

THE ASIAN AGE

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Taylor Swift chokes on a bug while performing *All Too Well* in London

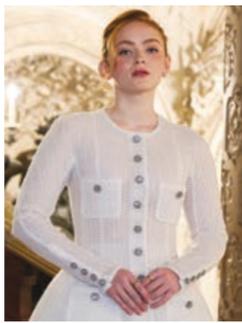


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WINDOWS



US actress Sadie Sink poses during an event at Palais Garnier opera house in Paris on Tuesday. — AFP

Porsche case: HC orders release of juvenile accused

Mumbai: The Bombay high court on Tuesday ordered that a 17-year-old boy allegedly involved in the Porsche car accident in Pune last month be released immediately from an observation home. The teen, who the police claim was drunk and driving the luxury car when it hit a two-wheeler in the early hours of May 19 killing two techies, was lodged at an observation home in Maharashtra's Pune city. A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangi and Manjusha Deshpande quashed the orders issued by the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) remanding the minor accused to the observation home. **Full report on Page 4**

MP mantris to pay I-T as 52-yr-old rule nixed

Bhopal: Madhya Pradesh Cabinet decided that state ministers will have to pay their income tax, instead of the state government bearing such burden. Chief minister Mohan Yadav in a statement said the Cabinet has taken a decision to strike off the 1972 rule. **Full report on Page 4**

ICC arrest warrants for 2 top Russian officials

The Hague (Netherlands): The International Criminal Court said it has issued arrest warrants for Russia's former defence minister and its military chief of staff for attacks on civilian targets in Ukraine, the third time the global court has issued warrants for Russian leaders. **Full report on Page 6**

COUNTERPOINT



Happy? We have reduced GST on gold and diamonds!

WEATHER

Max: 34°C
Min: 28°C
RH: 63%
Rain: 20%

Forecast: Mostly Cloudy

ASTROGUIDE

Krodhi: Uttarayana
Tithi: Jyeshtha Bahula Panchami till 8.55 pm
Star: Dhanishta till 1.04 pm
Varjyam: 7.50 pm to 9.20 pm
Durmuhurtam: 11.53 am to 12.45 pm
Rahukalam: 12 noon pm to 1.30 pm
SUNSET TODAY 7.23 PM
SUNRISE TOMORROW 5.25 AM
MOONRISE TOMORROW 11.38 PM
MOONSET TODAY 9.36 AM

INDIA bloc: No commitment on Dy Speaker ■ Election after decades

No deal, Speaker poll today: NDA's Birla vs Opp's Suresh

VINEETA PANDEY
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

After almost five decades, an election for the post of Speaker will take place in the Lok Sabha on Wednesday as Om Birla of the BJP and Kodikunnil Suresh of the Congress filed their nominations for the top post on Tuesday after a consensus was elusive between the NDA and INDIA bloc for the post. Seeking re-election of Mr Birla, the BJP had sought support from the Opposition parties to make him a consensus candidate. The INDIA bloc, however, was agreeable to concede the top post provided the deputy speaker was from their camp. The BJP refused to make any commitment at this stage, and said let the Speaker's election be over first, then they can sit and discuss the name of the deputy speaker.

The election for Speaker will take place on June 26. This will be for the first



Union home minister Amit Shah with other NDA leaders during the nomination filing of BJP MP Om Birla for the post of Lok Sabha Speaker in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

RAHUL GANDHI told the media the Opposition was ready to support the NDA's LS Speaker choice during a meeting called by defence minister Rajnath Singh, provided the deputy speaker's post was given to the INDIA bloc

time in over four decades that an election for the post of Speaker will take place. Mr Birla is seeking a second term as Speaker. Prior to this, Balram

Jakhar of the Congress had completed two terms as Speaker. The last time an election was held for the Speaker's post was in 1976, and prior to that in 1952.

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi told the media the Opposition was ready to support the NDA's Lok Sabha Speaker choice during a meeting called by defence minister Rajnath Singh, provided the deputy speaker's post

Rahul named as Leader of Opp. in Lower House

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi will occupy the post of Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and a letter about the decision has been sent to pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab.

The decision on Mr Gandhi's appointment was made after a meeting of the INDIA bloc floor leaders at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in the national capital.

After the meeting, Congress general secretary K.C. Venugopal said that Mr Gandhi will also be part of key panels, like those to select the Chief Election Commissioners and the Election Commissioners, along with the Prime Minister Narendra Modi. **More on Page 3**

Cong trampled Constitution, its Emergency mindset alive: Modi

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

With the Opposition bloc projecting itself as the protector of the Indian Constitution, the BJP leadership, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Tuesday marked the 49th anniversary of the Emergency, calling it the "dark days". Hitting out at the Congress, Mr Modi said that the 1975-77 Emergency is a reminder of how the party, when in power, subverted freedoms and trampled over the Constitution. He cautioned that the mindset that led to the imposition of the Emergency is "very much



Narendra Modi

alive among the same party that imposed it".

"Taking a dig at the Congress and INDIA bloc members who took oaths in the Lok Sabha holding a copy of the Constitution, the BJP said "holding the Constitution in hand is not enough; upholding the values enshrined in the Constitution is needed."

"Today is a day to pay homage to all those great men and women who resisted the Emergency. The #DarkDaysOfEmergency reminds us of how the Congress party subverted basic freedoms and trampled over the Constitution of India, which every Indian respects greatly... Just to cling on to power, then the Congress government disregarded every democratic principle and made the nation into a jail. Any person who disagreed with the Congress was tortured and harassed. Socially regressive policies were

al trade relationship due to the import of large quantities of Russian oil by India, which is also focusing heavily on investments in the Russian far eastern region. A proposed key defence mutual logistics pact — the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics

Owaisi slogan on Palestine gets expunged

New Delhi, June 25: AIMIM MP from Hyderabad Asaduddin Owaisi stoked controversy when he said, "Jai Palestine," after taking oath, triggering an uproar from the treasury benches that led to the Chair striking it off record.

Mr Owaisi took his oath as a Lok Sabha member in Urdu. After that, he hailed the conflict-hit West Asian region. After the controversy, he asked, "How is it wrong?" **More on Page 3**

Centre's panel to consult parents, students on NET & Neet reforms

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

As the Union education ministry is looking at ways to ensure no loss of academic year, a ministry's panel on exam reforms will meet with parents and students to understand their concerns and challenges about the examination process. According to sources, the ministry's top priority will be to conduct the exams that have either been cancelled or postponed within the next two months. The Centre had cancelled UGC-NET and postponed CSIR-UGC-NET and Neet-PG exams amid allegations of paper leaks.

A highly placed education ministry source said that "efforts were on to hold these exams within the next two months to ensure there is no loss of academic year to any student."

In its first meeting on Monday, the seven-member panel headed by former ISRO chief R. Radhakrishnan took stock of the situation and challenges the National Testing Agency faces. "The first priority for us is to elicit from the students and parents their concerns and suggestions," Mr Radhakrishnan said. **More on Page 2**

PM likely to visit Moscow in July

Will co-chair annual summit with Putin, but dates are yet to be fixed

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

In a major development, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to visit Russia soon, probably in the second week of July, to co-chair the annual summit between both nations along with Russian President Vladimir Putin. The last annual summit between both nations had taken place two and a half years ago in December 2021, just about two months before Russia launched its military offensive against

neighbouring Ukraine. There were no summits between the two nations in 2022 and 2023, although the summits were originally meant to take place annually.

The visit is also being seen as a clear message to the West that India will continue to maintain its close time-tested friendship with Russia. New Delhi has a "special and privileged strategic partnership" with Moscow, especially in defence and civil nuclear spheres, among other areas, and the past two years had seen a burgeoning bilater-

Modi speaks to Kazakh President Tokayev, reaffirms commitment to cooperation ahead of SCO summit

al trade relationship due to the import of large quantities of Russian oil by India, which is also focusing heavily on investments in the Russian far eastern region. A proposed key defence mutual logistics pact — the Reciprocal Exchange of Logistics



Emperor Naruhito of Japan, followed by Britain's King Charles III, inspects the guard of honour formed of the 1st Battalion Welsh Guards during a ceremonial welcome for him and Empress Masako on the occasion of their state visit to Britain at Horse Guards Parade in London on Tuesday. — AP



TMC women MPs take selfies at the Parliament House complex during the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Atishi taken to hospital, fast on water crisis in Delhi is over

AGE CORRESPONDENT
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Delhi water minister Atishi's indefinite hunger strike to demand more water for the national capital amid its ongoing scarcity came to an abrupt end after she was admitted to the emergency ICU at the Lok Nayak Hospital in the early hours of Tuesday.

Aam Aadmi Party Rajya Sabha member of Parliament Sanjay Singh said the Delhi water minister ended her indefinite fast after she was hospitalised. At a press conference, Mr Singh said Ms Atishi's health deteriorated after being on fast for nearly five days.

Giving an update on the minister's health, the hospital said that her condition is stable but she is in the ICU. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva wished her good health. "She should stop misleading the public," the BJP Delhi chief added. **More on Page 2**

HC stays Kejriwal's bail, says trial court 'didn't give ED time'

AAP differs ■ SC hearing today

SANJAY KAW
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

In a setback to chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, the Delhi high court on Tuesday stayed his bail in the excise policy case, holding that the trial court did not "appropriately appreciate" the material placed before it by the Enforcement Directorate while granting the relief.

A single-judge bench of Justice Sudhir Kumar Jain noted that the observations made by the trial court in the bail order were "uncalled for, unwarranted and out of context" and it should have followed "judicial discipline" by refraining from attributing malafide on the part of the ED in view of an earlier high court order supporting the absence of any such intent.

The high court said: "The vacation judge, while passing the impugned order (bail order) did not appropriately appreciate the material/documents submitted on record and pleas



Arvind Kejriwal

Delhi CM grilled by CBI in Tihar

New Delhi: The CBI on Tuesday examined Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal in Tihar jail and recorded his statement in connection with the ongoing probe into alleged irregularities in the Delhi excise policy case. Mr Kejriwal will be produced before the court on Wednesday and the CBI is likely to take his custody.

taken by the ED and the averments/grounds as raised in the petition under Section 439(2) of the Code require serious consideration while dealing **Turn to Page 4**

Shiva, Vasuki Naag idols found in MP's Bhojshala

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY
BHOJAL, JUNE 25

Idols of Lord Shiva and "Vasuki Naag" (the mythological snake with seven hoods) were among around 20 "archaeological remains" found in the controversial complex of Bhojshala temple in Dhar district in Madhya Pradesh during the latest scientific survey by Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), an activist of a Hindu body said on Tuesday.

While more than nine remains were found during the survey by ASI in the ASI-protected 13th century monument on June 22, over 11 remains were found on June 23, Gopal Sharma, convener of Bhojshala Mukti Yagna told this newspaper.

According to Mr Sharma, the idol of a seven-headed snake, known to be "Vasuki Naag", was found in the northern side of Bhojshala temple during the survey on June 22. **More on Page 4**

Assange freed from jail after US plea deal, flies out of UK

ADITI KHANNA
LONDON, JUNE 25

Wikileaks founder Julian Assange, who has been fighting against his extradition to the US on espionage charges for over a decade, has been freed from prison and flown out of the UK under a plea deal with the American authorities.

The 52-year-old Australian national was lodged at Belmarsh high-security prison in London since 2019 when he was



Julian Assange

taken into custody from the Ecuadorian Embassy, where he had sought asylum. It was revealed overnight on Monday that he has been freed. Assange will return to Australia, **More on Page 6**

UK media reports said, citing a letter from the US justice department.

He was charged with conspiracy to obtain and disclose national defence information.

In return for pleading guilty to one count of conspiracy to obtain and disclose national defence information, the activist will be sentenced to time served, 62 months — time already spent in a British prison, according to court documents. — PTI

IN BRIEF

1 held for stealing valuables at IGI

New Delhi: The CISF has nabbed a man, who allegedly stole mobile phones and laptops of multiple travellers from around the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport premises, officials said on Tuesday. The accused, identified as Dharmendra, used to prey on the victims in the Metro skywalk area, the walkway that connects Delhi Airport Metro's IGI station with the airport. The man was caught by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) intelligence team, deployed in civil dress in and around the airport area, at around 4 am on June 23 while he was allegedly stealing a woman's purse, officials said. The accused had similarly stolen the mobile phone, wallet, clothes and documents of a CISF constable in May from outside the terminal area apart from stealing the laptop and mobile phone of other passengers from the skywalk area this year, they said. He was handed over to the Delhi police, which arrested and booked him under sections 379 (theft) and 411 (keeping stolen property) of the IPC.

1 charged for power theft in Mangolpuri

New Delhi: A special court has convicted a Mangolpuri resident for indulging in power theft for domestic use, a Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited spokesperson said on Tuesday. The court of additional sessions judge, Rohini, Jitendra Singh, convicted Dinesh Singh, a resident of Mangolpuri, for indulging in power theft for domestic usage under Section 135 of the Electricity Act, 2003, she said. The quantum of sentence and civil liability in the case is yet to be determined, the spokesperson added. "The police during investigation found that the accused consumer was illegally tapping electricity by puncturing the low tension aerial bundled cable. It also found that there was no meter or legitimate electricity connection at the site and a load of 7.718 KW was found to be connected for domestic purposes," she said. The spokesperson added that the court has since April this year also convicted four more people.

Rapper held for robbing cab driver

New Delhi: The Delhi police has arrested an engineer-turned-rapper from Ayodhya for allegedly robbing a cab driver in Southeast Delhi's Amar Colony area, an officer said on Tuesday. Deputy commissioner of police (Southeast) Rajesh Deo said the cab driver was shot at and wounded by the accused, identified as Aryan Rajvansh, a native of Ayodhya. The incident took place near the Indian Oil petrol pump in Shrinivasi Puri around Monday night. Rajvansh allegedly robbed a mobile phone of a cab driver and fled after firing a gunshot at him, he said. The injured driver was admitted to the AIIMS hospital.

MAN CHARGED OF SEXUAL ASSAULT ON SON ACQUITTED

New Delhi: A court here has acquitted a man of the charge of committing aggravated sexual assault on his minor son, saying the accused cannot be convicted solely on the unreliable testimony of the child. Additional sessions judge Vinod Kumar Gautam was hearing the case against the father who was charged under Section 10 (punishment for aggravated sexual assault) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. According to the prosecution, the man had touched the private parts of his son with sexual intent on July 17, 2022 in the children's room inside a court complex here. In a recent order, the court acquitted the father and said, "The story projected by the victim fails to inspire the confidence of this court and the accused cannot be convicted solely on the unreliable testimony of the child victim without corroboration from independent evidence." The court said the child's testimony about his father molesting him in the room was not corroborated by independent witnesses, the room-in-charge, or other parents present there.

Doctor said she is being given water, is on intravenous therapy

Atishi indefinite hungerstrike ends with her hospitalisation

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Delhi water minister Atishi's indefinite hunger strike to demand water for the national capital amid its ongoing scarcity came to an end after she was hospitalised due to her worsening health condition in the early hours of Tuesday. Ms Atishi, who holds multiple portfolios in the Delhi government, was admitted to the emergency ICU at the Lok Nayak Hospital. Her condition is stable now.

Giving an update on Ms Atishi's health, hospital's medical director Dr Suresh Kumar said her condition is stable but she is in ICU. "She was advised hospitalisation last evening after her sugar levels declined and the presence of ketones was detected in her urine. She had declined hospitalisation. However, at midnight, as her condition deteriorated and she was drowsy, she was admitted. She is currently stable and in the ICU. Her blood tests are being done," he said.

The doctor said she is being given water and is on intravenous therapy. Her sugar levels had declined to 36mg/dL. Explaining the consequences of the sharp decline, Mr Kumar said if a person's sugar level goes below 50 mg/dL, it can have serious consequences. "Brain cells need glucose and if glucose does not reach them, it causes drowsiness and unconsciousness. If not given medical attention on time, a patient can go into a hypoglycaemic coma. The fall in blood sugar levels can also lead to multiple organ failure. Hypoglycaemia is a medical emergency for brain cells and other organs if not addressed on time," Mr Kumar said.

AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh said the minister ended her indefinite fast after she was hospitalised. At a press conference, Mr Singh said Ms Atishi's health deteriorated after being on fast for nearly five days and she was admitted to the LNJP Hospital around 3.45 am. The AAP leader said all MPs of the party will write to Prime Minister Narendra



Minister Atishi being shifted to LNJP hospital in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Modi to provide Delhi with its rightful share of water from Haryana. A post on X from Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's official handle said the people of the city "will definitely give a reply to the injustice that the BJP government is doing" to the national capital. "Delhi's water minister Atishi ji was on an indefinite hunger strike so that the people of Delhi could get their rightful share of water. She has been admitted to the hospital after her health deteriorated last night. Today, every Delhiite is worried about her health. The people of Delhi will definitely give a reply to the injustice that the BJP government is doing to Delhi."

"We all wish Atishi good health. Every Delhiite is with her in this satyagraha. Posted by: Team Arvind Kejriwal," the post read.

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"We all wish Atishi good health. Every Delhiite is with her in this satyagraha. Posted by: Team Arvind Kejriwal," the post read.

Congress lashes out at BJP, AAP: 'Delhiites left at God's mercy'

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Lashing out at both the AAP and BJP, the Delhi Congress on Tuesday claimed that both the parties are mere shadow boxing on the water scarcity issue instead of finding any solution and left the Delhiites at 'God's mercy'. Delhi Congress chief Devender Yadav said, "The BJP and the AAP are indulged in public spats and theatrics, instead of finding a solution to the water crisis. Water minister Atishi's so-called dharna to get water from Haryana was only a public stunt, and the BJP fished in troubled waters to heighten the water crisis."

Mr Yadav said that the AAP came to power promising free power and water to the people, and if the Delhi government was solely depending on water from Haryana to supply free water to a section of Delhiites, Mr Kejriwal's free water scheme was a big sham. He said that let alone free water, people were getting no water at all, and the poor have been forced to spend ₹100 daily to buy drinking water bottles.

Efforts on to hold Neet, NET in 2 months: Govt

Panel to meet concerned parents, students

AVINASH PRABHAKAR JHA NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

As the Union education ministry is looking at ways to ensure no loss of academic year, a ministry's panel on exam reforms will meet the parents and students to understand their concerns and challenges about the examination process.

