game. The other winner of the round was Fabiano Caruana of the United States, who beat Firouzja Alireza of France, while the other two games in the 10-player round-robin tournament ended in draws. It was a Nimzo Indian defense by Deac



Bogdan-Daniel that led to a complicated middle game. The Romanian was up to the task in finding counter-attacks and won a sacrificed pawn in the middle game. The position looked promising when Gukesh erred and allowed a tactical skirmish. However, Bogdan-Daniel failed to spot the best move and ended up trading his rook

for a minor piece. The position remained complicated but Gukesh converted it with ease. Praggnanandhaa faced the Ruy Lopez with black against Abdusattorov and, after initial opening duel, won a pawn to reach a rook and pawns endgame. While the position remained within the boundaries of a draw, the Indian tried hard for over sixty moves. However Abdusattorov did not give much as the two players eventually decided to split points. Caruana was in a spot of bother in the middle game arising out of a London system but Alireza could not find the right attacking moves. The American exchanged pieces at regular intervals and his extra pawn came in handy in the ensuing queen and minor piece endgame. In other games of the day, Dutchman Anish Giri played out a draw against American Wesley So, while Maxime Vachier-Lagrave of France also had to sign peace against Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi.

# SOUTH AFRICA BANISH AFGHANISTAN, ENTER MAIDEN T20 WC FINAL

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

South Africa exorcised their agonising semifinal jinx through an exceptional spell of pace bowling as they walloped an emotionally drained Afghanistan by nine wickets to enter their first-ever T20 World Cup final here. They will face the winners of the second semifinal between India and England in the title clash, but the Afghans will go home with their heads held high after a stirring run in the tournament. Marco Jansen (3/16) Kagiso Rabada (2/14) and Anrich Nortje (2/7) ripped the soul out of the Afghanistan top-order while bundling them out for a paltry 56 in just 11.5 overs after being invited to bowl. Despite the early departure of Quinton de Kock, bowled through the gate by impressive pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, the Proteas had little trouble in reaching 60 for one in 8.5 overs. Reeza Hendricks (29 not out), who put up his highest score in this event, and skipper Aiden Markram (23 not out) navigated them safely to the shores of victory as they have finally freed themselves from the painful tag of chokers in global events. Afghanistan have given their

everything to reach the World Cup semifinal, and in the crucial clash they were left with no energy, and produced a nothing effort that belied their doughtiness until now. It affected their batting as they looked unusually edgy against the South African pacers, who summoned a spell from hell. They reduced the Afghans to 28 for five inside the Powerplay and there was no coming back from that depth as they crashed to their lowest total in a T20 International. Their 56 was also the lowest total in a T20 World Cup semifinal. Once reduced to 28 for six, Afghanistan could not even offer a smidgeon of fight as their dream of reaching a maiden World Cup final was squashed even before it began. While the South Africa pacers were on the money, the Afghan batters too should cope some blame for being edgy on a pitch that hid no evils apart from those deliveries that kicked up from a length. Opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz was the first to perish, chasing Jansen's delivery outside the off-stump to give Reeza Hendricks an easy catch at slip. The dismissal of in-form Gurbaz seemed to inject doses of panic in the Afghanistan line-up, and Gulbadin Naib was consumed by a lovely in-



coming delivery by Jansen. But the next two dismissals were a combination of bowler's brilliance and batters' irrationality. Ibrahim Zadran, on whom a lot was riding for the Afghans, did not move his feet at all against a Rabada delivery that came back a bit. There was enough room for the ball to sneak past the bat and pad to rattle Zadran's leg-stump. Three balls later in the fourth over, Mohammad Nabi's dismissal was along similar lines and the only difference was that Rabada disturbed the off-stump this time. Nortje joined the party with the scalp of Azmatullah Omarzai, whose slash found Tristan Stubbs in the deep. Gurbaz, Zadran and Omarzai have been the leading run-makers for Afghanistan in this ICC showpiece, but on the crucial day all they could manage was a paltry 12 runs between them. Skipper Rashid Khan, who could have made some valuable runs, chose to expose all his stumps to Nortje to see the one close to his legs getting cartwheelled across the field. Leg-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi (3/6) applied the coupe de grace on Afghanistan batting line with two wickets in one over, jettisoning Karim Janat and Noor Ahmad.



## Laura calls for more red-ball cricket in women's cricket calendar

PTI ■ CHENNAI

South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has called for more Tests in women's cricket calendar and inclusion of red-ball tournaments in the rainbow nation's domestic structure, ahead of their one-off Test against India starting here on Friday. India and South Africa will face off here at Chepauk for only their third Test in history and first in nearly 10 years, a contest for which Wolvaardt conceded her side is not fully prepared for. While a multi-day red-ball women's competition was resumed in India last season, South Africa have no such tournaments.

