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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Steady leadership

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

Om Birla has been re-elected as the Speaker of the Lok Sabha. This marks a significant chapter in parliamentary history. Birla's leadership has been characterised by impartiality, a deep commitment to democratic principles, and a steady hand in navigating the complexities of parliamentary proceedings. "Parliament is the temple of democracy. It is our duty to ensure that it functions efficiently and reflects the aspirations of the people," Birla stated. "I am committed to working with all members to ensure that the Lok Sabha continues to be a vibrant and effective forum for democratic deliberation."



Om Birla, a seasoned politician from Rajasthan and a member of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), first assumed the role of Lok Sabha Speaker in June 2019. His re-election signifies a continuity of leadership essential for maintaining the stability and decorum of the lower house. It was indeed heartening to observe that his election was met with widespread support, not only from his party but also from various opposition factions.

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

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

### PICTALK



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

## Will British Indians back Rishi Sunak?



VIVEK SHUKLA

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

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



Hinduja, Lakshmi Mittal, and Swaraj Paul are some prominent Indian-origin individuals who feature in the list of Britain's richest people. Rishi Sunak and his wife Akshata Murthy, daughter of Infosys founder N.R. Narayan Murthy, were ranked 245th in the Sunday Times list of Britain's wealthiest individuals released in May. Historically, Indian immigrants in Britain have leaned towards the Labour Party. It was during the Labour government that India gained independence from British rule. However, recent surveys suggest a growing inclination towards the Conservative Party, the main rival to the Labour Party. Vinod Chavan, a writer residing in London since the 1970s, believes that Hindu voters in Britain may vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming elections. This news could be a relief for Sunak and his Conservative Party. It's important to understand that when we talk about Indians in Britain, we also include those who have settled in the country from East Africa, the Caribbean Islands, and other places. Sunak's family settled in Britain from Kenya in the 1960s, although his ancestors originally hailed from Punjab. There is also a belief that a large number of Indian residents in Britain became supporters of the Conservative Party after

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



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

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

became Britain's first Hindu Prime Minister in 2022. This development deepened the bond between Hindus and the Conservative Party. It is still too early to say whether Hindus will vote en masse for the Conservative Party in the upcoming British general election. However, for the first time, British Hindus have released a manifesto outlining their aspirations and expectations from the next government. They say they will only support those who endorse their demands. Hindus are the third-largest religious group in Britain. 29 Hindu organizations have so far endorsed this manifesto. According to the manifesto, "Hindus are the backbone of the British economy. Our contribution to the country's economy is disproportionately high. We are one of the most law-abiding communities. Yet, anti-Hindu hate is on the rise in the country." One of their key demands is for their safety. Will the Hindu votes be split or go to the Conservative Party? Will the Labour and Conservative parties consider the manifesto of the Hindu organizations? (The writer is Columnist and ex-Information Officer, UAE Embassy, New Delhi; views are personal)

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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

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

Abhijit Roy | Jamshedpur

#### AFGHANISTAN REACH SEMIFINALS!

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

#### Dynamic Opposition in Parliament



The swearing-in ceremony for Members of Parliament at the 18th Lok Sabha was noteworthy, with the opposition members prominently holding mini copies of the Constitution while taking their oaths.

Leaders like Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav, Avadesh Prasad, and Rakibul Hussain were seen holding these mini constitutions as they swore in as elected MPs. This gesture underscores the opposition's commitment to active governance and to reminding the government of its constitutional responsibilities. By swearing with the Constitution in hand, the opposition members are enhancing their personal commitment to the nation. Their duty is now twofold: to fulfill their roles as MPs and to safeguard constitutional values, reminding the government of its duties. Time will tell who upholds these values. Meanwhile, it is encouraging to see a dynamic opposition in the Indian Parliament to provide a robust counterbalance to those in power. Kirti Wadhawan, Kanpur

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

## India's assertive foreign policy and global aspirations



PUSHKAR PRIYADARSHI

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

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



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

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

est in terms of adults being insufficiently physically active after high-income Asia Pacific region, an international team of researchers, including those from the World Health Organization (WHO), said. This was up by 5 per cent, from 26.4 per cent of adults worldwide insufficiently engaged in physical activity in 2010. In India, a little over 22 per cent of the adults engaged in insufficient physical activity in the year 2000, while in 2010, close to 34 per cent of the adults were insufficiently physically active, the researchers found. They projected that in 2030, 60 per cent of the adults could be insufficiently engaging in physical activity, should current trends continue. This is indeed a cause of concern. India had 101 million diabetics, 315 million people with hypertension, 254 million with obesity, and 185 million with high levels of LDL cholesterol. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com







RAIPUR | FRIDAY | JUNE 28, 2024

# Zelenskyy urges EU leaders to fulfill arms commitments

AP ■ BRUSSELS

Ukraine's president called on Thursday to make good on their pledges to provide military equipment to his war-ravaged country, just days after the bloc launched membership talks with his government.



