



CITY 3
NO CHILD SHOULD BE DEPRIVED OF EDUCATION, SAYS CM YOGI

WORLD 6
RUSSIA REPORTS 5 DEAD IN UKRAINIAN STRIKE

SPORT 7
HI NAMES CORE PROBABLE GROUP FOR WOMEN CAMP

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INVINCIBLE INDIA! MEN IN BLUE CLINCH WORLD CUP AFTER 13 YEARS

PTI ■ BRIDGETOWN

India's agonising 13-year wait for a global title was brought to an end by Virat Kohli's ingenuity and Rohit Sharma's inspirational captaincy as the star-studded team outwitted eternal bridesmaids South Africa by runs in a see-saw final to lift its second T20 World Cup trophy here on Saturday.

Kohli, who was part of 2011 ODI World Cup triumph, announced his retirement from the format immediately after the end of the match.

"It's time for the next generation to take over. It was an open secret and I would have announced it even if we would have lost," Kohli said.

Hardik Pandya, booed for being handed IPL captaincy broke down having endured a tough six months and the enduring picture would certainly be the kiss planted on his cheeks by the man, people rooted for — Rohit Sharma.

Captain Sharma, his eyes glistening, was on his haunches as he was emotionally exhausted, wife Ritika, his soulmate, completely emotional as there wasn't a single soul who didn't feel choked.

When Heinrich Klaasen (52 off 27 balls) was going hammer and tongs against the in-form Indian spinners, it seemed Rohit Sharma and his men will have to settle for second place in



another World Cup final but they clawed their way back into the game with a lot of help from South Africa. Eventually, Hardik Pandya, much maligned by his own supporters for past six months, was able to defend 16 runs in the final over to ensure India's

first ICC trophy since 2013 and a maiden T20 World Cup crown in the post-IPL era. In response to India's 176 for seven, South Africa ended at 169 for eight.

The sense of relief and jubilation was evident on the stars of Indian team, Kohli and Rohit, who might not stay on for another T20 World Cup cycle. The result was also a fitting farewell to head coach Rahul Dravid.

It was the joint effort of Kohli (76 off 59) and Axar Patel (47 off 31) that allowed India to set the highest total in a T20 World Cup final. In the high-pressure run chase, India pacers provided two early wickets before a 58-run stand between opener Quinton de Kock (39 off 31) and Tristram Stubbs (52 off 27) put the Proteas back in the game. However, it was Klaasen's breath taking knock that almost stunned India. Needing a wicket, Rohit Sharma did not turn to his lead pacer Jasprit Bumrah and went for Axar Patel in the 15th over in which Klaasen pounded couple of sixes and as many fours to single-handedly take the game away from the opposition. The asking rate suddenly dropped to run a ball and it became South Africa's game to lose. Not known to keep their calm in pressure situations, South Africa made life tougher for themselves and needed 20 runs off the last 12 balls with David Miller and Keshav Maharaj in the centre. Bumrah, who had bowled a beauty to dislodge Reeza Hendricks in the powerplay, made an impact when he was eventually brought back for this remaining two overs, picking up a wicket and conceding only six runs off his final 12 balls. The equation came down 16 off the last six balls and on the first ball, Suryakumar Yadav took a sensational relay catch at the long-off boundary off Hardik to put India on the cusp of a thrilling victory.

JCO, 4 jawans die in Ladakh flash flood

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

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

"Rescue teams rushed to the location but due to high water level and strong currents the rescue mission didn't succeed and the tank crew lost their lives. The Indian Army regrets the loss of five brave personnel while being operationally deployed in eastern Ladakh. Rescue operations are still underway," the post explained. Since the May 2020 stand-off between the Indian and Chinese troops several soldiers of the Indian Army have sacrificed their lives during operational duties in the region. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh expressed grief over the unfortunate accident. In a post on X, the Defence Minister said, "Deeply saddened at the loss of lives of five of our brave soldiers in an unfortunate accident while getting the tank across a river in Ladakh. We will never forget the exemplary services of our gallant soldiers to the nation. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. The nation stands firm with them during this hour of grief." Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said he was deeply distressed by the news of the accident and the loss of lives.

JD(U) seeks Bihar package

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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



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

was looking for a Third Front until it joined hands with BJP. The JD (U) resolution called for extensive probe into paper leak cases to ensure stringent action against the guilty and maintain the credibility of central competitive exams. "There is also a need for Parliament to enact a strong law against leaks of examination papers," it added. The JD (U)'s decision to include a special package as an alternative to its historical push for special category status for Bihar marked a pragmatic climbdown as the Modi Government had cited the 14th Finance Commission's report to rule out special category status for any more states. Kumar's decision to appoint his confidant Jha as the party's working president, a position not held by anyone, gives ample hint of his inclination to maintain better coordination with the BJP

and drive a helpful bargain as Jha has good ties with the party's national leadership. A former Minister in Bihar, Jha was originally in the BJP and served as its link with Kumar before crossing over to the JD (U). Seen as competent, likeable and low-profiled, the Mithilanchal leader has long been a trusted aide of his ageing mentor who has burnt his fingers in the past due to shifting loyalties of his ostensibly reliable colleagues, including former JD(U) president RCP Singh, now in the BJP. Party sources said Kumar would expect Jha to ensure smooth relations between the JD (U) and the BJP while working to get a positive response to his party's demands, including aid to Bihar. Following his appointment, Jha said his party's purpose was to get central assistance for Bihar to build on the

foundation laid by the Kumar-led Government since 2005, except for a short period when Jitan Ram Manjhi was the Chief Minister. "It does not matter in what name such a help is given. We will pursue it with the Central Government and are hopeful for a positive outcome," he said. Asserting that everything would remain cordial between the BJP and the JD (U), he said the two parties were natural allies. The NDA would win more than 200 seats in the 2025 Assembly polls, he said, noting that the alliance had leads in 177 of the 243 Assembly segments in the recent Lok Sabha elections. The results in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections in which the JD (U) won 12 seats in Bihar showed people's approval of Kumar's work, Jha said, taking a swipe at those who thought the chief minister's political career was on a downward spiral. The JD (U)'s resolution said its responsibility and people's expectations had risen following the party joining the Central Government. The party has two Ministers in the Modi Government. The resolution called for more active and qualitative reforms in the fields of education, health care, agriculture, environment, social welfare, women's empowerment and national security.

Continued on Page 5

Fresh dates for cancelled UGC-NET exam announced

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid a raging row over alleged irregularities in the conduct of competitive exams, the National Testing Agency (NTA) has released fresh dates for cancelled and postponed examinations, announcing the UGC-NET will now be held from August 21-September 4. The University Grants Commission-National Eligibility Test (UGC-NET) was cancelled a day after being conducted on June 18 as the Education Ministry received inputs that the integrity of the exam was compromised. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan said the question paper was leaked on the



darknet and circulated on the Telegram app. The matter is being probed by the CBI. The UGC-NET is a test to determine the eligibility for the award of Junior Research Fellowship, for appointment of assistant professors and admission to

PhD courses. In a shift from the earlier pattern, the exam was conducted in offline mode this year and on a single day. However, the rescheduled exam will be conducted according to the earlier pattern of Computer Based Test (CBT) spread across a fortnight. The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) UGC-NET, which was postponed as a preemptive measure amid the row over alleged irregularities in the conduct of exams, will now be held from July 25-July 27. The CSIR UGC-NET is accepted for PhD admissions in Chemical Sciences, Earth, Atmospheric, Ocean and Planetary Sciences, Life Sciences, Mathematical Sciences, and Physical Sciences.

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Teenage girl abducted, raped

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A teenage girl was abducted and raped in Banthra area on Friday night. The police have registered a case and detained two suspects who are being questioned.

at odd hours and talk sleaze. The mother said she went to Mohit's house to enquire of about her daughter but he and his family misled her.

snatched her mobile phone and threw it in a pond. Later Mohit held her captive in a room of his house and raped her.

identify the attacker due to the darkness. The motive behind the attack puzzled both the police and villagers. Some speculated that the accused might have missed his target, saving Sahajram from more serious harm.



Visitors seem to be making the most of pleasant weather at Lucknow Zoo on Saturday

Pioneer

2 children fall into dugout, drown

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident, two children drowned in a dugout filled with water near the under-construction Kukrail riverfront in Khurram Nagar on Saturday.

collapsed on him during the incident. After removing the soil, rescuers also retrieved Qasim, but both children were pronounced dead upon arrival at a hospital.

Four housing schemes in the offing

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Development Authority is poised to launch four transformative housing schemes that promise to redefine urban living in the state capital.

technology-driven industries," Tripathi stated. "It will include a hi-tech technology park, global business park, and zones for science and engineering equipment and super specialty medical facilities.

Tripathi said. Furthermore, the Management Nagar Scheme on IIM Road is being developed in consultation with local stakeholders.

Management Nagar Scheme on IIM Road is being developed in consultation with local stakeholders.

Anupriya writes to Yogi over rejection of OBC, SC/ST candidates for govt posts

Lucknow (PTI): Union minister and Apna Dal (Sonelal) president Anupriya Patel has written a letter to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath over the rejection of OBC and SC/ST candidates for state government posts by declaring them "not found suitable".

and SC/ST candidates are "declared unserved." Patel also alleged that even after passing the minimum eligibility criteria for these examinations based on merit, OBC and SC/ST candidates are declared "not found suitable."

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सूचना

मेरे मकान नं. - 131/150-सी (1) का मूल विक्रम विवेक सं. 2184 दिनांक 27/1/11 व सुधारनामा क्रम सं. 2184 दिनांक 06.8.12 कही गिर गया है जिसका प्रयोग अब होना। अद्वल कारिक कुरेशी पुत्र तौसीक कुरेशी नि. 131/150 सी (1) बेगम पुरवा कानपुर नगर

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My client Deepshikha Gautam lost late deed of Mr Rajkumar in favor of Anita Devi dated 01/10/2018 registered as document book no 1 vol no 20639 on pages 355 to 380 at serial no 13941 sub registrar zone 3 kanpur if found please return to Adv Dinesh Singh Contact No 6387202121 Use of above mentioned Registry is illegal.