The ministry's top priority will be to conduct the exams which have either been cancelled or postponed within the next two months.

The Centre had cancelled UGC-NET and postponed CSIR-UGC-NET and Neet-PG exams amid allegations of paper leak.

A highly placed education ministry source said that "efforts were on to hold these exams within the next two months to ensure there is no loss of academic year to any student."

In its first meeting on Monday, the seven-member panel headed by former ISRO chief R. Radhakrishnan took stock of the current situation and challenges faced by the National Testing Agency (NTA).

"The first priority for us is to elicit from the students and parents in the country their concerns and suggestions. We are going to engage with them as far as possible in person or through electronic media. And in the next



Samajwadi Party workers stage a protest over the alleged irregularities in Neet 2024 results near party chief Akhilesh Yadav's residence in Lucknow. — PTI

fortnight, we would like to consolidate this," Mr Radhakrishnan said.

The former ISRO chief said the next priority is to quickly build a robust system for starting the tests.

"We are also looking at the future, especially to develop in this country a robust system, a tamper-proof system, a system with zero error and a system that will lessen the difficulties and stress for the students with adequate flexibility built into it," he added.

A senior officer said, "The panel was apprised of the current processes and functioning of the agency. The panel also looked into the statistics provided by the NTA about the multiple exams conducted by it and the number of candidates appearing for each exam. The panel also looked into which exams are conducted in pen and

paper mode and which are conducted as computer-based tests (CBT), and the nuances of both modes."

The committee during its meeting also discussed cyber security issues and challenges posed by the darknet, where the UGC-NET exam question paper was first leaked leading the education ministry to cancel the exam just the day after it was conducted. The reforms suggested by the panel are likely to be implemented by the next exam cycle.

Another official said, "It is a mammoth task and has to be done with complete preparation to ensure there are no loopholes but it is also the most important priority of the ministry right now. The panel will submit its report within two months and we will draw an action plan to implement the reforms by the next exam cycle."

4 family members suffocate to death in Dwarka house fire

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Four members of a family suffocated to death after a fire broke out at their home in Dwarka's Prem Nagar area, a Delhi Fire Services (DFS) official said on Tuesday.

He said the department was informed about the fire around 3.30 am and two fire tenders were sent to the spot.

The deceased were identified as Heera Singh Kakkar (48), his wife Neetu (40), and their sons Robin (22) and Lakshay (21).

Kakkar was a photographer by profession and the house was owned by the family, the police said.

According to the DFS official, the fire was caused by an inverter and it spread to an adjacent sofa on the first floor of the two-storey building, leading to the four victims inhaling smoke.

The police said the main gate was locked from inside. Firefighters broke it down, rescued the family members and rushed four of them to the Rao Tularam Memorial Hospital, where doctors

Locked iron gate delayed rescue efforts, say officials

New Delhi, June 25: As firefighters struggled to break open the locked gate of a house in Dwarka that caught fire on Tuesday, causing delay in the rescue operation, the residents inside tried saying themselves using wet towels, according to officials. The firefighters had to cut through the iron gate, the only entry point of the house, locked from inside, rescued the family members and rushed four of them to a hospital, however none could be saved, they added. The police and Delhi fire

services personnel said there was a delay in rescue operation as the main door was locked from inside and had to be broken down.

"Our team from Chhawla police station rushed to the spot after getting information about the fire. On reaching the spot, the police found that the main iron gate was locked from inside," a senior police officer said.

"With the help of firefighters, the gate was broken open and the injured were taken out," the officer added.

declared them dead. Heera Singh Kakkar's mother, Sita Devi, was sleeping on the ground floor of the building, a police officer said, adding that she was unharmed. The fire was doused within a few minutes but there was a lot of smoke inside the house, the officer said. The bodies were shifted to a mortuary for post-mortem examination. A

case under relevant sections is being registered and further probe is underway, the police said.

West Delhi MP Kamaljeet Sehrawat met the deceased's kin and offered condolences.

Ms Sehrawat instructed local BJP councillor Amit Kharkhari, who accompanied her, to provide every possible assistance to the bereaved family.

Fire breaks out in Safdarjung Hosp old emergency building

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

A fire broke out in a store room in the old emergency building of the Safdarjung Hospital here on Tuesday, Delhi fire services (DFS) officials said.

No one was injured in the incident. A nurse was rescued from the third floor of the building, they said. DFS chief Atul Garg said the department received information about the fire at around 10.40 am.

"The fire was at gate no. 6 of the old emergency building of the Safdarjung Hospital. Seven fire tenders were rushed to the spot. The fire broke out in the building's store room," he added.

Manoj Kumar Sharma, DFS divisional officer (South) said, "Eleven fire tenders, including fire bowlers, were rushed to the spot. We controlled the



Firefighters douse a fire which broke out in the emergency building of the Safdarjung Hospital in New Delhi. — PTI

fire immediately and rescued an elderly nurse from the third floor after breaking a window of the hospital."

A police investigation will ascertain the cause of the fire, he said. Safdarjung Hospital said in a statement that the hospital fire safety system was functional and got activated to contain the fire. Window panes were broken for easy escape of smoke," it said.

broke out. "Within no time, the Fire Management Team of Safdarjung Hospital and personnel from the CPWD and officials of Estate Section reached the spot... The hospital fire safety system was functional and got activated to contain the fire. Window panes were broken for easy escape of smoke," it said.

MCD official among 2 arrested for taking bribe

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

The anti-corruption branch said on Tuesday that it arrested two men, including an MCD superintendent, for allegedly taking a bribe to regularise the services of a sanitation worker in East Delhi.

The two accused are labour welfare superintendent Ritesh Kumar and sanitation worker Jal Singh, according to the anti-corruption branch's (ACB) joint commissioner of police Madhur Verma.

A retired sanitation worker informed the ACB that he had applied for the regularisation of services of his wife — currently working on daily wages in the Shahdara (North) Zone of the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) — as a 'safai karamchari (sanitation worker)', Mr Verma said. He added that Kumar allegedly demanded a bribe of ₹20,000 through Singh to approve the application for the regularisation of services of the complainant's wife.

Accordingly, a team was constituted and a raid conducted at their meeting point in the afternoon.

When Kumar and Singh came there, they were caught red-handed while demanding and accepting the bribe money from the complainant. Both have been booked under the Prevention of Corruption Act and are being interrogated, Verma said.

KUMAR ALLEGEDLY demanded a bribe of ₹20,000 to approve application for regularisation of services of the complainant's wife

Decide on Jain bail on July 9: SC to HC

RAKESH K. SINGH NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Observing that bail matters should not be adjourned "unnecessarily," the Supreme Court on Tuesday said it hoped that the Delhi high court will decide the bail plea of jailed former AAP minister Satyendar Jain in a money laundering case at the next hearing, scheduled for July 9.

On Monday, the apex court had, in a separate matter relating to the Delhi high court granting interim stay on the bail of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, observed that it was a bit "unusual" to reserve orders on stay matters.

A bench of Justices Manoj Misra and S.V.N. Bhatti made the observation while disposing of Jain's plea against the high court's decision to adjourn the hearing of his bail application for six weeks.

The bench said, "It goes without saying that bail matters are not to be unnecessarily adjourned. Therefore, we hope and trust that the high court shall take its call on the next date of hearing." During the hearing on Monday on Mr Kejriwal's plea against the interim stay on his bail in a

money laundering matter linked to the excise policy "scam," Justice Misra, who was part of the two-judge bench, observed that the stay order is normally pronounced the same day and not reserved.

"It's unusual," Justice Misra observed and added that the court would like to wait for the high court order to get a clear picture of the issue. During the hearing in the top court, senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, representing Jain, said he had challenged the long adjournment order.

Mr Singhvi argued that a substantial question of law has arisen from the case as to whether an incomplete charge sheet can be filed by the investigating agency to defeat the right of default bail to the accused.

He said a similar matter was under consideration of a three-judge bench of the apex court and urged the vacation bench that Jain's bail plea be tagged with it.

To this, Justice Misra told Mr Singhvi that the bench is sitting in combination with two judges and therefore cannot decide the issue, which is pending consideration of the three-judge bench.

Razing of Mangolpuri mosque's parts halted amid huge protests

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Protests erupted in Northwest Delhi's Mangolpuri area where portions of a mosque were demolished due to alleged encroachment amid heavy deployment of police and paramilitary forces, officials said on Tuesday.

The demolition drive, however, had to be halted after the situation escalated as a large mob gathered, forming a human chain to obstruct the entry of JCBs into the area, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD), which carried out the drive, said in a

statement. Additionally, the presence of women protesters, who sat on the unauthorised structure, complicated the law and order situation in the area, it added.

The demolition drive was undertaken by the civic body at a municipal park in Y Block of Mangolpuri against an illegally extended boundary wall of the mosque, the officials said.

The MCD removed 20 metres of the unauthorised structure but the situation escalated after a large mob and women protesters gathered at the site objecting to the demolition.

According to the police officials, there were stone pelting at a journalist during the demolition drive but no official complaint has been filed regarding the matter so far.

"We are waiting. If he (the journalist) gives any complaint, we will further proceed with the matter," a senior police officer told the media.

The local police and five companies of paramilitary personnel reached Mangolpuri's Y Block in the morning to demolish illegal encroachment at the mosque.

1,700 CISF men to guard upcoming Noida int'l airport

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

The Centre has sanctioned a 1,700-strong armed security contingent of the Central Industrial Security Force for the Noida international airport, which is expected to be operational from next April.

The Union home ministry recently approved the aviation security deployment plan and the survey conducted by the

security agencies for the greenfield airport, the official sources said.

The CISF is the designated national civil aviation security force and it has an aviation security group under its establishment that currently guards 68 airports across the country with a strength of about 38,000 personnel.

The force secures civil airports from potential terror and sabotage threats through its armed commandos, friskers and

IN first phase, airport will have one runway along with a terminal building with a capacity to handle 1.2 crore passengers annually

intelligence wing officials. The Noida airport unit will have about 1,700 men and women personnel, headed by a deputy inspector general-rank officer. This security deployment is meant for the first phase of the airport's operation.

tionalisation, the sources said. The airport was initially expected to launch operations in September but has now been pushed to April 2025 following construction delays.

It is coming up in the Jewar area of Uttar Pradesh's Gautam Buddha Nagar district, some 75 kilometres Southeast of Delhi.

The mega public-private partnership project of the Uttar Pradesh government

is billed to be India's largest airport upon completion. The airport is to be developed in an area of more than 5,000 hectares in four phases.

In the first phase, the airport will have one runway along with a terminal building with a capacity to handle 1.2 crore passengers annually, according to project officials.

The first airport the CISF took charge of was Jaipur in February 2000.

SHORT TAKES

Senior Akali leaders revolt against Badal

Chandigarh: A section of senior SAD leaders on Tuesday revolted against Sukhbir Singh Badal, demanding that he should step down as party chief following the SAD's debacle in the Lok Sabha elections. Addressing a press conference, they also announced that a 'SAD bachao' movement would be launched next month. The Akali Dal, however, called the rebel leaders "frustrated elements sponsored by the BJP" to weaken it. The leaders included former SAD MP Prem Singh Chandumajra, former Punjab ministers Sikandar Singh Maluka, Sarwan Singh Phullaur, former MLAs Gurpartap Singh Wadala, Parminder Singh Dhindsa, Gaganajit Singh Barnala, Surjit Singh Rakhra, former SGPC chief Jagir Kaur and SAD vice president Sucha Singh Chhotepur. The group held a meeting in Jalandhar to discuss how to strengthen the Akali Dal which they said has fallen from 'arsh' (sky) to 'farsh' (ground). — PTI

SC junks bail plea of SP MLA in liquor case

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain the bail plea of SP MLA Ramakant Yadav in a spurious liquor case in which nine people died in Azamgarh in 2022. A vacation bench refused to interfere with the Allahabad high court order denying him bail. Yadav's counsel withdrew the plea after the bench expressed disinclination to entertain it. The matter was dismissed as withdrawn. Yadav had moved the SC against the May 14 order of the HC which rejected his bail plea with a direction to the trial court to complete the examination of the remaining witnesses within four months. An FIR was registered in February 2022 in Azamgarh where nine people died allegedly after consuming spurious liquor. Though Yadav's name was not mentioned in the FIR, it was included in September 2022.

Sanatan remarks: Stalin son gets bail

Bengaluru: Tamil Nadu minister Udayanidhi Stalin was granted bail on Tuesday by a city court for his 'eradicating Sanatan Dharma' remark. The DMK leader appeared before the 42nd additional chief metropolitan magistrate following a notice to him based on a petition by social activist Parameesh for his remark. Mr Udayanidhi Stalin, who holds sports and youth affairs portfolio, got the bail with a surety of ₹1 lakh. The case has been posted to August 8. Mr Udayanidhi is the son of Tamil Nadu chief minister and ruling DMK chief M.K. Stalin. Speaking at a conference in Chennai in September 2023, Mr Udayanidhi had said Sanatana Dharma was against social justice and equality and that it should be 'eradicated' like malaria and dengue. — PTI

NO MARATHA NETA WITH ME: MAHA ACTIVIST

Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar: Maratha quota agitation leader Manoj Jarange on Tuesday said while the OBC leaders were united over the issue of reservation despite belonging to different parties, those from his own community were not with him and he was fighting a lonely battle for quota. He was talking to reporters on Tuesday before being discharged from a private hospital where he was admitted a few days back. Mr Jarange, who launched his latest round of protest on June 8 and suspended it six days later, has been demanding implementation of the draft notification that recognises Kunbis as 'sage soyare' (blood relatives) of Maratha community members. Kunbi, an agrarian group, falls under the OBC category, and Mr Jarange has been demanding that Kunbi certificates be issued to all Marathas, thus making them eligible for quota benefits. However, OBC activist Laxman Hake and his supporters have been opposing Mr Jarange's demand for issuance of Kunbi certificates to the Maratha community, and asserted that the state government must not take any decision that affects OBCs.



Manoj Jarange

Uproar over Owaisi oath, AIMIM leader justifies remarks 'Jai Bheem' slogans resonate in Parl as Opp. MPs take oath

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Majority members from the Opposition INDIA bloc took oath on Tuesday as elected representatives from Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal were sworn in on the second day of the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha. Among the prominent leaders who took oath were Rahul Gandhi, Akhilesh Yadav, Dimple Yadav, Om Birla, Hema Malini, Arun Govil, Asaduddin Owaisi, Kanimozhi Karunanidhi, Narayan Rane, Supriya Sule, Shrikant Shinde, Mahua Moitra, and Harsimrat Kaur. As many as 535 members took oath on Monday and Tuesday with seven yet to



Asaduddin Owaisi

complete the process. The seven MPs who are yet to take oath include Shatrughan Sinha, Deepak Adhikari and Sheikh Nurul Islam (all TMC), Afzal Ansari (SP) and Independents Amritpal Singh and Sheikh Abdul Rashid alias Engineer Rashid. Singh and Rashid are currently in jail. AIMIM MP from Hyderabad Mr Asaduddin Owaisi stoked controversy when he said "Jai Palestine" after taking oath, triggering an uproar from the treasury benches that led to the Chair ordering that the remarks be expunged

"Jai Bheem, Jai Meem, Jai Palestine". How is it wrong? Tell me the provisions of the Constitution. You should also listen to what others said. I said what I had to. Read what Mahatma Gandhi had said about Palestine." Majority of the MPs who took oath on Tuesday raised the slogans of "Jai Bheem, Jai Constitution". Several also hailed their states. MPs of the Opposition, particularly from the Congress and the Samajwadi Party took the oath while holding a copy of the Constitution.

Later, while talking to reporters outside Parliament, Mr Owaisi asserted he found nothing wrong in saying "Jai

Palestine" and that he mentioned Palestine because "they are oppressed people".

"Other members are also saying different things... I said 'Jai Bheem, Jai Meem, Jai Palestine'. How is it wrong? Tell me the provisions of the Constitution. You should also listen to what others said. I said what I had to. Read what Mahatma Gandhi had said about Palestine."

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'Dalit card' by Cong when its defeat is certain: Chirag

New Delhi, June 25: Union minister and BJP ally Chirag Paswan on Tuesday took a swipe at the Congress for playing the "Dalit card" in the election for Lok Sabha speaker, claiming that the Opposition resorts to the ploy whenever its defeat in a contest is certain. The Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas) leader said in a post on X that when the Congress-led Opposition knew that it would lose the vice-presidential poll in 2002, it fielded Dalit leader Sushil Kumar Shinde.

It named another Congress leader Meira Kumar, who hails from a Dalit community, as its choice for President in 2017 when the numbers favoured the BJP-led NDA candidate Ram Nath Kovind, who was elected, Mr Paswan said. "Now, when it obviously does not have the numbers in the Lok Sabha speaker's election, it has nominated the Congress' Dalit leader K. Suresh," Mr Paswan said. "Are Dalit leaders only symbolic candidates for the Opposition?" he added. — PTI



Bharat Adivasi Party MP Rajkumar Roat arrives at the Parliament House complex during the 2nd day of the first session of the 18th Lok Sabha in New Delhi on Tuesday. — PTI

Sharad welcomes Suryakanta Patil as she returns from BJP after 10 years 'No issue in taking back netas, but with riders'

SONU SHRIVASTAVA MUMBAI, JUNE 25

Nationalist Congress Party (SP) president Sharad Pawar on Tuesday maintained there was no issue in welcoming people whose entry will benefit the Opposition outfit and boost the morale of workers. However, induction in the NCP(SP) will come with riders, asserted the former Union minister. Mr Pawar said his party's door will remain open to those MLAs who did not

weaken the party amidst the split. The NCP founder also said that he would consult his party colleagues before giving entry to such MLAs in the party.

Mr Pawar was speaking at a function where senior BJP leader and former Union minister Suryakanta Patil joined the NCP(SP). Ms Patil was welcomed by Sharad Pawar and the party's Maharashtra president Jayant Patil. Last week, Ms Patil resigned from the BJP's



Sharad Pawar

primary membership after 10 years. Ms Patil had quit the undivided NCP to join the BJP in 2014. Mr Pawar and Mr Patil

praised her leadership qualities stating that her return would boost the NCP's prospects in Nanded, Hingoli, Parbhani, Beed and other districts in Marathwada region where the BJP lost badly in the Lok Sabha elections.

