



OPINION 6 SUU KYI SPENDS ANOTHER BIRTHDAY IN JAIL

WORLD 9 BIDEN STUMBLES IN FIRST PRESIDENTIAL DEBATE WITH TRUMP

MONEY 10 MARKETS SNAP RECORD-BREAKING RALLY

LUCKNOW, SATURDAY JUNE 29, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3



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DELHI DELUGE AFTER 90 YEARS

INDEPENDENT INDIA'S CAPITAL CHALLENGE



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

RAJESH KUMAR/SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

After enduring scorching heat for several weeks, the national capital on Friday witnessed heavy rainfall, breaking an 88-year record of precipitation in a single day, causing flooding and massive traffic jams across the city.

The IMD data showed 148.5 mm of rain, much of this coming in just a three-hour window between 2:30 am 5:30 am. "The highest ever rainfall recorded in 24 hours at Safdarjung, the primary observatory of Delhi, during the month of June was 235.5 mm on June 28, 1936. The 228.1 mm of rainfall in the 24 hours ending at 8:30 am on Friday is three times more than the June rainfall average of 74.1 mm and the highest for the month since 1936. On June 24, 1936, 235.5 mm rainfall was recorded in the

month of June in Delhi. On June 24, 1933, 139.7 mm rainfall was recorded while Delhi recorded 191.6 mm rainfall on June 30, 1981," the IMD said. "They are checking 24-hour rainfall records for every year since then to see whether this is the second-highest spell after that," officials added. IMD data showed 228.1 mm of rainfall was recorded at Safdarjung, the city's primary weather station, 192.8 mm at Lodhi Road, Mausam Bhavan, 150.4 mm at Ridge, 106.6 mm at Palam, and 66.3

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

Continued on Page 8

One killed in Airport collapse

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

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

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

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

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

Continued on Page 8

NEET not so neat in Parliament

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

While proceedings of the Lok Sabha were adjourned for the day before noon, the attempts to run Rajya Sabha ended with Chairman Jagdeep Dhankar remarks of "worst sacrilege that could be committed for this temple of democracy" following heated exchange of words with Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge who stepped in the Well of the House. Kharge claimed he was forced to take the step as he was being humiliated by the Chair and his voice along with those of other Opposition members went unheard.

Both Dhankar and Speaker Om Birla and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju told Opposition members that they could discuss the matter during the course of the Motion of Thanks but the

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

Continued on Page 8

NEWS BRIEFS

Former CM Hemant Soren gets bail

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



FATF clears India during mutual evaluation

NEW DELHI: The FATF mutual evaluation report recognising India's fight against money laundering and terror financing is satisfying and exemplary, highly placed sources said. As regards the issues flagged by the international watchdog to combat money laundering and terror financing, sources said these were not fundamental or significant deficiencies. Report on P10

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- (4) BHOPAL (MP) ENGLISH
- (5) RAIPUR (CHHATTISGARH) ENGLISH & HINDI
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'Check display of tobacco products in public places'

DC calls for crackdown on plastic

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob discussed the prohibition of tobacco products and polythene in a meeting held on Friday. Additional Municipal Commissioner Pankaj Srivastava and relevant departmental officials were in attendance. During the meeting, Jacob highlighted the detrimental effects of intoxicants on health. "People who consume intoxicants often resort to various drugs for intoxication, leading to severe mental and physical ailments," she stated. She emphasised the necessity of increasing awareness about the hazards of intoxication and promoting habits that avoid such substances. "Consumption of intoxicants is risking one's life," she added. Jacob instructed officials to enforce the Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), which prohibits the



Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob presiding over the meeting

display of tobacco and related items in public places. "Tobacco products displayed for sale at public places, major intersections, and roadsides should be immediately removed. Notices must be issued, and penalties enforced," she said. The divisional commissioner also tasked the MD of City Transport with promoting

tobacco control through stickers and slogans on buses. "Action should be taken against anyone selling or displaying tobacco products within 100 metres of educational institutions," she emphasised. Furthermore, she called for a comprehensive campaign against single-use plastic. "Notices should be issued to shops and carts found using

polythene, with heavy fines imposed. Wholesalers of single-use plastic should be identified, and polythene stocks at their warehouses confiscated. An awareness campaign should be launched to discourage the use of single-use plastic," she said. Meanwhile, in another meeting, Jacob emphasised the strict enforcement of traffic rules to reduce accidents, particularly stressing the importance of helmet use for two-wheeler riders. She instructed regular police patrolling of accident-prone areas. The divisional commissioner directed the additional municipal commissioner to relocate haphazardly parked carts to designated vending zones. She emphasised regular inspections of vending and parking zones, removal of illegal encroachments, and disciplined bus parking. Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh reported on the relocation of 264 vendors from Charbagh Junction to three designated zones, with ID cards issued. Remaining vendors will be accommodated behind railings installed by the Municipal Corporation at Charbagh crossing and at vending zones in Dubagga.

PRE-MONSOON SHOWERS BRING RESPIRE



Pre-monsoon showers brought major relief from the hot and humid conditions in Lucknow late Friday evening. The state capital recorded the maximum temperature at 40.3 degree Celsius, which was 4.2 degrees above normal, while the minimum temperature settled at 29.2 degree Celsius. Generally cloudy sky with a few spells of rain and thundershowers is the forecast for Saturday

Driving licence pendency to be cleared by June 30

Lucknow (PNS): Ram Naresh (name changed) from Gomti Nagar applied for the renewal of his driving licence on May 7 earlier this year. Although his licence was issued on May 24, he has yet to receive the hard copy at his address. Many applicants are facing similar issues and have been repeatedly visiting the Transport department seeking resolutions. Road Transport Officer, Lucknow, UB Singh acknowledged the problem and assured that it would be resolved by June 30. "Between May 20 and May 31, the NIC upgraded the software of the Sarthi portal we use. We have been operating on the upgraded version since June 1. Due to some disparities in the printing process, licences were not getting printed. However, this issue has been addressed, and all applicants who applied during this period will receive their licences by June 30," he said. Singh explained that a total of 1.5 lakh applications for driving licences were made across UP between May 20 and May 31, with 2,200 from Lucknow alone. "With the system now running on the updated version, the problems have been resolved. From June 4 and 5, new driving licences are being issued, and the backlog is also being cleared. Currently, the pending applications in Lucknow are between 800-900, which will be completed by June 30. This deadline has been set by the transport commissioner, and a dedicated team is working on the issue," he added.

Bizman deprived of ₹2-crore profit share

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Rakesh Kumar Jaiswal, a businessman from Vibhuti Khand, was allegedly duped of his Rs 2-crore profit share in an investment scheme involving a company run by his friend. According to Jaiswal, his friend Kunwar Bahadur aka KV Singh convinced him to invest Rs 30 lakh in the company with promises of significant returns. Singh introduced Jaiswal to Kamlesh Singh, claiming he

was a director in a Canada-based company. Subsequently, Jaiswal and his wife were made directors of a service centre in Noida under Singh's proposal. The victim was assured a profit share of Rs 2 crore against his investment. However, Jaiswal claimed that despite assurances, Singh and Kamlesh failed to fulfil their promise. "I filed a complaint at the police station, and Singh was summoned in 2023. He initially promised to pay but later reneged on his commitment. Now, he is threatening me for demanding my rightful share," Jaiswal alleged. In another incident, a man identified as Ziaur Rehman from Bareilly district was arrested for allegedly duping a victim of over Rs 6 lakh. He reportedly posed as a customer care representative after posting his contact number in advertisements on Google. The victim, who lost Rs 90 while purchasing a product through an app, contacted the number for customer support. The accused, impersonating a customer care agent, convinced the victim to share his OTP to resolve the issue. Instead, Ziaur Rehman used the OTP to siphon off more than Rs 6 lakh from the victim's account.

UP Tourism department organises 'Bodhi Yatra'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Tourism department organised 'Bodhi Yatra', a Buddhist conclave, in New Delhi on Friday. The programme aimed to promote the Buddhist pilgrimage sites in Uttar Pradesh, attracting both domestic and international tourists. The Tourism department had also extended invitations to ambassadors, high commissioners, and officials from other countries including Argentina, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Indonesia, Japan etc. Distinguished members from national and international commerce and industry associations, travel writers and bloggers also attended this conclave. Speaking about the conclave, UP Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh emphasised its significance in showcasing the state's rich Buddhist heritage. He highlighted that Uttar Pradesh is a historical centre of Buddhism and home to numerous significant pilgrimage sites associated with Buddhism. The state attracts a substantial number of Buddhist pilgrims and tourists from around the world each year.



The conclave included detailed presentations and discussion on investment opportunities in the Buddhist Circuit of Uttar Pradesh and the benefits and subsidies under the Uttar Pradesh Tourism Policy-2022. "A cultural programme featuring performances based on the extraordinary journey of Lord Buddha was the highlight of the conclave. The primary objective of the conclave was to boost foreign tourist arrivals, showcasing Uttar Pradesh's vast tourism potential and Buddhist heritage. The state government is actively pursuing various initiatives and collaborations to achieve this goal, with recent MoUs expected to yield positive results soon. The government aims to make Uttar Pradesh a \$1-trillion economy by 2027, with tourism playing a significant role," a tourism official said. He said Uttar Pradesh is renowned as the land of Buddha, housing six major Buddhist sites: Kapilvastu, Kaushambi, Kushinagar, Shravasti, Sankisa, and Sarnath. The Tourism department is developing Sankisa as a world-class tourist destination to attract more international Buddhist followers at this place. The state government is focused on enhancing tourist facilities at all the six Buddhist sites to better serve tourists.

Cancer hosp to run on lines of Tata Memorial

Lucknow (PNS): The Kalyan Singh Super Specialty Cancer Institute (KSSSCI) in Chak Ganjaria is set to be developed along the lines of Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai. Efforts in this direction have intensified, and the proposal was approved during the governing body meeting of the institute, which will continue to provide treatment for the poor and offer benefits from government schemes.

"The institute is being developed on the Tata model to provide better and modern treatment to cancer patients. Tata employs a revenue share model, where paid OPD, investigations, and admission services are provided. Part of the income generated from patient registration will go to the doctors, and the rest will go to the institute's account to aid in its development," Director Dr RK Dhiman said. He assured that the existing system of OPD, admission, and investigations for general patients would remain unchanged. "Patients will continue to receive benefits from schemes such as CM, PM Fund, Ayushman Bharat, and Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay. Charges for investigation and treatment will remain normal," he said. The director also mentioned that a budget of Rs 309 crore had been approved to enhance the institute's facilities. "With this budget, facilities for patients and their attendants will be developed. Resources for doctors and staff will also be increased, and the appointment of doctors will be expedited," he said.

PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY MARINE DEPARTMENT
 No. MD/ACCTS/MR-16/2023/703 Date: 25.06.2024
E-TENDER CALL NOTICE-CUM-E-AUCTION
 Name of the work: Manning, Maintenance and Commercial Operation of PPA Dry Dock and Other Ancillaries on payment of Licence Fee for a period of 05 (Five) years. Reserved price: Rs.13,97,52,584/- plus GST as applicable for 05 years. Last date & time of Submission of tender through on-line bidding is 15:00 hours on dt.16.07.2024. Date & time for opening of Technical Bid is 15:30 hours on dt.17/07/2024. For details, please log on to the website: <https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app>.
 Sd/- Deputy Conservator, Paradip Port Authority
 PPA/PR/19/2024-2025 dtd.27.06.2024

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 अंग्रेजी समाचार पत्र दि पायोनियर के दिनांक 17 जून, 2024 के संस्करण में प्रकाशित कराये गये विज्ञापन, जो कि महाविद्यालय में तृतीय श्रेणी कर्मचारी (कनिष्ठ सहायक) के रिक्त पद को सीधी भर्ती द्वारा भरे जाने हेतु आवेदन पत्र आमंत्रित किये जाने के संबंध में है, में आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त व जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 30 जून, 2024 के स्थान पर 07 जुलाई, 2024 तक विस्तारित की जाती है। अतः उक्त प्रकाशित विज्ञापन को इस सीमा तक संशोधित माना जाये।
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 प्राचार्य

JITF INFRALOGISTICS LIMITED
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 Website: www.jindainfra.com, E-mail: contactus@jindainfra.com

NOTICE OF THE 17TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the 17th Annual General Meeting ("AGM") of the Company will be held on Monday, 22nd July 2024 at 12.30 P.M. at Hotel Grand Rajputana, Telghani Naka Chowk, Station Road, Raipur-492001, Chhattisgarh to transact the business as set out in the Notice convening the said Annual General Meeting. The Notice of AGM along with Annual Report for the Financial Year ended 31st March 2024 has been sent to the members who hold shares as on record date, i.e., 21st July 2024, by email, whose email id is registered with the Company/Depository(s) and the physical copy to all the other members. The said documents can also be viewed on the company's website at www.jindainfra.com.

Notice is also hereby given that pursuant to section 91 of the Companies Act, 2013 and regulation 42 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the Register of Members and Share Transfer Books of the Company shall remain closed from 16th July 2024 to 22nd July 2024 (both days inclusive) for the purpose of AGM.

Further, pursuant to the provisions of section 108 of the Companies Act, 2013 read with rule 20 of Companies (Management and Administration) Rules, 2014 and regulation 44 of SEBI (Listing Obligations and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2015, the Company is providing remote e-voting facility to its members to cast their vote electronically on the resolutions to be transacted at 17th AGM of the Company.

The member please note the following:

- The remote e-voting shall commence at 9.00 a.m. on Friday, 19th July, 2024 and shall end at 5.00 p.m. on Sunday, 21st July 2024.
- The remote e-voting shall not be available beyond 5.00 p.m. on Sunday, 21st July 2024.
- The cut-off date for determining the eligibility of members for remote e-voting and voting through poll at AGM is 16th July 2024.
- Any person who becomes member of the Company after dispatch of notice of the meeting and holding shares as on cut-off date i.e. 16th July, 2024, may obtain the user id and password by contacting RCMC Shares Registry (Pvt.) Ltd., R & T Agent of the Company at B-25/1, Okhla Industrial Area Phase II, New Delhi - 110020, phone- 011-26387320-21, Fax- 011-26387322, Email-evoting@rcmcdelhi.com.
- The members who cast their vote through remote e-voting may also attend the AGM but shall not be allowed to cast their vote at AGM.
- The facility of voting through poll shall be available at the AGM to those members who have not casted their vote through remote e-voting.
- Members may go through the e-voting instructions provided in the AGM Notice or visit <https://evoting.nsd.com> and in case of any queries, you may refer the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for members and e-voting User Manual for members available at the download section of <https://evoting.nsd.com>.

For JITF Infra Logistics Limited
 Sd/-
 Alok Kumar
 Company Secretary
 ACS-19819

Place: New Delhi
 Date: 28.06.2024

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have changed my name from RINKY SHA To RINKI SAH W/O- RAJU SHA R/O PLOT NO. 10A, DAHELI SUJANPUR, PUSU PURAM, KOYLA NAGAR KANPUR, for future purpose

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Amit Jain to Amit Chandra Jain. In future purpose, I should be known as Amit Chandra Jain. Amit Chandra Jain S/O Prem Chandra Jain 7/182, Swaroop Nagar, Kanpur Nagar 208002

NOTICE

I, Shubhamanand Tiwari S/o Shivprasad Tiwari, R/o 3/554-B, Ruchikhand-1, Shardanagar, Lucknow have changed my old name from Tiwari Shubhamanand Shivprasad to Shubhamanand Tiwari for all purposes.