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NOTICE

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I bring to you kind notice that my name is Shahina Parveen Siddiqui Raees Ahmed W/o Siddiqui Raees Ahmed R/o 937/16 Maedena Manzil Civil Line, Darogabagh Distt. Unnao I have change my name Shahina Parveen Siddiqui Raees Ahmed to Shaheena Sadaf Siddiqui Raees Ahmed, vide affidavit dt. 29.06. 2024

NOTICE

My Actual Name & DOB Of My Mother is Ameena Bano (DOB-1.2.1957 instead of Aamina Bano (DOB 08.7.1962 The Above Amendment may please be made for correct documentation vide Affidavit No..94AE936234 dated 29.6.24, Amanulla At Vill. Majhana PO. Aliganj Bazar-Teh. Sadar Distt. Sultanpur UP-227805

सूचना

मैंने अपना नाम Ishaan Mishra से बदलकर Ishan mishra रख लिया. दोनों नाम मेरे ही हैं. अब से मुझे Ishan Mishra के नाम से जाना जाए, पुत्र डाऊनजय मिशा, निवासी - 44बी, बादशाहबाग लखनऊ-226007.

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I Izhar Hasan Khan, son of late. Abrar Hasan Khan Resident of 548/CH/264, Surya Nagar Near RDSO Gurdwara, Lucknow, My wife's name has been wrongly mentioned as Begum Shamim Izhar in my service record. While wife's correct name is Shamim Begum

Significant feat for SGPGI

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Dr Uday Pratap Singh and his team at Sanjay Gandhi Postgraduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS) successfully performed the world's first transvesical multiport robotic radical prostatectomy.

ing transvesical robotic radical prostatectomy are likely to experience earlier restoration of continence and sexual function, significantly enhancing their quality of life after surgery," Dr Uday Pratap Singh said.

Case against 4 for rigging constable recruitment exam

Lucknow (PNS): Four candidates were found to have manipulated the 2018 constable recruitment exam with the aid of solvers, a discovery made apparent during biometric testing.

Four candidates were found to have manipulated the 2018 constable recruitment exam with the aid of solvers, a discovery made apparent during biometric testing.

Daawat-e-Aam delights

Lucknow (PNS): A traditional and unique 'Daawat-e-Aam' was organised by Sanaatada Heritage along with other stakeholders on Saturday. The fest unfolded in two delightful phases.

Allergies affect 1 in 4 Indians

Noting that allergies affect approximately one in four Indians, head of the department of respiratory medicine at King George's Medical University Dr Surya Kant underscored the significance of recognising and managing these conditions proactively.

WORLD ALLERGY WEEK

HOW TO MITIGATE RISK
Keep your home environment clean and dust-free.
If you have pets, ensure they are kept away from living areas to minimise exposure to pet dander.

potential allergens such as plastics, perfumes, and certain cosmetics.
Minimise consumption of canned foods containing chemical additives, which can exacerbate allergic reactions.

डीए-वीओ कालेज, कानपुर

दि पायोनियर के दिनांक 20 जून, 2024 के संस्करण में प्रकाशित कराये गये विज्ञापन, जो कि महाविद्यालय में तृतीय श्रेणी कर्मचारियों-कनिष्ठ सहायक, प्रयोगशाला सहायक एवं टेक्नीशियन (भौतिक विज्ञान) के रिक्त पदों को सीधी भर्ती द्वारा भरे जाने हेतु आवेदन पत्र आमंत्रित किये जाने के संबंध में हैं, में आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त व जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 04 जुलाई, 2024 के स्थान पर 10 जुलाई, 2024 तक विस्तारित की जाती है। अतः उक्त प्रकाशित विज्ञापन को इस सीमा तक संशोधित माना जाये। कुमुकुम स्वरूप, सचिव-प्रबन्ध समिति

डीए-वीओ कालेज, कानपुर

दि पायोनियर समाचार पत्र के दिनांक 19 जून, 2024 के संस्करण में प्रकाशित कराये गये विज्ञापन एवं संशोधन आदेश दिनांक 21 जून, 2024, जो कि महाविद्यालय में चतुर्थ श्रेणी कर्मचारियों इलेक्ट्रीशियन (विजली मिस्त्री) एवं कार्पेन्टर (बढ़ई) के एकल रिक्त पदों को सीधी भर्ती द्वारा भरे जाने हेतु आवेदन पत्र आमंत्रित किये जाने के संबंध में हैं, में आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त व जमा करने की अंतिम तिथि 03 जुलाई, 2024 के स्थान पर 10 जुलाई, 2024 तक विस्तारित की जाती है। अतः उक्त प्रकाशित विज्ञापन को इस सीमा तक संशोधित माना जाये। प्राचार्य

HDFC BANK advertisement for a possession notice regarding a property at 2nd Floor, Exporlo Building, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow.

No child should be deprived of education, says CM Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Honouring the meritorious students of the state, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised on Saturday that it is the collective responsibility of people to ensure that no child is deprived of education. He stated, "We must fulfil this duty, as it is the greatest service to the country." He added, "In the Shrimad Bhagwat Gita, educating someone is regarded as the most sacred work." At a programme organised at Lok Bhavan, the chief minister also initiated the transfer of Rs 1,200 per student for the purchase of uniforms, shoes, socks, sweaters, stationery and school bags through DBT to the bank accounts of their parents or guardians. Addressing teachers and the Education department officials, the chief minister stated, "You are involved in this sacred work. Your conduct should be that of a guide to society, not merely a government official." Chief Minister Yogi stressed the importance of establishing schools as new centres of innovation and research and preparing students to face the toughest challenges. After felicitating the brilliant students, Chief Minister Yogi expressed that there is no greater honour for a guru than to see those he has guided

achieving high positions in the country, state, and district. He stated, "Through these programmes, we are honouring our talented students and presenting them as role models to the new generation, showing that if they also work hard, they will earn respect." Sharing his success mantra with the students, Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that no matter which field they choose in life, there is no substitute for hard work. He said, "A person who takes shortcuts in life can never reach the destination. Therefore, you should strive to work as hard as you can in life. The students who put in the effort made it to the merit list. Success confirms that we are on the right path and should remain focused and undeterred." Chief Minister Yogi stated that students from Uttar Pradesh Secondary Education, Uttar Pradesh Board of Secondary Sanskrit Education, Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE), New Delhi, and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), New Delhi have been honoured here. He remarked, "A total of 170 students, including 112 girls and 58 boys have made it to the merit list of high school and intermediate. This success demonstrates that our daughters have made significant



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath handing over a cheque to a student at a programme organised in Lok Bhavan on Saturday

strides, and there is a need to pay more attention to their education and development." He mentioned that in the Uttar Pradesh Secondary Education high school examination merit list, four boys and 13 girls made the cut out of a total of 17 students. In the intermediate merit list, 14 boys and 22 girls were among the 36 students. For the high school examination of the Uttar Pradesh Secondary

Sanskrit Education Council, two boys and nine girls were listed among the 11 students in the merit list. Additionally, in the intermediate merit list of 11 students, there was one boy and 10 girls. Among the 26 students from Uttar Pradesh in the CBSE class 10 merit list, there are 11 boys and 15 girls. In the CBSE 10+2 merit list, out of 22 students, three are boys and 19

girls. For ICSE, out of 30 students, 18 are boys and 12 are girls, while in the ICSE 10+2 category, out of 17 students, there are five boys and 12 girls, he added. Chief Minister Yogi emphasised that the government is awarding certificates, tablets, and one lakh rupees in cash to all these meritorious students. Moreover, he announced that the roads in the villages or

localities where these students reside will be named after them, or the government will undertake road construction projects in their honour. They will also have the opportunity to lay the foundation stone for these initiatives alongside the MLA and MP. Highlighting the launch of several programmes by the Basic Education Council today, Yogi remarked, "Under these initia-

tives, Rs 1,200 per student has been disbursed to the bank accounts of parents of over 88 lakh students. The Basic Education Council has pioneered numerous innovations over the past seven years." Reflecting on the state of education under previous governments, Chief Minister Yogi stated, "Before 2017, just as the government lived in darkness, they also allowed education to languish in darkness. Today, we have successfully conducted copy-free examinations within 12 days in a fair manner, with results available within 14 days." He contrasted this with the past, saying, "Previously, examinations took three months, results took another three months, admissions took an additional three months, and the remainder was spent on festivals, marking a whole year." Emphasising the strides taken by the Basic Education Council in advancing the next phase of Operation Kayakalp, which includes the introduction of modern PM SHRI Schools, Chief Minister Yogi announced, "We have established 18 Atal residential schools across 18 commission-erates. Additionally, we are set to inaugurate 57 new Mukhyamantri Composite Schools in various districts across the state." He continued, "Today marks a significant leap forward for

the Basic Education Department under the Nipun Bharat Abhiyan in Uttar Pradesh. The Kasturba Gandhi Balika Inter Colleges have also been upgraded to include classes 9 through 12, providing a new platform for girls' education." Present at the event were Secondary Education Minister Gulab Devi, Basic Education Minister Sandeep Singh, Additional Chief Secretary (Secondary Education) Deepak Kumar, Principal Secretary (Basic Education) MKS Sundaram, Director General of School Education Kanchan Verma, and several other officials. Meanwhile, Basic Education Minister Sandeep Singh emphasised that a developed society cannot exist without education. He highlighted that the government has prioritised enhancing the education system to benefit all segments of society. Significant progress has been made with nearly 95 per cent of schools in the state having completed work on 19 parameters, he added. Singh underscored the importance of technology in today's era, noting that the government has equipped all 2,09,863 schools with two tablets each to enhance children's education. Additionally, 880 ICT labs have been established across the state to further facilitate better learning environments.