Ms Patil said many leaders want to join the Sharad Pawar-led NCP but cannot muster the courage to face the NCP founder. "I have assured them that once I join the party, I'll take them into the party fold," the 75-year-old leader said.

In response to a query regarding those who want to shift their loyalty towards the NCP(SP), the senior Pawar said there is no problem in welcoming back those MLAs whose entry will benefit the Opposition outfit and boost workers' morale. "But those who have worked to weaken the party and harm its interests will not be taken back," Sharad Pawar said in an apartment reference to Ajit Pawar and his close associates.

Dhami meets Modi, seeks support on state projects

PRITHVIRAJ SINGH DEHRADUN, JUNE 25

Uttarakhand chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Tuesday requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to expedite the Centre's clearance for 24 hydro power projects previously banned by the Supreme Court but later cleared. These projects were halted due to the 2013 natural disaster in the Alaknanda and Bhagirathi valleys. Mr Dhami also urged the PM to approve the long-pending Dehradun-Mussoorie rail project.

In an important meeting with the PM, Mr Dhami asked him to review the final report of expert committee-2, constituted by the SC in 2014, which cleared the 24 Hydro Electric Power Projects (HEPs) after reviewing all 70 HEPs in the state. These projects are awaiting approval from the Union ministry of jal shakti and power. Dhami emphasised that HEPs are crucial for increasing the state's GDP and meeting its power requirements, as Uttarakhand currently spends ₹1,000 crores annually on electricity purchases.

Mr Dhami also urged the PM to direct the concerned ministries to clear all developmental projects pending forest land acquisition for non-forestry purposes, highlighting that Uttarakhand's 67% forest cover limits available land for development.

TMC MLAs must take oath at Raj Bhavan, says WB gov Slams Speaker over dilemma of swearing-in event

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, JUNE 25

West Bengal governor C.V. Ananda Bose asserted on Tuesday that two newly-elected Trinamul Congress MLAs of Bhagabangola and Baranagar, Reyat Hossain Sarkar and Savantika Banerjee respectively, would have to take their oath at the Raj Bhavan. The governor's stand came a day after Ms Banerjee rejected the invitation from Raj Bhavan to take the oath from him and instead wished to be sworn-in by Assembly Speaker Biman Banerjee at the House. Mr Bose also slammed the Speaker for the dilemma.

The Raj Bhavan claimed in a statement on X-handle, "It is unfortunate that a stand was taken by the



C.V. Ananda Bose

Speaker in his letter dated June 20. The letter was in bad taste undermining the dignity of the governor and contained barbs and innuendoes."

It also added, "The letter of the Speaker mentioned...it is my earnest request to you to consider the matter as per the well-established constitutional convention so that the newly-elected members can be administered oath/affirmation as early as possible."

Says contemporary security landscape presents 'multi-faceted challenges'

India must invest in modernisation: IAF Chief

New Delhi, June 25: IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal V.R. Chaudhari said on Tuesday the contemporary security landscape presents "multi-faceted challenges" from border disputes and terrorism to cyber threats and regional volatility, and India must invest in modernisation of its armed forces to navigate through these "turbulent times". Delivering a keynote address at a seminar in New Delhi, the IAF Chief

also said modern warfare is characterised by rapid technological advancements, asymmetric threats and the need for a comprehensive understanding of geopolitical, social and cultural contexts. His remarks come amid the backdrop of evolving geopolitics with conflicts being seen in some of the regions of the world.

The seminar was hosted by the Indian Air Force (IAF), College of Air Warfare (CAW) and Centre



V.R. Chaudhari

for Air Power Studies (CAPS) at the Air Force Auditorium at Subroto Park to mark the culmination of the third Warfare &

UP nod to ordinance to check paper leaks

Offenders to face life imprisonment

Lucknow, June 25: The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday cleared an ordinance to prevent question paper leaks and use of unauthorised means in exams, awarding jail term of two years to life imprisonment and fines up to ₹1 crore.

The move comes following recent incidents of question paper leak in the state police constable recruitment exam and public service commission test for review officers and assistant review officers.

The ordinance was given a go ahead at a state cabinet meeting presided over by chief minister Yogi Adityanath, state finance minister Suresh Khanna told reporters.

Under the ordinance, those arrested for ques-

tion paper leak would face a jail term ranging from two years up to life imprisonment. Mr Khanna said at a press meet after the Cabinet meeting.

Fines of up to ₹1 crore would also be imposed on such offenders, he added. The minister said the ordinance includes exams of state public service commission, Subordinate Service Selection Board, Uttar Pradesh Board, universities and institutions nominated by them.

It will also be applicable on any kind of recruitment examinations, regularisation or promotion examinations, entrance examinations for degree-diploma certificates or educational certificates, he added.

— PTI

Aerospace Strategy Programme (WASP). "This programme has enabled us to refine the definition of scholar warriors," the IAF Chief said. "This 'multi-faceted landscape' requires such military personnel who are not only adept at combat but also possess a deep understanding of the broader implications of their actions, the Air Chief Marshal said. "Therefore, in my opinion, a scholar warrior is a mili-

tary professional who combines intellectual acumen with combat prowess in today's "increasingly complex and dynamic security environment", Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari asserted. To emphasise the point, the IAF Chief also invoked the words of ancient Greek historian Thucydides, who said "The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting by fools". — PTI

Rahul is named as Leader of Opposition in Lower House

Cong leader to be part of key panels along with PM

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi has been named the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, party general secretary K.C. Venugopal announced after a meeting of floor leaders of Opposition parties. The decision was made at the meeting of INDIA bloc party leaders at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence in New Delhi. NCP(SP) leader Supriya Sule, Trinamul Congress MP Derek O'Brien, and Rashtriya Loktantrik Party leader Hanuman Beniwal were among the leaders present.

Addressing the press, Mr Venugopal said, "CPP chairperson Sonia Gandhi wrote a letter to



Rahul Gandhi

pro-tem Speaker Bhartruhari Mahtab, informing the decision to appoint Rahul Gandhi as the Leader of the Opposition in Lok Sabha." Mr Gandhi will also be part of key panels, like those to select Chief Election Commissioners and election commissioners, along with the Prime Minister.

"We are confident that as LoP, Rahulji will be a bold voice for the common people of India and ensure that the NDA government is held firmly accountable at all times," Mr Venugopal added in a post on X.

Mr Gandhi is likely to open the debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address when the Lok Sabha takes it up later this week or next.

The Congress did not secure the official post of the LoP in the 2014 and 2019 general elections due to insufficient seats. However, with 99 MPs, the party is now entitled to the post, and the Congress Working Committee (CWC) passed a resolution for Rahul Gandhi to take over as LoP.

EAM meets new Chinese envoy, progress in focus

New Delhi, June 25: External affairs minister S. Jaishankar on Tuesday emphasised on the "common interest" in "stabilisation and progress" in India-China relations during a meeting with Chinese ambassador Xu Feihong, amid the lingering border row in eastern Ladakh.

Mr Jaishankar also separately met envoys of New Zealand, Kuwait and Sri Lanka.

"Received ambassador of China Xu Feihong this evening. Discussed our bilateral relationship and our common interest in its stabilisation and progress. Wished him a successful tenure," the EAM said.

The external affairs minister has consistently been maintaining that India's ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas.

Following the meeting with Mr Jaishankar, the Chinese ambassador said he was looking forward to working with the Indian side to push forward the development of China-India relations towards the "right direction". "Honored to call on External Affairs Minister @DrSJaishankar today.

THE EXTERNAL affairs minister has consistently been maintaining that India's ties with China cannot be normal unless there is peace in the border areas

We exchanged views on China-India relations and other issues of common interest," the envoy said.

"Thanks for his best wishes. Look forward to working with the Indian side to push forward the development of China-India relations towards the right direction," he said.

Mr Xu arrived in Delhi on May 10 after the position of Chinese ambassador in India remained vacant for nearly 18 months, the longest such gap in over four decades.

The envoy presented his credentials to President Droupadi Murmu on May 31 along with a number of newly-appointed foreign envoys. The ties between the two countries nose-dived significantly following a fierce clash in the Galwan Valley in June 2020 that marked the most serious military conflict between the two sides in decades. — PTI

Ex-Kashmir HC Bar association prez arrested in murder case

YUSUF JAMEEL SRINAGAR, JUNE 25

The Jammu and Kashmir police on Tuesday arrested Mian Abdul Qayoom, a prominent lawyer and former president of the Kashmir Bar council, for his alleged involvement in the 2020 murder conspiracy of fellow lawyer Babar Qadri. Qayoom, who served as the president of the J&K high court Bar association for twenty terms between 1986 and 2019, was taken into custody after the state investigation agency (SIA) collected substantial evidence against him.

Eighty-year-old Qayoom, previously incarcerated several times, was accused of anti-India activities and supporting the separatist cause. He was closely associated with pro-Pakistan separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

During the investigation, Qayoom emerged as the primary suspect in Qadri's murder conspiracy. Qadri, known for his TV appearances and as the founder of the All J&K People's Justice Party, was killed by unknown gunmen at his Srinagar home in September 2020.

In August 2022, the police raided the homes of Qayoom and two other senior lawyers, seizing digital devices and other materials. The case, initially registered under various sections of the UAPA and the IPC.

SHORT TAKES

Shops set on fire in Raj after man killed

Jaipur: A brick kiln owner was murdered and an eatery and a liquor shop set on fire in Rajasthan's Pratapgarh district in a quarrel over dust from the kiln, police said on Tuesday. The 38-year-old kiln owner's family and angry locals also blocked a highway and pelted stones at the police personnel after he was allegedly stabbed to death by a group of people, which included the dhaba owner, they added. The incident took place late Monday evening in Kherot village under the Kotwali police station limits of Pratapgarh, the police said. — PTI

NHRC notice to TN over hooch tragedy

New Delhi: The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Tuesday said it had issued notices to the Tamil Nadu government and police chief in connection with the hooch tragedy in Kallakurichi district and sought a report in a week. The death toll in the Kallakurichi hooch tragedy climbed to 58 on Monday. As many as 219 people have been admitted to various hospitals. The NHRC said it had taken suo motu cognisance of a media report that several people lost their lives after "consuming spurious liquor" in Kallakurichi. — PTI

Modi may visit Moscow in July

Continued from Page 1 will happen." Diplomatic sources said Mr Modi's day-long visit is being planned around July 8, reported PTI. According to recent reports, Mr Modi is likely to skip the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Kazakhstan's Astana on July 3 and 4 as Parliament is now in session. External affairs minister S. Jaishankar may instead represent India at the SCO Summit, reports suggested. China and Pakistan are also members of the SCO and New Delhi's ties with both Islamabad and Beijing remain strained. Russia-China ties have grown stronger by the day, with President Putin undertaking a visit recently to Beijing to hold talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping. It may be noted that President Putin had spoken earlier this month to Mr Modi on phone and had congratulated him on the electoral success of the NDA following its victory on June 4. The Russian President also said this "reflects the support of the political course pursued by the Indian leadership, recognition of the results achieved in the socio-economic development of the country and strengthening of its international authority". Both leaders had also "expressed satisfaction with the current level of the Russian-Indian special and privileged strategic partnership which will continue expanding in all areas".

State Cabinet decides to change ex-gratia rule, will give scholarships MP mantris to pay I-T after 52 years

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY BHOPAL, JUNE 25

The Madhya Pradesh Cabinet on Tuesday decided to do away with the 52-year-old rule by withdrawing the privilege given to the state ministers under which the government was paying their income tax (I-T). The state Cabinet, which met here under the chairmanship of chief minister Mohan Yadav, decided that the state ministers will have to pay their income

tax, instead of the state exchequer bearing the burden. Mr Yadav submitted a proposal before the Cabinet, suggesting that the ministers should pay their income tax, instead of leaving the burden of paying it on the government.

The Cabinet endorsed the proposal, state urban development, minister Kailash Vijayvargiya said after the meeting. As per a rule made in 1972, the state government needed to pay the income tax of state ministers. The state exchequer had to bear a financial burden to the tune of ₹3.24 crore towards payment of I-T of the state ministers in the last five years, official sources said.



Mohan Yadav

AS PER a rule made in 1972, the state government needed to pay the income tax of state ministers and the state exchequer had to bear a financial burden to the tune of ₹3.24 crore towards I-T payment

In another significant decision, the Cabinet decided to bring changes in the ex-gratia provision rule to share the financial aids given to the slain martyr of a Central or state paramilitary forces

between his widow and parents.

The Cabinet also decided to waive the condition put for the corporate sector to plant trees in at least five hectares and decided that they can plant trees in two hectares under corporate social responsibility. It has also been decided in the Cabinet meeting that scholarships would be given to the students of state studying in Sainik Schools in other states.

The Cabinet also approved the annual budget for 2024-25.

NIA declares ₹10L each against 2 accused of VHP leader murder

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Tuesday declared a cash reward of ₹10 lakh each against two wanted accused in connection with the murder of Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Vikas Prabhakar at Nangal in Punjab.

The two accused, Harjit Singh alias Laddi is a resident of Nawanshahr in Punjab while Kulbeer Singh alias Sidhu is resident of Jagadhari in Haryana, are absconding in this murder case registered on May 9. The case against the accused is registered under various sections of IPC, UAPA and Arms Act, the agency said in a statement.

The probe agency has also released photos of the duo. The NIA has also issued contact numbers and email id of the agency and sought that any information leading to their arrest/apprehension can be shared with an assurance that the identity of the informants will be kept secret. Victim Prabhakar was the president of the VHP's Nangal unit.

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Victim Prabhakar was the president of the VHP's Nangal unit.



Mortals remains of CRPF constable Vishnu R. being taken to a school for people to pay their last respects in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. Vishnu R. was one of the two CRPF jawans killed in an IED attack by Naxals at Sukma district of Chhattisgarh on Sunday. — PTI

Mamata govt consulted over treaty with B'desh: Centre

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

After West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee alleged that her state was not consulted by the Centre in water-sharing talks with Bangladesh, government sources on Tuesday denied the claim, saying West Bengal had been consulted on every stage.

"India and Bangladesh signed a treaty on December 12, 1996 for sharing of the Ganga/Ganges waters at the Farakka barrage during the lean season. This Treaty is valid for thirty years and, therefore, due for renewal in 2026. An internal committee was constituted by the ministry of jal shakti on July 24, 2023 for carrying out internal review of the treaty. Stakeholders include the governments of Bihar as well as West Bengal, whose representatives have been included as members in this Committee and the West Bengal government has nominated their representative to the Committee on 25 August 2023," said the sources.

Search ops in Bastar markets as fake notes found in Naxal camp

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY RAIPUR, JUNE 25

Security forces have started keeping a strict vigil on the tribal weekly markets in Bastar in Chhattisgarh to prevent Maoists from circulating counterfeit currency notes in the insurgency-hit region, police said on Tuesday.

The move comes amid recovery of fake currency notes of denominations of ₹50, ₹100, ₹200 and ₹500 along with printing machines and inks by security forces in a Naxal dump in a jungle in Sukma district under

south Bastar in the state on Sunday.

Sources said that security forces have intensified vigilance on the tribal weekly markets particularly in remote Bastar to monitor movements of Maoists who may visit the markets to circulate the fake currency notes. Sukma district superintendent of police Kiran Chavan has earlier said that Maoists were circulating the fake currencies through the weekly markets in remote Bastar since their sources of revenue have been choked by security forces.

However, it was yet to be established by the police as to what is the scale of circulation of fake currencies in Bastar by Maoists. "Further probe is on into the matter. No one was arrested at the spot where the Naxal dump was found by the security forces. Arrest of a Maoist involved in the fake note printing and circulating operation will throw light on the matter", Bastar range inspector general of police Sunderraj P. said Tuesday. He said this was the first time that the fake currency note printing unit of Maoists in Bastar was seized by security forces.

had come to Kerala on vacation. Suhaib was booked for offences under relevant sections of the IPC and the Kerala Police Act, according to the FIR. "He has been taken to court for being remanded," an officer of the Nedumbassery police station said. Earlier in the day, after the threat was received, security personnel conducted extensive checks on the aircraft and found no danger, allowing the flight to proceed as planned, a Cochin International Airport spokesperson said in a statement. — PTI

Bomb threat to AI flight proved hoax, flyer held

Kochi, June 25: A bomb threat to a London-bound Air India flight on Tuesday turned out to be a hoax and a 30-year-old passenger suspected of making the call was apprehended here by authorities when he and his family checked in to board the same AI 149 flight, an official said.

According to the police, the accused made the threat as he was unhappy over the "poor service" he got when he arrived on an Air India flight. The accused, Suhaib, is a marketing executive in London and is settled there with his family, the police said, adding that he

Pune car hit: HC orders release of juvenile accused

Understand my pain: Victim's mom

Mumbai, June 25: The Bombay high court on Tuesday ordered that a 17-year-old boy allegedly involved in the Porsche car accident in Pune last month be released immediately from an observation home.

The teen, who the police claimed was drunk and driving the luxury car when it hit a two-wheeler in the early hours of May 19 killing two techies, was lodged at an observation home in Maharashtra's Pune city. The HC's decision has stirred strong emotions with the mother of one of the accident victims urging the judges to understand the pain of a bereaved mother who has lost her daughter.

"I was shocked after seeing the news. I have full faith in the judiciary. They must have made the decision after careful consideration. However, I request the judges to understand the pain of a mother who has lost her daughter. Punishment should be given accordingly so that the public can trust the judicial system," said Mamta Koshta, mother of the deceased

THE BOMBAY HC said amid the immediate reaction to the accident, the kneejerk reaction and the public outcry, the child in conflict with law (CCL) age was not considered

Ashwini Koshta. A division bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande quashed the orders issued by the Juvenile Justice Board (JJB) remanding the minor to the observation home.

"We allow the petition and order his release. The CCL (child in conflict with law) shall be in the care and custody of the petitioner (paternal aunt)," the court said. The bench noted the JJB's remand orders were illegal and passed without jurisdiction.

The court said amid the "immediate reaction to the accident, the kneejerk reaction and the public outcry, the CCL's age was not considered".

"The CCL is under 18 years old. His age needs to be considered," the HC bench said. — PTI

Modi talks to Kazakh Prez, gives support to SCO meet

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

Prime Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation with Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Tuesday, during which he conveyed India's full support for the success of the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) Summit.

In a statement, New Delhi said, "President Tokayev warmly congratulated the PM on the successful conduct of the largest democratic exercise in the world and his re-election for the historic third consecutive term."