NOTICE

I Rajbahadur s/o sukh Nandan R/o 28/1 Kamla Tower, Peeli kothi, kanpur, have changed my name to Rajbahadur Dhuriya for all further purposes

NOTICE

I have changed my name from MUKESH SHUKLA To MUKESH KUMAR SHUKLA S/O- SHIV GOPAL SHUKLA R/O ARAJI-307, KARRAHI ROAD, NEAR SANTOSH BABA MANDIR, KHADEPUR KANPUR, for future purpose

NOTICE

It is informed to the general public that in the high school mark sheet of my son Ayush Yadav, due to mistake, the father's name has been recorded as MAHESH PRASAD YAVAD whereas in other documents the correct name is MAHESH PRASAD YADAV. In future, MAHESH PRASAD YADAV should be read and considered as MAHESH PRASAD YADAV. Mahesh Prasad Yadav s/o late Hari Prasad Yadav, R/o-Janki Kheda., Belgarha, Malihabad, Lucknow

Passport delivery services to be made more user-friendly

Lucknow (PNS): Regional Passport Officer Shubham Singh on Friday announced several citizen-centric initiatives aimed at making passport delivery services more user-friendly and transparent. Speaking at a press conference at the Regional Passport Office, Singh detailed the new measures. One key initiative is 'Meet the RPO', which allows individuals to meet the regional passport officer every Wednesday from 11 am to 2 pm. Additionally, a WhatsApp number (9454004092) has been launched for direct messaging during official working hours to answer queries. Singh also mentioned that the office handles queries via 'X' and email directly. To enhance transparency, the passport office has displayed a list of services and their costs at all Passport Seva Kendras (PSKs) and the Regional Passport Office. During his two-month tenure, Singh observed numerous document-related queries. He emphasised that only three documents are mandatory for passport applications: one proving the date of birth, one as address proof, and one for educational qualification. Singh advised applicants to avoid mistakes when filling out forms and to ensure the details match those in the pro-

IGNOU launches MBA in health care, hospital management

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Senior Regional Director of SIGNOU, Lucknow, on Friday announced the launch of new programmes aimed at enhancing students' future prospects. She emphasised that all these programmes are designed to be employment-oriented, providing significant benefits to learners. Providing an overview of the Master of Business Administration (Healthcare and Hospital Management) programme, Singh highlighted its development by experts from various universities, hospitals, management institutes, and AICTE. These experts bring expertise in manage-

ment, hospital administration, and public health. Completion of this programme equips learners to contribute effectively to health services on national and international levels. "The programme aligns with IGNOU's mandate and mission by creating a skilled workforce to support healthcare institutions and hospitals, both public and private, ensuring quality healthcare nationwide, including in remote areas. Eligibility requires candidates to have a minimum of 50% marks in graduation, with reserved category candidates needing at least 45%," she added. The programme spans four semesters, totaling 112 credits. Graduates of the pro-

3 pvt parties qualify for final selection DEBRIS REMOVAL IN AKBAR NAGAR

chosen contractor must clear the area within four weeks, with penalties specified by the LDA for delays. A committee chaired by LDA Secretary Vivek Srivastava and comprising five members was tasked with selecting the lowest bidders to ensure transparency. Following the auction on Thursday, the committee identified three private parties and forwarded their details to the LDA vice-chairman for the final decision. While the tender is reportedly valued at Rs 50 lakh, LDA officials, including the vice-chairman, declined to comment on the financial specifics, possibly to maintain procedural integrity. The vice-chairman mentioned the challenge in quantifying the debris volume across the 25-acre Akbarnagar area, where over 1,200 houses (both temporary and permanent) and 200 shops and warehouses were demolished to pave the way for the 'Kukrail Riverfront' project.

Lucknow (PNS) Three private parties have qualified for the final selection after participating in an auction to secure a contract for debris removal from the Akbarnagar area. They emerged as the lowest bidders among 15 parties involved in the tender process, which concluded on Thursday. Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi will make the final selection during a review meeting scheduled for Saturday. The debris disposal process is slated to commence from July 1. The

Yogi for promoting M-Sand for sustainable development

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has given instructions to promote M-Sand (manufactured sand) as an alternative to river sand and moram. Under the chief minister's guidance, the state government is set to implement the M-Sand Policy very soon, ensuring the availability of a new alternative to natural sand/moram.

On Friday, while discussing the proposed policy with the Geology and Mining department, the chief minister said that efforts should be made to promote sustainable development without harming the environment and river ecosystems. In this context, M-Sand is a better alternative, he added. The chief minister mentioned that given the limited availability of riverbed sand and its increasing demand, M-Sand should be encouraged as an alternative to sand obtained from the riverbed. This will also create new employment opportunities, he added. During discussions on the new policy, the chief minister said that maintaining the quality standards of M-Sand was extremely important as it involved the safety of life and property. He mandated that all M-Sand manufacturers obtain Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) certification without exception.

The chief minister said that as the nodal department, the Geology and Mining department should coordinate with licensees and stakeholders at both state and district levels to



expedite the production of M-Sand. Efforts should be made to make M-Sand conveniently available to the general public and the price of M-Sand should be low compared to natural moram/sand, he said, adding that environmental standards should be strictly followed in the units related to it. Keeping in view the convenience of mining lease holders, the chief minister has instructed to simplify the issuance process of the e-Abhivahan form (EMM-11). He said that the process of issuing it should be streamlined at the district level, with a defined timeline for processing and monitoring of this process should be done by the department concerned. To tackle vehicle overloading during mineral transportation effectively, the chief minister has directed the enhancement of task forces in districts. He has emphasised that the best approach to prevent overloading is from the 'zero point', meaning enforcement should

start at the mining site where sand, moram, gravel, and other sub-minerals are loaded onto vehicles. A joint team of local officials of the district administration, police administration, transport and Geology and Mining department should act as a task force to ensure effective enforcement. Additionally, the chief minister stressed on conducting inspections of sand/moram transportation with practicality to avoid unnecessary inconvenience to the public. Chief Minister Yogi instructed the officials that a vehicle tracking system be employed for real-time monitoring of vehicles transporting minerals. He emphasised the issuance of the e-Abhivahan form only when the vehicle is physically present within the designated geofenced mining area. Furthermore, he stressed the utilisation of barren land instead of fertile land for establishing brick kilns. Chief

Minister Yogi directed officials to engage with entrepreneurs in this sector and raise awareness about avoiding the use of fertile land. Emphasising the need to control the prices of sand/moram during the rainy season, the chief minister also reviewed their storage arrangements. It was noted that while there were 533 storage sites in the year 2023-24, this session has seen an increase to 645 storage sites. Additionally, the quantity of stored materials has increased compared to last year. During the meeting, the chief minister was informed that 44,547 enforcement actions were undertaken in the year 2022-23, with the number rising to 57,539 in 2023-24. As of May in the current financial year, enforcement actions have already been initiated in 9,451 cases. These consistent efforts have effectively reduced illegal activities and contributed to an increase in revenue.

Mohan Bhagwat to release book on Abdul Hamid on July 1

Lucknow (PNS): A book on Veer Abdul Hamid, the hero of the 1965 India-Pakistan war and Param Vir Chakra awardee, has been written following a suggestion by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat. The 180-page book details the entire story of the Param Vir Chakra recipient. The book launch is scheduled for July 1 in Ghazipur, where the RSS chief will unveil it. The event is being organised at the request of Veer Abdul Hamid's eldest son, Zainul Hasan, who has met Bhagwat twice. Zainul shared that the book, titled 'Mere Papa Paramveer Hain', was authored by Mumbai's Dr Rama Chandran Srinivasan. Zainul's first meeting with Bhagwat in Ghazipur led to the idea of making a film about his father. However, Bhagwat suggested that a book should be written first. The book launch will coincide with the celebration of the Param Vir Chakra awardee's birth anniversary on July 1. Three months ago, Zainul wrote to the RSS chief expressing his desire to meet him and present the book. Shortly after, a message through Lucknow's pracharak Ramesh confirmed that Mohan Bhagwat would indeed launch the book. Bhagwat has visited Hathiyaram Math in Ghazipur twice, where he held deep discussions with Zainul. Inspired by Bhagwat's insights, Zainul highlighted that the book chronicles the bravery of Veer Abdul Hamid during the 1965 India-Pakistan war, specifically his heroic act of destroying Pakistan's Patton tanks, which turned the tide of the war.

Bioplastic Park to be set up in Gola Gokarannath

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a major initiative to combat environmental pollution, the Yogi Adityanath government is set to establish a Bioplastic Park in Uttar Pradesh with an investment of Rs 2,000 crore. This park will be developed over 1,000 hectares in Kumbhi village of Gola Gokarannath tehsil in Lakhimpur Kheri district. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed that the project be completed as soon as possible. The Bioplastic Park will be set up by Balrampur Sugar Mill Firm, creating a large number of jobs and paving the way for the establishment of many other supporting industries in the area. The Uttar Pradesh

Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) will serve as the nodal agency for the park's development. Bioplastic is a type of plastic made from natural materials such as corn, sunflower or sugar beet, also known as natural plastic. It decomposes quickly, thereby reducing environmental pollution. Using bioplastic not only promotes environmental sustainability but it can also be used in various industries such as packaging, ready-made garments, electronics, and other industrial products. The development and use of bioplastic helps in reducing the threat of plastic pollution and can significantly improve environmental conditions.

The establishment of the Bioplastic Park will not only generate new job opportunities in scientific and technical fields but also serve as a hub for scientists and researchers to enhance plastic manufacturing capabilities using cutting-edge technologies and research. The park will focus on developing and studying various plastic-related technologies. Notably, the scientific research in the park will lead to the development of new technological products for the effective use and recycling of plastic. This research will help solve environmental problems caused by plastic and study the latest techniques to reduce plastic pollution and recycle contaminated plastic.

YES-TECH to be launched statewide

Lucknow (PNS): In a significant move to safeguard farmers' crops, the Yogi Adityanath government is set to initiate new measures in Uttar Pradesh. Under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, the implementation of the Yield Estimation System based on Technology (YES-TECH) is set to commence statewide. Concurrently, efforts are underway to enhance the monitoring and maintenance of crops through the Restructured Weather-Based Crop Insurance Scheme (RWBCIS). Notably, a comprehensive strategy was devised to shield the state's crops from seasonal adversities, ensure crop insurance for farmers, and strengthen crop inspections at the gram panchayat level. The Agriculture department has now begun the process of appointing a

technology implementation partner (TIP) to execute the YES-TECH initiative across the state. The Agriculture department has begun the process of collecting data related to crops of the Rabi and Kharif seasons in 75 districts of the state. For RWBCIS through the YES-TECH process, the focus is currently mainly on wheat and paddy crops. Data collection will cover the years 2023-24, 2024-25 and 2025-26 and will be combined based on YES-TECH Manual-2023. After module development, other insured crops can also be linked to it. The assessment report will be prepared according to the assessment periods of a total of five seasons, including mid-season report (MSR) and end-season report (ESR). To complete all these processes, the technology implementa-

tion partner will deploy machine learning and artificial intelligence modules. As per Chief Minister Yogi's vision, emphasis is being laid on ensuring crops at the gram panchayat level in all districts and providing insurance cover to the farmers. With this, the government aims to extend the benefit of Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. Additionally, the process of benefiting the farmers through the RWBCIS has also been started. Under this process, crops like banana, chili, betel leaf as Kharif crops, and tomato, capsicum, green peas and mango as Rabi crops have been prioritised. The final dates for crop-wise insurance are June 30 for banana and betel leaf, July 31 for chili, November 30 for tomato, capsicum and green peas, and December 15 for mango.

Mayawati corners SP over Sengol issue

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Politics on the Sengol has heated up amidst the special session of Parliament. Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati has now reacted to the demand to remove the Sengol from Parliament. She has cornered the Samajwadi Party over the issue, saying that there is need to be cautious of the tactics of SP.

Mayawati posted on 'X' on Friday that along with speaking on whether to put the Sengol in Parliament or not, it would have been better for the SP to corner the Central government in the interests of the weak and neglected sections of the country and on issues of general public interest. She added that while the truth is that this party (SP) remains silent on most of such issues and after coming to power, it takes decisions against the weaker sections and ignores their great men.



She asked people to be cautious of all the tactics of SP. There is a political uproar over the demand of SP MP RK Chaudhary from Mohanlalganj Lok Sabha seat of UP to remove the Sengol from Parliament. Chaudhary wrote a letter to the Lok Sabha speaker and pro-tem speaker, saying that a huge copy of the Indian Constitution should be installed in place of the Sengol. He said the Sengol was a symbol of kings and emperors, and it should be removed from

Parliament. Politics intensified on this demand of the SP MP. After this, SP national president Akhilesh Yadav came to the rescue of his party's MP. He said that the SP MP must be saying this because when the Sengol was installed for the first time, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had saluted it properly but this time, while taking oath, perhaps he forgot to do so the same. Perhaps the party MP has written such a letter to remind Modi of the same, Yadav added.

Four more IPS officers shifted

Lucknow (PNS): The reshuffle in the bureaucracy of Uttar Pradesh continued on Friday with four more IPS officers being shifted in the state. Vikas Kumar has been made the new police chief of Balrampur district while Alok Priyadarshi has been given the responsibility of the police chief of Farrukhabad. Brijesh Singh has been removed from ATS and made the police chief of Budaun while Keshav Kumar has been kept on the waiting list for now.

Youth electrocuted

Amethi (PTI): An 18-year-old youth got electrocuted after an overhead power line fell on him in Jais area here on Friday, police said. The incident took place in Pure Azim village when Harikash went to an orchard to graze his cattle. A wire from an overhead power line broke and fell on him, Jais Inspector-in-charge Ravi Kumar Singh said. Harikash died on the spot, Singh said, adding that the body has been sent for post-mortem examination.