'Don't make classrooms boring, tense'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Urging teachers not to make classrooms boring and tense, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that every child has unique capabilities. He stressed the importance of setting expectations that align with each student's potential and asserting that imposing unrealistic goals could be detrimental and inhumane. Yogi highlighted the transformative impact of teachers who tailor their approach to nurture each child's personality incrementally. He expressed confidence that with the right encouragement, no obstacle could deter a student who embraces forward momentum without fear of the future, underscoring the role of educators in fostering such resilience. The chief minister also said that while achieving careers like IAS or IPS was commendable, it was equally vital to cultivate patriotism and instill humanitarian values in every child. Speaking at a felicitation ceremony for teachers at CMS, Yogi addressed the prevalent challenges in education, emphasising the need for proactive solutions. "What are the solutions to these problems? We must prepare ourselves to find them. Success isn't a matter of luck; it hinges on diligent effort. The harder one works, the greater the success and internal fulfillment," he said. Yogi urged teachers to innovate in



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressing the gathering at CMS in Lucknow on Saturday

their teaching methods to make learning engaging and accessible. "A teacher's role transcends the classroom. Those in this field are lifelong educators who must continuously innovate in pedagogy to make lessons captivating for students," he said. Reflecting on his own schooling, Yogi recalled how his teachers used practical examples to teach complex subjects like Physics and Chemistry,

eschewing rote memorisation. Paying tribute to CMS founder-chairperson Dr Jagdish Gandhi for his contributions to education and social service, the chief minister praised the resilience and vision of Dr Gandhi and his wife Bharti Gandhi. "When I visit CMS, I am reminded of Dr Jagdish Gandhi's unwavering spirit in the face of adversity, always championing humanitarian values,"

Yogi remarked. Acknowledging his dual purpose in attending the event, he stated, "I am here to honour and felicitate the teachers and to pay tribute to Dr Jagdish Gandhi." "Although people mourn when someone passes away, people like Dr Jagdish Gandhi achieve immortality through their enduring contributions," he added.

Council bypoll: BJP to send 10 names to central leadership

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party has decided to send a panel of 10 names to the central leadership to choose a candidate for legislative council seat that has fallen vacant following the resignation of former Samajwadi Party MLC Swami Prasad Maurya. This decision was taken during a meeting of the state core committee of the party which was chaired by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence here. This is the first poll after the Lok Sabha election where the MLC seat would be contested on the basis of strength of the parties in Vidhan Sabha. There is speculation that the Samajwadi Party may not field a candidate because of the numerical supremacy of the BJP in the lower House. "Still the state unit of the BJP has decided to send a panel of names to the central leadership so that it could decide the candidate depending on the caste

and seniority in the party," a senior BJP leader said. The meeting also decided to hold a state executive committee meeting on July 14 to discuss the upcoming by-elections to 10 assembly seats. The party will finalise three candidates for each seat and send the list to the central leadership. "Even for the bye-elections, the candidates will be selected by the central leadership. The state unit will only have a suggestive role," the leader said. The meeting was attended by Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, BJP state president Bhubendra Singh Chaudhary, general secretary (organisation) Dharampal Singh, and other senior leaders. Additionally, the party chalked out a strategy for participation in the large-scale tree plantation drive, One Tree in Mother's Name, and decided to involve party leaders and workers in the campaign. The dates for the drive will be announced soon.

Chaudhary Vijendra Singh quits BSP

Lucknow (PNS): Chaudhary Vijendra Singh, who contested the Bijor Lok Sabha seat on a Bahujan Samaj Party ticket, has resigned from all his posts in the party. Singh formally announced his departure from the BSP and sent a letter to party supremo Mayawati. He has not yet disclosed which political party he will join next. Political experts speculate that Singh may contest the upcoming assembly by-election from Meerapur. After the recent Lok Sabha election results, Singh is reported to have grown close to Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary. It is speculated that he may contest the by-election on an RLD ticket. Notably, Vijendra Singh was the only BSP candidate in west Uttar Pradesh to save the party's deposit, securing more than two lakh votes in the Lok Sabha elections. Expressing his gratitude to Mayawati for giving him the opportunity to contest the Lok Sabha election, Chaudhary Vijendra Singh stated that he will soon decide his next steps after consultation with his supporters. While his resignation is seen as a significant blow to the BSP, former divisional president of BSP Shahjahan Saifi has downplayed its impact, asserting that the party will not suffer any loss due to Singh's departure.

Complaints received by CDOs and SDMs to be monitored

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Similar to the monitoring of public complaints received by senior district officers such as the district magistrate and police captains, complaints received in the offices of the chief development officers (CDOs) and sub-district magistrate (SDMs) will now also be monitored. Under the new system, public complaint applications submitted to CDO and SDM offices will be entered into the Jan Sunwai Samadhan System (IGRS). This will ensure timely resolution and establish accountability of the officers involved. It should be noted that for the resolution of complaints, the general public can submit applications through various channels including the chief minister's office, deputy chief minister's office, district magistrate's office, district commissioner/senior superintendent of police/superintendent of police, Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas (Tehsil Diwas), Thana Samadhan Diwas, Public Facilitation Centres, Government of India (PG Portal), Chief Minister's Helpline 1076, portals, and apps. The resolution of complaints is managed by the officials concerned through the Integrated Grievance Redressal System (IGRS). Recently, when the chief minister reviewed the Public Grievance Redressal System, it

was found that there were offices in districts where public grievance petitions were received, but there was no system in place to log and resolve these petitions through the Integrated Grievance Redressal System (IGRS). Offices of sub-district magistrate and chief development officer receive important applications on a daily basis. These offices are now being integrated with the IGRS. After the conclusion of the Lok Sabha elections, the chief minister, in a recent video-conferencing meeting with senior field officers, informed that the Janata Darshan programme has been resumed. He directed that senior officers stationed at the district, tehsil, block, range, and zone levels to also start regular public grievance redressal programmes. Officers are required to be present for public grievance hearings every day from 10 am to 12 noon. They have been instructed to listen to the public's problems and complaints with sensitivity and ensure appropriate resolution within a stipulated time frame. The chief minister has explicitly told the officers that "the satisfaction of the public is the benchmark for your performance". The chief minister's aim with this initiative is to ensure that people's issues are resolved at the lowest level of administrative officials.

Azad decision to contest UP bypolls to rattle BSP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a move that is bound to rattle the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Azad Samaj Party led by Chandrashekhar Azad has announced to contest all the 10 seats in the upcoming state assembly bypolls. BSP, in a departure from its long-standing stance, has already announced to contest the coming by-election to all 10 UP assembly seats. The BSP is under tremendous pressure to register its political strength in UP, as the party drew a blank in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections. The BSP will field candidates on 10 seats, of which nine fell vacant after the sitting legislators were elected to the Lok Sabha. The Sisamau seat in Kanpur was declared vacant after the disqualification of sitting MLA Irfan Solanki, who was sentenced by a court in a criminal case. BSP chief Mayawati has also made it clear that despite the Lok Sabha poll debacle, her party will go solo in the bypolls. Party coordinators have been asked to screen the candidates and send the list to the party office for approval. Party office-bearers have been asked to start preparations for the bypolls by organising meetings in the constituencies. On the other hand, Chandrashekhar Azad said that he had appointed in-charges for four assembly seats - Khair (Aligarh),

The BSP is under tremendous pressure to register its political strength in UP, as the party drew a blank in the recently concluded Lok Sabha elections

Meerapur (Muzaffarnagar), Kundarki (Moradabad) and Ghaziabad Sadar (Ghaziabad). SP state president Sunil Kumar Chittod said the party would hold meetings in Phulpur (Prayagraj), Manjhwa (Bhadohi), Katheri (Ambedkar Nagar), Milkpur (Ayodhya), Sisamau (Kanpur) and Karhal (Mainpuri) and after this, the party would announce the names of in-charges for all remaining seats. Chittod said the bypolls would be an opportunity for the ASP to expand its footprint in other districts after bagging the Nagina seat in the Lok Sabha poll. "Party workers are upbeat. We have also decided to contest the bypolls in nagar panchayats and nagar palika parishads in various districts," he said. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Chandrashekhar Azad secured victory in the Nagina constituency, defeating his nearest rival Om Kumar of the Bharatiya Janata Party. BSP candidate Surendra Pal Singh was pushed to the fourth position. The shift of Dalit voters to the ASP has left the BSP worried. The assembly

bye-election will also set the stage for the show of strength for Akash Anand, whom Mayawati has reinstated on the key post of national coordinator earlier this week. In the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, Anand launched the party's election campaign from Nagina to counter the influence of Chandrashekhar Azad. He addressed public meetings in Dalit-dominated constituencies across UP. Later, his rallies were postponed following the registration of an FIR in a hate speech case in Sitapur on April 29. On May 7, Mayawati removed him from the post of national coordinator of the party and as her political successor. After reinstating Anand on both the key posts, Mayawati told party leaders to support and encourage her nephew, adding that he should be given due respect on party platforms and party cadre should work in unison to ensure his success in politics. With Chandrashekhar Azad leading the ASP campaign, the fight for Dalit votes between the BSP and the party will now intensify in Uttar Pradesh.

SP not to contest UP legislative council bypoll

Lucknow (PNS): With the Samajwadi Party deciding not to field its candidate, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party candidate is set to be elected unopposed in the bypoll to the lone legislative council seat. The vacancy in the Upper House of the state legislature was caused by the resignation of SP MLC Swami Prasad Maurya. The term of this seat ends on July 6, 2028. The SP has decided to not to force a contest by fielding its candidate as it lacks the required number in state assembly for winning the seat. Members to the legislative council are elected from multiple constituencies - local bodies, graduate, teachers and state assembly while six members are nominated by the governor on the recommendation of the chief minister. The strength of the Upper House is 100. As per the poll schedule announced by the Election Commission of India, the last date for filing nomination paper is July 2, scrutiny of papers will be held on July 3 and July 5 is the last date for withdrawal of the papers. If necessary, polling will be held on July 12. As per the established tradition, the by-election to the Upper House is always won by the ruling party on account of their strength in the state assembly. Swami Prasad Maurya, former SP MLC and general secretary, had resigned from the membership of the legislative council and party following his differences with SP president Akhilesh Yadav. Maurya had also accused Akhilesh Yadav of discriminating against him and disowning his statements.