"PM thanked him for his warm felicitations. The two leaders reiterated their commitment to continue to work together to advance bilateral strategic partnership," said the statement. New Delhi added, "PM conveyed India's full support for the success of the upcoming SCO summit in Astana, and expressed confidence that Kazakhstan's leadership would contribute to the furtherance of regional cooperation."

No deal, Speaker poll today

Continued from Page 1

was given to the INDIA bloc. But with the BJP non-committal on the issue, the Congress and DMK representatives walked out of a meeting, ruling out a consensus candidate for the post.

Mr Gandhi said the NDA had insulted its leader Mallikarjun Kharge. "Monday evening Mr Rajnath Singh spoke to the Congress president asking for a consensus candidate. They (BJP) said they will call back, but till now they haven't called back", said Mr Gandhi.

BJP president J.P. Nadda said the election of Speaker cannot be conditional. Another BJP leader Parhlad Joshi said: "There cannot be preconditions. We will sit again and talk for the deputy speaker post. We urge the Opposition to rethink."

Parliamentary affairs minister Kiren Rijiju said that the Opposition was consulted three times and added the deputy speaker appointment was a different process and the NDA will discuss it separately. He called the Opposition "adamant" and appealed to the Congress to support Mr Birla's candidature. Mr Rijiju said that in every Lok Sabha the Speaker was elected unanimously.

"Union minister Rajnath Singh had called Mallikarjun Kharge ji and has said that he will return his call, but it has not been done. While Modi ji wants constructive cooperation they are insulting our leader by not returning the call," Mr Gandhi told reporters. "We gave the deputy speaker post to the Opposition during UPA. Mr Modi will have to change. The PM's words have no value. Outside (Parliament) he talks about cooperation but inside he does just the opposite."

INDIA bloc leaders flanked Mr Suresh as he filed his nomination. However, INDIA partner Trinamul Congress said it had not been consulted and the Congress had unilaterally taken the decision. Later, it is learnt that Mr Gandhi spoke to TMC leader Abhishek Banerjee on the nomination of Mr Suresh to end his grievance and the latter attended the INDIA bloc meeting.

Sources said after the talks with the BJP failed, the Congress had to take a decision on the spot to field a candidate for the Speaker's post.

It is learnt that the meeting between Congress leader K.C. Venugopal and DMK's T.R. Baalu from the Opposition side and Union ministers Rajnath Singh,

Amit Shah and J.P. Nadda at Mr Singh's office in Parliament to evolve a consensus ended in acrimony as both sides stuck to their position.

Mr Suresh said it was not about winning or losing, but about a convention that the Speaker will be of ruling party and the deputy speaker from the Opposition. "The last two Lok Sabhas, they denied us the deputy speaker's post because they said you are not recognised as the Opposition. Now we are recognised as the Opposition, (and) the deputy speaker's post is our right. But they are not ready to give us. Till 11.50 am, we were waiting for a reply from the government's side but they did not give any reply," he said.

Sources said over 10 sets of nominations (called notices for motion) were filed in support of Mr Birla's candidature, including from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh and J.P. Nadda, and members of BJP allies like the TDP, JD(U), JD(S) and LJP (R). Three sets of nominations were filed in support of Mr Suresh.

Ahead of the contest, the INDIA bloc held a meeting at Mr Kharge's residence to decide its strategy for Wednesday's action.

HC stays Kejriwal's bail, says trial court 'didn't give ED time'

Continued from Page 1

with the said petition. The present application is allowed and the operation of the impugned order is stayed." Justice Jain made it clear that nothing in the order should be taken as an opinion or observation on the merits of the main ED plea challenging the trial court order. The main matter is listed on July 10. Delhi Cabinet minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said, "I think the high court bench was prejudiced. We will approach the higher court. Our legal team will decide the strategy and the time when we approach the higher court."

The trial court, presided over by vacation judge Niyay Bindu, had granted bail to Mr Kejriwal on June 20, saying the ED failed to furnish direct evidence linking him to

"proceeds of crime" in the money laundering case. The ED moved the HC next day, contending that the trial court's order was "perverse, one-sided, wrong-sided" and that it was passed without granting it adequate opportunity to argue the case.

The HC had put in abeyance the operation of the bail order till the pronouncement on the issue of stay. Mr Kejriwal, meanwhile, approached the SC against the interim stay on his bail. The SC fixed June 26 for hearing his plea against the stay, saying it will like to wait for the pronouncement of the HC order. In the 34-page order, Justice Jain asserted that every court is under an obligation to give sufficient opportunity to the parties to present their respective case

and, in the instant case as well, the ED ought to have been given adequate opportunity to advance arguments on his bail application.

Justice Jain said the trial judge neither discussed nor considered the arguments made by the ED, including those advanced in the written submissions. He said that the trial court also did not discuss and record its view with respect to the "twin condition" requirement under Section 45 of the PMLA while granting bail. Under Section 45 of PMLA, an accused can be granted bail subject to the "twin conditions" that the court is prima facie satisfied that he is not guilty of such offence and the prosecutor has been given an opportunity to oppose the application for bail.

The HC said that the issue

regarding Mr Kejriwal's vicarious liability as the head of the AAP also did not find any place in the bail order. It said: "The perusal of the impugned order is reflecting that the vacation judge has passed the impugned order without going through and appreciating the entire material brought on record by the rival parties, which reflects perversity in the impugned order. There is factual force in the arguments advanced by additional solicitor-general S.V. Raju (for the ED) that the vacation judge has not passed the impugned order after due consideration of the entire material on record."

At this stage, the HC stated that it cannot be said that Mr Kejriwal's arrest and remand are not in accordance with law.

'Cong trampled Constitution, its Emergency mindset alive'

Continued from Page 1

unleashed to target the weakest sections," posted Mr Modi on his social media platform. Noting that those who imposed the Emergency have "no right to profess their love for our Constitution", Mr Modi said, "These are the same people who have imposed Article 356 on innumerable occasions, got a bill to destroy press freedom, destroyed federalism and violated every aspect of the Constitution."

Slamming the Congress, the PM said the mindset that led to the imposition of the Emergency is very much alive among the same party that imposed it. "They hide

their disdain for the Constitution through their tokenism, but the people of India have seen through their antics and that is why they have rejected them time and again," the PM wrote.

Addressing an event at the BJP headquarters, party president J.P. Nadda said those who insulted and ignored the Constitution several times have declared themselves the protectors of the Constitution. He also slammed the Opposition for fielding its MP K. Suresh against the NDA's Om Birla for election to the office of LS Speaker.

Attacking the Congress and its former president Rahul Gandhi, Union home minister Amit Shah

said that the party and its "yuvraj" have forgotten that Indira Gandhi had imposed the Emergency. He said that Mr Gandhi's father Rajiv Gandhi had said in Parliament on July 23, 1985, that "there is nothing wrong with an Emergency".

"The Congress crushed the spirit of our Constitution several times for the sake of maintaining a family in power. Indira Gandhi unleashed ruthless atrocities on the people of India during the Emergency," Mr Shah wrote on X.

The Union home minister added: "Rajiv Gandhi even said, 'If any Prime Minister of this country feels that an Emergency is necessary under these circumstances

and does not apply the Emergency, he is not fit to be the Prime Minister of this country'. This very act of taking pride in a dictatorial act shows that nothing else is dear to the Congress other than the family and power."

Accusing the Congress of having an "Emergency DNA," Union minister Bandi Sanjay Kumar said, "Holding the Constitution in hand is not enough; upholding the values enshrined in the Constitution is needed. Nobody has mocked the Constitution more than Congress. Even as we speak in the Congress-journalists, curbing freedom of speech."

THE ASIAN AGE

26 JUNE 2024

Tories destined to fail for first time in 14 yrs

Having lurched from crisis to crisis in the last four years since the Covid pandemic, the Tories await the inevitable now. If the pollsters have captured the mood of the people right, the Conservatives, led by their country's first Hindu Prime Minister, are doomed to fail in the polls hastily called for July 4 as a last throw of the dice by the captain of a sinking ship.

The well-meaning Rishi Sunak and his government are gasping for their last breath as the 14-year rule of the Tories appears ready to end. Having come to power as the leader of a coalition in 2010 and blundered into choosing the Brexit referendum as an option granted by the then PM David Cameron in 2016, the Tories have been haunted by as series of scandals ending with the latest one on insider betting on the general election dates, including by Tory poll candidates.

It is not illegal to bet in the UK where the bookmakers may even offer odds on the chances of Mr Sunak ascending the throne if he were ever so inclined to fancy himself to attain the impossible. But to do so with insider knowledge is considered a criminal act. And if proof were gathered to condemn those involved in the latest Tory shenanigan, there could even be prison time for some.

Mr Sunak was seen as too detached from the real world and way too pleased with himself for his rise as an outlier to the head of one of Britain's oldest political parties

A cynical disregard for the rules as the betting caper was, it was only a distraction much as Mr Sunak skipping the 80th World War II commemoration of D-Day landing on the beaches of Normandy to attend a TV interview on the coming UK polls was political embarrassment. A whole set of events in which the Tory top brass behaved as if there was one rule for the rulers and quite another for the people, damaging their credibility with the public who are determined to oust them by handing them their biggest defeat in the history of the Conservative Party.

As the fourth UK PM since Mr Cameron and second in the wake of Boris Johnson's resignation after Partygate, when he went from the heroic Brexiteer and champion vote catcher winning 365 seats for the Tories in 2019 to political villain, Mr Sunak could do little in 18 months even if the economy moved from recession to recovery and steep inflation which once caused inestimable heartburn during the cost-of-living crisis dropping to low as two per cent now.

His best of intentions notwithstanding, Mr Sunak, the Indian IT titan Narayana Murthy's son-in-law, was seen as too detached from the real world and way too pleased with himself for his rise as an outlier to the head of one of Britain's oldest political parties. And Tories wishing to dump him for Ms Penny Mordaunt or someone else found they had too little time for their revenge act when Mr Sunak called for early elections.

So much have the Tories crumbled in the public eye that the reform Party of UK, with Nigel Farage back in poll fray, are predicted to win their first UK seats even as a never-before low may be on the cards for those who kept Labour out for 14 years since 2010 after the highs of the Tony Blair and Gordon Brown years.

GST breather for easier biz?

The recent Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council meeting was focussed on improving the ease of doing business in the country by reducing the compliance burden of businesses. One of the important decisions taken by the Council was on monetary limits imposed on the revenue departments for filing appeals against adverse decisions.

According to the new limits, the department cannot appeal an adverse tax decision at the GST Appellate Tribunal unless tax involved is more than ₹20 lakhs, at the high court ₹1 crore, and at the Supreme Court ₹2 crores.

One of the issues that causes harm to India's ease of doing business is prolonged litigation in the country. With this decision, the Council has taken a decision which is in the right direction.

Similarly, the Council's decision to waive interest and penalties for demand notices under Section 73 for FY 2017-18, 2018-19, 2019-20 if full tax is paid by March 31, 2025, will improve tax compliance and reduce pending cases. This decision will also improve tax collections. Similarly, no interest will be levied on delayed return filing if the amount is available in the electronic cash ledger on the due date.

The Council's plans to establish a uniform time limit for issuing demand notices and orders, regardless of whether fraud, suppression, or willful misstatement will bring certainty to the businesses in terms of compliance.

With scams involving input tax credit increasing in the country, the Council has set a deadline for claiming ITC on invoices/debit notes for FY 2017-18 to 2020-21 as November 30, 2021.

The implementation of biometric-based Aadhaar authentication for GST registration applicants will introduce a robust registration process which will curb fraudulent input tax credit claims via fake invoices. While these steps ease tax compliance, the GST regime is still a work in progress until it is made less complicated with fewer tax slabs.

THE ASIAN AGE

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Subhani



A wish-list for Budget: If I were Nirmala Sitharaman



Sanjeev Ahluwalia

Integrating high-level fiscal and financial decision-making under one roof would be a visible ode to Prime Minister Modi's languishing mantra of co-operative federalism

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman is all set to make history. Some may say she has already made history by being the first woman to become finance minister, if one excludes Prime Minister Indira Gandhi who held the finance portfolio in 1969. If all goes well, she will become the first FM to serve for more than six years and 125 days by the end of 2025, smashing Pannipati Chidambaram's record over two separate spells (2004 to 2008 and 2012 to 2014). For continuous service, the venerable C.D. Deshmukh (1950 to 1956) holds the record of six years and 53 days, which Ms Sitharaman will equal even earlier.

Contrary to popular perception — mainly because of her impish grin when she scores a debating point — Ms Sitharaman was not the youngest finance minister at age 60 in 2019. That honour belongs to Rajiv Gandhi in 1987 (along with being the PM) at age 43. The second youngest was Pranab Mukherjee at age 47 in 1982, followed by P. Chidambaram at age 51 in 1996.

Every FM yearns for a legacy to be remembered by. This requires substantive action beyond getting there early or hanging in there for long. Ms Sitharaman's first term under Prime Minister Narendra Modi was diligent, free of adverse outcomes but studiously correct as a *sipahi* (soldier) of the PM — with apologies to Rajeev Chandrashekar of the BJP, who claims that privilege.

If I were Nirmala Sitharaman, I would use my time till 2029 to build a legacy — beyond the implementation of 300-day rolling plans or the subsequent high decibel political outreach around relatively mundane outcomes, which generally accompany such budgetary provisions.

The finance ministry flies solo in three significant areas. First, defining the fiscal stance of the government — the fiscal deficit, debt levels and the share of private and public investment at play in the economy. Second, developing an action plan to achieve the associated fiscal and investment metrics. If private investment must increase, relative to public resources, what is the vision for the supporting financial services — banking, financial institutions, stock markets and insurance services?

Third, the tax policy of the government, which determines who pays for government interventions. All three are highly political decisions.

The FM plays a prime role in aligning government tax revenue to the volume of government expenditure to keep fiscal deficit and debt within norms. At present, public debt is 50 per cent higher and the fiscal deficit more than 25 per cent higher than the norm. Keeping them within the norms means shaping financial outlays towards efficiency enhancing, productive spending, while saying no to political grandstanding based on debt. In short, the FM must draw measurable red lines around the expenditure expectations of her Cabinet colleagues.

Cynics would say such foundational decisions are taken by the Prime Minister's close-knit circle of advisers. Also, how can an FM, who is in Parliament at the behest of the party (via the indirect election route to the Rajya Sabha, as opposed to getting directly elected to the Lok Sabha) do otherwise but play ball with top-down political directives?

The FM can take heart from previous FMs, also in Parliament via the indirect Rajya Sabha route. Arun Jaitley will be remembered for accepting the challenge of living within a low FD

target of 4.1 per cent of GDP in 2014-15, down from 4.5 per cent, the previous fiscal, where P. Chidambaram had left it, and for reducing it further to 3.5 per cent by 2017-18. Successfully shepherding the GST regime — an inherited, albeit much needed, hot potato from the Congress government, was another achievement, but failing to oppose demonetisation — which was a political misadventure — was not. Dr Manmohan Singh (as PM) braved the wrath of his own party and Left party allies for pushing through the civil nuclear deal with the United States in 2006, paving the way for the close alliances India enjoys today.

Similar opportunities await Ms Sitharaman. Consider, for example, the need for a forward-looking tax policy. Her diligent oversight and evident probity — she did not fight the 2024 Lok Sabha elections because she could not afford the expenses required to win — have ensured a smart uptick in Central government tax receipts.

From 6.8 per cent of current GDP in 2019-20, these increased to 9.6 per cent in 2023-24, vastly different from 2019-20 when they reduced from 7.6 per cent in 2014-15. But the underlying tax structure remains distorted, porous, and shallow.

Tax reform requires shunning high nominal rates as substitutes for poor assessment and collection capabilities. Low tax rates, minus exemptions, are preferable to high nominal rates with lots of exemptions, designed to let favoured taxpayers escape the tax, whilst others get their backs broken. Consider that, thanks to "clever" tax planning, less than 0.6 million families (0.2 per cent of all families) declared a tax-

able annual income of more than ₹5 million in 2022-23.

High import tax rates seem necessary to "protect" domestic industry because the RBI keeps the rupee artificially expensive and domestic interest rates high, to forestall an outflow of foreign portfolio investment from the stock market. Keeping the stock market at elevated levels is now a performance metric of the government, much to the glee of the middle class. But an expensive rupee makes exports expensive and uncompetitive whilst incentivising imports, widening the trade deficit, which then needs to be plugged in by higher taxes on imports and more incentives for inflows of foreign investment to plug the adverse external account (trade plus financial flows) — pulling the economy into a circular, downward trending vortex.

High domestic lending rates, and high domestic bank lending margins compensate for losses from imprudent lending practices at low rates, often under government schemes but serve to constrain domestic investment, counteracted by "viability gap financing subsidies" for the big corporates and interest subsidies for small business.

A five-year macro-economic plan can lead us out of this circular, un-strategic, economic trap. Mandate a Fiscal and Financial Commission (FFC) to integrate the entire financial sector. Chaired by the FM with state government FMs as members working on a consensual basis, it can subsume the GST Council and the quinquennial Finance Commission, whose mandate is already diminished by the comprehensive GST framework. Inter-state allocation of grants could be determined quinquennially but monitored and fine-tuned annually.

Integrating high-level fiscal and financial decision-making under one roof would be a visible ode to Prime Minister Modi's languishing mantra of co-operative federalism. If I were Ms Sitharaman, I would step, a bit out of line, to hit a six.

The writer is adviser, Observer Research Foundation

LETTERS
PLAYING CHICKEN

India's recent growing ties with Tibet and Taiwan are causing friction with China. China views both regions as part of its territory, and any engagement with them by other countries is seen as a provocation. This is especially true for Tibet, where India's longstanding support for the Dalai Lama and recent high-profile visits by Indian officials have angered it. Additionally, India's warming relations with Taiwan, including a recent agreement on mobility, are seen by China as a potential step towards recognition of Taiwan's independence. India sees its engagements as a way to assert its strategic autonomy.

Amarjeet Kumar
Hazaribagh

'DIVINE' DIRECTION

ALLEGATIONS of corruption in the construction of the much acclaimed Atal Setu were summarily dismissed by the Maharashtra deputy CM Devendra Fadnis who smugly explained that only the approach road to the bridge had developed cracks, and not the bridge itself. But why should even the approach road develop cracks within three months of its inauguration? It is the same story all over the nation. Bridges collapsing regularly, expressways having potholes, bypass tunnels getting flooded in the rain and now it seems the roof of the Ram temple is leaking. Is anybody ever held accountable? The money used for building these comes out of our own pockets.