Stakes high for both INDIA bloc and BJP in UP assembly bypolls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After the stunning victory of A Samajwadi Party in the Faizabad Lok Sabha constituency, the battle for the by-election to Milkipur is hotting up. SP MP Awadesh Prasad was MLA from Milkipur assembly constituency in Faizabad district. The stakes are high for the Bharatiya Janata Party as it lost the Faizabad Lok Sabha seat which includes Ayodhya, where the Ram temple was inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22 this year. The BJP hopes to regain some lost ground if it wins the Milkipur assembly seat. Katheri assembly seat in neighbouring Ambedkar Nagar district has also high stakes as SP MLA Lalji Verma has also been elected to the Lok Sabha. The opposition INDIA bloc faces the challenging task of proving that it retains the tempo generated by the victory in the Lok Sabha polls. The

upcoming bypolls to 10 Uttar Pradesh assembly seats may answer the question. SP and Congress, both constituents of INDIA bloc, have announced their alliance not only for the bypolls but also for the 2027 UP assembly elections. The bypolls will also be a test of whether the slump in BJP's Lok Sabha seat tally in the state will have any bearing on the assembly seats. The Election Commission of India is yet to announce the schedule for the bypolls but political parties in UP have started the preparations. The 10 assembly seats where bypolls will be held are the ones vacated by MLAs who contested and won the Lok Sabha elections. "Our preparations are on. Talks over seat-sharing are in progress. Top-level leaders of both the parties (Congress and SP) are in touch. We will continue to fight in alliance with the SP under the INDIA bloc. We will win the bypolls on all

the seats the way we defeated the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections on a majority of seats," said SP spokesman Rajendra Chaudhary. On the other hand, the BJP, having suffered a big setback in the Lok Sabha elections, is gearing up for a massive ground campaign to boost the morale of its cadre and reach out to the voters. "We will fight the bypolls with full spirit and will retain almost all the seats," said BJP spokesperson Manish Dixit. Among the seats that will be held by bypolls is SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's Karhal assembly seat, Khair (Aligarh), Kundarki (Moradabad), Katheri (Ambedkar Nagar), Phulpur (Prayagraj), Ghaziabad, Majhawan (Mirzapur), Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar) and Milkipur (Ayodhya). In political circles it is believed that the INDIA bloc may pose a formidable challenge to the ruling BJP and boosting the

morale of the party cadre after its performance in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls would be a challenging task for the BJP. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance experienced a significant setback, with a decline in both seat tally and vote share. The BJP's vote share decreased from 49.98 per cent in 2019 to 41.37 per cent in 2024. The Apna Dal (Sonehal) saw its vote share shrink from 1.21 per cent in 2019 to 0.92 per cent in 2024 and it won only one seat. The Bahujan Samaj Party, which contested the parliamentary elections solo, also faced a substantial decline in its vote share which dropped from 19.43 per cent in 2019 to 9.39 per cent with zero seats in 2024. In a notable shift, the SP, which had not won any reserved seats in 2019, secured seven reserved seats, while its ally Congress won one reserved seat. In 2019, all reserved seats were won by the BJP, BSP and Apna Dal (S).

3 kids drown while bathing in river

PTI ■ SULTANPUR

Three children drowned in the Gomti river here while bathing, police said on Friday. The incident happened in the Barua area on Thursday when Farhan (12), Abid (10), Hasnain (13) and some other friends went to the river, they said. The three boys got trapped in the waves while bathing. Seeing this, their friends started calling for help and passersby rushed to the spot, they said. District and police officials also reached the spot after getting information. Local divers searched for the boys till 11 pm but failed to trace them, Inspector Sriram Pandey said. A team of State

Disaster Response Force (SDRF) from Ayodhya was on Friday morning deployed for the rescue operation and the bodies were fished out from the river after an hour-long effort, he said. The bodies have been sent for post-mortem, he added.

LIGHTNING STRIKE KILLS TWO

Two people, including a teenage girl died in Kudwar area after they were struck by lightning here on Friday, police said. The incident took place in Sehgauli village around 3 pm when Kusum Kori (46) and Nancy (13) were standing under a tree because of rain, said Ram Vilas Yadav, SHO at Kudwar Police Station. Sub-

Divisional Magistrate Thakur Prasad said that due financial assistance will be given to the family members of the victims.

MAN DIES AS DUMPER CATCHES FIRE

A man was killed and two others were injured on Friday morning after their dumper collided with a tree and caught fire here, police said. According to police, the incident occurred in Vir Dhora Semra on the Haliyapur-Sultanpur road when Shailendra (45), the driver of the dumper was taking the vehicle to unload gravel. The driver lost control of the vehicle and it collided with a tree, Para police station in charge R B Suman said.

The dumper soon caught fire killing Shailendra on the spot. Two other people, including the co-driver of the vehicle, were injured. The locals reached the spot, brought the fire under control and informed the police, Suman said. Upon receiving information, the police immediately rushed to the spot and began to rescue the injured. One of the injured was trapped in the vehicle and was rescued by cutting it with a gas cutter. While the other one was rescued safely, he said. All three were rushed to the hospital where doctors declared Shailendra dead on arrival and the two injured are undergoing treatment, he added.

3 arrested in 'digital arrest' case

Lucknow (PNS): With the arrest of three accused on Friday, the cyber police claimed to have solved the 'digital arrest' case in which a man was duped of Rs 2.71 crore. The accused had also duped another man of Rs 43 lakh using the same modus operandi. "The accused duped of two persons of over Rs 3 crore while impersonating police officers and CBI sleuths probing money laundering case. They intimidated the victims claiming his involvement in a money laundering case," the police said. On the fateful day, the victim got a call from an unknown mobile number and the caller told him that his credit card and his identity were used in illegal transaction of money and that he was a suspect in the Suresh Anurag money laundering case. The victim was then asked to confine himself to a room at his house and talk to a CBI officer heading the 'probe'. This way, the accused digitally arrested the victim and forced him to cough up Rs 2.71 crore. The accused were identified as Yaspal, Keshav Goel and Sanket Kumar, all of Agra. The police team recovered five mobile phones, cheque books and other items from the possession of the accused. PTI

Ensure start commercial operations of Noida airport by Dec: Govt to officials

PTI ■ NOIDA

The Uttar Pradesh government on Friday asked officials to ensure that the commercial operations of Noida International Airport must begin by December this year. State Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra issued the directions after a review meeting with concerned officials and a physical inspection of the airport site in the Jewar area of Gautam Buddha Nagar. The development for the first of four phases of the project is underway. The chief secretary's visit came close on the heels of the airport developer Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL) pushing the commercial operations to April 2025 from the earlier projected date of September 29, 2024. YIAPL is a special purpose vehicle of Zurich Airport International AG, the concessionaire for the mega greenfield project of the UP government. During the review meeting, YIAPL informed the chief secretary that contractor Tata Projects is working on the completion of the ATC (air traffic control) building. "The building will be handed over to the Airport Authority of India for ATC equipment installation by August, and the

The chief secretary's visit came close on the heels of the airport developer Yamuna International Airport Private Limited (YIAPL) pushing the commercial operations to April 2025 from the earlier projected date of September 29, 2024

installation will be completed by September," according to an official statement. Currently, work on electric lighting is underway on the runway and apron. Navigation equipment, including the glide path antenna and localizer, has already been installed near the runway, it stated. "The chief secretary directed officials concerned that all equipment to be installed by the Airport Authority of India must be completed by September... He instructed them that the airport's development should be completed on time by September 2024, and commercial operations must commence by December," the statement said. During the inspection of the terminal building, the concessionaire informed the chief secretary

that the facade and roof work is in progress, and finishing work on the pier has begun. Installation of automated baggage handling system is also progressing, the statement said. CEO of Noida Airport and YIAPL Christoph Schnellmann, COO Kiran Jain, CEO of Noida International Airport Limited (NIAL) Arun Vir Singh, and project's nodal officer Shailendra Bhatia, among others, apprised Mishra about the developments related to the project. The meeting also discussed issues related to security, communications, navigation and surveillance systems for air traffic management, and the DGCA (aviation regulator), with participation from officials of the respective central agencies. The chief secretary asked the concessionaire to ensure that all departmental requirements and regulations are adhered to and that any issues are resolved by September, according to the statement. "Commercial operations of the airport must begin in December under all circumstances," Mishra said. Besides, the chief secretary instructed YIAPL that a catch-up plan should be presented by July 15 after a meeting with representatives of Tata Projects, the statement added.

NHRC notice over death of workers in sewage tank

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission has issued notices to the Uttar Pradesh government and the state's police chief over reports of three workers drowning in a tank of a sewage treatment plant of a multinational IT company in Gautam Buddha Nagar. The authorities "failed to be alert" and conduct proper supervision keeping an eye on such

hazardous activities in which the workers were deployed to undertake such dangerous work, the NHRC observed in a statement on Friday. The commission has taken suo motu cognisance of a media report on three workers drowning in a sewage treatment plant of a multinational IT company in Greater Noida. The victims reportedly fell and drowned in the tank of the sewage treat-

ment plant while repairing a submersible pump to fix overflowing sewer, it said. The National Human Rights Commission observed that the content of the news report, if true, raises serious issues about the violation of the rights of the victims. Accordingly, it has issued notices to the chief secretary and the director general of police of Uttar Pradesh,

seeking a detailed report within a week, the statement said. The report should include the status of the FIR registered, action taken against the persons responsible, as well as relief and rehabilitation provided to the next of kin of the deceased workers by the employer and the authorities concerned, it added. The commission has been consistently advoc-

Solve problems related to sewer lines, MLA directs Jalkal GM

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former UP Minister and MLA from Varanasi South Dr Neelkanth Tiwari has directed the General Manager of Jalkal department to solve problems related to sewer lines before the start of Shravan month. He was hearing the complaints of people at the parliamentary office of Prime Minister Narendra Modi here on Friday. He listened to the people on different issues for about three hours. Surekha from the Manas Temple area of Durgakund, made complaints related to sewer. According to the applicant, thousands of devotees arrive in the fair in the month of Shravan (Sawan) and due to choked and overflowing sewer lines, waterlogging situation often arises. MLA Dr



MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari listening to people's complaints at PM's parliamentary office in Varanasi on Friday.

Neelkanth Tiwari immediately called the GM of Jalkal and directed him to get removed all the sewer related problems on priority before the start of the Sawan Mela. The residents of

Vindhayavasi Nagar near Orderly Bazar complained about encroachment and poor road conditions in the colony. The MLA directed the zonal officer of Nagar Nigam for immediate appropriate action in this direction. Vineet Kumar gave an application alleging corruption in the steno recruitment process in the High Court. Chhangur Gupta lodged a complaint of alleged irregularity in land acquisition in Soyepur. Kailash demanded stoppage of 'harassment' of vendors who did not get place in the vending zone. Maya Dubey, Shanti Tripathi, Vimal Yadav etc gave applications for financial assistance for cancer treatment. The MLA forwarded all complaints to the Chief Minister's office for immediate action.

3 criminals arrested

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Prayagraj police on Friday claimed to have nabbed three hardened criminals of inter-state vehicle robbers' gang and recovered ₹3 lakh cash, a Bolero, Maruti Swift Dzire car and a Splendor bike besides illegal pistol and cartridges from them. The criminals had committed theft of truck on June 23 near IFFCO police post of Phulpur. This truck belonged to Afzar, son of Mohammad Jalil and Fayaz Akhtar, son of Miraj Akhtar, residents of Rudapur Malak Harhar village under Phaphamau police station area. The Phulpur police became alert after this incident of truck theft. The police first arrested Mohammad Shamshad aka Pakanna. The Phulpur police and Prayagraj's SOG team arrested the criminals Ejaz Pathan alias Taj Mohammad of Naiganj, Jaunpur, and Mohammad Shamshad alias Pakadna of an area under Shahganj police station, Soran, Prayagraj, and Ashraf Ali, son of late Jamshed Alam, a resident of Bagrawajit under Maniyari police station Muzaffarnagar district, Bihar. On strict interrogation the criminals confessed to major incidents of robbery and theft. They said during interrogation that they used to steal bikes first and then started stealing cars. Dozens of cases related to robbery and other criminal incidents are registered in various police stations against them. Inspector Phulpur Deendayal Singh said along with the Bolero stolen from Ugrasenpur Bibipur market of Phulpur, a stolen Maruti Swift Dzire, Rs 3 lakh cash and an illegal pistol with three live cartridges were also recovered from the criminals. Singh said that the interstate criminals caught by Phulpur Police and SOG team have a long criminal history. Meanwhile the crime wing of RPF on Thursday night arrested two people for illegally selling train e-tickets.

Illegal plotting demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) demolished three big-sized illegal plotting in zone 2 in Baheda village of Panki on Thursday. The drive was led by the OSD Sat Shukla. The squad removed illegal plotting on around 7.50 bigha area of arazi No 06 belonging to Chandra Shekhar, Guru Prasad, Mauji Lal and others. It bulldozed the boundary wall, drains, roads and electricity poles etc. available there. Besides, the illegal plotting carried out on around 5.50 bighas near Shri Chandra Shekhar Society, belonging to Saurabh Pal, Ramu Pal, Lucky Pal and others (Siyaram Property & Construction) in Baheda, Panki, was also removed. Here too the squad removed the illegal construction of boundary wall, drains, roads and erection of electricity poles. On arazi No.09 illegal



The KDA squad removing illegal plotting in Baheda, Panki area.

plotting along with construction of boundary wall, drains, roads and electricity poles were also demolished by the squad on around 6.50 bighas of land belonging to Ram Kumar and others. In all the cases, the process for lodging FIR against the guilty was on. Meanwhile, the squad removed the unauthorised possession on KDA land in Ratanpur Extension Part-I adjacent to plot No E-17. OSD Sat Shukla, area assistant engineer

50-yr-old woman dies in wall collapse

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 50-year-old woman sleeping on a cot outside the house was killed after a mud wall fell on her in Meja in the wee hours on Friday. The woman's death shocked the family members. Jaydevi, wife of Lekhmani Dubey, a resident of Ulda village under Manda police station area, was sleeping on a cot outside the house when the mud wall suddenly fell on her. On hearing the noise, the people gathered at the spot removed the debris and took the woman out. Her family her to the nearest hospital. By then she had stopped breathing. On the other hand, as soon as the news of the death reached home, her sons, Annu and Omprakash, were inconsolable. On getting the information, revenue inspector and lekhpal Ashok Pandey reached the spot. After the paperwork, the

officers were informed about the incident. After which the family members cremated the deceased at Durgapur Ganga Ghat. Lekhpal Raghavendra Yadav said on the information of the family members, the spot has been inspected. Appropriate compensation will be provided to the next kin of the deceased. The woman died after being buried under the wall. This has been confirmed, he added. **ATTACKED:** BJYM state vice-president Rohit Mishra was attacked by unidentified youths late on Thursday night when he had gone out for a walk after dinner. Youths who came in the Safari chased him and beat him with kicks and punches. They also attacked him with a sharp weapon and tried to run over the Safari on him. When Rohit survived, they tried to kidnap him by pulling him into the car.

The incident which took place at 1.15 am on Thursday night in Balrampur House was captured on CCTV. The Colonelganj police registered a case. Rohit lodged an FIR against unknown persons at the Colonelganj police station. He told the police that he could not identify the attackers. Colonelganj Kotwali inspector Pradeep Kumar Singh said efforts are being made to identify the accused from CCTV. Rohit is originally from Senani Nagar Karanpur Pratnagar. Rohit has been the former president of the Students Union of Allahabad University. He has also been the National secretary of ABVP. In August 2021, Rohit was made the State Vice-President of BJYM. **WORKS REVIEWED:** Chief Development Officer (CDO) Gaurav Kumar reviewed the development works of the district during a meeting held at

the auditorium located in Vikas Bhawan. All the block development officers of the district attended it. CDO Gaurav Kumar directed all the officers to review the development works being done in their block. He said development work should be of quality and completed on time. DDO, Project Director, District Gram Vikas Agency, District Panchayat Raj Officer were present in the meeting. **PROMOTED:** A total of 197 employees of UP Board headquarters and all five regional offices, Meerut, Bareilly, Gorakhpur, Varanasi and Prayagraj have got promotion. These employees celebrated the promotion. UP Board Secretary Dibyakant Shukla congratulated everyone. He said that the employees have got promotion in view of their better work. He asked them to always focus on their work and do it with full dedication.