6 engineers suspended for road collapse

Ayodhya (PNS): The Uttar Pradesh government has taken a serious note of the recent collapse of the newly-constructed Ram Path in Ayodhya and suspended six engineers of the Public Works Department (PWD) and Jal Nigam. The Ram Path, built at a cost of crores of rupees, had collapsed twice, on June 22 and June 25, due to heavy rainfall. The authorities had undertaken repair work, but it was not completed properly, leading to the second collapse. The government has taken a stern view of the incident, terming it a serious lapse and dereliction of duty. As a result, PWD's Executive Engineer Dhruv Agarwal, Assistant Engineer Anuj Deswal, and junior engineer Prabhakar Pandey have been suspended. Similarly, Jal Nigam's Executive Engineer Anand Kumar Dubey, Assistant Engineer Rajendra Kumar Yadav, and junior engineer Mohammed Shahid have also been suspended. The government has also recommended departmental action against these engineers, citing gross negligence and damage to public property and the government's image.

UP generates over one crore tokens through ABHA ID (3,83,789). Recently, Uttar Pradesh also set a new record by surpassing the figure of 80 lakh in ABHA-based OPD registrations. Previously, the state had achieved acclaim for creating 10 crore ABHA IDs. These achievements highlight Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's efforts to raise awareness and encourage active participation in healthcare initiatives across the state. Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) is an initiative of the National Health Authority (NHA). It is a health savings account launched under the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-MJAY), designed to provide financial assistance for healthcare needs to economically weaker sections.

28 meritorious students receive funds, tablets



MLA Saurabh Srivastava honouring a meritorious student in Varanasi on Saturday

PNs ■ VARANASI In a programme organised in the commissionerate auditorium here, 28 meritorious children of the district were distributed tablets, certificates/medals along with funds in their accounts through DBT.

The DM congratulated the honoured meritorious students for their success and motivated them to continue this effort in the future.

On this occasion, a sum of Rs 1 lakh was transferred to the bank accounts of four meritorious students at the state level and Rs 21,000 to the district level meritorious students through DBT.

BLW should be pathfinder in use of Hindi: GM

PNs ■ VARANASI The quarterly meeting of BLW Rajbhasha Implementation Committee was organised under the aegis of Rajbhasha department in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Friday.

Bareka Darpan magazine. He said the dream of self-reliant India would be successful with the use of Hindi.

Hindi in BLW. The meeting was conducted by Senior Rajbhasha Officer Dr Sanjay Kumar Singh, who at last also proposed the vote of thanks.

Woman found dead, kin allege murder

PNs ■ PRAYAGRAJ A 26-year-old woman, identified as Babita Prajapati, was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Achola village under Manda police station in Prayagraj on Saturday.

been murdered for dowry. The situation grew tense between the in-laws and the maternal family, prompting the villagers to inform the police.

rushed him to SRN Hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. The police arrested the accused, identified as Nakul Bind.

arrest of Nakul Bind, who is being interrogated. Meanwhile, a 30-year-old woman, Ruby Nishad, allegedly attempted suicide by jumping into the river from the new Yamuna bridge on Saturday.

Former ACJ passes away

PNs ■ PRAYAGRAJ Former Acting Chief Justice (ACJ) of the Allahabad High Court VK Shukla passed away on Saturday. After retiring from the high court, he was practising law in the Supreme Court.



AK Verma takes additional charge as NCR GM

PNs ■ PRAYAGRAJ Ashok Kumar Verma, an officer of the Indian Railway Stores Service, assumed additional charge as general manager of North Central Railway on Saturday.



Indian Railway Institute of Logistics and Material Management and a PG Diploma in Alternate Dispute Resolution Mechanism from the National Academy of Legal Studies and Research University.

Verma held a meeting with all the principal heads of departments. DRMs also joined the meeting via video conferencing.

Rehabilitation lab opened in BHU

PNs ■ VARANASI A rehabilitation and wellness lab was inaugurated in the physical education department of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Saturday.



Arjun Awardee VS Chauhan inaugurating Rehabilitation and Wellness Lab at BHU in Varanasi on Saturday

proper rest after fatigue of the muscles. At present, high level players need this unit very much during training and competitions.

opportunities to do various types of new research on common people and players in the field of rehabilitation and wellness.

Journalists seek safety, security from ADG of Prayagraj Zone

Prayagraj (PNs): A delegation from the Electronic Media Club, led by convener Virendra Pathak, met ADG (Prayagraj Zone) Bhanu Bhaskar to submit a memorandum regarding the safety of journalists.

13 postal dept officers felicitated

PNs ■ VARANASI Officers and employees of the UP Circle of the Department of Posts were felicitated for their excellent work in various fields in the Uttar Pradesh Circle Excellence Award ceremony organised in Lucknow.



Sukanya Samridhi Account in the entire UP in the financial year 2023-24. Superintendent of Post Offices, Jaunpur Division, Parmanand Kumar, was felicitated for securing first position in Aadhaar revenue in the entire UP and Superintendent of Post Offices, Ballia Division, Hemant Kumar, was felicitated for securing second position in postal distribution.

Indrajit Pal, Investigation Inspector, Regional Office, Varanasi, Dilip Pandey, Postal Inspector Chandauli, Jai Gopal Pandey, secured second position in the Best Postal Inspector category, Shubham Jaiswal in the Best Rural Dak Sevak category, Branch Postmaster Nyoli Ghazipur got first position, Sarvesh Pandey of Varanasi West Division got first position in the Development Officer category in the field of postal life insurance, Dinesh Kumar, Ghazipur Division, got second position, Santosh Kumar Yadav got third position in the Direct Agent category, Ram Bachan Maurya got second position in the Field Officer category. In the Driver category, Gopal Singh of Varanasi East Division was felicitated for securing third position.

Training on new criminal laws held

PNs ■ VARANASI On the instructions of District Magistrate S Rajalingam, a training session was organised for all the revenue officers of the district in the Circuit House auditorium here on Saturday regarding the awareness being run on a wide-scale about the new criminal laws coming into force from July 1, 2024.

In the training session, information about the new laws was given by Joint Director (Prosecution in-charge) Hari Kishor Singh, and Assistant Prosecution Officers Madhusudan Tiwari and Anshikam Trivedi.

Verma, ADM (Administration) Vipin Kumar, ADM (Protocol) Prakash Chandra, ADM (Finance) Vandita Srivastava and SDMs Pratibha Mishra, Shivani Singh, Amit Kumar, Nikhlesh Mishra and all theseldars and other officers posted in Varanasi district were present in the training programme.

Mock drill at IFFCO for onsite emergency plan

PNs ■ PRAYAGRAJ A mock drill for the onsite emergency plan was conducted at the IFFCO Phulpur unit. The drill simulated a scenario where a fire and heavy leakage of natural gas occurred from the downstream flange of the isolation valve of the PSV installed on the main header from the GAIL terminal to the IFFCO Phulpur complex.



ation, IFFCO management, and department heads. Senior executive director (unit head) Sanjay Kudesia emphasised the importance of technical analysis in any disaster situation to improve response strategies. He noted that such mock drills enhance performance during actual conditions.

The rehearsal involved cooperation from the fire department (IFFCO), GAIL (IFFCO), local administration, and UP Fire & Security departments. Participants in the drill included Civil Defence controller Narendra Sharma, Rakesh Kumar Tiwari, GMs Sanjay Vaish and MD Mishra, JGMs Dr Anita Mishra, PK Singh, Sanjay Bhandari, PK Patel, Ratnesh Kumar, Arun Kumar, Arvendra Kumar, AK Gupta, HOD (human resources) Shambhu Shekhar, chief manager (fire and safety) Sanjeev Kumar, manager (fire and safety) AK Yadav, Vikas Kumar, Manoj Patel, and other officers and employees from relevant departments.

Leaders condole death of five soldiers in Ladakh flash flood

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday expressed sadness over the death of soldiers in a flash flood in Ladakh and said the entire country is with their families. Five Army personnel, including a junior commissioned officer, drowned when their T-72 tank sank due to flash floods in the Shyok River near the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the Nyoma-Chushul area in Ladakh during an exercise early Saturday.

"I am saddened by the news of the accident during the military exercise in Ladakh. I express my condolences to the families of the brave soldiers who lost their lives in this accident. The whole country is with the families of the brave soldiers," Shah said in a social media post in Hindi.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra expressed sorrow at the death of five soldiers who



drowned when their T-72 tank sank due to a flash flood in the Shyok river in Ladakh on Saturday.

"Deeply distressed at the loss of lives of five Indian Army brave-hearts, including a JCO (junior commissioned officer), while getting a T-72 tank across a river in Ladakh," Kharge said in a social media post.

"Our heartfelt condolences to the families of the Army personnel who fell victim to this

said the news of the soldiers' death was extremely sad. "The news of the martyrdom of five Indian Army soldiers in an accident during a military exercise of a tank crossing a river in Ladakh is extremely sad," he said in a post in Hindi on X. "While paying my humble tribute to all the martyred soldiers, I express my deepest condolences to the bereaved families. We stand with them in this hour of grief. The country will always remember their dedication, service and sacrifice," he said in a post.

Priyanka Gandhi also expressed her condolences to the families of the five soldiers. "The news of the martyrdom of five army soldiers in the sudden flood... in Ladakh is extremely sad. May God grant peace to the departed souls. My deepest condolences to the bereaved families," she said in social media post in Hindi.

"The country will always remain indebted to our brave soldiers and their families for this supreme sacrifice," she added.

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

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian multi-role stealth frigate INS Shivalik, mission deployed in South China Sea and North Pacific Ocean, has reached Pearl Harbour in Hawaii to take part in the Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise, which is 'world's largest naval exercise,' navy said here on Saturday.

It spans six weeks and navies from 26 countries will take part in the mega drill. Giving details, officials said the Indian warship sailed into Pearl Harbour on Thursday on completion of JIMEX 24, a bilateral exercise between India and Japan.