Anthony Henriques
Mumbai

SACK THESE BABUS!

THE AUTOMATIC train protection system would have prevented the collision between Kanchenjunga Express and the goods train. The system has been installed in less than 1,500km of tracks out of the total 70,000km covered by the Indian Railways since its field trial in 2016. That means this life saving device has so far been placed in only a little over two per cent of railway tracks in eight years! Railway officials said that the reason is high cost and technical challenges. Cost is a factor when it comes to saving lives! But it is not for a glamorous bullet train project.

Sujit De
Kolkata

Anita Anand



Some lessons from Thailand's same-sex marriage law: Social attitudes can change

On June 18, Thailand made history as the first country in Southeast Asia to pass a marriage equality law, recognising same-sex couples. The law, approved by the Senate and earlier by the House of Representatives, and once approved by the King, can come into force three months after it is published in the *Royal Gazette*. This development, the culmination of more than two decades of effort by activists, was supported by an overwhelming majority of legislators in the Upper House. It had passed in the Lower House a few months ago.

The law describes marriage as a partnership between two individuals, instead of between a man and woman, and with this, LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and others) couples will have the same legal rights and recognition as heterosexual couples, including those related to tax relief, inheritance, adoption, and healthcare decision-making. These rights are denied to same-sex couples because they are not married.

My first acquaintance with Thailand's challenges in what was known as "population issues" in the early 1980s was meeting Mechai Viravaidya in Washington DC, at a briefing by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In a room full of population advocates and policymakers, Mechai stood tall. The son of a Scottish mother and a Thai father, he had the best of both genes. He spoke about Thailand's high birth rate, sex tourism, AIDS and poverty and their inter-connectedness.

His analysis was an impressive, with a fresh take on all these issues, and the first time I had heard a person speak so candidly about issues of sex and sexuality. With this background, he started his organisation Population and Development Association (PDA) in the mid-1970s. The meeting ended and as we stepped out of the room, he stood by the door, shaking our hands and pressing a condom into our palms.

Later, in the 1990s, I met Mechai several times in Thailand while I was working on a documentary on reproductive health issues. We shot at various clinics his organisation PDA had helped set up, in collaboration with the government and the corporate sector, including the immensely popular restaurants he'd started called Cabbages and Condoms.

In Asia, Taiwan was the first country to legalise same-sex marriage in 2019, and then Nepal followed in 2023. Ironically, the three countries — all of them being traditional societies — have been able to pass same-sex marriage laws. The Thai and Taiwanese are mostly Buddhist and the Nepalese are Hindus. While nothing in these religious traditions suggests that same-sex partnerships are not right, they don't favour it either. The predominant view is that a marriage is between a man and a woman.

The institution of marriage is primarily for procreation. The idea that two people of the same sex could live together, have sex, and not procreate is an abhorrence to many. But times change, and the LGBTQ+ movements in countries have become

more persistent and strategic. Many of these movements have pitched their issues as human rights and challenged clauses in their constitutions. In Nepal and Taiwan, where same-sex laws have passed, members of the community often face discrimination, prejudice, and even violence. In Southeast Asia, rising religious conservatism and colonial-era laws have made life hard for the LGBTQ+ community, and same-sex relations are criminalised in several countries, including Myanmar and Brunei.

In 2023, India's Supreme Court declined to legally recognise same-sex unions in a landmark ruling, after campaigners had sought to obtain the right to marry under the law. Lessons from countries where same-sex marriage is recognised suggest that persistent campaigns by the LGBTQ+ community and other human rights groups can pay off. While discrimination and violence against the community may continue, it is a question of time as public awareness increases.

In Thailand and other countries, in the media, TV serials and films, more LGBTQ+ people feature than before, and personal stories of people in the community coming out to parents, the extended family, and friends are now commonly portrayed. There is more awareness.

According to a 2015 opinion poll, 89 per cent of Thais said they would accept a colleague who is gay or lesbian, 80 per cent would not mind if a family member was LGBT, and 59 per cent were in favour

of legalising same-sex marriage. Fast forward to 2022, in a poll by the National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), 93 per cent of Thais accepted LGBT friends or colleagues, 91 per cent would accept a LGBT person as a family member, and 80 per cent supported same-sex marriage. In a government survey conducted between October 31 and November 14 in 2023, 96.6 per cent of the Thai public supported the same-sex marriage bill.

This acceptance by Thai society suggests that people, over time, can change their minds and lean towards accepting new social norms. The area of family is particularly difficult as it implies sex and heterosexual sex, between a man and a woman. The idea that two people, of the same sex, or sexual orientation along the spectrum want to call themselves a "family" is difficult for most people to accept. But living our lives by societal prescription and heterosexual norms leads to mental health problems, unhappiness, and even suicide.

However, definitions of family are changing; divorce rates are higher, more people want to be single, and many people don't want children. There are different permutations and combinations of families and care is not a matter of opposite sexes or bloodlines.

In matters of the heart, we cannot choose who we fall in love with or desire.

The writer is a development and communications consultant

SHORT TAKES

NEPAL CONVICTS 'BUDDHA BOY' OF CHILD SEX ABUSE

Kathmandu, June 25: A Nepali man whose followers believe him to be a reincarnation of Buddha has been convicted of child sexual abuse, a court official said on Tuesday. Ram Bahadur Bomjan, known as "Buddha Boy" by his devotees, became famous as a teenager after followers said he could meditate motionless for months without water, food or sleep. "The district court on Monday found Bomjan guilty of child sex abuse," said Sikandar Kaapar, information officer at the court in Nepal's southern town of Sarlahi.

DENMARK FIRST TO IMPOSE CO₂ TAX ON FARMS

Copenhagen, June 25: Denmark, a major pork and dairy exporter, will introduce a tax on livestock carbon dioxide emissions from 2030, making it the first country to do so and hoping to inspire others to follow, the government said.

A tax was first proposed in February by government-commissioned experts to help Denmark reach a legally binding 2030 target of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 70% from 1990 levels. The government reached a wide-ranging compromise with farmers, industry, labour unions and environmental groups.

FINLAND TO BEGIN BIRD FLU VAX FOR HUMANS, A FIRST

Helsinki, June 25: Finland plans to offer preemptive bird flu vaccination as soon as next week to some workers with exposure to animals, health authorities said on Tuesday, making it the first country in the world to do so.

The Nordic country has bought vaccines for 10,000 people, each consisting of two injections, as part of a joint EU procurement of up to 40 million doses for 15 nations from manufacturer CSL Seqirus CSL.AX.

The Australian company in a statement to Reuters said Finland would be the first country to roll out the vaccine.

KNIFE ATTACK AT SCHOOL BUS STOP IN CHINA: 3 HURT

Beijing, June 25: A suspect has been detained in China after a knife attack at a school bus stop in Suzhou that injured three people, including a Japanese woman and her child, a Japanese Embassy spokesperson confirmed on Tuesday.

A man stabbed the woman and her child at a bus stop for a Japanese school, and then seriously injured a Chinese woman on the bus who tried to block him when he tried to get on, the spokesperson said. Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said the man was arrested at the scene after the Monday afternoon attack.

JUDGE PARTIALLY LIFTS TRUMP HUSH MONEY GAG ORDER

New York, June 25: A New York judge partially lifted a gag order on Donald Trump on Tuesday following the Republican presidential candidate's conviction on criminal charges stemming from an effort to influence the 2016 election by buying a porn star, Stormy Daniels, silence for \$1,300,000.

The revised order now allows Trump to speak publicly about witnesses in the case and removes a prohibition on his commenting about the jury, but keeps in place restrictions on his statements about individual prosecutors and others involved in the case.

W.H.O., SCIENTISTS WARN ON MPOX STRAIN IN CONGO

London, June 25: The spread of mpox in Africa needs to be addressed urgently, the World Health Organisation said on Tuesday, as scientists warned separately of the dangers of a new strain spreading in Democratic Republic of Congo. "There is a critical need to address the recent surge in mpox cases in Africa," said Rosamund Lewis, the WHO's technical lead for mpox.

John Claude Udahekuma of the University of Rwanda said the strain's fatality rates were around 5% in adults and 10% in children.

ICC issues arrest warrants for Russia Army chief, ex-minister

Court accuses Gerasimov, Shoigu of war crimes for targeting civilians

The Hague, Moscow, June 25: The International Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for Sergei Shoigu, the former Russian defence minister, and leading Russian general Valery Gerasimov on Tuesday for alleged crimes committed during Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Russia's Security Council said on Tuesday that the arrest warrant for Shoigu was legally meaningless and part of a hybrid war against Moscow, state news agency TASS said.

It brought to eight the number of arrest warrants issued against senior Russian suspects since Moscow sent troops into Ukraine in February 2022. They include Russian President Vladimir Putin, who faces charges over the deportation of Ukrainian children to Russia.

The court's move was welcomed by Kyiv.

The Hague-based court said Shoigu and Gerasimov were suspected of having committed war crimes and crimes against humanity for directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects in Ukraine. Judges had found there were "reasonable grounds to believe that the two suspects bear respon-

RETALIATORY STEP: RUSSIA BANS EU NEWS OUTLETS

Russia said on Tuesday it was banning access inside Russia to the broadcasts of 81 different media outlets from the European Union including AFP and Politico in retaliation for a similar EU ban on several Russian media outlets. The EU said in May it was suspending the distribution of what it described as four "Kremlin-linked propaganda networks," stripping them of their broadcasting rights in the bloc.

European banks leaving Russia would damage both Western and Russian companies, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Tuesday, pointing to the many Western businesses that still operate and use banking services in Russia.



File photo of Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu (R) speaking to Chief of General Staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov before a meeting of President Vladimir Putin with the top military brass in Moscow, on Dec. 19, 2023. — AP

US journalist Evan Gershkovich will stand trial for espionage in Russia on Wednesday in a court whose proceedings are classified as a state secret. No reporters, friends, family members or US embassy staff will be allowed into the courtroom in the city of Yekaterinburg where Gershkovich, 32, faces up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

Russia, which is not a member of the ICC, has repeatedly said Ukraine's energy infrastructure is a legitimate military target and it denies targeting civilians or civilian infrastructure. Ukraine is also not a member, but has granted the ICC jurisdiction to prosecute crimes committed on its territory since November 2013. — Reuters

5 killed in Kenya Parliament breach

Nairobi, June 25: Five people were shot dead and dozens wounded in Kenya on Tuesday in mounting anti-tax hike protests, NGOs said, as police clashed with demonstrators who stormed the Parliament compound in Nairobi.

Police fired tear gas, water cannon, rubber bullets and, according to a rights group, live ammunition against protesters, as tensions sharply escalated in protests that have caught the government off guard.

"Despite the assurance by the government that the right to assembly would be protected and facilitated, today's protests have spiralled into violence," said a joint statement from several NGOs, including Amnesty Kenya, which reported the dead and wounded.

The White House appealed for calm and more than 10 Western nations

voiced their deep concern over the violence. The mainly Gen-Z-led rallies have galvanised outrage over proposed tax hikes and simmering anger over a cost-of-living crisis. "This is the voice of the young people of Kenya," said Elizabeth Nyaberi, 26, a lawyer.

"Although they are tear gassing us, but we don't care. We are here to speak for our generations and the generations to come," she added. — AFP

OBAMA HALF-SIS. HIT WITH TEAR GAS

Washington, June 25: Kenyan activist Auma Obama, the half-sister of US ex-president Barack Obama, was among protesters tear-gassed on Tuesday during demonstrations outside the Parliament building. — Reuters

US gun violence health crisis: SG

Washington, June 25: The US Surgeon General declared gun violence in the country a public health crisis on Tuesday, calling on Americans to act to prevent rising firearm-related deaths and its cascading effects, particularly on Black Americans and other communities.

In the first-ever public health advisory on gun violence, Surgeon General Vivek Murthy outlined what he called devastating and far-reaching consequences on the public's well-being and called for more research funding, better mental health access and other steps such as secure storage to reduce harm.

"Firearm violence is an urgent public health crisis that has led to loss of life, unimaginable pain, and profound grief for far too many Americans," Murthy said the impact of gun violence spreads far beyond the staggering number — 50,000 a year — of lives lost. It impacts people who have either been shot and those that survived it, who have lost family members or who are reading about it in the news, he added.

The surgeon general also said declaring gun violence a public health issue prioritises the problem. — Reuters

to voiced their deep concern over the violence.

The mainly Gen-Z-led rallies have galvanised outrage over proposed tax hikes and simmering anger over a cost-of-living crisis. "This is the voice of the young people of Kenya," said Elizabeth Nyaberi, 26, a lawyer.

— AFP



Israeli police carry away a protester as they disperse ultra-Orthodox Jews blocking a highway while staging a protest over laws on the military draft. — AFP

Ultra-Orthodox must serve in Army: Israel SC

Jerusalem, June 25: Israel's Supreme Court ruled on Tuesday that the state must begin drafting ultra-Orthodox Jewish seminary students into the military, a decree which creates new political strains for embattled Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Netanyahu's coalition government relies on two ultra-Orthodox parties that regard conscription exemptions as key to keeping their constituents in religious seminaries and out of a melting-pot military that might test their conservative customs.

Leaders of those parties said they were disappointed with the ruling but issued no immediate threat to the government.

However, the prospect of the military, backed by defence minister Yoav Gallant, starting to draft seminary students could widen cracks in Netanyahu's increasingly brittle coalition.

The ultra-Orthodox conscription waiver has become increasingly cha-

Airstrikes by Israel kill 24 in Gaza City

Cairo, June 25: Israeli forces killed at least 24 Palestinians in three separate airstrikes on Gaza City early on Tuesday and the dead included a sister of Ismail Haniyeh, the chief of militant Islamist group Hamas, and medics said.

Israeli tanks also pressed deeper overnight into western areas of Rafah in the enclave's south, blowing up homes, residents said. Two of the Israeli

airstrikes hit two schools in Gaza City, killing at least 14 people, medics said. Another strike on a house in the Shati (Beach) camp, one of the Gaza Strip's eight historic refugee camps, killed 10 others.

The house in Shati belonged to the extended family of Hamas political chief Haniyeh, based in Qatar. One of his sisters was killed along with other relatives, family members and medics said. — Reuters

reged in Israel as its armed forces are overstretched by a multi-front war with Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

"At the height of a difficult war, the burden of inequality is more than ever acute," the court's unanimous ruling said. Israelis are bound by law

to serve in the military from the age of 18, for three years for men and two years for women.

Members of Israel's 21 per cent Arab minority are exempt, though some do serve, and ultra-Orthodox Jewish seminary students were largely exempt for decades. — Reuters



WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange looking out of the window as his plane from London approaches Bangkok for a layover. — AFP

Assange to be 'free man' after plea deal by US

Sydney, Washington, June 25: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is due to plead guilty on Wednesday to violating US espionage law, in a deal that will set him free after a 14-year British legal odyssey and allow his return home to Australia.

Assange, 52, has agreed to plead guilty to a single criminal count of conspiring to obtain and disclose classified US national defence documents, according to filings in the US District Court for the Northern Mariana Islands.

The deal marks the end of a legal saga that has seen Assange spend more than five years in a British high-security jail and seven holed up in the Ecuadorian embassy in London as he fought accusations of sex crimes in Sweden and battled extradition to the US, where he faced 18 criminal charges.

The US government viewed him as a reckless villain who had endangered the lives of agents through WikiLeaks' mass release of secret US documents — the largest security breaches of their kind in US military history.

But to free press advocates and his supporters, which includes world leaders, celebrities and some prominent journalists, he is a hero for exposing wrongdoing and alleged war crimes, and was persecuted for embarrassing US authorities.

On Wednesday, Assange is due to be sentenced to 62 months of time already served at a hearing in

ASSANGE PLANE TAKES OFF FROM BANGKOK: SCRIBE

Bangkok, June 25: A plane carrying Julian Assange left Bangkok on Tuesday to fly the WikiLeaks founder to a court hearing in a US territory in the Pacific as part of a plea deal. It departed Bangkok around 14.25 GMT to take him to the North Mariana Islands, where he is expected to plead guilty to a single count of conspiracy to obtain and disseminate national defence info and then be freed to go to his native Australia. — AFP

I'm just elated. Frankly, it's just incredible. We weren't really sure until the last 24 hours that it was actually happening."

— STELLA ASSANGE
Julian Assange's wife

Saipan in the Northern Mariana Islands, at 2300 GMT (Tuesday).

The US territory in the Pacific was chosen due to Assange's opposition to travelling to the mainland US and for its proximity to Australia. Australian-born Assange left Belmarsh maximum security jail in the early hours of Monday, before being bailed by the London High Court and later boarding a flight, his wife, Stella Assange said. — Reuters

Trudeau's party loses key bypoll

Ottawa, June 25: In a stunning blow to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, his Liberal Party lost a closely-watched federal by-election on Tuesday to the Conservatives from a longtime Liberal stronghold, prompting opposition leader Pierre Poilievre to demand a snap election.

In a nail-biting finish, Conservative candidate Don Stewart won the Liberal stronghold of Toronto-St. Paul's by defeating Liberal Party's Leslie Churchill by 590 votes. The contest also featured Amrit Parhar, an Indian-origin candidate from the New Democratic Party.

Toronto-St. Paul's is a federal electoral district in Toronto, Ontario province. The Liberal Party had held Toronto-St. Paul's since 1993. It is one of 338 seats in the House of Commons. Stewart's victory over Churchill is shocking because the seat has been held by the Liberals for more than 30 years.

GAMBLING PROBE: CANDIDATES LOSE TORIES' SUPPORT

London, June 25: Britain's Conservative Party said on Tuesday it had withdrawn support from two parliamentary candidates who are being probed over alleged bets placed on the timing of next month's national poll.

The scandal, a blow to PM Rishi Sunak in the run up to a July 4 vote his Conservatives are forecast to lose, has also emboldened the party's campaign director and a London police officer. — Reuters

It was held by the Liberals for 10 successive elections. Former MP Carolyn Bennett whose appointment as ambassador to Denmark triggered the by-election had been the local representative for over 25 years. — PTI

India in August 2023 became first country to land near the little-explored South Pole area
China probe brings back Moon's far side samples

Beijing, June 25: China's Chang'e-6 lunar probe module returned to Earth on Tuesday, completing its historic mission to collect the first-ever samples from the Moon's unexplored far side, in a major step forward for the country's ambitious space programme.