Prof BC Nirmal honoured with 'Vidhivachaspati'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Prof Bagish Chandra Nirmal, former dean, Faculty of Law; Banaras Hindu University (BHU) and former Vice-Chancellor of National Law University, Ranchi has been honoured with the title of 'Vidhivachaspati' (equivalent to the honorary LLD) by the more than 100 years old historical institution 'Hindi Sahitya Sammelan', Prayag' in its convention held at the Central University of Odisha, Koraput recently. This citation has been given to only five-six eminent personalities in more than hundred years history of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag. This year the institution has honoured Prof Nirmal with this citation for his contribution in the field of justice and jurisprudence through Hindi medium. On the occasion Vice-Chancellor (V-C) of Central University of Odisha, Koraput, Prof Chakradhar Tripathi, chief of Hindi Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag Kuntak Mishra, Prof MP Tiwari and others officials present.

Varanasi launches global call for innovators to find solutions to make city safer

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Varanasi has launched a global call for innovators to find data-driven solutions to make the city safer for the millions of people who visit every year for pilgrimage as part of the Toyota Mobility Foundation's \$9m Sustainable Cities Challenge. The challenge is to better manage the growing influx of annual visitors, while making the city more accessible for tourists and local residents, particularly older people and people with disabilities. Located on the banks of the Ganga river in northern India, Varanasi is widely known as the 'spiritual capital' of the nation. The old city of Kashi within Varanasi is one of India's most important pilgrimage sites, with millions of people visiting every year for religious and cultural reasons. The inflow of tourists, however, when coupled with the city's narrow, winding lanes and dense urban fabric, raises potential questions around safety and overcrowding. The city attracted around 70 million visitors, which reiterates the need to enhance its safety and accessibility, especially as most tourists are middle-aged and elderly people. In 2022, Varanasi's floating population was estimated to be 35 times of its local population.

"Millions of people visit the city every year for religious, spiritual and touristic activities alike. Our leadership is committed to make Kashi safer and more accessible for all. We look forward to working with emerging innovators from around the world and hope that this challenge will help us identify technologies and the solutions that will benefit citizens, pilgrims and tourists of Varanasi. Kashi, one of the oldest surviving cities in the world, has various opportunities for it to be at the forefront of innovation in participatory and holistic development", said Municipal Commissioner Akshat Verma. "We work under the three principles of innovation, partnership and leaving a sustainable legacy and believe that this project has the potential to develop innovative but human centric crowd management solutions that can also be applied to other cities facing similar issues", said Executive Programme Director of the foundation Pras Ganesh. Director of Cities and Societies at Challenge Works, Kathy Nothstine said that as an important site of pilgrimage, the population of Varanasi grows exponentially throughout the year as people come to visit. Executive Director of Integrated Transport, Clean Air & Hydrogen, Sustainable

Cities and Transport, WRI India Pawan Mulukutla said that by strategic interventions and effective crowd management measures, the thriving heritage city of Varanasi can become a torchbearer of sustainable mobility for other tourist destinations globally. Varanasi is one of three cities Detroit (USA) and Venice (Italy). Over 150 cities from 46 countries around the world entered the challenge after the call to cities was first launched in June 2023. Applications for the Varanasi Challenge are open from Thursday until September 5. The function was also attended by Mayor Ashok Tiwari. Up to 10 semi-finalists will be selected in November this year and receive a grant of \$50,000 each. Companies will have the opportunity to directly engage with city leaders, end users, and beneficiaries to customise their solutions and demonstrate them on-ground in the city. In May 2025, up to five finalists will be granted \$130,000 each to test their solutions in a larger area of the city over an extended period to assess their impact and further customise their solutions. In March 2026, up to three winners will be selected to share final implementation funding of \$1.5 million to further scale their solutions in the city.

Woman killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A woman was killed by slitting her throat under mysterious circumstances in Almena village under Makhi police station area of Unnao late on Thursday night. Around 1 am, she had gone to ease herself in her old house situated opposite the new home. On her failing to return from there till 4 am her family members rushed to spot and found her profusely-bleeding body there. There were deep slit marks on her throat. On hearing the cries of kin, local residents also assembled on the spot who informed the police which have started investigation keeping many aspects, including love affair in mind. Mohini Yadav (22) had slept with family members on Thursday night. She had gone to old house to ease herself around 1 am where her father lived alone. CO Rishikant Shukla, ASP (South) Prem Chand along with forensic team rushed to the spot and carried out a probe. Prima facie the woman appeared to have been killed with a sharp-edged weapon by slitting her throat. The police sent the body for an autopsy. The kin were also uncertain about the cause of incident. They are being quizzed by the police.

MEETING ORGANISED: A quarterly meeting of the Rajbhasha Implementation Committee was held at the director's office under the chairmanship of Director Prof Seema Paroha, on Thursday. It discussed the annual programme 2024-25 issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Official Language. Deputy Director (Rajbhasha) briefed the committee extensively on all agenda items. The director emphasised that the National Sugar Institute (NSI) is committed to the development of Hindi and welcomes suggestions in this regard. Prof Seema Paroha, Director and Mallika Dwivedi, Assistant Director (Rajbhasha), presented certificates and prizes to Daya Shankar Mishra, Stenographer Grade-1 for outstanding participation and securing a position in the Food Corporation of India, Kanpur Zone image-based poetry competition. In relation to Rajbhasha implementation, a Hindi workshop was organised. Narendra Singh, representative of the Central Secretariat Hindi Committee, was invited to deliver a lecture.

Prayers for India's victory in T20 World Cup final

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The activists of Namami Gange offered prayers and performed aarti at Ganga Dwar, river side gate of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham on Friday, seeking blessings of Maa Ganga and Baba Vishwanath for India's victory in T20 World Cup final. India will play the final against South Africa at Barbados, a country of Caribbean islands, forming a joint team of West Indies, on Saturday evening as per Indian Standard Time (IST). The Namami Gange team, which inspires people every

day for Ganga's cleanliness, boosted the morale of the Indian team by prayers and aarti, performing Maa Ganga's aarti at Ganga Dwar at Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham for the Indian team's victory over South Africa in the T-20 World Cup Cricket Final. Along with the devotees carrying the national flags and pictures of Indian cricketers, cricket bats, etc, they raised slogans in favour of Indian team like Bharat Mata Ki Jai, Chak De India, Jeetega Bhai Jeetega, Hindustan Jeetega, Badhte Chalo etc. Regional coordinator (Kashi) of Namami Gange Rajesh Shukla,

who was also a state-level cricket player, said that the Indian team is undefeated in the World Cup so far and has made it to the finals by winning all its league, group and semi-final matches. "As cricket is the favourite game of Indians and high hopes of 140 crore Indians are on the Indian cricket team, we wish for the blessings of Vedadhishdev Mahadev and Maa Ganga for the Indian cricket team to become the winner." Prominent participants also present in the event were Ayush Dixit, Sushila Mishra, Rinki Dixit, Alok Verma, Rohit, Abhishek and Suryansh.

Shastri Ghat being beautified with state-of-the-art facilities

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The state government is getting the raw ghat of trans-Ganga in Ramnagar converted into a concrete ghat in the name of the second Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri near his ancestral house there. The government has already built a museum by renovating his residence in Ramnagar, and now Shastri Ghat is also being beautified with state-of-the-art facilities for the visitors. The ghat made of Chunar stones will have a heritage look and its construction work is likely to be completed by this month end. "This work is almost complete", said the Project Manager of Uttar



Pradesh Projects Corporation Limited, adding that special attention has been given to show the heritage look in the construction of Shastri Ghat, so that the architecture of the ghat looks similar to the surrounding historical forts and buildings. "Stone changing rooms, palanquin-like sitting places and railing have been built. Special attention has been paid to heritage lights and greenery in the construction of the ghat. The construction of the ghat is almost 97 per cent

complete. It is likely to be completed by the end of this month", he added. According to him, it is being constructed at a cost of about ₹10.55 crore. The length of the ghat will be 130 metres. For the people visiting the ghat, there will be parking and stairs, besides a ramp for the handicapped and the elderly. Shastri Ghat is located near the Ramnagar Fort of former Kashi Naresh (royal family). Chunar stones similar to the stones of the fort will also be used in the construction of the ghat. With the construction of this concrete ghat, the number of tourists will increase on the other side of the Ganga as well, he added.

Emphasis on integration of Vedic Mathematics in secondary classes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In an effort to walk another mile towards skill-building in Vedic Mathematics with the modern-day education, the Shri Govind Hari Singhania Centre for Advanced Learning in collaboration with the CSJM University (CSJMU) and Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nyas conducted a two-day national workshop on Vedic Mathematics-Advanced Level at Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre recently. It witnessed teachers, research scholars, distinguished mathematicians and intellectuals from acclaimed institutions across the country. Mathematics enthusiasts attended the session live and online. National Vice President, and in charge, Higher Education, Akhil Bhatti, Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nyas and Head of Department, Mathematics, Brahmmanand PG College, Kanpur, Dr Rakesh Bhatia, National Co-Convenor Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nyas, Dr Bindu Singh, State Convenor, Shiksha Sanskriti Uthan Nyas; Dr Namita Tiwari, Head of Department, Mathematics, CSJMU, and Dr BV Rathish



Kumar, Professor, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, IIT Kanpur. Principal Bhawna Gupta was also present at the workshop. Dr Anup Rajput, Head of Elementary Mathematics, NCERT, New Delhi, and Prof Anuradha Gupta, Department of Mathematics, Delhi College of Arts and Commerce, University of Delhi also attended the session online. The workshop commenced with the lighting of the lamp by the chief guest, Dr Mahendra Kumar along with the other distinguished guests. Dr Kumar addressed the teachers and research scholars and focused on the importance of Vedic Mathematics right from ancient times and its integration with modern world education. Distinguished resource person Dr Anup Rajput recapitulated the importance of 360-degree evaluation of mathematics as per NEP 2020. The next two sessions were conducted by eminent scholars Dr Rakesh Bhatia and Dr. Anokhe Lal Pathak who emphasised on the integration of Vedic Mathematics in secondary classes and its application in complex analysis.

Principal Bhawna Gupta delivered her encouraging talk by reiterating the essential features of Vedic Mathematics and its relevance in modern education. On the second day, the workshop commenced with an online session by Prof Anuradha Gupta. Dr Rakesh Bhatia expressed his views on integration of Vedic Mathematics in senior secondary classes. The final session was conducted by Prof BV Rathish Kumar on the Indian knowledge system regarding Mathematics, science and technology. The workshop held at SPSEC proved to be a resounding success bringing together educators from Kanpur, Odisha, Kota, Jharkhand, and Jammu. This workshop was primarily organised for teachers and research scholars aiming to enable them to effectively convey its benefits to their students. Chairperson of the school, Manorama Govind Hari Singhania, vice-chairman, Abhishek Singhania, vice-chairperson, Varsha Singhania, and vice-chairman and director, Partho P Kar, expressed their appreciation over such innovative practices adopted in school.

NIA raids in Guj, Maha in hunt for suspected spies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) Friday conducted searches in Gujarat and Maharashtra on the premises of those suspected to have received money from Pakistan to spy on Indian defence establishments.

The searches were conducted in a case registered by the NIA in June last year.

The agency filed a charge sheet in July 2023 against two accused including an absconding Pakistani national. This was followed by two more charge sheets against three others, including a Pakistani national, a statement issued by the NIA said.

NIA investigations have revealed that Pakistani nationals had collaborated with the arrested accused in the espionage racket, in which sensitive/vital information pertaining to the Indian Navy was being leaked as part of a con-



spiracy to unleash terrorist violence in India, it said.

"Cracking down on suspects involved in the 2021 Visakhapatnam Pakistani ISI espionage case relating to leakage of classified defence information, the NIA on Friday conducted extensive searches at three locations in Gujarat and Maharashtra," the statement said.

The residences of the suspects, believed to have received money from Pakistan to spy on

Indian defence establishments, were thoroughly searched by the NIA teams at three locations. Several incriminating materials, including mobile phones and documents, were seized during the searches.

The NIA is examining the seized materials to identify more linkages in the case, originally filed by the Counter Intelligence Cell, Andhra Pradesh, on January 12, 2021, under various sections of Indian Penal Code, Unlawful

Activities (Prevention) Act and the Official Secrets Act, 1923.

NIA also conducted a series of searches in the Naxal-infested regions of Chhattisgarh in connection with a CPI (Maoist) arrest and arms recovery case. "Half a dozen places in the troubled region were extensively searched, and several mobile phones, a printer, and cash amounting to Rs 39,100 were seized along with incriminating documents," a statement issued by the NIA said.

The six premises subjected to searches are located in the remote villages of Mujalgoni, Kalmuchche, Amabeda and Jiwalamari in Kanker district, it said. The NIA is continuing with its investigation in the case, registered initially by the local police on February 5 this year and taken over by NIA on February 22. Early investigations led to the arrest of two persons in the case, the probe agency said.

Parents, not digital devices help children manage emotions: Study

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Are you one of those parents who hand over digital devices to your kids to escape tantrums? Beware! While it might offer a quick fix, relying too much on screens can hinder your child's development of essential emotional regulation skills.

This could set the stage for issues like poor impulse control or frequent outbursts, turning everyday frustrations into major challenges when they grow up, a study published in *Frontiers in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry* has said. In other words, excessive use of digital devices to distract children can prevent them from learning how to manage emotions independently.

The researchers from Hungary and Canada tracked 300 parents of children aged two to five over a year. They found that children who were frequently pacified with digital devices struggled more with managing anger and frustration. Parents often turned to digital



distractions when their children displayed poor behavior control, but this approach only exacerbated the issue. The study emphasised that the early years are crucial for developing self-control, where children learn to recognize emotions and respond deliberately rather than impulsively. Veronika Konok, a researcher at Eötvös Loránd University in Hungary and the study's lead author, stated, "Tantrums cannot be cured by digital devices. Children must learn to manage

their negative emotions with the help of their parents, not a digital device."

The study suggested that over-reliance on screens can cripple children's ability to handle emotions effectively later in life. The researchers recommended that parents should guide their children through frustrating moments, helping them recognize and handle their emotions rather than avoiding the situation. They also stressed on the importance of parents receiving

support from health professionals through training and counseling to better navigate their child's emotional development.

Dr Shweta Sharma, a clinical psychologist and counselling psychologist, who is not related with the study, agreed with the observations, warning that, "over-reliance on digital devices for emotional regulation could potentially impair children's ability to recognize and manage emotions effectively later in life."

"This may manifest in difficulties with anger management, emotional control, and overall emotional well-being" said Dr Sharma, who also happens to be general secretary of Indian Association of Clinical Psychologists (IACP). Dr. Rabya Umman, an RCI-registered clinical psychologist opined that instead of relying on gadgets, parents should be proactive and supportive, and help their children build strong emotional regulation skills, contributing to better mental health and well-being in the long run.

Modi pays tributes to Narasimha Rao



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid tributes to former prime minister P V Narasimha Rao, widely hailed for introducing various economic reforms, on his birth anniversary. Paying homage to Rao, Modi said in a social media post, "He is remembered for his leadership and wisdom. It is our Government's honour that we conferred the Bharat Ratna on him earlier this year, recognising his rich contribution to



our nation." Born in 1921, Rao was a veteran Congress leader who became prime minister in 1991 after the assassination of former prime minister and party leader Rajiv Gandhi during the Lok Sabha election campaign. The dismantling of what was known as the "license-permit raj" built around the state's rigid control of the economy and encouragement of private enterprise through numerous reforms are considered Rao's enduring legacy as prime minister.

President urged to stall three new criminal laws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

CPI (ML) Liberation MPs on Friday sought President Droupadi Murmu's "urgent intervention" to postpone the implementation of the new criminal laws that are set to come into force from July 1, saying they need a thorough review and wider consensus.