"Most of us don't have any preparation in the format, since we don't play domestic four-day cricket. It's difficult, since I have to leave the balls that I have been cover-driving my whole life, and I still tend to play it by instinct," Wolvaardt said during a press conference here on Thursday. Citing the lack of preparation for red-ball cricket fixtures which are few and far between, the star batter even suggested scrapping the format. "We either need to play more Tests and incorporate it into the domestic level, or we can just leave it because playing one or three Tests is very hard to adapt to," she said. "But I want to have more of it," Wolvaardt added.



South Africa's last outing in the format was earlier this year in February when they were trounced by Australia by an innings and 284 runs in Perth. After this fixture against India, South Africa's next Test assignment will be against England in December. "Getting the opportunity to

play more red-ball cricket is awesome. Having three scheduled in a calendar year is pretty cool," she added. "I personally really enjoy the format. So, this Test will be a huge challenge for us, and hopefully, we will adapt to the conditions well." "Women's Tests, in general, is a bit unknown as neither teams have too much experience in it. India does have a good home advantage and winning here will be a tough challenge, but we are up for it," she added. "The pitch is expected to be spin-friendly while there is also forecast of rain. "Preparation-wise, we have been facing a lot of spin in the nets lately since it will be the biggest threat here. The balls

were staying low at the nets yesterday," Wolvaardt said. "Batting-wise, it's going to be a big challenge. But thankfully, we have a few top spinners in our squad who are licking their lips and getting ready for the game tomorrow. Hopefully, they are going to put on a great show," she added. With the South African men's team making it to the final of the T20 World Cup, Wolvaardt said her side would also be keeping an eye on Saturday's final. "Most of us woke up early to watch the game, but only to watch them chase 57. It was absolutely amazing to watch and felt incredible. We will definitely watch the final and cheer them on," she said.

## Sri Lanka head coach Chris Silverwood steps down

PTI ■ COLOMBO

Sri Lanka's head coach Chris Silverwood on Thursday stepped down from the role following the team's dismal outing in the ongoing T20 World Cup, the SLC announced. Former captain Mahela Jayawardene had resigned from the post of the consultant coach on Wednesday. "Being an international coach means long periods away from loved ones. After lengthy conversations with my family and with a heavy heart, I feel it is now time for me to return home (England) and spend some quality time together," Silverwood, who played six Tests and seven ODIs for England as a pacer, said in his statement. "It has been a real honour for me to be part of Sri Lanka Cricket and I will be taking away many fond memories,"

added Silverwood. Sri Lanka crashed out of the T20 WC in the group stages itself with two losses, a no result and a solitary win, and it was the former champions' worst performance in the ICC showpiece. During Silverwood's tenure, Lanka won the T20 Asia Cup in 2022 and also reached the final of the 50-over Asia Cup last year where they lost to India. They also secured a slew of bilateral series wins both at home and overseas, including one against Australia in the 50-over format and two away Test series wins over Bangladesh. The SLC has already started the process of finding a new head coach ahead of the team's next international outing against India in a white ball series next month. The Lankans will then head to England for a two-match Test series.

## Rahane joins Leicestershire, to play County Championship and One Day Cup

PTI ■ LEICESTER

Former India skipper Ajinkya Rahane has signed with English county side Leicestershire for the second half of the ongoing season, the club announced on Thursday. As per the deal, he will be featuring in the team's final five games of the ongoing County Championship, besides playing in the One Day Cup, where the Foxes are the defending champions. The 36-year-old joins Leicestershire in place of Wiaan Mulder, who is expected to travel to the West Indies with South Africa in August. Rahane has accumulated over 26,000 runs across formats (First-Class, List-A and T20), having struck 51 hundreds with a top score of an unbeaten 265. Playing for the 'Men in Blue', he has collected more than 8,000 runs, including 15 centuries, along with a best knock of 188 in the New



Zealand Test in 2016. "I'm really excited to have another opportunity to come to Leicestershire. I've built a strong rapport with Claude (Henderson) and Alfonso (Thomas), and I'm looking forward to playing for the Club this summer," Rahane said in a club statement.

"I followed the team's results last year and was very impressed with what I saw. I'm hoping to enjoy my cricket and contribute to more success for the Club this season." Rahane is expected to arrive in mid-July, with his first contest being away to Notts Outlaws in the One Day Cup on July 24. "We are thrilled to welcome someone of Ajinkya's quality to Leicestershire. It was unfortunate that Ajinkya's schedule didn't quite work with our last year. But, it's a massive boost to have secured his services for the business end of this season," commented Leicestershire's Director of Cricket, Claude Henderson. "He holds immense experience and vital leadership qualities, which will be hugely beneficial to the team alongside his run-scoring ability. Ajinkya's arrival also presents a fantastic opportunity for our batters to learn from one of the game's best."