The harbour phase of the exercise from June 27 to July 07 will see participation in multiple symposiums, exercise planning discussions, sports competitions and reciprocal deck visits.

The sea phase of RIMPAC - 24, divided into three sub-phases



will witness ships undertaking basic and advanced level integration exercises during the first two sub-phases. The event will conclude with a theatre level large force tactical exercise*.

The exercise will witness the participation of an Aircraft Carrier Battle Group, submarines, maritime reconnaissance aircraft, unmanned aerial vehicles, remotely piloted surface ships and also an amphibious force landing operations including joint opera-

tions with special forces of multinational navies. RIMPAC-24, spanning over six weeks of intense operations and training is aimed at enhancing interoperability and building trust among the navies of friendly foreign countries. Led by the US Navy, approximately 29 countries are participating in the current edition of the multi-dimensional exercise.

The world's largest international maritime exercise, RIMPAC-24 provides a unique training opportunity while fostering and sustaining cooperative relationships among participants, critical to ensuring the safety of sea lanes and security of world's oceans.

INS Shivalik's participation in RIMPAC-24, 9,000 Nautical Miles away from Indian coast stands testimony to the Indian Navy's capability to operate in any part of the world. The ship is an indigenously designed and built 6,000 tonnes guided missile stealth frigate.

Heavy to very heavy rainfall predicted for NW, NE India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) on Saturday predicted heavy to very heavy rainfall in northwest and northeast India over the next four to five days. A low-pressure area is currently situated over the northwest Bay of Bengal, adjoining the north Odisha-Gangetic West Bengal coasts, the weather office said.

Cyclonic circulations have formed over northeast Rajasthan, east Uttar Pradesh bordering Bihar, and northwest Uttar Pradesh at lower tropospheric levels, it added.

An east-west trough extends from northwest Uttar Pradesh to the low-pressure area. Due to these weather systems, isolated heavy rainfall is expected in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhnad, Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, and



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

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

Assam and Meghalaya on June 29. The Met office also predicted isolated heavy rainfall for Saurashtra, Kutch, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and coastal and south interior Karnataka from June 29 to July 1. Gujarat, Goa, and central Maharashtra are expected to receive heavy rainfall from June 29 to July 3, with isolated very heavy rainfall in Konkan, Goa, and central Maharashtra from June 30 to July 3.

The IMD also said the southwest monsoon has further advanced into the remaining parts of east Uttar Pradesh and some areas of west Uttar Pradesh on Saturday. Conditions are favourable for the monsoon to advance into more parts of west Rajasthan, Haryana, Chandigarh, Punjab, and the remaining areas of west Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, and Jammu over the next two to three days, it added.

Canopy at Rajkot Airport collapses



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

After the tragic airport canopy collapse in Delhi that claimed a life and injured many, a canopy at the Rajkot International Airport in Gujarat has also collapsed due to heavy rain on Saturday. The canopy was placed at the passenger pickup and drop area outside the airport terminal. No injuries have been reported so far.

A video on social media showed airport officials on the spot of the canopy collapse. This marks the third such occurrence in a short span, raising concerns over airport infrastructure resilience in extreme weather conditions.

In a post on X, the Rajkot airport authorities said that water accumulation was observed on the city side of the canopy at the terminal building at 11.40 am due to heavy rains. "As we came to know about it we gave the information to the civil works department and the area beneath was cordoned off," said Rajkot International Airport in the post.

Modi to release three books on Venkaiah today



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

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

Air connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar gets boost

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Giving a boost to air connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar, an Air India flight made a successful night landing at Port Blair Airport, an official statement said.

The Air India Airbus A321 with 68 passengers on board landed at INS Utkrosh on Friday evening. INS Utkrosh is under Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC) and it is located on the same premises

of Veer Savarkar International Airport in Port Blair. A statement issued by the Andaman and Nicobar Command said, "The aircraft left Kolkata around 5.40 pm and landed successfully in Port Blair at 7.34 pm. The aircraft proceeded towards Veer Savarkar International Terminal to disembark passengers."

"This successful night landing marks a significant step towards enhancing air connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, benefiting



islanders and boosting tourism. This landmark event was made

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

"Utkrosh Airfield is fully capable of handling both day and

night operations. Apart from its strategic importance, these developments mark a crucial step in improving regional connectivity and strengthening the 'Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik' (UDAN) scheme," said a senior Andaman and Nicobar Command official.

He urged private airline operators to avail maximum utilization of the night landing and takeoff facility at the Port Blair airport.

40% risk allowance for NDRF rescuers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union government has approved a 40 per cent hardship and risk allowance for National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) rescuers, keeping in mind the tough operations undertaken by them, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced on Saturday. He said this while welcoming a 35-member expedition team of the NDRF that recently scaled the 21,625-foot-high Mt Manirang in Himachal Pradesh.

"The government has approved a 40 per cent risk and hardship allowance for NDRF personnel only yesterday. This has been a long pending demand... All the 16,000 personnel of the force will benefit from this," Shah said after welcoming the expedition named 'Vijay'.

Officials said this allowance would be granted over and above salaries. Special forces like the National Security Guard (NSG) and the Special Protection Group (SPG) get a 25 per cent hardship allowance owing to the special charter of



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

It has been decided that at least one team from these forces will mandatorily participate in international and

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

"We have come a long way... The government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been working on the concept of zero casualties during disasters for the last 10 years," he said. Shah said his government has allocated higher funds for capacity building and training of the NDRF and state disaster response forces by allocating Rs 2 lakh crore during 2014-24 as compared to Rs 66,000 crore during 2004-14. He complimented the NDRF team for the successful expedition, saying such exercises will boost the force's capabilities and morale and it will be able to do better during disasters and accident operations.

Shah cautioned the rescuers that they should not rest on their laurels but keep improving. The NDRF was raised in 2006 as a federal contingency and disaster response force and at present, has a strength of more than 18,000 men and women rescuers deployed across the country as part of 16 battalions and 28 RRCs.

It undertakes operations to mitigate and combat man-made and natural disasters like earthquakes, floods and train accidents among others.

India presents action plan at Colombo Process

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India has presented an action plan focusing on several of its priority areas for regional cooperation under the Colombo Process, a regional consultative forum comprising 12 Asian nations. India rolled out the plan while chairing a meeting of the grouping in Geneva on Friday.

In the meeting, India listed a range of its priorities that included reviewing the financial sustainability of the Colombo Process and broadening the grouping's membership by including new nations as members and observers.

Muktesh Pardeshi, Secretary (Consular-Passport-Visa Division) in Ministry of External Affairs, delivered the special address at the meeting.

"He emphasised India's commitment to advancing the objectives of the Colombo Process and enhancing collaboration among member states," the ministry said. "India presented an outline of



an action plan for the next two years, focusing on key priorities and initiatives to further strengthen the Colombo Process," it said.

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

JD(U) seeks...

From Page 1
Expressing concern over the recent Patna High Court judgment striking down the Bihar Government's decision to increase reservation for SCs, STs and OBCs from 50 per cent to 65 per cent, the JD (U) urged the Centre to put the State's law in the Constitution's 9th Schedule to rule out its judicial review.

The resolution praised Kumar's political acumen and positive strategy, saying he played an important role in the running of the NDA government in Bihar and formation of the central government at the Centre under Modi's leadership.

It said people re-elected a government at the Centre that worked for national interest. Another resolution passed at the national executive stressed on the need for strengthening the party's organisation in the States going to Assembly polls, while specifically mentioning Jharkhand. It noted that JD (U) candidates had contested and won elections in the State.

It would seriously work on its election strategy and put up candidates there, the resolution said. Sources said the JD (U) would nudge the BJP to leave a few seats for its candidates in Jharkhand.

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

AP ■ DUBAI

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

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

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

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

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

US media expects Biden to withdraw from Pres race

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A day after Joe Biden's dismal showing at the first presidential debate against Donald Trump, leading US media outlets have commented that the incumbent US President should leave the race for the White House for the future of American democracy and prevent a second inroads for his Republican rival. Biden, seeking a second term in the White House, stumbled and fumbled during the televised presidential debate with his predecessor Trump on Thursday night in Atlanta, setting off alarm bells among top Democrats about whether the 81-year-old president can stay atop the gruelling months ahead of the elections on November 5.

The 78-year-old Trump, who is the presumptive Republican Party candidate for the presidential election, clashed right from the start with Biden and by the end of the 90 minutes debate, gave enough fodder for serious editorials and opinions as well as memes on social media. The New York Times Editorial Board on Friday went on to say how President Biden has repeatedly and rightfully described the stakes in this November's presidential election as "nothing less than the future of American democracy" and how Trump has proved himself to be a significant jeopardy to that democracy and someone who has "systematically attempted to undermine the integrity of elections." "Mr. Biden has been an admirable president. Under his leadership, the nation has

prospered and begun to address a range of long-term challenges, and the wounds ripped open by Mr. Trump have begun to heal. But the greatest public service Mr. Biden can now perform is to announce that he will not continue to run for re-election," it said. The Washington Post editorial, 'How Biden and the Democrats should think through what to do now' said it's incumbent on this incumbent (President Biden) to determine, "whether continuing to seek re-election is in the best interests of the country" as it continued: "Former president Donald Trump proved emphatically on Thursday why preventing another Trump presidency is the paramount consideration." The Los Angeles Times editorial 'For the sake of the nation, Biden must reassure Americans he is up to a second term' presented a gloomy picture but with a ray of hope. "If all one was confronted with was a transcript of the debate, Biden's performance would look better. He effectively confronted Trump on the former president's complicity in the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection and scored several policy points. Alas, for many viewers, especially those who don't follow politics carefully, that mattered less than the fact that Biden confirmed Trump's caricature of 'Sleepy Joe,'" it said. But it also added: "Nor, despite the visible jitters of many Democrats, does the disappointing debate performance mean that Biden should step aside from running for reelection — a scenario fraught with its own problems for the Democratic Party. However, it does mean that the president has to reassure Americans who might now have doubts about his fitness for another term."