In a letter, the two MPs -- Sudama Prasad and Raja Ram Singh -- said several compelling concerns are being raised from various sections of society and the legal fraternity regarding the three new criminal codes - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam.

The MPs said there are several draconian provisions in the laws that have criminalised the basic civil liberties that citizens enjoy, in particular, the freedom of speech, right to assembly, right to associate, the right to demonstrate and other civil rights, the MPs said. "This is particularly evident in the introduction of a broadened definition of a 'terrorist act' from the draconian UAPA,



the retention of the notorious sedition law (section 124A of IPC) under a new nomenclature and the criminalising of hunger strikes - all of which are likely tools in the criminalisation of legitimate dissent and lawful nonviolent democratic protests," they said. They said there are enhanced arbitrary powers to the police that will have an impact on civil liberties and human rights in the country. "Statutory sanction has been

given to the police to detain persons, without complying with the safeguards around arrest," they said. They also said the new laws have made it mandatory to display prominently, both physically and digitally, the name, address and the nature of the offense of an arrested accused, in every police station and district headquarters. "This provision in addition to violating the right to privacy and human dignity of a person

facilitates the profiling and targeting of individuals by the police prior to any formal conviction," they said. The MPs said handcuffing has been made statutory, while the police have been given discretion in the registration of FIRs. "Most shockingly, the duration of police custody has been enhanced from the present limit of 15 days, to 60 or 90 days (depending on the offence), exposing accused persons to intimidation, torture and danger," they said. The CPI(ML) Liberation leaders said it appears that "half measures have been taken at tackling mob lynching since the relevant provisions in the BNS, while criminalises such actions without specifically calling it as such, has omitted religion as one of the explicit grounds. They also expressed concerns over provisions sanctioning punishments like solitary confinement which they called inhuman.

"Given the massive backlog of criminal cases (3.4 crore cases), bringing these three laws in force at this time, will create two parallel legal regimes, leading to further backlog and placing further strain on the already overburdened judicial system," they said. The MPs said while there is no denying that India's criminal justice infrastructure is in dire need of reform, the three criminal laws are not the answer. "These were passed with undue haste, without any discussion or parliamentary scrutiny given that 146 Opposition MPs were under suspension at the time these laws were passed. As such, it is necessary that the Union government take the decision to suspend the implementation of these three criminal laws and re-introduce them in Parliament for proper scrutiny and deliberations," they said.

The MPs urged the President to make an "urgent intervention". "We share their concerns that the new laws will erode liberties and legal safeguards of citizens by arming the state with more sweeping and draconian powers. The new laws need a thorough review and wider and more informed consensus. Please advise the government against rushing with their implementation," they said.

Nitish in Delhi for party national executive meet



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Bihar Chief Minister and BJP(U) supremo Nitish Kumar on Friday reached Delhi, a day before the party's National Executive meeting scheduled to be held in the national capital. Kumar will chair the National Executive meeting on June 29. According to party insiders, Kumar, who is the party's national president, will also meet JD(U)'s Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs at his official residence in the national capital on Friday evening. The national executive meeting will be attended by party's all MPs, including union Ministers and JD(U) leaders--Rajiv Ranjan Singh alias Lallan Singh and Rammath Thakur and senior leaders from Bihar and other states.

Police stations across India to create awareness on new criminal laws

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

All 17,500 police stations in the country will hold a special event on July 1 involving women, youth, students, senior citizens and eminent personalities to apprise them the key features of the new criminal laws, which will come into force on that day, official sources said.

The new laws -- Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita 2023 and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam 2023 -- will come into effect from July 1. These laws are set to replace the British-era Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act respectively.

Sources said coinciding with commencement of these three criminal laws, an event will be held on July 1 by the Officer-in-Charge of each police station in all states and Union Territories highlighting the key features of the new criminal laws. The programme at the police station or a suitable place will involve women, youth, students, senior citizens, retired police officers, eminent personalities and members of self-help groups, anganwadi centres and local peace committee and also educational institutions like schools, colleges etc, they said. According to a data of the Police Organisations compiled by Bureau of Police Research & Development (BPR&D), there are over 17,500 police stations in the country. All higher education institutions under the University Grants Commission (UGC), All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) as well as in the states and UTs will



organise day long activities on July 1 that will focus on group discussions, workshops, seminars on various provisions of new criminal laws, highlighting the major transformation intended to achieve the ends of justice with wide participation of students, faculties and other staff. Zero FIR, registration of police complaints online, summons through electronic modes and mandatory videography of crime scenes of all heinous crimes are the key highlights of the three new criminal laws. The Union Home Ministry is gearing up to roll out the three new criminal laws from next week with 40 lakh grassroots functionaries trained to ensure people are aware about the legislations and the impact these will have on everyone, particularly women and children, official sources said Wednesday. Over 5.65 lakh police, prison, forensics, judicial and prosecution officials have also been trained about the new laws. The BPR&D also conducted 250 training courses, organised webinars and seminars in which 40,317 officers and personnel have been trained. Under the new laws, victims

will receive a free copy of the FIR, ensuring their participation in the legal process. An interesting addition of the law is that in the event of an arrest, the individual has the right to inform a person of his choice about his or her situation. This will ensure immediate support and assistance to the arrested individual. Besides, arrest details will now be prominently displayed with in police stations and district headquarters, allowing families and friends of the arrested person easy access to important information. To strengthen the case and investigations, it has become mandatory for forensic experts to visit crime scenes for serious offences and collect evidence. Additionally, the process of evidence collection at the crime scene will be mandatorily videographed to prevent tampering of evidence. This dual approach significantly enhances the quality and reliability investigations and contributes to a fair administration of justice, sources said. The new laws prioritised the investigations for offences against women and children, ensuring timely completion within two months of record-

ing information. Under the new law, victims are entitled to regular updates on the progress of their case within 90 days. This provision keeps victims informed and involved in the legal process, enhancing transparency and trust. The new laws guarantee free first-aid or medical treatment to victims of crimes against women and children at all hospitals. This provision ensures immediate access to essential medical care, prioritising the well-being and recovery of victims during challenging times. Summons can now be served electronically, expediting legal processes, reducing paperwork, and ensuring efficient communication between all parties involved. For certain offences against woman, statements of the victim are to be recorded, as far as practicable, by a woman magistrate and in her absence, by a male magistrate in the presence of a woman to ensure sensitivity and fairness, creating a supportive environment for victims. Both the accused and the victim are entitled to receive copies of the FIR, police report, chargesheet, statements, confessions, and other documents within 14 days. Courts grant a maximum of two adjournments to avoid unnecessary delays in case hearings, ensuring timely justice delivery. The new laws mandates all state government to implement witness protection scheme to ensure the safety and cooperation of witnesses, enhancing the credibility and effectiveness of legal proceedings. The definition of "gender" now includes transgender individuals, promoting inclusivity and equality.

Review work of staffers to retire non-performers, Centre tells Ministries

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Trked over non-adherence to its directives, the Centre has asked all ministries to timely review the working of the employees so that the non-performers are prematurely retired from service. In an order, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) asked ministries concerned to direct the public sector undertakings (PSUs), banks, autonomous institutions and statutory bodies under their administrative control to undertake the exercise of periodic review of employees.

It said instructions have been issued from time to time for undertaking periodic review of the government servants' performance with a view to ascertaining whether they "should be retained in service or retired from service prematurely, in public interest". The administrative ministries and departments have repeatedly

been requested to adhere to guidelines issued in this regard and furnish a report to this effect to the DoPT, said the order issued to the secretaries of all central government departments.

However, it has come to notice that various ministries and departments are not adhering to the said guidelines resulting in delay in identifying the government employees due for review under relevant provisions of Fundamental Rules (FR)-56 (J)/(I) and Rule 48 of Central Civil Services or CCS (Pension) Rules (now, revised as Rule 42 of CCS (Pension) Rules, 2021), it said. These rules lay down the policy of periodic review and premature retirement of government servants and to ensure efficiency, economy and speed in the disposal of the government functions.

"In view of the above, the ministries/departments are requested to take immediate action to identify the employees due for review under relevant provisions of Fundamental/Pension Rules and ensure that their cases are expeditiously submitted for consideration before the duly constituted review committee as per extant instructions," read the order dated June 27.



Further, all the ministries, departments and organisations have been asked "to strictly adhere" to the timeline mentioned in DoPT's order issued in this regard in 2020 "for undertaking the exercise of review of performance of the government servants and for

the employees of PSUs/banks/autonomous institutions/statutory organisations under their administrative control to ensure that the employees with doubtful integrity or found to be ineffective are not allowed to continue in government", according to the order.

The DoPT had issued comprehensive and consolidated guidelines through its 2020 order detailing the procedures to be followed in identifying the cases of premature retirement.

All ministries and departments have been asked to furnish a report to the DoPT in a particular format by the 15th day of each month starting from July, 2024, it added.

The DoPT said that the objective of the CCS rules is to strengthen the administrative machinery by developing responsible and efficient administration at all levels and to achieve efficiency, economy and speed in the disposal of government functions.

India denounces US report on religious freedom

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday categorically rejected criticism against it in an annual US State Department report on international religious freedom, describing it as deeply biased and visibly driven by vote-bank considerations.

External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the report selectively picked incidents to advance a preconceived narrative against India.

In his remarks at the release of the report, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said there has been a "concerning increase" in anti-conversion laws, hate speech and



demolitions of homes and places of worship of members of minority faith communities in India. "As in the past, the report is deeply biased, lacks an understanding

of India's social fabric and is visibly driven by votebank considerations and a prescriptive outlook," Jaiswal said.

"We therefore reject it. The exercise itself is a mix of imputations, misrepresentations, selective usage of facts, reliance on biased sources and a one-sided projection of issues," he said.

The MEA spokesperson said, "It has selectively picked incidents to advance a preconceived narrative as well.

In some cases, the very validity of laws and regulations are questioned by the report," Jaiswal said the report also appears to challenge the integrity of certain judgments given by Indian courts.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Presidential address

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

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



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Suu Kyi spends another birthday in jail

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



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

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



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



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

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

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

PICTALK



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

PTI

Directive on doctor's fees sparks controversy in Bihar

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



GYAN BHADRA

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



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

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

THE PLIGHT OF GIG WORKERS

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

PRESERVING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

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

Integrity of India's education system



od remain grim reminders for many. Nevertheless, the citizens, under the leadership of selfless figures like Jayaprakash Narayan, acted decisively to restore democracy. Similarly, when N.T. Rama Rao's elected government was toppled in Andhra Pradesh, the people again rose to action and restored it. In the last decade, India has been experiencing an undeclared emergency, characterized by a subdued press, with the country ranking 161st out of 180 in the Global Press Freedom Index, the killing of five journalists in a year, and over 200 injured. Numerous individuals have been imprisoned for extended periods without charges simply for expressing dissent. Arbitrary manipulation of election results, such as in the Chandigarh mayoral election, and the use of central agencies to silence opposition voices are reminiscent of the Emergency era. While MISA was used by Indira Gandhi, UAPA serves a similar purpose today. The people possess the power to protect democracy as evidenced by the results of the recent election. AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

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

THE SPEAKER'S ELECTION

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

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FIRST COLUMN

DISCOVERING WISDOM THROUGH A ZEN TALE

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



RAVI VALLURI

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

Zen Story

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; Views are personal)

Challenges ahead for RaGa as Leader of the Opposition



KS TOMAR

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Responsibilities as LoP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Union budget needs to adopt all-inclusive approach to health

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

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



SUGANDH AHLUWALIA

private sector investments, which are vital for the development of state-of-the-art healthcare facilities across the country. Additionally, extending interest rate subventions for medical equipment could alleviate the financial strain on hospitals, facilitating the modernization of technology and improvement in service delivery. A significant step forward for India's healthcare system

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

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

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

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

care accessible to all, especially in rural regions where the need is most pressing. Physical infrastructure along with the human resources is essential for delivering quality healthcare. Rational regulations and policies are critical to supporting India's aspiration to achieve UHC by 2030. Such regulations should enable seamless collaboration among all stakeholders, ensuring that quality healthcare services are accessible to all citizens, regardless of socio-economic status.

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

essential for achieving UHC, particularly in addressing the dual burden of non-communicable and communicable diseases. Health insurance is a vital component in the journey toward "Health for All." With low insurance coverage, many individuals face substantial out-of-pocket expenses when seeking healthcare services. Implementing mandatory health insurance and gradually expanding coverage to include self-employed professionals and other currently excluded groups can pave the way for a more equitable healthcare system.

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

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

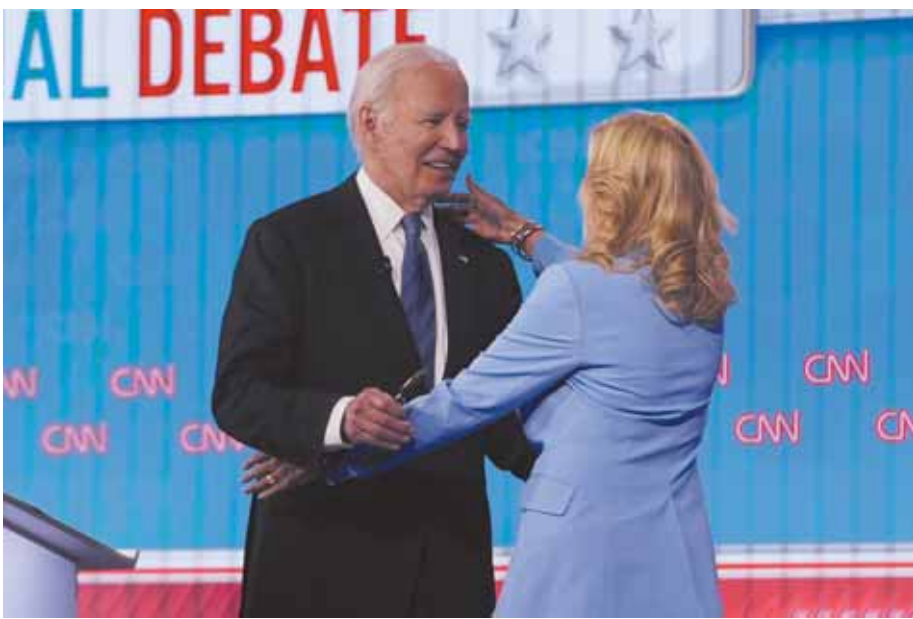
The private sector's investments in healthcare infrastructure and training health workers are significant contributions toward this goal. Achieving the goal of Healthcare for All by 2030 in India presents numerous opportunities but also requires overcoming significant barriers. A multi-faceted approach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

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

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

Biden stumbles in first presidential debate with Trump

AP ■ ATLANTA



First lady Jill Biden, right, hugs President Joe Biden at the conclusion of a presidential debate with Republican presidential candidate former President Donald Trump hosted by CNN, Thursday.

Joe Biden, seeking a second term in the White House, stumbled in his first televised presidential debate with his predecessor Donald Trump, setting off alarm bells among top Democrats about whether the incumbent president can stay atop in the gruelling months ahead of the elections. During their roughly 90-minute debate defined by personal attacks on Thursday night, Trump, the presumptive Republican Party candidate in the November 5 presidential election, clashed right from the start with 81-year-old Biden, arguing pointedly about the American economy, foreign relations and migration.

“We’re like a Third World nation and it’s a shame,” Trump, 78, said. “We’re no longer respected,” he said, blaming a halting and raspy-voiced Biden. “They think we’re stupid.”