The EU launched membership talks with Ukraine on Tuesday, a decade after Russian troops seized the Crimean Peninsula to deter the country from moving closer to the West, part of a chain of events that set the two neighbors on the path to war.

"We have to work on next steps," President Volodymyr Zelenskyy told reporters in Brussels as he arrived to attend a summit of EU leaders. He said he and the leaders would discuss "the urgent things -- air defense, that is one."

essence encapsulates what the 27-nation bloc has been doing for the country in terms of financial, military and other assistance since Russian forces invaded in February 2022.

# Court denies Imran's appeal to suspend sentence in illegal marriage case

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

A Pakistani court on Thursday rejected the appeals of Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi to suspend their sentences in the illegal marriage case, in a major setback to the former prime minister who has been in jail since August last year.



On February 3, Khan, 71, and Bushra, 49, were sentenced to seven years in prison and a fine of Rs 5,00,000 each by a trial court for contracting the marriage during iddat, a mandatory period for a woman in Islam to wait before a second marriage after the death of her husband or divorce.

released. Khan's party termed the development "absolutely ridiculous". In a post on its official X account, the PTI said the case was "unprecedentedly despicable in both our country's as well as Islamic history", and had been "globally condemned and brought immense embarrassment to Pakistan".

# China's former defence minister expelled from Communist Party

PTI ■ BEIJING



China's ruling Communist Party headed by President Xi Jinping on Thursday expelled the former defence minister Gen. Li Shangfu for alleged corruption and launched prosecution proceedings against him, months after he was dramatically sacked from the post.

Li, who headed the People's Liberation Army's all-important Rocket (Missile) Force and was personally picked up for the top defence post by Xi himself, went missing last year, sparking speculation that he was being investigated for corruption and indiscipline.

discipline. He sought improper benefits in personnel arrangements for himself and others, took advantage of his posts to seek benefits for others, and accepted a huge amount of money and valuables in return, the Xinhua report said. He is suspected of the crime of taking bribes. He was also found to have offered money to others to seek undue benefits, constituting the suspected crime of offering bribes.

defence and the armed forces, and the image of senior officials, it said.

Li is a Chinese aerospace engineer and headed China's powerful missile force, officially called Rocket Force as the General of the PLA before he was elevated as minister. His sacking followed a major shakeup in the PLA Rocket (missile) Force in which its commander, Li Yuchao, and political commissar, Xu Zhongbo, were replaced without any official explanation.

# Le Pen questions President's role as army chief ahead of election

AP ■ NICE

With just three days to go until France's landmark legislative election, the country's far-right leader on Thursday raised the question of who would be in charge of the military if her party takes over the government after the two-round balloting.

to serve out his final term as president. Serving as a commander-in-chief of the armed forces "is an honorary title for the president since it's the prime minister who actually pulls the strings," Le Pen said in an interview with Le Télégramme newspaper published Thursday.

The French Constitution states that "the President of the Republic is the head of the armed forces" and that the head of state also "chairs the councils and higher committees of national defence." However, the Constitution also states that "the prime minister is responsible for national defence."

ties, they broadly agreed on strategic matters of defence and foreign policy. But this time the power sharing concept known in France as "cohabitation" could be very different given the animosity between the far-right and the far-left politicians. Both blocs appear to deeply resent the business-friendly, centrist president.

# China urges global scientists to study lunar samples, cites obstacle with US

AP ■ BANGKOK

China's space officials said Thursday they welcomed scientists from around the world to apply to study the lunar rock samples that the Chang'e 6 probe brought back to Earth in a historic mission, but noted there were limits to that cooperation, specifically with the United States.

work. Still, China could cooperate with scientists of other countries. It worked with the European Space Agency, France, Italy and Pakistan in the Chang'e 6 mission.

what is seen from Earth, and the far side faces outer space. The far side is also known to have mountains and impact craters and is much more difficult to reach.