The Chicago Tribune's editorial titled 'As America sank into the couch, Joe Biden and Donald Trump combined for a depressing farce. Enough' was the most uncharitable as it said, "By all means, defend the honour and service of the man. But to pretend he (Biden) is the party's best choice for four more years? For a party that loves to accuse Republicans of mendacity, it's pretty rich." "Biden, if we've not made that clear, should announce that he will be a single-term president who now has seen the light when it comes to his own capabilities in the face of the singular demands of being the president of the United States. He can do so with honour, but he is the only person who can do so. Certainly, his family can help. But, again, he is the only one," it asserted. The Wall Street Journal started by saying the Trump-Biden debate was "painful—for the United States." "President Biden's halting, stumbling debate performance Thursday night showed all too clearly that he isn't up to serving four more years in office. For the good of the country, more even than their party, Democrats have some hard thinking to do about whether they need to replace him at the top of their ticket," were its scathing remarks only to be added with a disclaimer: "This isn't a partisan thought; it's a patriotic one."



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

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

AP ■ BELGRADE (SERBIA)

An attacker with a crossbow wounded a Serbian police officer guarding the Israeli Embassy in Belgrade on Saturday, Serbia's interior ministry said. The officer responded by fatally shooting the assailant. Interior Minister Ivica Dacic said in a statement that the attacker fired a bolt at the officer, hitting him in the neck. He said the officer then "used a weapon in self-defense to shoot the attacker, who died as a result of his injuries."

The policeman was conscious when he was transported to Belgrade's main emergency hospital, where an operation to remove the bolt from his neck will be performed, the statement added. A spokesman with the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that "today there was an attempted terrorist attack in the vicinity of the Israeli Embassy in Belgrade." The spokesman said the embassy is closed and no employee of the embassy was injured. The identity of the attacker was still being determined. "All the circumstances of the attack and possible motives are being investigated," Dacic said. Israel's Embassy is located not far from the US Embassy in an upscale Belgrade district. It has been guarded by an elite police unit with officers armed with automatic weapons. Serbia has maintained close relations with Israel during the war in Gaza.

10 Ukrainians held prisoner for years in Russia return home

AP ■ KYIV (UKRAINE)

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

physical, are very frightening there." The former prisoners, wrapped in blue and yellow flags, reunited with families in Kyiv and called those who couldn't be there. For some, the separation had lasted many years. "I really want to hug you. I'll be with you soon, Mommy," said Isabella Pekh, the daughter of freed art historian Olena Pekh, through a video call. "I'm so sorry I couldn't meet you." For almost six years, Isabella Pekh spoke at international conferences and appealed to ambassadors for help in freeing her mother, who was detained in the occupied part of the Donetsk region. "It was six years of hell that words cannot describe. But I knew I had my homeland, I had people who loved me, I had my daughter," Olena Pekh said. Two Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests were among those freed. One, Bohdan

Heleta, was detained in 2022 in his church in the occupied city of Berdiansk in the southeastern region of Zaporizhzhia. "There are a lot of our men and women there," Heleta said of those who remain imprisoned. "They need help, concrete help. They are waiting for it." Pope Francis in an address on Saturday called for the release of all prisoners in the war, and thanked God for the liberation of the two priests. Zelenskyy in a post on X wrote that "I am grateful to everyone who helped. I thank our team working to free the prisoners. I also want to acknowledge the efforts of the Holy See in bringing these people home." According to Ukraine's Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, 3,310 Ukrainians have already been released from Russian captivity since Russia's full-scale invasion.

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

PTI ■ LAHORE

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

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

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

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

9 dead in Nepal landslide

AP ■ KATHMANDU

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

Russia reports 5 dead in Ukrainian drone strike

AP ■ KYIV

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

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

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

PTI ■ WASHINGTON / ISLAMABAD

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

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

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

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

UNESCO finds IS-era bombs in Mosul mosque walls

AP ■ BAGHDAD

The UN cultural agency has discovered five bombs hidden within the walls of the historic al-Nouri Mosque in the city of Mosul in northern Iraq, a remnant of the Islamic State militant group's rule over the area, UNESCO said in a statement on Saturday. The mosque, famous for its 12th-century leaning minaret, was destroyed by IS in 2017

and has been a focal point of UNESCO's restoration efforts since 2020. The UN agency said that five large-scale explosive devices, designed for significant destruction, were found inside the southern wall of the Prayer Hall on Tuesday. "These explosive devices were concealed within a specially rebuilt section of the wall," the statement said. "Iraqi authorities were promptly notified,

secured the area, and the situation is now fully under control." It added that "one bomb has been defused and removed, while the remaining four are interconnected and will be safely disposed of in the coming days." Iraqi authorities have requested that UNESCO halt all reconstruction operations at al-Nouri mosque and evacuate the entire complex until the devices are

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

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

PTI ■ PANCHKULA (HARYANA)

Middle-distance runner Lili Das was seen as a big hope for Indian athletics when she burst onto the scene in 2016. But things panned out differently from there and eight years later, she is still seeking her first senior international medal. The absence of sponsors has prevented Lili from realising her full potential at the top level, but the feisty athlete from West Bengal is not giving up just yet, years after having created a national record in 1500m in the Federation Cup (Junior) in 2016. Das, now 26, qualified for the 2016 World Junior Championships in Bydgoszcz, Poland, where Neeraj Chopra won a gold, and finished 10th in the 1500m final there. That year, she bagged gold in both 800m and 1500m at the Asian Junior Championships but since graduating to the senior level, she has not won any international medal bar one bronze in 800m in the 2019 South Asian Games. "I have won international medals at junior level, but somehow, I am not winning international medals at senior level. I missed a medal at 2017 Asian Championships and I missed out on taking part in the 2018 and

2022 Asian Games. That is the sad part," Das, who has been in the national circuit for more than 10 years, told PTI on Saturday. "But I am not giving up just yet. I am 26 now, but luckily, I have not had major injuries in my career and as long as I am fit, I will keep working hard and try to win international medals. My next target is the 2025 Asian Championships and then the 2026 Asian Games." Das has, however, achieved domestic success and she won a 1500m gold on Friday at the ongoing National Inter-State Championships, beating the likes of national record holder K M Deeksha. Das stands at around 5 feet but is known to be a feisty character. In pursuit of more success, especially at the international stage, Das has begun dabbling in 5000m and even 10K road race. She won 5000m gold at the Federation Cup last month and took part in the TCS World 10K Run in Bengaluru in April. "I started running these longer distances in a bid to improve my timing in 1500m. Let us see what happens. I have to do whatever I can to improve my timing (in 1500m)." Hailing from Hooghly district's Triveni town in West Bengal, Das'



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

Most of the athletes except a few are from poor families and they will struggle. I also faced the same but I am better off now after getting a Railways job," she said. Das is currently working as an office superintendent at the Eastern Railways headquarters in Kolkata, though she trains at the SAI Bengaluru. "My mother is sports-minded, she used to compete at the local level when she was young. She encouraged me to do sports when I was in class 2 or 3. She used to take me to the playing ground, I chose athletics only because of her. Even now she would come to watch me on and off during championships. "I joined SAI Kolkata in 2012 and since then I am in the national circuit beginning at the junior level." Asked about her next competition, she said, "I will compete in the Inter Railways Meet in August and then the National Open. I won a gold here (Inter-State) and if I do well in the upcoming events, I am hoping to get promotion to chief OS (office superintendent)." "Currently in India, there is disparity among athletes in getting sponsorship. I have no sponsors and that is why I am struggling to improve myself."

11 names core probable group for women coaching camp

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Hockey India on Saturday announced a 33-member Indian women's probable group for a two-month long training camp at SAI center starting here from Monday. The Indian team went on a short break after losing all its matches in the FIH Hockey Pro League season in London and Antwerp. India had lost all four games against Belgium and Argentina in Antwerp last month and were beaten by Germany (1-3) and Great Britain (2-3) in London. "We recently travelled to Antwerp and London for the Europe leg of the Pro League, and while the results were not in our favour, we learned a lot as a team," Chief coach Harendra Singh said in a release. "On several occasions, we were leading, and we proactively searched and threatened to score while looking for an equalizer. These are good signs to have in the initial stages of a rebuild, and I am sure the Indian Women's Hockey Team will be a force to be reckoned with in the future." The camp will conclude on August 31.



TEAM:

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



Praggnanandhaa lets Gukesh off hook on day of draws

PTI ■ BUCHAREST (ROMANIA)

Grandmaster Praggnanandhaa missed out on becoming a joint leader at the Superbet Classic chess tournament after settling for a draw against compatriot D Gukesh in the third round here. After losing to Gukesh in the last Candidates tournament in April earlier this year, Praggnanandhaa had a great opportunity to equalise the score this year but could not find a winning continuation after Gukesh spoiled a drawn endgame. The Catalan opening saw Gukesh sacrificing a pawn early and Praggnanandhaa had his share of counterplay on the Queen side. As things unfolded, Gukesh recovered the pawn with an optical advantage with his Knight against a slightly bad Bishop of Praggnanandhaa. With the intricacies of the middle game over, Gukesh decided to part with a pawn and reached a Queen and rook endgame that should have been an easy draw but a blunder on his 53rd move saw a forced liquidation leading to a King and pawns endgame.

On another day, Praggnanandhaa may have found the winning continuation to become a joint leader but luck smiled on Gukesh and the game was drawn a few moves later. For the first time in three days, all the five games in the ten-player double round-robin tournament ended in draws. The other player coming close to a win was Maxime Vachier-Lagrave who almost pulled it off against his French teammate Alireza Firouzja. It was a Berlin defense game wherein Firouzja won the opening battle for the third day running getting a balanced position easily as black. However, a late error in the queen-less middle game, saw Vachier-Lagrave seize the initiative and it should have been a win that slipped out of hands for the older Frenchman. With all games ending in draws, the lead positions remained unchanged and Gukesh continued to be at the top of the tables along with Fabiano Caruana of United States who drew a keenly contested game against Nodirbek Abusattorov of Uzbekistan.