The return capsule landed precisely in the designated area in Siziwang Banner, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 2.07 pm (Beijing Time), operating normally, and "the mission is a complete success," China National Space Administration (CNSA) announced.

China's President Xi Jinping extended congratulations on the complete success of the Chang'e-6 mission, said state-run Xinhua news agency.

China's probe was the first to reach and collect samples from the far side of the moon.

The development came after India in August 2023 became the first country to land near the little-explored lunar South Pole region when its Chandrayaan-3's lander, carrying the

THE CHANG'E-6 probe is expected to have returned to Earth with up to 2 kilograms of moon dust and rocks from the lunar far side, which will be analysed by Chinese researchers before being opened for access by international scientists.

Pragyaan rover, successfully landed there.

China is the only country to have landed on the far side of the Moon, having done so before in 1959. The

far side — which faces away from Earth — is technically challenging to reach due to its distance, giant craters and few flat surfaces. The reentry module will be airlifted to Beijing for opening, and the lunar samples will be transferred to a team of scientists for subsequent storage, analysis and study, said the CNSA.

The Chang'e-6 probe is expected to have returned to Earth with up to 2 kilograms of moon dust and rocks from the lunar far side, which will be ana-

lysed by Chinese researchers before being opened for access by international scientists, according to the CNSA. The Chang'e lunar exploration probe is named after the Chinese mythical moon goddess.

Consisting of an orbiter, a returner, a lander and an ascender, Chang'e-6 was launched on May 3 this year. Supported by the Queqiao-2 relay satellite, it landed at the designated landing area in the South Pole-Aitken Basin on the far side of the moon on June 2. — PTI



Officials prepare to recover the landing module of the Chang'e-6 moon probe after it landed in Inner Mongolia, in northern China, on Tuesday. — AFP

quick
BITES

INDICATORS	%
Sensex	78,053.52 0.92
Nifty 50	23721.30 0.78
S&P 500*	5,462.16 0.26
Dollar (₹)	83.43 0.05
Pound Sterling (₹)	105.88 -0.13
Euro (₹)	89.48 0.021
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	71,625.166 0.23
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	85.70 -0.36
IN 10-Yr bond yield	6.986 0.015
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.221 -0.028

* As of 8:30 PM IST

Sid's Farm raises \$10 million to expand business

Dairy start-up Sid's Farm on Tuesday said it has raised \$10 million (about ₹33 cr) from investors to expand its business. The funding round was co-led by Omnivore and Narotam Sekhsaria Family Office. "Sid's Farm plans to use the funds to establish a strong presence in Hyderabad and Bengaluru by enhancing manufacturing capabilities to meet the demand for high-quality dairy products," the company said.



Silveline Power signs agreement for new tech

Silveline Power has signed a licensing agreement worth \$135 million with SRAM & MRAM Group for hydrogen fuel-based EV technology. The group is developing technologies for the electric vehicle (EV) ecosystem, along with ancillary supplies ecosystem to enable the complete supply chain necessary for EVs manufacturing under a technology licensing for \$135 million to be amortised over a period of five years, Silveline Power said.

Kalpataru gets orders worth ₹2,333 crore

Kalpataru Projects International Ltd (KPIL) on Tuesday said it has secured orders worth ₹2,333 crore with its joint ventures and international subsidiaries. The company said its new orders include transmission and distribution business in India and overseas markets, an engineering procurement construction order for an industrial plant in the metal industry and a residential building order in India.

Indian Hotels signs property in Kanpur

Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL) on Tuesday said it has signed a new property at Kanpur in Uttar Pradesh. The Taj branded hotel is a green-field project with 150 rooms. It will feature all-day dining, a bar, two specialty restaurants and over 10,000 sq ft of banqueting space, among others, the company said in a statement. With the addition of this hotel, IHCL will have 26 hotels Uttar Pradesh under, it added.

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Rally in bank, IT stocks takes Sensex to 78,000

Market gets booster from news about fiscal consolidation

RAVI RANJAN PRASAD
MUMBAI, JUNE 25

The Sensex crossed 78,000 mark for the first time and closed above the new milestone at 78,053 led by a rally by bank and IT stocks.

The Sensex after touching a new high of 78,164.71 closed at 78,053.52 up 712.44 points or 0.92 per cent. The Nifty-50 too touched a fresh high of 23,754.15 and closed at 23,721.30 up 183.45 points or 0.78 per cent.

Foreign portfolio investors were net buyers of equities worth ₹1,175.91 crore while domestic institutions were net sellers by ₹149.45 crore.

The top gainers included Reliance Industries (0.88 per cent), HDFC Bank (2.32 per cent), ICICI Bank (2.48 per cent), Larsen & Toubro (1.56 per cent), SBI (1.10 per cent).

"The domestic market

WEALTH CREATION	
SENSEX HITS	DATE
78,000	June 25, 2024
77,000	June 10, 2024
76,000	May 27, 2024
75,000	April 09, 2024
74,000	Mar. 06, 2024
73,000	Jan. 15, 2024
72,000	Dec. 27, 2023
71,000	Dec. 15, 2023
70,000	Dec. 11, 2023

experienced a financial sector-driven rally on Tuesday, primarily led by private banks, with the Nifty Bank reaching a new high (52,746) and the Sensex surpassing 78,000. However, profit booking was evident in sectors such as realty, power, metals, and midcaps. Amidst moderate consolidations and sector rotations, the

market is moving upwards due to expectations from the upcoming budget," said Vinod Nair, head - Research, Geojit Financial Services.

"Banking counters-led rally propelled the index to breach its narrow range bound movement to end the trade at a fresh high of 23,721.3 with gains of 183.45 points. Apart from

banks, the IT sector performed well while realty and metal were the major laggards. Major buying was seen in index stocks," said Aditya Gagar, director of Progressive Shares.

Market got a booster from fiscal consolidation news flow. The current account deficit reduced to 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product in FY24 from 2 per cent in FY23 and recorded a surplus of 0.6 per cent of the GDP in Q4 due to higher service exports.

"Even in the upcoming budget, the focus will remain on fiscal consolidation along with growth-oriented measures aimed at addressing rural stress. Hence, we expect the market to maintain its positive momentum as we draw nearer to the event," said Sidhartha Khemka, head - Retail Research, Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Govt's market borrowings to come down

SANGEETHA G
CHENNAI, JUNE 25

The Centre will be able to bring fiscal deficit further down to 4.9 per cent in FY25 full budget from 5.1 per cent proposed in the interim budget and the market borrowings are expected to decline, finds India Ratings (Ind-Ra).

Even the revenue deficit to GDP ratio in the full budget is expected to decline to 1.7 per cent from 2

per cent proposed in the interim budget, it said.

As a result, the Centre's gross market borrowings are expected to decline to ₹13.58 trillion in the FY25 full budget from ₹14.13 trillion in interim budget.

Similarly, net market borrowings are expected to come down to ₹11.2 trillion from ₹11.75 trillion.

As the fiscal deficit and the borrowing numbers appear achievable, Ind-Ra expects the FY25 full bud-

● **THE CENTRE'S** gross market borrowings are expected to decline to ₹13.58 trillion in the FY25 full budget from ₹14.13 trillion in interim budget.

et to have a favourable impact on the interest rate.

"In view of the lower market borrowings and India's inclusion in JP Morgan's government

bond index-emerging markets, the 10-year G-sec yields are expected to decline to 6.8 per cent mark at end-FY25. This will not only help the government to borrow at lower costs, but also lower the capital market borrowing cost for corporates, banks and other financial institutions," said Sunil Kumar Sinha, senior director and principal economist, India Ratings.

energy secretary Bhupinder Singh Bhalla said.

This will allow the government to widen import restrictions aimed at boosting local adoption of solar power hardware and increasing self-sufficiency in the sector. In a bid to wean itself off Chinese imports, India has levied taxes on some solar components and introduced a so-called approved list of

impacting societies and economies within 3-5 years, also included integrated sensing and communication, immersive technology for the built world and genomics for transplants.

"Organisations make better choices when they understand the factors shaping the future. The report identifies technologies poised to significantly influence societies and economies," WEF managing director and head of the Centre for the fourth industrial revolution Jeremy Jurgens said.

"It also spotlights technologies with immense potential for revolutionising connectivity, addressing the urgent challenges of climate change and driving innovation across various fields," he added.

The report produced in collaboration with Frontiers, were identified through a selection process involving over 300 academics and experts.

The WEF said while artificial intelligence (AI) has been used in research for many years, advances in deep learning, generative AI and foundation models are revolutionising the scientific discovery process.

Agarwal noted that the demand for residential segment has been very strong post-Covid, while the leasing activities in the office market are also back on track.

— PTI

FMCG sector to see 7-9% growth

New Delhi, June 25: The FMCG sector is expected to have a sustained growth rate of 7-9 per cent in 2024, supported by government initiatives to stimulate consumption and create job opportunities, a report said.

The FMCG sector's resilience and adaptability, coupled with robust government support and digital transformation initiatives, position it favourably to navigate through uncertainties and emerge stronger.

"Looking ahead, the FMCG sector in India is poised for sustained growth, with forecasts indicating a 7 to 9 per cent expansion in 2024," a report from ICICI Lombard General Insurance said.

However, the sector faces challenges such as "inflationary pressures, subdued consumer confidence, and prevailing unemployment rates."

Now, the FMCG industry has a "burgeoning economic footprint", which exceeds ₹9.1 lakh crore and has a "pivotal role" in driving India's economic growth and employment generation, it added.

Moreover, the online sales channel for FMCG is also increasing and has



been valued at ₹1.7 lakh crore. Segments such as D2C reflect a "rapid digital transformation and evolving consumer purchase behaviour".

"Such digitalisation trends underscored the industry's adaptability to changing market dynamics and its proactive approach towards catering to digitally savvy consumers," the corporate India risk index 2023 report said.

The FMCG industry was struggling after the pandemic and the rural sector was having the successive de-growth for some quarters.

However, the industry navigated through showcasing resilience and adaptability amidst evolving consumer trends and witnessed a notable upswing in volume and value growth in the second half of 2023.

— PTI

Domestic solar cell-making capacity to increase

New Delhi, June 25: India expects a surge in domestic solar cell-making capacity in the coming months, which will help reduce its dependence on imported materials from China to manufacture solar panels, a renewable energy official said.

The country's cell capacity is set to jump five-fold to about 30 GW a year by March 2025, renewable

models and manufacturers, a non-tariff trade barrier that's meant to get foreign shipments out.

The domestic module output has already picked up due to existing import curbs, manufacturers still rely on China for other back-end products that go into making solar panels.

Cells, another component, will be the next item to be restricted, though

the government will be more cautious, he said.

"We plan to give the industry around two years time to prepare so that we have ample domestic capacity," Bhalla said.

It had to temporarily withdraw non-tariff import restriction on modules last year after industry complained that tightening supplies were disrupting projects.

— Bloomberg

WEF lists top emerging tech trends

New Delhi, June 25: Privacy-enhancing technologies, elastocalorics as sustainable cooling solutions and livestock feed sources from single-cell proteins were listed among the top 10 emerging technologies for addressing global challenges.

AI-powered scientific discovery, carbon-capturing microbes, reconfigurable intelligent surfaces and high-altitude platform stations were also featured in the annual list published by the world economic forum (WEF).

The WEF said these top 10 emerging technologies focus on applications in health, communication, infrastructure and sustainability.

The annual list, which identifies breakthroughs

ing director and head of the Centre for the fourth industrial revolution Jeremy Jurgens said.

"It also spotlights technologies with immense potential for revolutionising connectivity, addressing the urgent challenges of climate change and driving innovation across various fields," he added.

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The WEF said while artificial intelligence (AI) has been used in research for many years, advances in deep learning, generative AI and foundation models are revolutionising the scientific discovery process.

Agarwal noted that the demand for residential segment has been very strong post-Covid, while the leasing activities in the office market are also back on track.

— PTI

NEW PATHS

iPhone maker focuses on deals to use ChatGPT, Gemini in its products

Apple rejects Meta AI overtures

Cupertino (US), June 25: Apple rejected overtures by Meta Platforms to integrate the social networking company's AI chatbot into the iPhone months ago, according to people with knowledge of matter.

The two companies aren't in discussions about using Meta's Llama chatbot in an AI partnership and only held brief talks in March, said the people.

The dialogue about a partnership didn't reach any formal stage, and Apple has no active plans to integrate Llama.

The preliminary talks occurred around the time Apple started hashing out deals to use OpenAI's ChatGPT and Alphabet's



● **THE COMPANY** not to move forward with formal Meta discussions in part because it doesn't see that company's privacy practices as stringent enough.

Gemini in its products. The iPhone maker announced the ChatGPT agreement earlier this month and said it was expecting to offer Gemini in the future.

The company decided not to move forward with formal Meta discussions in part because it doesn't

see that company's privacy practices as stringent enough, according to the people.

Apple has spent years criticising Meta's technology, and integrating Llama into the iPhone would have been a stark about-face.

Apple also sees ChatGPT

as a superior offering. Google, meanwhile, is already a partner for search in Apple's Safari web browser, so a future Gemini deal would build on that relationship.

The Wall Street Journal reported that the two companies were in talks about an AI partnership.

Apple unveiled a suite of artificial intelligence features at its Worldwide Developers Conference on June 10.

The new technology - called Apple Intelligence - includes homegrown tools for summarising notifications, transcribing voice memos and generating custom emoji.

But Apple's chatbot tech-

nology isn't as advanced as that of rivals, prompting it to seek out partners.

The company also believes that customers will want the ability to switch between different chatbots depending on their needs, similar to how they might hop between Google and Microsoft's Bing for searches.

Apple continues to talk to AI start-up Anthropic about eventually adding that company's chatbot as an option, the people said.

Apple Intelligence will begin rolling out later this year as part of operating systems for the iPhone, iPad and Mac.

— Bloomberg

5G auction starts, Centre hopes to rake in ₹96,317 cr

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO
NEW DELHI, JUNE 25

The government on Tuesday received bids for ₹11,000 crore worth on the first day of the spectrum auction in five rounds of bidding from major telecom players. The government had put over 10,500 Mhz spectrum valued at ₹96,238 crore on the block.

The auction will continue further on Wednesday as well. "The telecom operators have shown interest in 900 MHz, 1,800 MHz, 2,100 MHz and 2,500 MHz bands initially till the auction entered the fourth bidding rounds. We expect the participating telcos will continue their spirit for the tomorrow bidding as well," the sources said.

On day one of spectrum auction, issued by the department of telecom (DoT), biddings took place mainly in the 900 and 1800 Mhz bands. "Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea are participating in the auction. Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of ₹3,000 crore for the spectrum auction among the three telcos.

MHz valued at ₹96,238 cr. "Certain that the auction will play a crucial role in facilitating affordable and quality telecom services for all and boosting innovation across India," he said in a post on X.

It is the 10th spectrum auction since the process for sale of radio waves started through an online bidding process in 2010. The last spectrum auction was held in August 2022, which, for the first time, included radio waves for 5G services.

In the mega auction, the 3,300 Mhz band and 26 Mhz band are seen as suitable bands for 5G services. However, telecom industry body cellular operators' association of India director general SP Kochhar also said the 5G auctions will catalyze the rapid rollout of 5G services across the country, leading to enhanced coverage and vastly improved connectivity.

Earlier in the day, telecom minister Jyotiraditya Scindia also said that the government started a spectrum auction for a total quantum of 10,522.35

— PTI



● **RELIANCE JIO**, Bharti Airtel and Vodafone Idea are participating in the auction. Reliance Jio has deposited the highest earnest money of ₹3,000 crore for the spectrum auction among the three telcos.

— PTI

CRICKET



SHORT SINGLES

Gulbadin's cramp sparks controversy

Gulbadin Naib dramatically falling on his back, clutching his thigh after Afghanistan coach Jonathan Trott signalled his players to slow things down in the T20 World Cup match against Bangladesh caused both amusement and annoyance as former players questioned the genuineness of his discomfort. Naib, who was fielding in the slip cordon, complained of cramps during the 12th over bowled by spinner Noor Ahmad, after Trott was seen on camera asking his players to slow down as Bangladesh had fallen behind on the Duckworth-Lewis par score in the rain-hit Super 8 clash.

"The coach sends a message out to say slow it down, slow it down and the first slip just dives on the ground needlessly. That is unacceptable. Gone off anyway, I get that might have gone off anyway for the rain," said Simon Doull while commentating.

Zimbabwean commentator Pommie Mbangwa quipped: "Oscar, Emmy?"

Warner makes low-key exit

Australia batting great David Warner's 15-year-long international career, dotted with glorious achievements and controversies in equal measure, has come to an anti-climactic end after Afghanistan beat Bangladesh, eliminating the former champions from the T20 World Cup at the Super Eight phase. Australia, the 2021 champions, finished at third place in the Super 8s Group 1 table with just two points — from the win against Bangladesh. They had suffered a shocking loss to Afghanistan and a humbling defeat to India.

The 37-year-old Warner, who made his international debut in January 2009 in a T20I match, thus made a low-key exit from international cricket with Australia's 24-run loss to India on June 24 at Gros Islet being his last match.

There was no guard of honour or standing ovation, befitting one of Australia's all-time great batters. He made six runs off six balls in the match, edging Arshdeep Singh as Suryakumar Yadav took a low catch. He walked off the pitch with his head down, not knowing whether that was his last game.

Co-inventor of DLS method dies

English statistician and one of the inventors of the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern (DLS) method, Frank Duckworth died at the age of 84, according to a report. Duckworth passed away on June 21, according to a report in ESPNcricinfo.com.

The Duckworth-Lewis method, devised by Duckworth and fellow statistician Tony Lewis, was introduced to determine results in rain-affected cricket matches.

The method was first used in international cricket in 1997.

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AFGUNS & ROSES

Afghanistan make first-ever semis, Australia out

Kingstown, June 25: The redoubtable Rashid Khan led the way as Afghanistan qualified for their maiden T20 World Cup semifinal with an eight-run win over Bangladesh in a rain-hit Super 8 match here, adding a golden chapter to their cricketing history that has survived war, political ostracization and lack of even a base at home.