Trump, appearing very confident during the high-stakes debate at the CNN headquarters

in Atlanta, also repeated falsehoods - from abortion to taxes and the deficit - and at first

avoided answering if he would accept the 2024 election result. Trump also linked the country’s

problems to the influx of migrants crossing the porous southwestern US border with

Mexico, saying they were hurting the American economy. “We had the safest border in the world,” Trump said about his 2017-2021 term in the White House. Now, he claimed, “It’s the most dangerous place in the world.”

Responding to Trump’s statement, Biden said, “He is exaggerating, he’s lying,” underlining that 40 per cent fewer migrants are now crossing the border since he recently imposed tighter entry restrictions.

The two leaders called each other a liar and the worst president in the history of the US. Biden called Trump a sucker and loser. “I was recently in France for D-Day, and I spoke to all about those heroes that died. I went to the World War II cemetery — the World War I cemetery he refused to go to,” Biden, the presumptive candidate of the Democratic Party, said, referring to Trump, who declined to visit the cemetery in 2018. “He was standing with his four-star general, and he told me, he said, ‘I don’t want to go in

there, because they’re a bunch of losers and suckers. My son was not a loser. He’s not a sucker. You’re the sucker. You’re the loser,” Biden said.

Trump said that the quotes were made up in a third-rate magazine and he later fired the general.

On the age factor, Biden reminded Trump that he was just three years younger than him. At 81, Biden is the oldest president in US history.

Trump called Biden a criminal after the latter called him a “convicted felon,” referring to his conviction in a New York hush-money case.

“Joe could be a convicted felon with all of the things that he’s done, he’s done horrible things. This man is a criminal. This man, you’re lucky, you’re lucky, I did nothing wrong. We have a system that was rigged and disgusting,” Trump said.

“When he talks about a convicted felon, his son (Hunter Biden) is a convicted felon, at a very high level,” he alleged.

As the two leaders sparred over

Ultra-orthodox jews protest Israel’s new military service mandate

Bnei Brak (Israel) (AP): Hundreds of ultra-Orthodox Jewish men blocked a major highway in central Israel for two hours on Thursday to protest a recent Supreme Court decision ordering young religious men to enlist for military service. Military service is compulsory for most Jewish men and women in Israel. But politically powerful ultra-Orthodox parties have won draft exemptions for their followers that allow them instead to study in religious seminaries.

This long-standing arrangement has bred widespread resentment among the broader public — a sentiment that has grown stronger during the eight-month war against Hamas in Gaza. Over 600 soldiers have been killed, and tens of thousands of reservists have been activated, straining careers, businesses and family lives.

Protesters sat on the highway and lay on the ground as police lifted them up and dragged them away. Officers mounted on horseback charged into the crowd. Many demonstrators held signs and chanted “To prison! Not to the army!” “We all came here for one goal, we reflect the position of all the Orthodox public,” said a young man, identifying himself only by his first name Ozer. “All the Orthodox public prefers to go to prison and not to the army.” The ultra-Orthodox see their full-time religious study as their part in protecting the state.

Many fear that greater contact with secular society through the military will distance adherents from strict observance of the faith. The Supreme Court this week ordered the government to begin drafting ultra-Orthodox men, saying the system of exemptions is unequal. The decision could lead to the collapse of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government. Ultra-Orthodox parties and their followers oppose any change in the system.

UK PM Rishi Sunak ‘hurt’ after far-right party campaigner filmed using racist slur for him

PTI ■ LONDON



British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Friday reacted to a racist slur targeted at him, saying it made him “hurt and angry”. Speaking to reporters on the general election campaign trail, Sunak said his two daughters, Krishna and Anoushka, had to see and hear Reform UK activists who campaigned for party leader Nigel Farage “calling me a Paki”.

“It hurts, and it makes me angry,” the 44-year-old British Indian leader said, adding that Farage has questions to answer. Sunak noted: “I don’t repeat those words lightly. I do so deliberately because this is too important not to call out clearly for what it is.

“When you see Reform candidates and campaigners, seemingly using racist and misogynistic language and opinions seemingly without challenge, I think it tells you something about the culture within the

Reform Party.” He was speaking after a campaigner for the far-right Reform UK was filmed using the slur considered racist towards people of South Asian heritage, forcing the party’s leader and general election candidate Nigel Farage to condemn the actions as “appalling”. Reform UK is fielding hun-

reds of candidates in the July 4 election on an anti-immigration stance with the hope of posing a major challenge for the incumbent Conservative Party, which is heavily trailing in the polls. However, with the election called earlier than expected, the party has been unable to fully vet all its campaigners and one of them — Andrew Parker — was filmed by an undercover reporter from Channel 4.

“The appalling sentiments expressed by some in these exchanges bear no relation to my own views, those of the vast majority of our supporters or Reform UK,” Farage said in a statement. The same activist was also heard suggesting army recruits with guns should be posted to “just shoot” illegal migrants landing on UK beaches. Speaking at a campaign event on Thursday, Farage said that “one or two people let us down and we let them go” but added

that “in most cases they’re just speaking like ordinary folk”. The 60-year-old divisive politician is making his eighth attempt to be elected to Parliament after seven failed bids. This time, polls suggest a comfortable lead for him in the race to represent the seaside town of Clacton-on-Sea.

While Reform is likely to win only a handful of seats, at most, in the 650-seat House of Commons, Farage says his goal is to get a foothold and lead the “real” Opposition to a Labour Party government — which is widely expected to succeed the Sunak-led Tories after the general election. The British Indian leader has, meanwhile, warned voters that a vote for Reform UK was effectively a vote in favour of a tax-raising Labour Party. He has also hit back at Farage’s own controversial statements claiming that the West had provoked Russian President Vladimir Putin into attacking Ukraine.

Turkiye’s pres expresses willingness to restore diplomatic ties with Syria

AP ■ ANKARA



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday that there is no obstacle preventing Turkey and Syria from restoring diplomatic ties that were cut off at the start of the Syrian civil war more than a decade ago. His comments came just days after Syrian President Bashar Assad made similar remarks, indicating a willingness among the two neighbouring countries to end tensions and normalise relations. “There is no reason why (diplomatic ties) should not be established,” Erdogan told reporters.

“In the same way that we kept our relations with Syria alive in the past — we had these meetings with Mr Assad that included family meetings — we cannot say that it will not happen again,” Erdogan said. He was referring to a vacation that the Erdogan and Assad families took in southern Turkey in 2008, before their relationship soured.

media reported that in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin’s special envoy to Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, Assad “affirmed Syria’s openness to all initiatives related to the relationship between Syria and Turkey, based on the sovereignty of the Syrian state over all its territories on the one hand, and combating all forms of terrorism and its organizations on the other hand”.

The Russian envoy, in turn, said that “the current circumstances seem more suitable than ever for the success of mediations, and that Russia is ready to work to push the negotiations forward, and that the goal is to succeed in restoring relations between Syria and Turkey,” Syrian state-run news agency SANA reported.

Erdogan told reporters that Turkey respects Syria’s sovereignty. “There is no question of us having the aim of interfering in Syria’s internal affairs,” Erdogan said. “The people of Syria are our brothers.”

During the Syrian conflict, Turkey supported armed opposition groups in the country’s northwest aiming to oust Assad from power. The Syrian government has repeatedly condemned Ankara’s control over a territory that it took hold of through several military incursions since 2016 targeting US-backed Kurdish forces that Turkey regards as terrorists. On Wednesday, Syrian state

Iran votes in snap poll for new pres amid rising tensions in Mideast

AP ■ TEHRAN

Iranians voted Friday in a snap election to replace the late hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, with the race’s sole reformist candidate vowing to seek “friendly relations” with the West in an effort to energize supporters in a vote beset by apathy.

Voters face a choice between hard-line candidates and the little-known reformist Masoud Pezeshkian, a former surgeon. As has been the case since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, women and those calling for radical change have been barred from running, while the vote itself will have no oversight from internationally recognized monitors.

The voting comes as wider tensions have gripped the Middle East over the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip. In April, Iran launched its first-ever

direct attack on Israel over the war in Gaza, while militia groups that Tehran arms in the region — such as the Lebanese Hezbollah and Yemen’s Houthi rebels — are engaged in the fighting and have escalated their attacks.

Meanwhile, Iran continues to enrich uranium at near weapons-grade levels and maintains a stockpile large enough to build — should it choose to do so — several nuclear weapons. The remarks by Pezeshkian come after he and his allies were targeted by a veiled warning from the country’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, over their outreach to the United States.

Pezeshkian’s comments, made after he cast his ballot, appeared to be aimed at boosting turnout as public apathy has grown pervasive in the Islamic Republic after years of economic woes

and mass protests. He seemed to hope that invoking the possibility of Iran emerging from its isolation would motivate people otherwise disillusioned with Iranian politics. A higher turnout typically aids those like Pezeshkian in the reformist movement that seeks to change its Shiite theocracy from within.

While Iran’s 85-year-old Khamenei has the final say on all matters of state, presidents can bend the country’s policies toward confrontation or negotiation with the West. However, given the record-low turnout in recent elections, it remains unclear just how many Iranians will take part in Friday’s poll. Pezeshkian, who voted at a hospital near the capital, Tehran, appeared to have that in mind as he responded to a journalist’s question about how Iran would interact with the West if he was president.

“God willing, we will try to have friendly relations with all countries except Israel,” the 69-year-old candidate said. Israel, long Iran’s regional arch-enemy, faces intense criticism across the Mideast over its grinding war in the Gaza Strip. He also responded to a question about a renewed crackdown on women over the mandatory headscarf, or hijab, less than two years after the 2022 death of Mahsa Amini, which sparked nationwide demonstrations and violent security force response. “No inhuman or invasive behavior should be made against our girls, daughters and mothers,” he said. A higher turnout could boost Pezeshkian’s chances, and the candidate may have been counting on social media to spread his remarks, as all television broadcasters in the country are state-controlled and run by hard-liners.

Israel allows 19 wounded children to leave Gaza in first medical evacuation

Khan Younis (Gaza Strip) (AP): Israeli authorities say 68 people — 19 sick or wounded children plus their companions — have been allowed out of the Gaza Strip and into Egypt in the first medical evacuation since early May, when the territory’s sole travel crossing was shut down after Israel captured it.

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.

The Israeli military body responsible for Palestinian civilian affairs, known by its acronym COGAT, said Thursday that the evacuation was carried out in coordination with officials from the United States, Egypt and the international community. The children and their companions

left Gaza via the Kerem Shalom cargo crossing, and the patients were to travel to Egypt and farther abroad for medical treatment.

Family members bade a tearful goodbye to the kids at Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis. 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. The girl has severe burns on her head from an Israeli airstrike. He said he didn’t get clearance to leave Gaza with her, although her mother did.

“It’s been almost 10 months, and there is no solution for the hospitals here,” he said.

with her mother. Neither she nor her husband were cleared to leave.

“He has tumors spread all over his body and we don’t know what the reason is. And he constantly has a fever,” she said. “I still don’t know where he is going.”

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 Nasser Hospital from Al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza City earlier this week. Five have cancer and one suffers from metabolic syndrome. That evacuation was organized by the World Health Organization, 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 was being conducted 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.

Zaqout said 21 children had originally been scheduled to leave Thursday, but one arrived at the hospital too late to make the departure. It was not immediately clear what prevented the other child from joining the evacuation.

China’s Chang’e-6 collects nearly two kgs of samples from Moon’s far side

PTI ■ BEIJING

China’s Chang’e-6 mission, which returned this week from the far side of the Moon, has brought back nearly two kilograms of samples for research which will further enhance the understanding of lunar evolution, the country’s space agency announced on Friday.

Based on the preliminary measurement, the Chang’e-6 mission collected 1,935.3 grams of lunar samples, according to the China National Space Administration (CNSA).

“We have found that the samples brought back by Chang’e-6 were more viscous compared to previous samples, with the presence of clumps. These are observable characteristics,” Ge Ping, Deputy Director of the CNSA’s Lunar Exploration and Space Engineering Centre, who is also the spokesperson for the Chang’e-6 mission, told the

media here. Researchers will then carry out the storage and processing of the lunar samples as planned and initiate scientific research work.

The lunar samples, which were collected from the far side of the moon for the first time in human history, hold unique scientific significance as they will further enhance the understanding of lunar evolution, accelerate the pace of peaceful exploration and utilization of lunar resources, and serve as an important asset for all humanity, the CNSA said.

It said it would organise scientific research on the samples, sharing China’s lunar exploration achievements with the international community. Based on the lunar sample management rules released by the CNSA and the experience in dealing with the applications for lunar samples collected by the Chang’e-5 mission, applica-

tions for the Chang’e-6 samples are expected to open to domestic research institutions and scientists in about six months, Ge said, state-run Xinhua news agency reported. Regarding international applications, Ge noted that China welcomes scientists from all countries to submit applications under relevant procedures.

Previously, significant scientific achievements have been made through in-depth research on the lunar samples brought back by the Chang’e-5 mission, in areas such as lunar formation and evolution, space weathering, and resource utilisation, the CNSA said. The Chang’e-6 probe was launched into orbit on May 3. Its returner, carrying the lunar samples, landed precisely in its designated area in Siziwang Banner, north China’s Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region on June 25, marking a complete success for the mission.

Olympian Bindra, Malik honoured with special award in UK

London (PTI): India’s first individual gold medallist, Abhinav Bindra, and Paralympian Deepa Malik have been honoured with Special Recognition Awards at a ceremony celebrating Indians who have made a significant impact globally.

India Global Forum’s (IGF) annual UK-India Awards 2024 at Fairmont Windsor Park, near London, on Thursday evening, honoured the sporting legends alongside a ‘Global Indian Icon Award’ for social crusader Arunachalam Muruganatham, in recognition of his revolutionary work in menstrual hygiene captured in the 2018 Akshay Kumar film ‘Pad Man’.

Lord Anthony Bamford, founder of multinational construction giant JCB, was honoured with the Lifetime Contribution to UK-India Relations. “For a global sport

like the Olympics, it makes complete sense to have a closer relationship with the world’s largest population. Every fourth or fifth person in the world is in India, so there’s a lot of synergy there,” said Bindra, on India potentially hosting the Olympics during a discussion around the future of sport in the country.

“But more than infrastructure, I think what we need is a vision that actually transcends far beyond the sporting events itself. The Olympics, whenever held in India, has to be seen as a catalyst for change, how the Games can really address challenges and how it can seize opportunities. “It really has to be a springboard for how we can make India healthier and make India a more inclusive country,” he said. “We have to use it as a guide to make India better through sport,” Bindra said.

5 missiles hit near ship in Red Sea, likely in latest Houthi attack

Dubai (AP): A ship travelling through the Red Sea came under repeated missile fire on Friday in a likely attack launched by Yemen’s Houthi rebels, authorities said, the latest targeting the crucial maritime route. Five missiles landed near the vessel as it traveled off the coast of the rebel-held port city of Hodeida in Yemen, the British military’s United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations center said.

The missiles landed near the vessel, but caused no damage, the UKTMO added. The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack. However, it can take them hours or even days before they acknowledge an assault. The rebels have targeted more than 60 vessels by firing missiles and drones in their campaign that has killed four sailors.