With both leaders on two points, Vachier-Lagrave, Alireza, Wesley So, Giri and Nepomniachtchi share the third spot on 1.5 points apiece. Another half point behind is Abusattorov and Bogdan Daniel with six rounds still remaining in the USD 350000 prize money tournament. Dutchman Anish Giri played out an easy draw on his 30th birthday against Russian Ian Nepomniachtchi with both players giving nothing away and this was also the first game to end in the day. Deac Bogdan-Daniel of Romania played out his second draw in the tournament holding off a slightly worse endgame for more than a couple of hours against Wesley So of United States. **RESULTS ROUND 3:** D Gukesh (Ind, 2) drew with R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 1.5); Maxime Vachier-Lagrave (Fra, 1.5) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (FID, 1.5); Nodirbek Abusattorov (Uzb, 1) drew with Fabiano Caruana (Usa, 2); Wesley So (Usa, 1.5) drew with Deac Bogdan-Daniel (Rom, 1).

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

AP ■ LAS VEGAS

Vinicius Junior scored two first-half goals to lead Brazil to a 4-1 victory over Paraguay and put itself in position to advance out of Group D in the Copa America. Savinho also scored a first-half goal for Brazil and Lucas Paqueta scored on a penalty kick in the second half. Omar Alderete scored Paraguay's goal. There were plenty of tense moments with five yellow cards and a red handed out. Andres Cubas was sent off for a red card in the 81st minute, forcing Paraguay to play the last part of the match down a man. Yellow cards were handed to Brazil's Wendell, Junior and Paqueta and Paraguay's Fabian Balbuena and Ernesto Caballero. The victory was quite a response for the Seleção

Canarinho, who opened the tournament Tuesday with a scoreless draw against Costa Rica despite outshooting their opponent 18-2. With four points, Brazil is two behind group leader Colombia, which defeated Costa Rica 3-0 earlier Friday. A victory or tie by Brazil against Colombia on Tuesday ensures one of the group's two spots in the knockout stage. Brazil also has a six-goal differential advantage over Costa Rica, so a loss likely won't keep out the nine-time Copa America champions. Brazil has had its difficulties against Paraguay in Copa America play, having drawn in their previous five meetings. That tied for the second-longest unbeaten streak against Brazil in this tournament, which Paraguay also was part of from 1963-83. But Brazil won the most recent



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

crossbar, Savinho put Brazil up 2-0 in the 43rd minute. Both teams got into a scrum in extra time, with Chilean referee Piero Maza Gomez handing yellow cards to Wendell and Balbuena at three-plus minutes. Then Junior delivered the crushing blow five minutes into extra

time. Paraguay had its chances and even outshot Brazil 8-5, including 4-3 on goal. Brazil goalkeeper Alisson Becker made a tremendous save diving to his right to prevent a goal from Danián Bobodilla 15 minutes into the match. Early in the second half, however, Alderete scored to close the deficit to 3-1. Then 17 minutes later, Paqueta made up for a missed penalty kick in the first half by converting to give back Brazil its three-goal lead. Brazil coach Dorival Júnior made a bold and controversial move by deciding not to start Raphinha. The move, with national team legend Neymar watching from the stands, clearly paid off. Raphinha was a late-game substitute, entering the match at the 72nd minute in place of Savinho.

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

AP ■ GLENDALE

Davinson Sánchez and Jhon Córdoba scored three minutes apart in the second half, and Colombia advanced to the Copa America quarterfinals with a 3-0 win over Costa Rica. Colombia controlled possession (62%) for the second straight game and led 1-0 at halftime on Luis Díaz's penalty kick in the 31st minute. Los Cafeteros kept up the pressure in the second half and wrapped up Group D with a dominating performance in front of 27,386 pro-Colombian fans at State Farm Stadium. Colombia outshot Costa Rica 14-5 and faces Brazil on Tuesday in Santa Clara, California to close out the



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

"Today was a game we dominated from start to finish," Colombia coach Néstor Lorenzo said through an interpreter. Costa Rica had the first big surprise of the tournament,

playing nine-time Copa America champion Brazil to a scoreless tie despite being outshot 18-2. Los Ticos found themselves on their heels again against another powerhouse team in the desert - and it didn't go quite as well for the youngest roster in the tournament. "The other team was clearly on another level," Costa Rica coach Gustavo Alfaro said. Colombia controlled possession (66%) in its opening 2-1 win over Paraguay and dominated the ball early against Costa Rica. Díaz had the first good chance in the fifth minute, just missing the crossbar on a header. James Rodríguez followed with the first shot on goal in the 20th minute, but Patrick Sequeira sprawled out for a diving save.

Díaz scored on the penalty kick after Sequeira took down a charging Córdoba at the edge of the penalty box. Los Cafeteros kept up the pressure, just missing another goal when Sánchez couldn't get a head on Díaz's bouncing cross. Colombia had 71% possession in the first half and kept control in the second. Sánchez made it 2-0 with a header off a corner kick in the 59th minute. Córdoba scored when he slipped behind Costa Rica's defense and beat Sequeira from a tough angle. "We're a good team, but we also have good character," Lorenzo said. "It's no miracle. They're good players," Lorenzo said after the game, in Spanish. "The quality of the players is what makes the difference."

AP ■ DORTMUND

Cristiano Ronaldo has been a showstopper, as expected, at the European Championship. Just not necessarily in the way he'd like to be. The Portugal superstar with 632 million followers on Instagram and a never-ending stream of endorsement deals has had to deal with a raft of on-field selfie-seekers, during matches and in training. One presumed super-fan even leapt from the stands over the players' tunnel toward a startled-looking Ronaldo as he headed to the locker room after Portugal's match against Georgia. He's raged at a referee (earning a yellow card), booted away a water bottle, and angrily remonstrated in the dug-out. He's also had 12 shots, more than anyone else at Euro 2024. What Ronaldo hasn't done is score a goal - and that's the currency he deals in, at least in soccer. OK, there was that moment he passed up a golden chance to score by passing unselfishly to

Ronaldo soccer's ultimate showstopper

Bruno Fernandes for Portugal's third goal in the 3-0 win over Turkey. A double-stopper that befuddled Abdulkemir Bardakci and left the Turkey center back on his back has proved a hit on social media and gave the world a reminder of the Ronaldo of 10, 15, even 20 years ago. Ronaldo, though, is 39 now. Those big moments have become fleeting, especially when it comes to the big tournaments and when he's playing against top-level defenses. Make that seven straight matches in which he has failed to score at a major tournament, covering the 2022 World Cup and Euro 2024. For the first time in his 21-year international career taking in five World Cups and six European Championships, he has ended a group stage without a goal. So, with the powers of this undoubtedly soccer great on the wane, the question will again



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

doesn't think so. The Portugal coach is in thrall with Ronaldo, as shown by his reaction to the striker's assist - his record-tying eighth at the European Championship - against Turkey. "It should be shown in every academy in Portugal and world football," Martinez said, purring at this "spectacular" piece of play. A day earlier, he'd got into an exchange with a journalist who questioned whether Ronaldo could handle the intensity of a major tournament at age 39. "All you need to do is look at what he has done in the last 12 months," Martinez proffered, pointing to his record in the Saudi league with Al-Nassr, for whom he started 31 of 34 games and scored a league-high 35 goals, and his 10 goals in Euro 2024 qualifying - second only to Belgium's Romelu Lukaku. Before the tournament, Martinez had lauded Ronaldo by saying he "approaches every day as a new way to be the best" and that his stats "are better than anything, subjectively, that you can say."

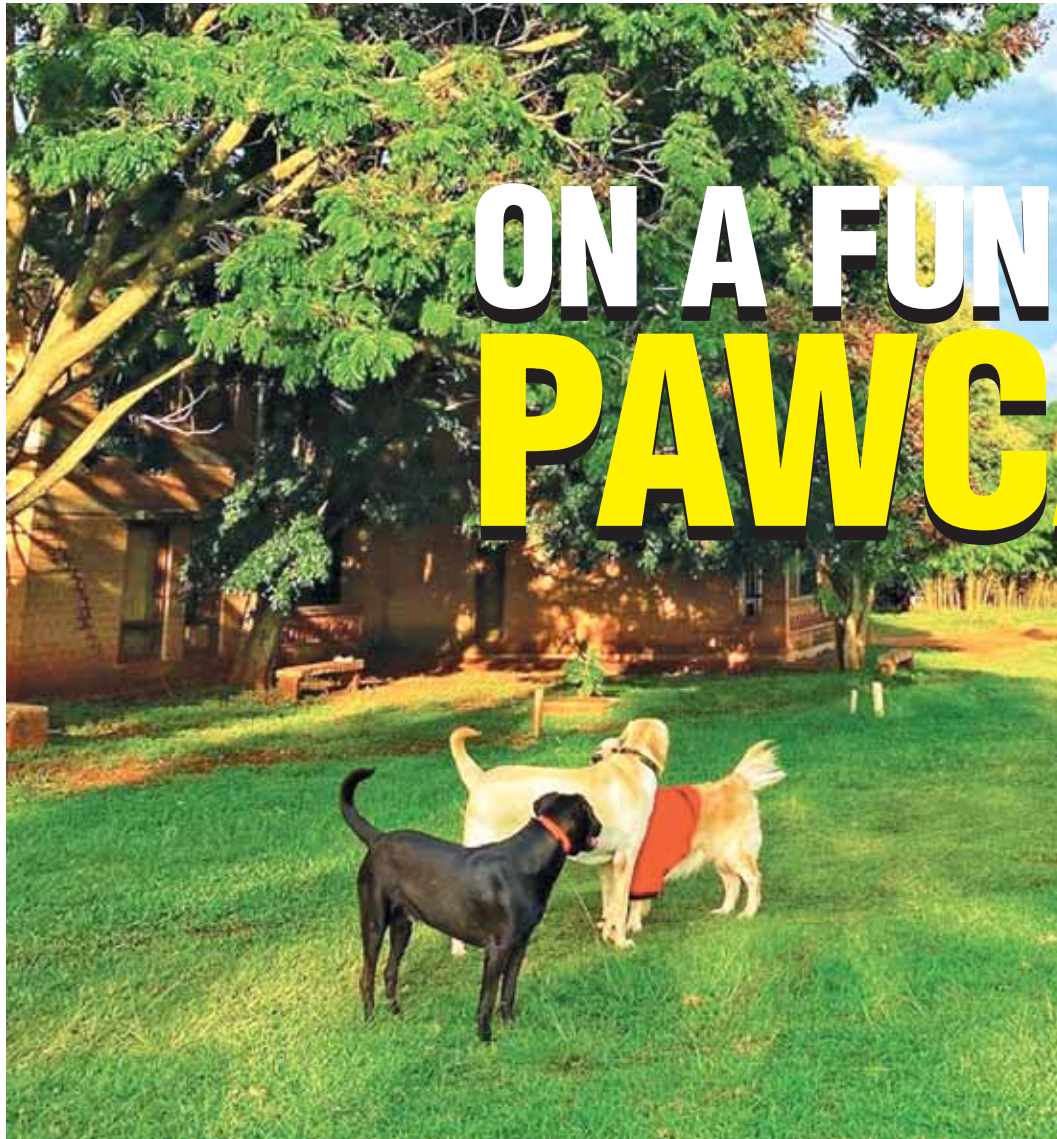
Maybe to justify his arguments - or who knows, to keep in Ronaldo's good books - Martinez started the striker against Georgia despite resting all of his other key outfield players for a game that meant little for Portugal, which had already qualified as group winner. It was at this stage at the last World Cup where Ronaldo lost his place in Portugal's team, to the shock and anger of his millions of fans who might not see him play as much these days because of his move to the Middle East. He had started all three of the group games, scoring only a penalty, and reacted poorly to being substituted by then-coach Fernando Santos against South Korea in the third. Ronaldo didn't start the 6-1 win over Switzerland in the round of 16 - his replacement, Goncalo Ramos scored a hat trick - nor the quarterfinal loss to Morocco, after which he left the field in tears.