In the process, Rashid's maverick team knocked out 2021 champions Australia after having humbled them in their previous Super 8 match. The Afghans will now face South Africa in the last-four stage on June 27.

Opting to bat after winning the toss, Afghanistan's batting stumbled to a below-par 115/5 as Bangladesh bowlers made the most of a tricky pitch, bowling as many as 66 dot balls.

The match was eventually truncated to 19-overs-a-side due to frequent rain interruptions and Bangladesh was given a revised target on 114.

Leg-Spinner Rishad Hossain, 3/26, led the charge while for Afghanistan, opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz hitting a painstaking 43 off 55 balls.

However, Afghanistan showed just why and how they have managed to come this far in international cricket since becoming a full ICC member only in 2017, producing a gritty bowling performance, spearheaded by Rashid (4/23) and pacer Naveen-ul-Haq (4/26).

Their heroics ensured a successful and historic defence of the low score as Bangladesh were bowled out for 105 in 17.5 overs. Litton Das (54 not out) was the lone warrior for Bangladesh in the game that also featured some questionable delaying tactics by the Afghans when they were ahead on DLS par score.

The Afghans' job was made easy by India, who handed Australia a 24-run defeat last night.

It wouldn't be wrong to say that the Australians have been sent packing from the tournament by India and a team that considers India its home base for the lack of amenities in its strife-ravaged country.

Afghanistan have relied on their opening pair with the bat and bowl to set up their victories and the script was no different on Tuesday.

While Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran forged a crucial 59-run stand with the bat, Fazalhaq Farooqi and Naveen picked up wickets upfront.



Afghanistan captain Rashid Khan (right) is congratulated by teammate Mohammad Ishaq after dismissing Bangladesh batter Rishad Hossain during the Super 8 match at Arnos Vale Ground in Kingstown on Monday. — AP

Afghanistan's run to semi is an inspiration: Rashid

Kingstown, June 25: Skipper Rashid Khan believes that Afghanistan's maiden T20 World Cup semifinal qualification, following spectacular wins over New Zealand and Australia along the way, is a momentous feat that will inspire the youth of the strife-torn nation. Afghanistan, who became a full ICC member only in 2017, scripted history by qualifying for their maiden T20 World Cup semifinal with a win over Bangladesh here.

"I think the semifinal is going to be a massive, massive like inspiration for the youngsters back home in Afghanistan. That Afghanistan team get into the semis for the first time," Rashid said at the post match press conference.

"And we have done it under 19 level, but this level we haven't done that. Even Super Eight was first time for us and then in semis," he added. Moments after the win,

SCOREBOARD

Afghanistan: Rahmanullah Gurbaz c Soumya Sarkar b Rishad Hossain 43, Ibrahim Zadran c Tanzim Hasan Sakib b Rishad Hossain 18, Azmatullah Omarzai c Litton Das b Mustafizur 10, Gulbadin Naib c Soumya Sarkar b Rishad Hossain 4, Mohammad Nabi c Shanto b Taskin Ahmed 1, Karim Janat not out 7, Rashid Khan not out 19. Extras (b-5, w-8) 13. **Total (for five wickets in 20 Overs) 115.**
Fall of wickets: 1-59, 2-84, 3-88, 4-89, 5-93.
Bowler: Tanzim Hasan Sakib 4-0-36-0, Taskin Ahmed 4-1-12-1, Shakib Al Hasan 4-0-19-0, Mustafizur Rahman 4-0-17-1, Rishad Hossain 4-0-26-3.
Bangladesh: Litton Das not out 54, Tanzid Hasan lbw b Fazalhaq Farooqi 0, Najmul Hossain Shanto c Nabi b Naveen-ul-Haq 5, Shakib Al Hasan c and b Naveen-ul-Haq 0, Soumya Sarkar b Rashid Khan 10, Towhid Hridoy c Ibrahim Zadran b Rashid Khan 14, Mahmudullah c (sub) Mohammad Ishaq b Rashid Khan 6, Rishad Hossain b Rashid Khan 0, Tanzim Hasan Sakib c Nabi b Gulbadin 3, Taskin Ahmed b Naveen-ul-Haq 2, Mustafizur Rahman lbw b Naveen-ul-Haq 0. Extras (b-1, lb-7, w-3) 11. **Total (all out in 17.5 overs) 105.**
Fall of wickets: 1-16, 2-23, 3-23, 4-48, 5-64, 6-80, 7-80, 8-92, 9-105.
Bowler: Naveen-ul-Haq 3.5-0-26-4, Fazalhaq Farooqi 2-0-15-1, Mohammad Nabi 2-0-15-0, Rashid Khan 4-0-23-4, Noor Ahmad 4-0-13-0, Gulbadin Naib 2-0-5-1. (D/L method)

visuals of jubilant fans back home celebrating Afghanistan's historic achievement started doing the rounds on social media. "The cricket we have played in the whole tournament so far — I think we deserve to be in the semis. The way everyone took the responsibility of getting into the game and performing best for the team," said Rashid. — PTI

AF HAIL LARA INSPIRATION IN WC SUCCESS

Kingstown, June 25: West Indian batting great Brian Lara had predicted Afghanistan would reach the T20 World Cup semifinals nearly a month before the tournament began and now that the giant-slayers have made it, skipper Rashid Khan said he is immensely proud to have proved the legend right.

"The only guy who put us in the semifinals was Brian Lara and we proved him right. When we met him at a welcome party, I told him we won't let you down," Rashid said at the post-match presentation.

"I think when you get the kind of great, great statements from a legend, as a team, I think it gives you lots of energy as well. We are capable," he added.

Lara, in an interaction last month, had predicted that Afghanistan would be among the semifinalists in the mega-event. — PTI

SUPER EIGHT

GROUP 1						
TEAMS	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
INDIA	3	3	0	0	6	+2.017
AFGHANISTAN	3	2	1	0	4	-0.305
AUSTRALIA	3	1	2	0	2	-0.331
BANGLADESH	3	0	3	0	0	-1.709

GROUP 2						
TEAMS	P	W	L	N/R	Pts	NRR
S. AFRICA	3	3	0	0	6	+0.599
ENGLAND	3	2	1	0	4	+1.992
WEST INDIES	3	1	2	0	2	+0.963
USA	3	0	3	0	0	-3.906

Wind dance for swinging Arsh

MOSES KONDETY
GROS ISLET (ST LUCIA),
JUNE 25

India avenged their loss in last year's ODI World Cup final by beating Australia in a crucial Super Eight match that eventually ended the Aussies' T20 World Cup campaign. In the semifinal, they are lining up England, who had sent them out at the same stage in the previous edition of the Cup in Australia.

Arshdeep Singh is understandably pleased but is keeping his feet on the ground. "Right now we are not expecting anything out of that game, just trying to enjoy this moment. It's a long travel day to Guyana. Once we reach that country, we'll see the conditions there and plan how we can do our best," he said after the match against Australia.

The left-arm pacer did well against the Aussies, taking three wickets while conceding 37 runs to restrict them in a big chase. Bowling against the wind at the Darren Sammy National Cricket Stadium was a challenge though.

"Our motto is to adapt to the conditions. At one end we were getting good support from the wind and the ball was swinging, but from the other you had to run against the wind and contain batsmen who were trying to hit shots with the wind assisting them. We've

played two matches with a lot of wind in the air; we have an idea how to handle it," he said.

What was the thought process with Australia going good in the first 10 overs? "We knew if we get a couple of wickets, it will be tough for the new batters to hit boundaries at will. A couple of nice overs from the spinners in the middle stage helped us. Kuldeep (Yadav) is a champion spinner. Today, he was bowling from the tough end and even against the wind, conceded just 6-an-over while taking crucial wickets," he said.

Arshdeep also gave credit to pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah. "He puts a lot of pressure on the batters with his economy so they try to come hard against me, which gives me chances to get wickets," he said.

Captain Rohit Sharma's 92 was just class. "He hit effortless shots that went flying out of the ground. I enjoyed it a lot. He is a legend and a big knock was around the corner. It came off really well... we hope he does the same in the coming games.

The 25-year-old also patted Hardik Pandya for his 17-ball 27 towards the end which pushed India past the 200-run mark. "It was an important innings. Having that cushion of 15 to 20 extra runs always helps as a bowler and gives you that freedom to try a couple more things and go for the wickets," he said.



EQUESTRIAN ANUSH TO REPRESENT INDIA IN PARIS OLYMPICS

New Delhi, June 25: Asian Games medallist Anush Agarwalla will represent the country in the dressage event of the Paris Olympics after pipping close contender Shruti Vora on better average, the Equestrian Federation of India (EFI) said on Tuesday. Agarwalla, who bagged gold in team dressage and bronze in individual dressage events at the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, was picked ahead of Vora after a careful evaluation of the recent performances of the two contenders.

It will be India's first ever entry at the dressage event of the Olympics as largely riders in past editions competed in eventing categories only.

Agarwalla (with his horse Sir Caramello Old) has been consistent since the qualification period began last year and achieved Minimum Eligibility Requirement four times, while veteran Vora earned the required two MERs this month. — PTI

Last-gasp Zaccagni keeps Italy hopes alive

Leipzig (Germany), June 25: Mattia Zaccagni kept Italy's European Championship title defence alive with an incredible late equaliser in the holder's thrilling 1-1 draw with Croatia, as Spain completed a perfect group stage and showed Albania the door.

Italy are in the last 16 of Euro 2024 after forward Zaccagni struck a superb equaliser with almost the last kick of the game in Leipzig, sparking an explosion of joy among the Italian fans and even a sprint up the line from 65-year-old coach Luciano Spalletti.

The Azzurri will play Switzerland in the next round thanks to Zaccagni, who came on with nine minutes remaining and curled in his leveller in the eighth minute of stoppage time following a brilliant burst and pass from



Italian players celebrate after teammate Mattia Zaccagni scored against Croatia during their Group 'B' match at the Euro 2024 tournament in Leipzig on Monday. — AP

defender Riccardo Calafiori. "Nobody believed any more, but the players did," Spalletti told Sky Sport in Italy, before raging at critics in the Italian press pack.

Spalletti's team finish Group 'B' in second place on four points, five behind winners Spain who beat

Albania 1-0 thanks to a neat Ferran Torres finish in the 13th minute in Dusseldorf. Albania's Euros adventure is over following a

defeat which also means that England, France and the Netherlands are guaranteed a place in the next round at least as one of the four best third-placed teams.

Croatia meanwhile are all-but out due to Zaccagni's late equaliser just as it looked as if Luka Modric was once again going to be the hero for his country.

Modric defied his advancing years by firing Croatia into the lead nine minutes after the break and becoming the oldest goalscorer in Euros history.

At 38 years and 289 days old, Modric broke the record set by Austrian Ivica Vastic in 2008, pouncing on a rebound after Gianluigi Donnarumma made an incredible save from Ante Budimir's point-blank range header. — AFP

AIFF ACCUSES STIMAC OF USING ASTROLOGER TO PICK PLAYERS

New Delhi, June 25: India's football federation has accused Igor Stimac of using an astrologer to pick players after sacking him as coach following their World Cup qualifying failure.

Defeat to Qatar earlier this month ended India's dreams of reaching the third round of Asian qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup and his contract was terminated last week.

The 56-year-old Stimac, in his final press conference, said he had heart surgery because of stress and battled "lies" and people with "private interests" during his tenure.

Indian FA accuses sacked Stimac of using astrologer to pick players. The AIFF responded late Monday, saying

Stimac had damaged the national association with "negative statements".

"Mr Stimac's communication — apparently made with the sole intent of maligning the AIFF and showing its personnel in poor light — is not befitting of a professional who has served the organisation for over five years," it said in a statement.

"This conduct has only reinforced the AIFF's belief that the right decision was made, with just cause, to terminate his contract."

Stimac, who played a World Cup semifinal for Croatia in 1998, became India coach in 2019 and they briefly broke into the top 100 of FIFA's world rankings for only the second time in nearly three decades. — AFP

in the news

Gitika Talukdar to cover Paris Olympics 2024

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glam sham

Taylor Swift swallows bug!

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The Kalki confusion benefits Rajasehkar!

'Technical glitch' results in unintentional bookings for his film also titled Kalki!

With Prabhas's much-awaited mythological sci-fi film *Kalki 2898 AD* finally open for bookings in Hyderabad, tickets are being sold at a frantic pace for both the 2D and 3D formats. More than 60,000 tickets are being sold per hour on Book My Show — an indicator of the popularity of Prabhas, also known as the Rebel Star. However, there's another unexpected gainer in this frenzy. Tickets were also available on the same online platform for an earlier Rajasehkar movie titled *Kalki*. Consequently, many fans mistakenly bought tickets for the



older film instead of reserving seats for the new one. Because of this mix-up, Rajasehkar's film seemed to be sold out within minutes — and netizens are wondering

TICKETS WERE ALSO AVAILABLE ON THE SAME ONLINE PLATFORM FOR AN EARLIER RAJASEKHAR MOVIE TITLED *KALKI*. CONSEQUENTLY, MANY FANS MISTAKENLY BOUGHT TICKETS FOR THE OLDER FILM INSTEAD OF RESERVING SEATS FOR THE NEW ONE. BECAUSE OF THIS MIX-UP, RAJASEKHAR'S FILM SEEMED TO BE SOLD OUT WITHIN MINUTES

whether it was a deliberate ploy to benefit from the publicity surrounding *Kalki 2898 AD*.

Book My Show has now clarified that there was a technical error that caused Rajasehkar's *Kalki* to appear on their platform. They have also given an assurance to those who may have mistakenly booked seats for the 2019 movie that they would get confirmed tickets for *Kalki 2898 AD* instead.



MOUSE TO URINE

FOOD SAFETY ERODES INDIA'S TRUST

Recently, India has been rocked by some alarming incidents related to food safety, severely impacting public trust and highlighting significant gaps in regulatory oversight and hygiene standards

APSARA REDDY

THE ASIAN AGE

The unsettling chain of events began with a disturbing discovery in a popular ice cream brand, of a human finger, sparking widespread outrage and calls for stricter quality control measures. Shortly after, another shocking incident surfaced when a dead mouse was reportedly found in a container of chocolate sauce from another well-known brand, intensifying concerns about the safety of packaged foods. The most recent incident, which further underscored hygiene lapses, involved the arrest of a man in Bengaluru allegedly for urinating into a batch of popcorn to "enhance" its flavour with salt.

TURN TO PAGE 11

OPINIONS AND REACTIONS



While India's regulatory framework is robust, its implementation often falls short, leaving loopholes that can be exploited. The laws are watertight, but effective enforcement and monitoring are crucial to ensure compliance across the board."

— Sudha Ramalingam, an advocate specialising in food safety laws

PROMINENT CASES

- **Cadbury Controversy:** Cadbury faced a crisis in India when worms were found in its chocolates, leading to widespread consumer distrust.
 - **Maggi Noodles Issue:** The popular noodle brand was banned nationwide due to charges of unsafe levels of lead, triggering a massive recall and legal battles over food safety standards.
 - **Adulterated Milk Crisis:** Instances of milk adulteration with chemicals or dilution with water have posed significant health risks to consumers.
 - **Pesticide residue in vegetables:** High levels of pesticide residues found in vegetables have raised health concerns among consumers.
 - **Illegal Food Additives:** Reports of harmful additives used in processed foods to enhance flavour without regard for safety regulations have alarmed consumers.
 - **Allergen mislabelling:** Incorrect labelling of allergens such as nuts or gluten has exposed those sensitive to these to serious health risks.
- These instances underscore the diversity of the challenges to ensuring food safety across different sectors in India. They highlight the need for strict enforcement of regulations, continuous monitoring, and public education to uphold consumer health and confidence in the food supply chain.



'Political corruption inspired Indian 2'

Kamal Haasan says filming of Indian 3 too has been completed

ANUPAMA SUBRAMANIAN

Actor-politician Kamal Haasan delivered a pointed commentary on the Indian political system during the trailer launch for his *Indian 2* on Tuesday. Addressing the media, Kamal said the prevalent corruption in the general political scenario of the country had driven the film's narrative. "I thank Indian politics for giving us the fuel to make such films. I feel corruption is so rampant even today, making the return of the vigilant 'Indian Thatha' (Kamal Haasan's character) through *Indian 2* even

more meaningful," he said. He also revealed that filming for *Indian 3* has been completed. Kamal acknowledged Udhayanidhi Stalin's involvement in the project, saying, "As a big fan of the film *Indian*, its actor (Kamal himself) and director (Shankar), Udhayanidhi has come forward to involve himself in the project. I thank him for that." He added, "He should be seen as an example of someone who puts in their utmost best. Even I cannot do so beyond a certain point; Anirudh has exerted every possible effort to infuse life into the film."

Gitika Talukdar to cover Paris Olympics 2024

Guwahati-based sports journalist is the first female photographer from India to have received a direct accreditation from the IOC



POOJA PRABHAN SRIJITH

They tell you this is a world where you can be anything, but following your dreams is often hard. And sports photographer Gitika Talukdar knows that first-hand. The focussed journalist, who recently received direct accreditation by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to cover the 2024 Paris Olympic Games, says, "When I began working in 2006, people did not take me seriously, though I put as much effort into my job as my male counterparts. It took a long time to get this recognition, but now, I am happy to find myself among one of the few internationally-recognised women sports photographers."

This Guwahati girl is the first and to date the only female photographer from India to have received this accreditation from IOC, which has a vision of promoting women journalists. "Despite many hurdles and constraints, I'm grateful I was able to come such a long way without any Godfather. I am deeply thankful to the IOC for honouring me with this direct accreditation," she adds.

Gitika began following her dream of becoming a sports journalist in her native city. "I started my career at the 2006 National Games in Guwahati, and later, several lucrative opportunities came my way, such as four

FIFA World Cups, the IPLs, ISL and ICC matches, as well as various ODI and International league matches," she says. She also covered the Tokyo Olympic Games in 2020, which was held during the COVID-19 pandemic, and was the only woman photographer from India to do so. Her dedication to her job won her a scholarship from the Sports Ministry of South Korea to pursue a Masters degree in Sports Management from the prestigious Seoul National University, South Korea, in 2020.

"I guess, if you're passionate about what you do, magic happens," says Talukdar, with a sparkle in her eyes.

While good and bad days are part of the game, Talukdar believes nothing overrides passion.