SC allows cities to enforce bans on homeless people

Washington (AP): The Supreme Court decided on Friday that cities can enforce bans on homeless people sleeping outdoors in West Coast areas where shelter space is lacking. The case is the most significant to come before the high court in decades on the issue and comes as a rising number of people in the US are without a permanent place to live.

In a 6-3 decision, the high court reversed a ruling by a San Francisco-based appeals court that found outdoor sleeping bans amount to cruel and unusual punishment. A bipartisan group of leaders had argued the ruling made it harder for them to manage outdoor encampments encroaching on sidewalks and other public spaces in nine Western states. That includes California, which is home to one-third of the country’s homeless population.

Homeless advocates, on the other hand, said that allowing cities to punish people who

need a place to sleep would criminalise homelessness and ultimately make the crisis worse. Cities had been allowed to regulate encampments but couldn’t bar people from sleeping outdoors.

The case came from the rural Oregon town of Grants Pass, which appealed a ruling striking down local ordinances that fined people USD 295 for sleeping outside after tents began crowding public parks. The US 9th Circuit Court of Appeals, which has jurisdiction over the nine Western states, has held since 2018 that such bans violate the Eighth Amendment in areas where there aren’t enough shelter beds.

The ruling comes after homelessness in the United States grew a dramatic 12 per cent last year to its highest reported level, as soaring rents and a decline in coronavirus pandemic assistance combined to put housing out of reach for more people.

Markets snap record-breaking rally

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Market benchmarks Sensex and Nifty halted their three-day record-hitting rally to close with losses on Friday as investors booked profit in banking, finance and tech stocks despite a positive trend in global equities.

Snapping a four-session winning run, equity indices succumbed to selling pressure after mid-session when profit-taking emerged on select counters.

After hitting fresh all-time high level in early trade, the 30-share index declined 210.45 points or 0.27 per cent to settle at 79,032.73. During the day, it jumped 428.4 points or 0.54 per cent to hit a fresh record peak of 79,671.58.

The Nifty went lower by 33.90 points or 0.14 per cent to 24,010.60. During the day, it climbed 129.5 points or 0.53 per cent to hit a new lifetime high of 24,174.

"Profit taking in banking stocks led the downfall in key benchmark indices, which had hit fresh intra-day highs in early optimism. While markets displayed volatility and ended weak in late selling, both Sensex and Nifty managed to close above



their psychological levels of 79k and 24k, respectively," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The Sensex breached the historic 79,000 mark on Thursday, and the Nifty hit the 24,000 level for the first time in intra-day trade.

In the past four trading days, the BSE benchmark jumped 2,033.28 points or 2.63 per cent. On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark jumped 1,822.83 points or 2.36 per cent, and the Nifty climbed 509.5 points or 2.16 per cent.

Among indices, bankex declined 1.04 per cent, telecommunication (0.65 per cent), financial services (0.52 per cent), teck (0.42 per cent) and industrials (0.26 per cent).

Healthcare, energy, metal, oil & gas, utilities and commodities were among the gainers. "Asian stocks rose Friday as traders looked ahead to a key report on inflation that could influence the Federal Reserve's next move on interest rates. European stocks mostly moved higher...With investors tensed ahead of the weekend's French election," said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research, HDFC Securities.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the green. European markets were trading mostly higher. US markets ended in positive territory on Thursday. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) bought equities worth Rs 7,658.77 crore on Thursday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.89 per cent to USD 87.16 a barrel. The BSE benchmark jumped 568.93 points or 0.72 per cent to settle at a new closing peak of 79,243.18 on Thursday. The Nifty ended at a fresh record high of 24,044.50, rising 175.70 points or 0.74 per cent.

"We expect this positive momentum to continue at a steady pace with stock-specific action. However, the release of economic data points next week would keep a little volatility in the market.

"Sector like Auto is expected to be in the limelight as OEMs would release their monthly auto Sales number," Siddhartha Khemka, Senior Group VP, Head - Research, Broking & Distribution, Motilal Oswal Financial Services Ltd, said.

The FATF mutual evaluation report recognising India's fight against money laundering and terror financing is satisfying and exemplary, highly placed sources said.

As regards the issues flagged by the international watchdog to combat money laundering and terror financing, sources said these were not fundamental or significant deficiencies.

The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the global financial crime watchdog, on Friday said India has reached a high level of 'technical compliance' with its norms and the country's anti-money laundering and terror financing efforts is achieving good results.

FATF report hailing India's anti-money laundering drive exemplary, satisfying: Sources

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The FATF mutual evaluation report recognising India's fight against money laundering and terror financing is satisfying and exemplary, highly placed sources said.

The mutual evaluation report on India was adopted at the FATF June 2024 plenary in Singapore. In the fourth round of FATF mutual evaluations, 17 countries from G-20 nations were evaluated of which only 4, including India, are placed in 'regular follow-up' category. The remaining G-20



nations were placed in 'enhanced follow-up' and one in 'grey list'. Sources said 'regular follow-up' indicates that India needs to submit progress report on recommended actions in October 2027. Those in the 'enhanced follow-up' category would have to submit follow-up report every year. "Overall India's performance is exemplary and satisfying. Given the diverse country there is always room for improvement," sources said.

"Good ratings will lead to better access to global financial markets and institutions and increase investor confidence. It will also help in the global expansion of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), India's fast payment system," the ministry said.

Fiscal deficit at 3% of full year Budget estimates at May-end 2024: CGA data

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The central government's fiscal deficit was only at 3 per cent of the annual estimates at May-end 2024-25, the first two months of the financial year during which model code of conduct was in place due to Lok Sabha elections.

The fiscal deficit or the gap between the government's expenditure and revenue was 11.8 per cent of Budget Estimates (BE) of 2023-24 in the first two months of the previous financial year. For the current financial year (2024-25), the government estimates the fiscal deficit at 5.1 per cent of the GDP, or Rs 16,85,494 crore.



the Controller General of Accounts (CGA), fiscal deficit during April-May 2024 was Rs 50,615 crore or 3 per cent of the BE 2024-25. In the corresponding period of the last fiscal it was 11.8 per

cent of that year's BE. Net tax revenue was Rs 3.19 lakh crore or 12.3 per cent of BE 2024-25. In the corresponding period it was 11.9 per cent of BE 2023-24. Total expenditure at May-end

2024 was Rs 6.23 lakh crore or 13.1 per cent of this fiscal BE. In the year-ago period it was 13.9 per cent of BE. Generally, the government refrains from making expenditure on new projects when the election commission puts in place model of conduct.

The central government's fiscal deficit during 2023-24 at 5.6 per cent of the GDP was better than previous estimates of 5.8 per cent on account of higher revenue realisation and lower expenditure.

Gold climbs ₹370; silver jumps ₹600 amid strong global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices climbed Rs 370 to Rs 72,550 per 10 grams in the national capital on Friday amid a rise in precious metal rates internationally, according to HDFC Securities.

The yellow metal prices had settled at Rs 72,180 per 10 grams on Thursday. Silver prices also jumped Rs 600 to Rs 91,200 per kg. It had closed at Rs 90,600 per kg in the previous session.

"In Delhi markets, spot gold prices (24 carats) are trading at Rs 72,550 per 10 grams, up by Rs 370 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities, said. In the overseas markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at



USD 2,322 per ounce, up USD 17 from the previous close.

Gold climbed for the first time in three days, boosted by recent US jobless data which suggested the US labour market was weakening from its tight levels during the post-pandemic recovery, supporting the voice of early

interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve, Gandhi said. In addition, silver was quoted higher at USD 29.20 per ounce. It had ended at USD 28.94 per ounce in the previous session.

According to Praveen Singh, Associate VP, Fundamental Currencies and Commodities at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas, traders will be awaiting the upcoming US Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) inflation data, the Fed's preferred gauge of inflation, going to be released later on Friday, which will be crucial for the bullion prices.

GAIL advances net zero emission target to 2035

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned gas utility GAIL (India) Ltd on Friday said it has advanced the target to achieve net zero carbon emission by five years to 2035 as it takes multi-prolonged approach to reaching the goal.

The company was previously targeting net zero carbon emissions by 2040. "GAIL Board accorded approval to advance its net zero target for Scope-I and 2 emissions by five years, from the year 2040 to year 2035," the company said in a statement. Scope 1 covers emissions from sources that an organisation owns or controls directly—for example from burning fuel in factories or even in its fleet of vehicles.

Govt's gross liabilities rise by 3.4% to ₹171.78 lakh crore at March-end: Finance Ministry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Total gross liabilities of the government increased to Rs 171.78 lakh crore at the end of March 2024 from Rs 166.14 lakh crore at December-end, the finance ministry has said.

This represented a quarter-on-quarter increase of 3.4 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2023-24, said the public debt management quarterly report (January-March, 2024). Public debt accounted for 90.2 per cent of total gross liabilities during the quarter, it said.

"During the quarter, the yield on Indian domestic bond softened on account of lower than anticipated borrowing plan announced in interim budget, adjustment of the fiscal deficit to 5.1 per cent of

the GDP for FY25, a targeted reduction of the fiscal deficit at or below 4.5 per cent by FY26, FPI inflows and steady inflation," it said.

On the other hand, it said, US treasury yields remained volatile during the quarter mostly affected by Federal Reserve action, inflation, and employment data.

US 10-year yields touched a high of 4.33 per cent during the quarter. The weighted average yield softened to 7.19 per cent in Q4 2023-24 relative to 7.37 per cent in Q3 2023-24 on new issuance, it said.

of dated securities increased to 12.54 years at the end of Q4 of 2023-24 relative to 12.52 years at the end of Q3 of 2023-24, it said.

The ownership pattern of central government securities indicates that the share of commercial banks surged to 37.7 per cent at end-March 2024 as compared to 36.6 per cent in March 2023, it said.

Further, it said, the share of insurance companies remained constant at 26.0 per cent in March 2024 whereas FPIs' share improved to 2.3 per cent in March 2024 relative to 1.4 per cent in March 2023.

Wockhardt aims to launch antibiotic with USD 25 bn mkt potential by early FY26

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Drugmaker Wockhardt on Friday said research and trials on the antibiotic Zaynich are progressing satisfactorily, and it is aiming for an early FY26 launch. Zaynich has a market potential of USD 25 billion, the city-based company's founder chairman Habil Khorakiwala told reporters here.

The company has invested over USD 500 million on its research efforts till now, which have yielded six successes, including Zaynich which are at different levels of development and marketing, he said. Zaynich has been granted a susceptibility breakpoint of 64 mg per litre for around 10 gram negative pathogens showing high

resistance rates by the American Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute, according to a statement.

He said the company expects the final approvals from the Indian regulators to launch the antibiotic by the end of FY25 and will soon be launching it commercially after that.

For the developed markets as well, the company expects approvals to come in similar timelines or maybe with some lag, Khorakiwala said, outlining the commercial strategies. In India, the company plans to sell the antibiotic at a tenth of the price in developed markets, and will primarily be targeting pneumonia patients, he said.

In the developed markets, it will be looking for partners willing to establish networks to sell the antibiotic, he said. Khorakiwala said that antibiotic resistance levels are as high as 60 per cent locally and at an elevated 35 per cent globally which makes it a decent opportunity.

Lightweight tractor developed for small scale farmers



ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

A lightweight frame tractor having compact 9 HP diesel has been developed by CSIR-Central Mechanical Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-CMERI), specifically for small-scale farmers who have been mostly relying on bullock-driven carts or high-powered costly tractors for the cultivation.

This tractor boasts practical front and rear wheel sizes, a manageable wheelbase, ground clearance, and turning radius, making it easy to maneuver in small farm plots. Currently, over 80 per cent of cultivators in the country fall into these categories, many of whom still rely on bullock-driven farming due to the cost and operational challenges associated with existing options like power tillers and traditional tractors. "The introduction of this technology aims to significantly enhance farming efficiency, allowing tasks that traditionally took days with bullock carts to be completed in mere hours. Moreover, it reduces the capital investment and maintenance costs burdening small

farmers," said an official from the DST under the Union Ministry of Science and Technology. He explained, "a large number of framers still depend on bullock driven farming in which operational costs, maintenance costs and poor returns pose a challenge. Though power tillers are replacing bullock driven plough, they are cumbersome to operate. Tractors on the other hand are unsuitable for small farmers and unaffordable for most small farmers." The indigenous technology was demonstrated in nearby villages and to various manufacturers. Recognizing its potential impact, a Ranchi-based MSME has expressed its keenness to establish a manufacturing plant for mass production of these tractors. "Their goal is to supply these affordable machines to farmers through state government tenders, ensuring accessibility through subsidised rates. This initiative not only promises to improve agricultural outcomes but also supports local economies by promoting manufacturing and job creation within the region," said the official.

About 60% of MSMEs plan to digitise their business processes by 2025: Vi study

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Almost 60 per cent of MSMEs plan to digitise their business processes, and 43 per cent plan to increase their digitalisation budget by 2025, according to a study by Vi Business, the enterprise arm of Vi (Vodafone Idea). Medium, Small, and Micro Enterprises (MSMEs) are the backbone of India's economy, currently contributing nearly 30 per cent to the country's GDP, the report said.



Bharat (a developed economy) by 2047, it said. The Vi Business ReadyForNext MSME Growth Insights Study' drew insights from 1.6 lakh respondents across 16 industries. "In FY 2025, MSMEs are looking to prioritise

digitalising business processes (59 per cent) over workspace optimisation (29 per cent), and customer engagement (12 per cent), indicating need for future-proofing business operations and growth. Over 50 per cent of MSMEs focusing on business digitalisation plan to increase

their budget," the report noted. It also said, "43 per cent of MSMEs plan to increase their overall digitalisation budget by 2025. Sectors with lower Digital Maturity Index (DMI) are particularly inclined to increase their investments reflecting a growing commitment towards digital transformation."

IT-ITES (information technology and IT-enabled services), financial services and transportation were the top three sectors that emerged as the most digitally matured. "Digitalisation has a direct positive correlation with the turnover. Further, as the firm size increases, the variation in digital maturity level narrows, indicating that medium to large firms have embraced

digitalization and there is scattered digital adoption among micro and small firms," it said.

During COVID-19, while MSMEs prioritised digitalising their workspaces, the focus has moved on to engaging with their customers digitally in 2024, it said.

"India's vibrant MSME sector, boasting over 6.3 crore enterprises, is a cornerstone of our nation's economic strength. These businesses are not just engines of growth, contributing roughly 30 per cent of GDP, but also vital job creators, employing a staggering 11 crore individuals," said Arvind Nevatia, Chief Enterprise Business Officer, Vodafone Idea Limited.

India, US extend digital tax on e-commerce supplies till June 30

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India and the US have decided to extend a 2 per cent equalisation levy or digital tax on e-commerce supplies until June 30, the finance ministry said on Friday.

In a major reform of the international tax system, India and the US have joined 134 other members of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework (including Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK) in reaching an agreement on October 8, 2021, on the statement on a two-pillar solution to address the tax challenges arising from the digitalisation of the economy.