Given his public comments, it's unlikely Martinez will follow Santos' path and drop his captain in the knockout stage, starting against Slovenia on Monday, for what may prove to be Ronaldo's last matches at a major tournament. Nor do his teammates, who have grown up idolizing Ronaldo, want that to happen. "We want to be side by side with our captain," Portugal defender Diogo Dalot said, while midfielder Vitorino has spoken of the "privilege to be able to share moments with him on and off the pitch." Ronaldo's desire and passion clearly remains. He is still a prolific scorer, albeit mostly against weaker opposition these days, even if his mobility and, in particular, his pressing isn't at the level of a top-notch striker. It would be no surprise to see the top scorer in men's international soccer - with 130 goals - get off the mark against Slovenia. Whether his continued selection is beneficial for Portugal is another thing entirely.

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



ON A FUN FILLED PAWCATION!



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

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

COMFORT MEETS LUXURY AT PRESIDENT, MUMBAI - IHCL SELEQIONS

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

BONDING IN A NURTURING ENVIRONMENT

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

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

A PERFECT GETAWAY WITH PETS!

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



SO PLEASE, OH PLEASE, WE BEG, WE PRAY,
GO THROW YOUR TV SET AWAY, AND
IN ITS PLACE YOU CAN INSTALL A LOVELY
BOOKSHELF ON THE WALL
— ROALD DAHL



FROM THE PEN OF A GROUNDED POET

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New normal is *Sitting side by side* *On a sofa* *With no eye contact* *Chatting of this and that* *These are the first few lines and the poem ends with the sad fact that the new normal is:* *And at all times* *Not facing each other* *But thumb twitching* *On the mobile through* *Inane vicarious clips* *Of far and near ones* *And total strangers* *Never once glancing* *Directly or even sideways* *Smiling at each other.* Modes of communication or rather the language of communication comes up again in another poem called *Version 3.0* where the poet talks about her journey from the deep south up north 'travelling light with nothing/more than

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



a bilingual tongue'. Subtly yet strongly commenting upon the Rashtrabhasha issue, she says, *At the workplace, monolingual, mute* *Biding time mastering a language* *National though notional,* *Opening floodgates of ecstasy mouthing* *My own tongue, my mother tongue,* *At regional gatherings.* This is such striking comment upon the way in which so much in our relationships with people, so much of our identity, so many of our needs, are determined by the fluency with which we speak different languages. But are we accepted because we speak the required language or do we remain strangers divided by our regional differences, not explicitly stated but always there? Do we, in turn, become one with the region of our profession or adoption or do we still dream of lands we associate most with the tongue that comes easiest and naturally to us, our mother tongue? These are questions to think about. Neerada makes you think.

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

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

One of the characteristics of Neerada's poems in 'Alignment' is that there is a lot said through implication which is sometimes sensuous and can get your heart beating a bit faster. For example, in the poem *Delete*, the poet writes about

Your unsolicited *Picture on FB* *And she goes on to say,* *The familiar contours* *Of your face* *Traced out a trillion times* *Through summer and winter* *Stood out embossed* *On my finger tips.* *The best option now* *For the photo shopped version,* *Press delete* *To wipe out that sting* *Of dormant memories* *Off my fingertips.*

This is a brilliant use of synesthetic imagery and one can literally feel the tingling in the tips of one's fingers. A poem that ends with a delightful twist is *Chrysanthemums* where the unnamed 'he' always came when the chrysanthemums bloomed and he always asked if they were dahlias or marigolds, and the poet says *Too polite to correct* *She'd smile- a wide smile*

Her lashes lowered and *The chrysanthemums paled* *Into insignificance.* *The evening* *Stretched to its elastic limits* *Catapulted into night.* *What she didn't know was* *That he had always known* *They were chrysanthemums.* There is the sweetness of romance in these lines that is unmistakable and so appealing; one can almost imagine the whole scene played out in one's head. Tea 1 carries the same fragrance of romance very delicately framed, implied through such lines as *While I made tea* *On a rusty stove* *He stood watching* *Leaning by the door* *Aand then said,* *I like the cut of your dress* *As though it were a cue* *To turn the stove on to sim* *And let the simmering within* *Come to a boil.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Journey to an expanded self awareness

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

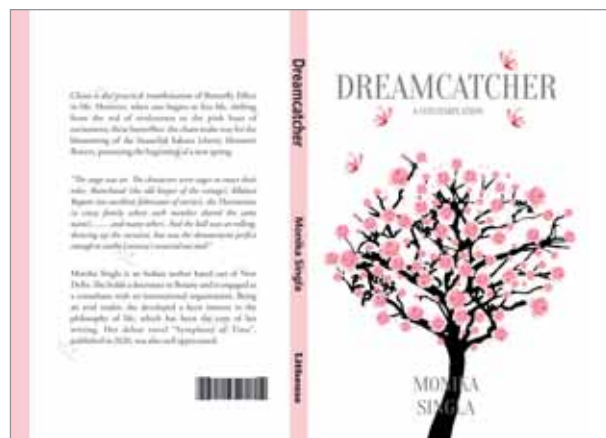
Her already raw senses are over burdened by the onslaught of experience of a train station environment.

Yet her insecurities are deep seated in her psyche and are result of the generational trauma she endured during her growing up years

by the hands of her equally tormented mother Neena, reviews **DEEPAK KUMAR JHA**

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

thus shifted to being extra protective about her daughter from the negativities of the world. Having brought up in a rather affluent and rich family, she desires nothing less for her daughter. And even though Loveena had both her parents-Neena and her father Dev, it was her mother and mother's stories which were to carve her life and make her the person that she would become. And the story's trajectory thus turns to Loveena's mother Neena's life. Neena's husband Dev was a victim of his own sense of helplessness for his lack of understanding the business of Neena's father and inability to take it up for posterity, even though he was the sole son-in-law the family had. His job as an assistant professor of history in the university projected him as most suitable boy for Neena, when a friend of Neena's



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

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



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

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

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

respite from her choppy life that and decides to leave the house and Vikram. She goes looking for solitude in a place away from the chaos of the city, away from the prying eyes of the society. Her life's journey takes a new turn as she arrives at Pathankot where she embarks upon a spiritualistic journey. Armed with the strength of her soul and her renewed faith in life and self and the world in general, Loveena finally finds herself ready to go back to place from where she herself had once run away from all her life challenges a long time back. Her tumultuous relationship with Vikram's place was when she had shunned everything to cross over into next phase of her life. She was now ready to go meet Vikram as a new person. But this time she isn't running away. This time she is running towards meeting life head-on.

TANGRA TALES

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



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



CHEF HO CHI MING

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

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



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

Disappointing Service Mars Fine Dining Experiences



PAWAN SONI

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

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



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



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

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

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

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





**YOUR
WEEK
AHEAD**



MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

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

**Lucky number 4 | Lucky colour Maroon
Lucky day Friday**



LEO July 23-Aug 22

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

**Lucky number 16 | Lucky colour Mint
Lucky day Thursday**



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

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

**Lucky number 12 | Lucky colour Ivory
Lucky day Friday**



TAURUS April 20-May 20

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

**Lucky number 14 | Lucky colour Magenta
Lucky day Monday**



VRIGO Aug 23-Sep 22

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

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



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

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

**Lucky number 1 | Lucky colour Mustard
Lucky day Monday**



GEMINI May 21-June 20

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

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



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

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

**Lucky number 8 | Lucky colour Indigo
Lucky day Wednesday**



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

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

**Lucky number 15 | Lucky colour Forest Green
Lucky day Friday**



CANCER June 21-July 22

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

**Lucky number 11 | Lucky colour Peach
Lucky day Sunday**



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

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

**Lucky number 10 | Lucky colour Rust
Lucky day Sunday**



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

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

**Lucky number 3 | Lucky colour Cherry Red
Lucky day Thursday**

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GURUSPEAK
SRI SRI RAVI SHANKAR

Do you pray?

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

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



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