"China welcomes scientists from all countries to apply according to the processes and share in the benefits," said Liu Yunfeng, director of the international cooperation office of the China National Space Administration. Meanwhile, little information about the global first achieved Tuesday was announced. Chinese officials declined to reveal how many samples they actually gathered or any preliminary findings.

"I'm afraid this matter will not be revealed until tomorrow, so I hope everyone can wait patiently for another day," Chang'e 6 chief designer Hu Hao said at the news conference. On Monday, Chinese scientists said that they anticipate the returned samples will include 2.5 million-year-old volcanic rock and other material that scientists hope will answer questions about geographic differences on the moon's two sides. The mission had aimed to gather two kilograms (more than four pounds) of material.

Officials did announce some future plans, with a planned Chang'e 7 probe to explore resources on the moon's South Pole. Further down the line, they have planned Tianwen-3 for around 2030 to carry out a Mars sample return mission and a Tianwen-4 Jupiter exploration mission.

# Rajapaksa to meet Chinese Premier

Colombo (PTI): Former Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa on Thursday left on an official visit to Beijing where he will meet Premier Li Qiang and Foreign Minister Wang Yi to discuss the island nation's debt restructuring agreement with China.

commemorative events in Beijing marking the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. The event would be attended by Chinese President Xi Jinping and other leading Communist Party of China (CPC) members.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Wednesday announced that debt restructuring agreements were finalised with bilateral lenders, including India and China, in Paris, describing the development as a "significant milestone" that will bolster international trust in the cash-strapped island nation. The debt restructuring deal entails allowing time till 2043 to repay USD 4.2 billion of Chinese loans - the bulk of which was drawn during the Rajapaksa presidency 2005-15.

Rajapaksa had steered a massive infrastructure drive by building a port and an airport and a southern highway with Chinese commercial loans. Sri Lanka was facing criticism of falling under a Chinese debt trap under Rajapaksa's presidency.

# 'Women's rights to be discussed at meeting attended by Taliban'

United Nations (AP): The UN political chief who will chair the first meeting between Afghanistan's Taliban rulers and envoys from about 25 countries answered sharp criticism that Afghan women have been excluded, saying Wednesday that women's rights will be raised at every session.

States and NATO forces withdrew following two decades of war. No country officially recognises them as Afghanistan's government, and the UN has said that recognition is almost impossible while bans on female education and employment remain in place and women can't go out without a male guardian.

Undersecretary-General Rosemary DiCarlo stressed to a small group of reporters that the two-day meeting starting Sunday is an initial engagement aimed at initiating a step-by-step process with the goal of seeing the Taliban "at peace with itself and its neighbours and adhering to international law," the UN Charter, and human rights. This is the third UN meeting with Afghan envoys in Qatar's capital, Doha, but the first that the Taliban are attending. They weren't invited to the first and refused to attend the second.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International criticized the United Nations for not having Afghan women and civil society representatives at the table with the Taliban. DiCarlo described the meeting as a process.

# List of threatened species grows by 1,000

Abuja (Nigeria) (AP): Over 45,000 species are now threatened with extinction — 1,000 more than last year — according to an international conservation organization that blames pressures from climate change, invasive species and human activity such as illicit trade and infrastructural expansion.



The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) released its latest Red List of Threatened Species on Thursday. Now in its 60th year, the list sounds the alarm about animals and plants at risk of extinction, but it also highlights conservation success stories such as the Iberian lynx.

The list now includes 1,63,040 species, an increase of about 6,000 from last year. Copiapoa cacti, native to Chile's Atacama coastal desert, the Bornean elephant and the Gran Canaria giant lizard are among the threatened species, IUCN revealed.

Copiapoa cacti have long been coveted as decorative plants, driving an illegal trade that has been amplified by social media where enthusiasts and traders showcase and sell the cacti. A staggering 82 per cent of the species is now at risk of extinction, a significant jump from 55 per cent in 2013, the report said. IUCN said that the decline is due to the surge in demand for the Chilean cacti in Europe and Asia as ornamental species. The smugglers and poachers facilitating the trade, the organization said, have gained increased accessibility to the plants' habitat due to roads and housing expansion in the Atacama area.

The 2024 update also highlights the Asian elephant in Borneo as an endangered species. It is estimated that only about 1,000 Bornean elephants remain in the wild, according to IUCN analysis. The population has decreased over the past 75 years primarily due to extensive logging of Borneo's forests, destroying much of the elephants' habitat. Conflicts with humans, habitat loss due to agriculture and timber plantations, mining and infrastructure development, poaching, exposure to agrochemicals, and vehicle collisions also threaten the species, the IUCN said.