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



AP ■ PARIS

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

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

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

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



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

PTI ■ PANCHKULA (HARYANA)

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

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

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

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

AP ■ WIMBLEDON (ENGLAND)

There is a real shift happening at the top of tennis, a youth movement that long seemed inevitable but never actually arrived until now. As the sport's attention shifts to the grass of Wimbledon, where play begins Monday, Carlos Alcaraz, Jannik Sinner, Iga Swiatek and Coco Gauff are the players whose names are on everyone's lips. Alcaraz is the defending men's champion and owner of three Grand Slam titles at the age of 21 after his triumph at the French Open. Sinner, 22, is the top-seeded man at Wimbledon and won the Australian Open in January. Swiatek, 23, is the top-seeded woman and just earned her fourth championship at Roland Garros and fifth major overall. Gauff, the youngest of the bunch at 20, is ranked a career-best No. 2, has reached at least the semifinals at the past three Slam tournaments and won her first such trophy at last year's U.S. Open. While Swiatek has entrenched herself at No. 1 in the women's game, and is now 11-1 against Gauff, neither has been past the quarterfinals at Wimbledon, and there is a much more closely contested and intriguing rivalry developing between Alcaraz and Sinner (Alcaraz leads 5-4 after winning their semifinal at the French Open in five



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

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

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

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

AP ■ DORTMUND (GERMANY)



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

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

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

AP ■ DORTMUND

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

Proteas will succumb to unplayable Axar, Kuldeep in final: Sarandeep

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India cricketer Sarandeep Singh feels the "unplayable" spin combination of Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel will be too much for the South Africans to handle during the T20 World Cup final in Bridgetown, Barbados on Saturday. Wrist spinner Kuldeep has taken 10 wickets in four games with a best of 3/19, while Axar has grabbed eight from seven games with a best of 3/23. Both left-arm spinners are expected to play in the final. "If you ask me, who are the two players who will win it for India in the final, I will say Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel. They are outright match-winners in spin-friendly conditions," Sarandeep told PTI Videos on Friday. "We are having at the world's best spinners at the moment. Look at the way Kuldeep and Axar came in, they are winning all the games. They are unplayable. Everyone is talking about Kuldeep. He is going to destroy the South African middle order. "He has done it against Australia (in Super 8s) and

England (in semifinals). Now it's the turn of South Africa. Axar is also a very dangerous slow left-arm orthodox bowler. An outright match-winner. Indian spinners will win the final." India and South Africa are coming into the final having not lost a single match in the World Cup. While South Africa won all their eight games, India were victorious in seven as the tie against Canada in Florida was washed out due to rain. Sarandeep, who played three Tests and five ODIs, added that Axar and Kuldeep would be even more potent on the spin-friendly Bridgetown wicket. "Axar starts getting wickets from the sixth over. It's not easy for Axar to bowl in powerplay. He comes, bowls, and makes things easy for the rest of the bowlers. Kuldeep and Axar are complementing each other so well. "The wickets in West Indies are not easy to play especially if you have world-class spinners like Kuldeep and Axar. It was not easy for England, it will not be easy for South Africa as well,"



Sarandeep observed. The former India off-spinner added that skipper Rohit Sharma was spot on in his assessment of Caribbean conditions and opted for four spinners. "Rohit opted for four spinners but (Yuzvendra) Chahal is not in the scheme of things. The reason is, others have done their job exceedingly well. (Ravindra) Jadeja is the senior-most player but he is not coming into powerplay. Axar knows how to bowl in these conditions. He is the best option for us to bowl into the powerplay. He is giving the results as well," he added. On whether South African spinners Keshav Maharaj and Tabraiz Shamsi could also trouble the Indian batters, Sarandeep said, "Yes they will. Keshav and Shamsi are also very good. Let's see how Indian batsmen handle the spinners. "India has a very strong middle order. India has left-handers like Rishabh Pant, Shivam Dube, Axar, and Jadeja. Four left-handers in the middle order. It will be interesting to see how Maharaj and Shamsi are going to tackle

them. And vice-versa. This will be a big challenge for them also." Sarandeep added that India has the best batting and bowling lineup in the world. "Bumrah's economy is 3.5 or 3.6. This is so unreal. Other bowlers go over 9 or 10. Even after eight games, his economy is 3.5. This is so unreal. What else can you ask from him? India is the favourites not only in batting but bowling as well." The former cricketer played down Virat Kohli's lack of form. Virat has scored only 76 runs in seven innings. "Virat is waiting for the final to perform. He is a world-class player, no doubt. He is mentally very strong. He is a team man. He is playing for the team. And there is some plan given to him. "Normally he opens only in the IPL. But here he had been given a clear-cut role. Virat is trying to hit from the first ball and trying to put more pressure on the bowlers. But somehow he is getting out quickly. But I am not worried about him. He is a big-match player. And that big game is coming. His big innings is coming against South Africa."

Buttler admits tactical mistake of not bowling Moeen Ali on turning Providence track

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

Admitting that they were completely outplayed by India in the T20 World Cup semifinal, England skipper Jos Buttler said in hindsight it was a tactical mistake on his part to not bowl Moeen Ali on a turning Providence pitch here. Indian spin twin of Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav claimed three wickets each as the defending champions folded for 103 in 16.4 overs in their pursuit of 172 in a rain-interrupted semi-final here on Thursday. "Yeah, disappointing. I think we were outplayed by India. They fully deserved the victory," Buttler said in the post-match media interaction. "They had an above-par score. I was hoping to restrict them to 145-150 probably on that pitch. It was always going to be a tough chase from there."



managed to make the Super 8s beating Namibia via DLS method. "Reaching a semi-final of a World Cup is an achievement. We wanted to obviously go all the way. That was what we came here for," said Buttler, who led them to the T20 World Cup title in 2022 after taking over white-ball captaincy from Eoin Morgan. "We faced lots of challenges and adversity throughout the whole tournament and we've stuck together well and played well enough to get to this stage. But unfortunately, at this stage, we've fallen short." "I think everyone has made progress and we've played well and not well enough, but I think the stuff that we've been doing behind the scenes, the way we've prepared, the way we've trained, the way we've played in patches has been really good. "There's a lot of talent in the team. And yes, we came up against a top team today in these conditions," he said. Asked if there would be fresh faces the next time, he said: "Yeah, I think... I can't do that. I haven't taken in the defeat. Very much thinking about this game and what happened and yeah, I think they say there's some time between today and the next matches, and we can see what happens."

India played a really good game of cricket, whatever team or whatever happened at the toss -- they were going to be a tough team to beat and we had to be at our best if we were going to win the game and we were short of our best today." India will face South Africa in the final and Buttler feels it will be a game of close margins. "The two top sides in the final is going to be a game of small margins and it's going to be a great game. Two really good teams," he said. The Buttler-led side managed to beat only one Test playing nation -- West Indies -- in this tournament and were on the brink of early elimination after a washout against Scotland and a defeat to Australia in the group stage. However, Australia handed them a lifeline by beating Scotland and they narrowly

would have got Moeen (Ali) in the game of course. So, yes, bits and pieces here and there," Buttler admitted. The ball was turning viciously and staying low as Rohit placed close-in fielders that resembled playing Tests in India. "I think everyone knew what to expect from this wicket. I think traditionally the bounce is low. And yeah, I thought India played really well and they played the conditions better than we did." Asked about their playing combination, Buttler said: "We thought long and hard about selection, about whether we kept the same balance that had been working well, or did we need four seamers on that particular wicket. That was a really tough call that we made and we ended up sticking with what we had."

Plan was to make it difficult for England without doing anything extraordinary: Axar

PTI ■ GEORGETOWN (GUYANA)

His exploits in the powerplay set up India's massive win over England and left-arm spinner Axar Patel said keeping things simple was the key as it helped him make life difficult for rival batters "without doing anything extraordinary". Coming in to bowl in the fourth over, Axar (3/23) removed England skipper Jos Buttler off his very first delivery before dismissing Jonny Bairstow and Moeen Ali in consecutive overs to derail England's chase as they eventually folded for 103 in pursuit of 172 in the T20 World Cup semifinals here on Thursday. "Obviously in powerplay, it is difficult (to bowl) but when you know that you are getting help from the wicket, then without thinking much, without doing anything extraordinary, I thought that the more I keep it simple, the easier it would be for me," Axar said during the post-match press conference.



"We spoke in the dressing room that it's not an easy wicket (for batting), and I knew that the batsmen will charge at me. It wasn't going to be easy to hit me down the ground and also (they) couldn't hit off the back foot because the ball wasn't coming on the bat. "So my plan was to make it difficult for them, force them to think of playing some other shots, and, that's what hap-

pened on the first ball. So that was the plan." Axar sent his first ball from round the wicket and Buttler, looking for the reverse-sweep, ended up lobbing it up for wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant to do the rest. "I hadn't really planned to get a wicket on the first ball. My mindset was to put the ball in the right areas. Obviously, when you play knockouts, you want to start and finish well with the first and last ball," said Axar, who was adjudged the Player-of-the-Match. "I think it was difficult to hit big shots, to sweep and reverse sweep because some balls was keeping low on this wicket, so you can't connect it so easily." India scored 171 for 7 after being asked to take first strike and Axar said they were confident of defending the total. "I think 170 was a par score, we could defend it. Rohit bhai said after he finished batting that it was very difficult to hit big shots because the odd ball was spin-

ning, it was staying low and skidding as well. "When we made 170, we knew that we had scored 10-15 runs extra, which we could have defended." Batting at number eight, Axar also hit a six during his 10-run cameo and he said it gave him an idea about the nature of the surface as the pacers were bowling slower balls in the death overs. "Obviously, I got a clue from that (batting) as to what I could do and what I couldn't. When I went to bat, everyone was bowling slower, the ball was not coming at the speed I wanted so I couldn't connect properly. So giving pace would have made it easy for them. It was important to hit the ball at a good area. "It's also about pressure. When you are chasing, and you know that the wicket is helping the bowlers, as an opener, or anyone in the top four, they think of cashing in on the powerplay as much as possible but it didn't work out."

Shafali Verma becomes fastest woman double-centurion in Test cricket

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Dashing India opener Shafali Verma smashed the fastest double-century in the history of women's Test cricket, eclipsing Annabel Sutherland of Australia during the one-off Test against South Africa here on Friday. Shafali, 20, scored her double ton off just 194 balls, bettering Sutherland's feat, which came off 248 balls against South Africa earlier this year. Shafali also became the second Indian after former skipper Mithali Raj to hit a double century in Test cricket after almost 22 long years here. Mithali's 214 had come off 407 balls and the former India skipper achieved during



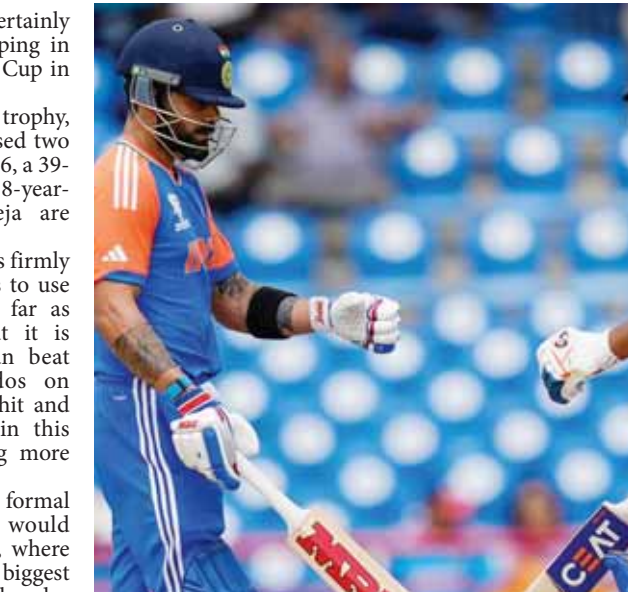
the drawn second Test against England at Taunton in August, 2022. Shafali struck 23 fours and eight maximums during her attacking knock. She brought up her twin ton with consecutive sixes of off-spinner Delmi Tucker, followed by a single. Shafali was finally run out at 205 off 197 balls. Besides, her opening partner Smriti Mandhana also made an attacking 149 off 161 balls with the help of 27 boundaries and one six to stitch a formidable opening partnership of 292 runs, which came off in just 52 overs. India are going great guns against South Africa on the opening day scoring at close to a run-a-ball.

Last Tango: Possibly final time Rohit and Virat will play for India in T20I format

New Delhi, (PTI)

This Saturday afternoon in Barbados, no Indian fan would want Rohit Sharma to drag his jaded body towards the dug-out trying to hide a tear welling up at the corner of his eye. No Indian fan would want to revisit Virat Kohli's blank stare towards the podium where the coveted ODI World Cup trophy rested exactly seven months and 10 days back. What they would surely want to see is the two greats do a memorable tango in probably their 'Last Dance' in the game's shortest format, at least in India colours. If one understands the drift of Indian cricket's ecosystem, whether it is the BCCI mandarins or the national selectors, they want the troika of Kohli, Rohit and also Ravindra Jadeja to go out on a high from the format. This is because next month's

Zimbabwe series would certainly usher in a new dawn keeping in mind the 2026 T20 World Cup in India. To prepare for any global trophy, the core needs to be finalised two years in advance and in 2026, a 39-year-old Rohit or a nearly 38-year-old Kohli or even Jadeja are unlikely to fit in. At this point, with the focus firmly on the final, no one wants to use the sensitive 'R' word as far as T20Is are concerned but it is believed that if India can beat South Africa in Barbados on Saturday, both skipper Rohit and Kohli would know that in this format, they have nothing more left to achieve. There may or may not be a formal announcement as they would continue to be a part of IPL, where they are still two of the biggest brands apart from Mahendra Singh Dhoni and the non-cricketer -- Shah Rukh Khan.



For Kohli, it will be the completion of a cycle with all three ICC white-ball trophies (2011 ODI World Cup, 2013 Champions Trophy) in

his cabinet. Just like Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara decided immediately after beating India in that 2014 T20 World Cup final that they would both quit the shortest format, one doesn't know if the two greats would do something similar. Kohli and Rohit, the two generational talents with 8334 T20I runs, six centuries, 69 fifties and 119 catches between them are the last bridge between the old and new and they both deserve to be in the same frame with that trophy in hand. Both are World Cup winners but those two victories belonged to the Dhonis, Sachin Tendulkars, and Yuvraj Singh way more. This trophy would rightfully belong to them. Champions have egos -- some have pretty pronounced ones, while few others keep them concealed.

One could gauge the pain in Kohli's eyes after he got out against England and if anyone wants to count the 'King' out of the final, do it at your own peril. For Rohit, if one wants to sum up November 19, 2023 for him, the apt coinage would be Sudhir Mishra's 1996 cult classic "Is Raat Ki Subaah Nah". Even if he asserts that he has moved on, the wounds have healed, he would still be itching for a closure. One can say with a degree of certainty that had India won the 2023 ODI World Cup, Rohit would not have been desperate to play this edition of the T20 World Cup. He wants some kind of closure as far as white ball global triumph is concerned. A T20 World Cup triumph would give him that. His popularity is organic. Dhoni was "Mahi bhai" to his juniors, a man they revered. Kohli earned

respect with his humongous on-field achievements. But Rohit gets love, unadulterated -- from peers as well as juniors. No wonder Ravichandran Ashwin chokes while narrating how the skipper asked one of the team physios to accompany the spinner to Chennai after his mother had a health scare and that too in the middle of a Test match. They have seen the crests and troughs of Indian cricket together for more than a decade. They had arrived when Nokia 3310 was in vogue and in their twilight zone, they are witness to change in nature of fandom -- every third android phone owner is either a 'Viratian' or a 'Rohitian'. Thankfully for Rohit and Kohli, there is nothing more to prove. If Saturday indeed is their 'Last Dance' in T20Is, the void will be difficult to fill not just in terms of quality but also, and perhaps more so, emotionally.

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