## Bumrah is 1000 times better than me: Kapil Dev

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Iconic former India all-rounder Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a "1000 times better" bowler than what he was at his prime. Bumrah, who has been doing exceptionally well in the ongoing T20 World Cup, snaring 11 wickets at an outstanding economy of 4.08 in the 23 overs he has bowled so far. "Bumrah is 1000 times better than me. These young boys are far better than us. We had more experience. They are better," Kapil told PTI Videos. Bumrah, who is widely regarded as the best pacer in international cricket now,

has played 26 Tests for India, picking up 159 wickets and an economy of under three. His 89 ODI appearances have yielded 149 wickets while his T20I wicket count stands at 85 from 68 matches. Kapil ended his career with a then world record 434 Test wickets and is considered one of the best all-rounders of all time who also claimed 253 ODI scalps. The 65-year-old, who led India to their maiden World Cup title in 1983, also lauded the overall fitness levels of the current national team. "They are very good. Outstanding. They are fitter. They are much more hardworking. They are fantastic," he said.

## Debutantes in focus as India women take on SA

PTI ■ CHENNAI

The focus will be on young talent, especially the debutantes, when the Indian women's cricket team squares off against South Africa in a one-off Test starting here on Friday, a decade after the two teams last clashed in a five-day game. With Test cricket not being a regular affair for women, as many as five in the Indian squad could get a debut in the longest format, after having established themselves and proved their mettle in the limited-overs circuit. Also, with India coming off a 3-0 clean sweep in the preceding ODI series against the same side, the momentum is surely with the hosts although this will be a different format altogether. The likes of Uma Chetry, Priya

Punia, Saika Ishaque, Arundhati Reddy and Shabnam Shakil will be the ones to watch as they prepare for their Test debut. The last time India competed in a red-ball match was December 2023, which was their first Test outing in two years. Playing back-to-back home Tests against England and Australia (one each), the hosts were successful in both instances. The Indians last played South Africa in a Test back in 2014 in Mysore, winning it by a comprehensive innings and 34-run margin. Although the focus has generally been on white-ball cricket for the Indian women, head coach Amol Muzumdar has mentioned that there will be more red-ball cricket going forward. He has said that having a Women's Test Championship will add more



value to the bilateral Tests. "It's not a bad idea to have a (Women's) Test Championship, something we can look forward to. But that is for the Board (BCCI and ICC) to decide. If it happens, it's indeed better for the game," he had said on Wednesday. While Harmanpreet Kaur will lead the side with five Tests under her belt, vice-captain Smriti Mandhana is the most

experienced of the lot, having played a Test more than her skipper. Both Mandhana and Jemimah Rodrigues were in good form against England and Australia. They would once again back themselves to come up with a solid show with the bat against the South Africans here. The likes of Shafali Verma and Deepti Sharma will also be expected to come good as they are currently the team's second and third-highest run-scorers respectively in the format. As for bowling, Deepti Sharma and Pooja Vastrakar were lethal forces that gave the England and Australia a hard time in December. Also, Sneha Rana's off-breaks could be a nightmare for the Proteas, especially on the Chennai track, which is traditionally known to assist

spinners. As for South Africa, the women have played just one Test in two years, against Australia in Perth this February, which the latter won comprehensively. Even the South African side has five names in line for Test debuts. However, the team led by Laura Wolvaardt will continue to rely heavily on all-rounders Sune Luus and Delmi Tucker along with Tazmin Brits. With the ball, Masabata Klaas and Anneke Bosch are their top wicket-takers, while spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba can be tricky to face on this track. Chepauk has hosted only one women's Test to date, back in 1976 when India drew against the West Indies. However, Muzumdar asserted that the team is aware of the demands here and will play accordingly.

**VEER MADHO SINGH BHANDARI**  
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**Online Counselling Notice for Admission 2024-25**

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• BTECH • BHMCT • BALLS • BBALLS • BBA • BCA • BPHARM • MTECH • MPHARM • MBA • LLB • LLM • PG DIPLOMA	II	28-06-24 TO 27-06-24	28-06-24 TO 28-06-24	03-07-24	03-07-24 TO 04-07-24	04-07-24 TO 08-07-24
	III	09-07-24 TO 10-07-24	09-07-24 TO 11-07-24	16-07-24	16-07-24 TO 17-07-24	17-07-24 TO 21-07-24
<b>Schedule For Second Year Admissions (Lateral Entry) B.Tech &amp; B.Pharm</b>						
	III	28-06-24 TO 27-06-24	28-06-24 TO 28-06-24	03-07-24	03-07-24 TO 04-07-24	04-07-24 TO 08-07-24

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