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# SOUTH AFRICA BANISH AFGHANISTAN, ENTER MAIDEN T20 WC FINAL

PTI ■ TAROUBA (TRINIDAD)

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

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



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

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

PTI ■ CHENNAI

South Africa skipper Laura Wolvaardt has called for more Tests in women's cricket calendar and inclusion of red-ball tournaments in the rainbow nation's domestic structure, ahead of their one-off Test against India starting here on Friday.



India and South Africa will face off here at Chepauk for only their third Test in history and first in nearly 10 years, a contest for which Wolvaardt conceded her side is not fully prepared for. While a multi-day red-ball women's competition was resumed in India last season, South Africa have no such tournaments. "Most of us don't have any preparation in the format, since we don't play domestic four-day cricket. It's difficult, since I have to leave the balls that I have been cover-driving my whole life, and I still tend to play it by instinct," Wolvaardt said during a press conference here on Thursday.

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II	26-06-24 TO 27-06-24	28-06-24 TO 28-06-24	03-07-24	03-07-24 TO 04-07-24	04-07-24 TO 08-07-24
III	09-07-24 TO 10-07-24	09-07-24 TO 11-07-24	16-07-24	16-07-24 TO 17-07-24	17-07-24 TO 21-07-24

**Schedule For Second Year Admissions (Lateral Entry) B.Tech & B.Pharma**

III	26-06-24 TO 27-06-24	28-06-24 TO 28-06-24	03-07-24	03-07-24 TO 04-07-24	04-07-24 TO 08-07-24
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**Note:**

- Admission to 1st year of pharmacy courses will start soon.
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# Bumrah is 1000 times better than me: Kapil Dev

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Icnic former India all-rounder Kapil Dev feels Jasprit Bumrah is a "1000 times better" bowler than what he was at his prime. Bumrah, who has been doing exceptionally well in the ongoing T20 World Cup, snaring 11 wickets at an outstanding economy of 4.08 in the 23 overs he has bowled so far. "Bumrah is 1000 times better than me. These young boys are far better than us. We had more experience. They are better," Kapil told PTI Videos. Bumrah, who is widely regarded as the best pacer in international cricket now, has played 26 Tests for India, picking up 159 wickets and an economy of under three. His 89 ODI appearances have yielded 149 wickets while his T20I wicket count stands at 85 from 68 matches. Kapil ended his career with a then world record 434 Test wickets and is considered one of the best all-rounders of all time who also claimed 253 ODI scalps. The 65-year-old, who led India to their maiden World Cup title in 1983, also lauded the overall fitness levels of the current national team. "They are very good. Outstanding. They are fitter. They are much more hardworking. They are fantastic," he said.

Citing the lack of preparation for red-ball cricket fixtures which are few and far between, the star batter even suggested scrapping the format. "We either need to play more Tests and incorporate it into the domestic level, or we can just leave it because playing one or three Tests is very hard to adapt to," she said. "But I want to have more of it," Wolvaardt added. South Africa's last outing in the format was earlier this year in February when they were

trounced by Australia by an innings and 284 runs in Perth. After this fixture against India, South Africa's next Test assignment will be against England in December. "Getting the opportunity to play more red-ball cricket is awesome. Having three scheduled in a calendar year is pretty cool," she added. "I personally really enjoy the format. So, this Test will be a huge challenge for us, and hopefully, we will adapt to the conditions well."

Women's Tests, in general, is a bit unknown as neither teams have too much experience in it. India does have a good home advantage and winning here will be a tough challenge, but we are up for it," she added. The pitch is expected to be spin-friendly while there is also forecast of rain. "Preparation-wise, we have been facing a lot of spin in the nets lately since it will be the biggest threat here. The balls were staying low at the nets yesterday," Wolvaardt said. "Batting-wise, it's going to be a big challenge. But thankfully, we have a few top spinners in our squad who are licking

their lips and getting ready for the game tomorrow. Hopefully, they are going to put on a great show," she added. With the South African men's team making it to the final of the T20 World Cup, Wolvaardt said her side would also be keeping an eye on Saturday's final. "Most of us woke up early to watch the game, but only to watch them chase 57. It was absolutely amazing to watch and felt incredible. We will definitely watch the final and cheer them on," she said.

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