"I love my profession; I truly enjoy myself whenever I am on duty," she smiles.

PHOTOJOURNALISM ISN'T FOR THE WEAK

"Photojournalism is a tough job, more so for women, because, there's always discrepancy in opportunities and pay scales, which can get really demotivating," she shares, but goes on to say, "These days, it's really good that India is organising many sporting events, which gradually opens up better opportunities for young people in sports-journalism."

When quizzed about what she likes to do on an off-day, she reveals that she likes cooking. "I am a music lover and I compose some songs and like singing as well whenever time permits. Also, I'm a total movie buff," she adds.

Besides journalism and photography, Talukdar also works as a sports administrator. "I've designed a sports education project for girls, which will be launching soon in Assam. I've always believed that sports can change the life of a child," she signs off.

"PHOTOJOURNALISM IS A TOUGH JOB, MORE SO FOR WOMEN, BECAUSE, THERE'S ALWAYS DISCREPANCY IN OPPORTUNITIES AND PAY SCALES, WHICH CAN GET REALLY DEMOTIVATING. THESE DAYS, IT'S REALLY GOOD THAT INDIA IS ORGANISING MANY SPORTING EVENTS, WHICH GRADUALLY OPENS UP BETTER OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN SPORTS-JOURNALISM."

"I BELIEVE SPORTS CAN CHANGE THE LIFE OF A CHILD, THEREFORE I FEEL HAPPY AND SATISFIED THAT I AM ABLE TO DO SOMETHING FOR THE BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY."

— **GITIKA TALUKDAR, Sports Photographer**



Elon Musk is now dad to a dozen!

Welcomed another baby with Neuralink employee earlier this year

Maverick millionaire Elon Musk seems to practice what he preaches in one respect for sure. The tech tycoon has been vocal about his concern about falling birth rates worldwide, and also his support for large families. Well, he recently had another baby – his 12th child, and the third with Shivon Zilis, a director at his Neuralink company.

The baby was apparently born sometime earlier this year. The Tesla CEO told *Page Six* that it wasn't intended to be kept a secret and that the couple's "friends and family" knew about the new addition.

No information is available as yet about the infant's gender or name.

It may be recalled that Zilis and Musk had twins in 2021, just about a month before Musk and alt-pop singer Grimes had a daughter via surrogacy.

"Bravo to big families," Musk had said in 2022 and announced his decision to have a large brood of children.

MERYL STREEP'S DAUGHTER COMES OUT

Louisa Jacobson Gummer announces she's lesbian and introduces her girlfriend during Pride Month



Meryl Streep's daughter, Louisa Jacobson Gummer, is marking Pride Month in a special way this year by publicly coming out as a lesbian on Instagram. She shared a series of new photos introducing her girlfriend, Anna Blundell.

Louisa's announcement did not coincide with Meryl's birthday on June 22, as she made no mention of her mother in the photos. Instead, the post featured selfies and a screenshot of an article titled "We're entering a joyful new era of lesbian fashion." In her caption, Louisa mentioned, "Blessed to be entering the joyful new era." The post garnered enthusiastic reactions from followers, with one commenting, "The lesbians keep winning!" Another remarked, "Coming out at your mom's birthday is iconic," while a third wrote, "Joyful joyful we adore thee."

BREACHING FRONTIERS

Art Basel in Switzerland is one of the world's leading fairs in the international art market with footfalls from across the world; Deccan Chronicle speaks to artists and galleries from India that made it to the 2024 edition...



MALLIK THATIPALLI

A meeting place for artists, art collectors and many celebrities from the art scene Art Basel 2024 showcased various art forms, with both works by modern masters and art by emerging talents. Started 1970, by three gallery owners from Basel -- Trudl Bruckner, Ernst Beyeler and Balz Hilt, the event has grown immensely over the years achieving cult status. This year saw nearly 250 gallerists feature 4,000 artists from different countries and genres showcasing the highest quality work across all media, including painting, sculpture, photography, and digital artworks. The Indian presence was also felt with three galleries from the country participating alongside the best of the art world.

DIFFERENT STROKES

Reena Kallat, Artist says that throughout history, the coloniza-

tion of the mind has persisted as an invisible thread, subtly weaving through our perceptions and shaping our understanding of the world. It is to highlight these inherent biases that she showcased a map that appears uncanny in its orientation and scale. As an exercise in counter-cartography, it subverts normalised perceptions of the world, and invites viewers to carefully reconsider the tacit structures governing us. In the work, viewers confront an image that flips standard orientations, placing what is typically considered the 'South' above the equator. This reversal compels audiences to reckon with an unfamiliar, yet evocative perspective. It draws attention to the politically charged nature of cartographic practices, which often reflect the intentions and biases of map makers. "This work destabilises what we might consider 'normal' and prompts us to re-examine the commonplace yet powerful structures we take for granted," she says.

QUILTING STORIES

As a printmaker, **Jayeeta Chatterjee, artist** used Nakshi Kantha, the traditional Bengali quilting technique to revive the communal practice currently facing the threat of extinction. After preparing large wood-works, she printed her compositions on used sarees collected from the women portrayed in the art-



Art work by Jayeeta

“ WHEN A CHILD ITSELF IS A MOTHER, A WOODBLOCK PRINT AND NAKSHI KANTHA STITCH ON A RECYCLED COTTON SAREE, TELLS THE STORY OF CHILD MARRIAGE.”
— **JAYEETA CHATTERJEE, artist**

work. Through this technique, she wove anecdotes, floral motifs, and the domestic everydayness of women. Her work that was showcased at Art Basel, When a Child Itself is a Mother, a woodblock print and Nakshi Kantha stitch on a recycled cotton saree, tells the story of child marriage, highlighting its prevalence in both rural villages and urban areas. With a focus on Karnataka, where an increasingly high incidence of child marriages fall under the radar, the work tells the story of a neighbouring household. The man was 32 and the girl 16. At 17, she was a mother and now has a two-year-old to raise. In front, is an image of her attempting to rest, one hand on her baby and in the other, its toy. In the back, is a stark contrast- the image of a school-girl caught between backs bent from the weight of domestic responsibility. In the corner, a shrub of buds refuses to bloom. Jayeeta explains, "To flower, they require care of their own- fresh air, sunlight, and water. Without household support, the young mother is thrust into an abrupt transition where she must care for her child before

getting to be one herself. The architectural elements in the background, depict the intergenerational cycle of child marriage that continues to persist." **Roshini Vadehra, Director, Vadehra Art Gallery** says they showed a very special body of vintage photographs by artist Sunil Gupta from the 1980s. The booth garnered incredible interest from both private collectors and institutions. Sunil has been widely exhibited internationally and is also a part of most museums' permanent collections. So there was great interest from curators and museums and we were able to place his works in new collections as well.



“ THROUGHOUT HISTORY, THE COLONIZATION OF THE MIND HAS PERSISTED AS AN INVISIBLE THREAD, SUBTLY WEAVING THROUGH OUR PERCEPTIONS AND SHAPING OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD.”
— **REENA KALLAT, artist**



Terra Firma - Chronicle of Flawed Calculations by Reena

Mouse to urine: Food safety erodes India's trust

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

OPINIONS AND REACTIONS

Food safety experts and industry stakeholders have voiced grave concern over these incidents, emphasizing the urgent need for stringent enforcement of existing regulations.



"The surge in health issues linked to food choices, even those marketed as healthy, underscores the need for heightened vigilance among healthcare providers."
— **Dr. Hari Mani, an intensive care expert**



"Food safety hinges on proactive investments in quality inspectors who conduct random checks at retail outlets. The conditions in which products are stored directly impact their safety, as seen in incidents like worms found in chocolates or noodles. Punishment for lapses in food safety are necessary to ensure accountability and protect consumer trust."
— **Vikram Cotah, COO of GRT Group of Hotels.**

FSSAI'S RESPONSE

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has responded vigorously to recent food safety crises with heightened regulatory enforce-

ment and enhanced consumer awareness initiatives. The organization has conducted thorough investigations, issued advisories, and collaborated closely with state authorities to ensure swift

corrective actions. It has emphasized adherence to food safety standards by manufacturers and distributors, while imposing stringent penalties for violations. FSSAI's efforts to educate con-

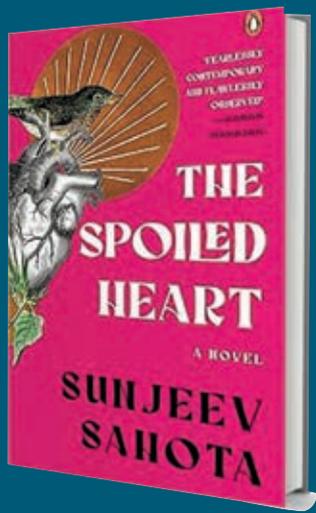
sumers on their rights and responsibilities in ensuring food safety aim to promote greater transparency and accountability throughout the food supply chain.

"Quality control, research, and leveraging scientific mechanisms through technology are indispensable for maintaining high food safety standards. Governments should subsidize these initiatives for small food business owners to ensure compliance with stringent regulations and safeguard public health."

— **Sathish Kumar, Managing Director, MilkyMist**



Matters of the heart amid petty politics



The Spoiled Heart
Author: Sunjeev Sahota
Publisher: Penguin Hamish Hamilton

A deeply moving novel from the twice Booker-nominated author that deals with racism, gender, love, personal tragedy, and political upmanship

NEIL PATE

Set in today's British labour union party politics, renowned author Sunjeev Sahota's *The Spoiled Heart* brings the readers face-to-face with the struggles of common working-class folks and the issues faced by women, migrants and people of colour. The male protagonist, Nayan Olak, a down to earth man of Indian descent, has been promised the general secretary's post in Britain's largest labour union. He is determined to make society a better place to live. Nayan is someone who scaled the ranks after putting years of service in the labour union. His solidarity lies firm-

ly with the 'working class' folks in the UK. Nayan's opponent is a young and dynamic well-heeled woman Megha Sharma, who is a formidable force in her own right.

Nayan's loyalty to the party after decades of service despite personal tragedies is known to the people in his hometown of Chesterfield. Two decades ago, Nayan's mother and son died in a horrific fire that engulfed his parent's shop and the small apartment above it where they lived. The tragedy left a void in Nayan's life because soon after the accident his wife too walked out on him, leaving him all alone

to take care of his old father, who suffers from dementia.

The author cleverly makes the narrator Sajjan Dhanoa recount all these events. Sajjan, a talented writer lived in Chesterfield close to Nayan's house and has seen him grow up right from his student days. As the poll fervor picks up, the political barbs between Nayan and Megha's supporters become ugly and personal. To make matters worse, Nayan is still haunted by the fire incident and is unable to put a closure. He wonders if it was arson by some thugs or a racist attack by someone. His only solace is Helen Fletcher, who has moved back into her old house in Chester-

field town with her teenage son, Brandon. Nayan is attracted to her. They grow closer and he starts a relationship with her. He feels that their pasts may be linked to each other in some way. However, there is a lot at stake, especially Nayan's political career. As an Anglo-Indian, he is likely to become the first non-White general secretary in Britain's largest labor union. But one wrong move and all his dreams will come crashing down.

The Spoiled Heart is a multi-layered contemporary story with brilliant well-etched characters, who literally jump out of the pages, surprise you, and then slip back into their daily lives, effortlessly!



LITERARY FLIGHTS IN PLAIN SIGHT

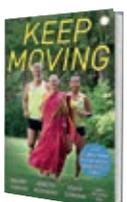
A good book can change your life, here are some titles that will make you fall in love again, sail oceans, improve your eating habits, and keep you on your toes, writes **Neil Pate**



Choice
Author: Neel Mukherjee
Publisher: Hamish Hamilton

Three ingeniously linked but distinct narratives pave their way into Neel Mukherjee's book, *Choice*. A publisher, who is at war with his industry and himself; an academic who exchanges one story for another after an accident brings a stranger into

her life; and a family in rural India have their lives destroyed by a gift. Each of these stories has unintended devastating consequences. The author tries to answer questions about whether the choices we make affect our work, our relationships, and our place in the world. The author talks about myths and confronts our fundamental assumptions about economics, race, appropriation, and contemporary life.



KEEP MOVING
Authors: Milind Soman, Ankita Konwar, Usha Soman, Roopa Pai
Publisher: Juggernaut Publication

Age is just a number. Super model-cum-actor Milind Soman doles out honest-to-goodness fitness mantras in his latest book, *Keep Moving*. The book traces the fitness journeys of three people from his family across different generations – Usha Soman (84), Milind Soman (58) and his wife, Ankita Konwar (32). The trio is probably the 'fittest family' in the entire country. Each one of them shares their individual exercise and workout regime, the food choices, and the lifestyle that suits them. Despite having different perspectives on physical and mental exercises, they firmly believe in one thing — when it comes to your body, you are the only expert. There are no spin doctors and quick fixes in the Soman household. The family sees fitness as a way of life. They show the readers how to go inwards to find our own unique motivations for well-being.



Two Sides to Every Murder
Author: Danielle Valentine
Publisher: Penguin

This explosive YA thriller from renowned author Danielle Valentine will leave you in a state of trance. The main character Olivia was born during the infamous Camp Lost Lake murders. As she grows up, she begins questioning the mysterious events surrounding her birth. Olivia finds there's a lot more to that tragic night. The man whom she calls 'Dad' is not her biological father. On the other side, Reagan's mother is constantly in fear of being arrested for a crime she never committed. Reagan and her mother have spent years on the run. Reagan's mother might be considered guilty of murder, but Reagan knows she's innocent. Tired of running, she returns to Camp to clear her mother's name. However, the danger of someone wanting to bury the past lurks around. To stay alive, Olivia and Reagan must work together to uncover the truth.



The Satvic Revolution
Authors: Subah Saraf, Harshvardhan Saraf
Publisher: Penguin

If you are always striving to look for a practical guide to improve your health and boost energy throughout the day and keep weight under control, then *The Satvic Revolution* is for you. The authors share their first-hand experiences and lifestyle changes they made for a healthy body, mind, and soul. Subah and Harshvardhan Saraf battled chronic diseases for many years. After trying all available solutions with no success, they turned to natural health wisdom. They adopted seven life-changing habits that helped them fully heal themselves. These habits draw from the best of both worlds ancient wisdom and modern science. While the first four elevate your physical health, the last three focus on deeper aspects that are often overlooked — your mental and spiritual health. The book has interesting anecdotes, illustrations, and activities.



Forgotten Desires
Author: Corinne Michaels
Publisher: Baae Inc

A book of hidden desires that will keep you glued from start to finish. Bestselling author Corinne Michaels's *Forgotten Desires* gives the readers a peek into the lives of a billionaire and a marriage of convenience. Carson Knight (aka Crew) is a billionaire, who is looking for a temporary wife to get custody of his daughter from her unstable ex-wife Jacqueline. Their marriage was loveless — a merger of assets of two business families. Carlson lands up at the wedding of his employee Rowan, who is the brother of his ex-flame Brynnee Whitlock. It is kismet, the two meet and can't take their eyes off each other. A decade ago, Crew and Brynnee had spent a week together and were madly in love, until he dumped and disappeared without any explanation. Even after 10 years, Crew is irresistibly handsome. Brynnee is keen on starting her crisis management PR firm, but she can't get Crew out of her head. Will she and Crew (aka Carlson) give love a second chance?





PHOTO: PICSART

A man wears Pride Month makeup

PHOTO: FREEPIK

PHOTO: PICSART

Own your pride makeup look!

Makeup trends do a full 360 degree this Pride Month with rainbow to neon colours and glitter to gender-inclusive products and sustainable practices

ANUSHREE CHAURASIA

✓ Pride month is in full swing and the fact that Pride doesn't have the same pompousness around it in India has not stopped people from celebrating it in whatever way they could. From walking down the streets with rainbow flags and outstanding outfits to wearing rainbow makeup and standing in solidarity with queer folks. It is all about celebrating inclusivity and diversity with Pride!

Just like every pride month, Pride of 2024 is a vibrant explosion of makeup trends

that celebrates the LGBTQ+ community's diversity, unity, creativity and resilience. Makeup enthusiasts are pushing the boundaries of self-expression with bold and inclusive looks that honour the spirit of Pride. From bright colours to sustainable products, brands are prioritising eco-friendly packaging, vegan formulas and ethical sourcing of ingredients. This aligns with the values of many in the LGBTQ+ community who advocate for a more sustainable and compassionate world.

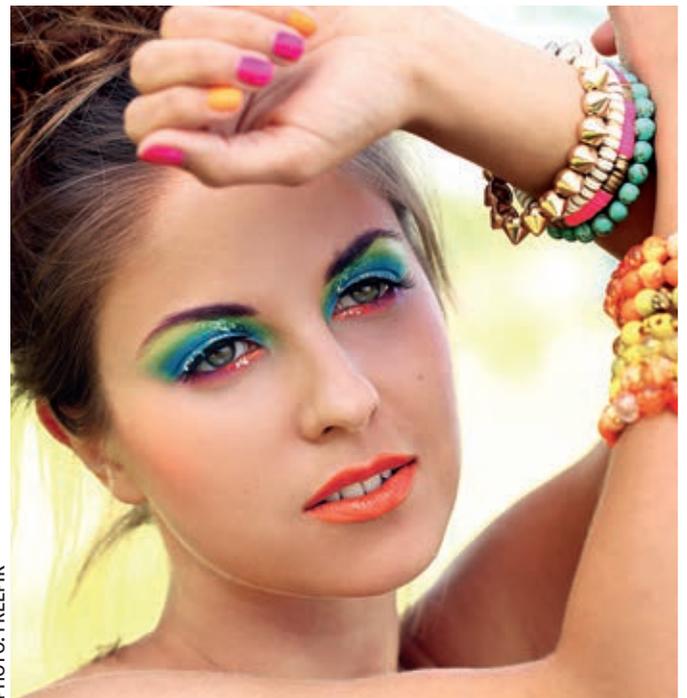
Makeup artist Phia Pereira says that there is massive



THIS YEAR THERE'S HUGE AMOUNTS OF THE 1990'S MAKEUP TREND GOING ON. DARK SMOKEY EYES, A BOLD LIP LINER, AND GLOSS. THIN BROWS WITH EYEBROW PIERCINGS."

— PHIA PEREIRA, *makeup artist*

PHOTO: FREEPIK



brow piercings. Septum rings have become a staple of bisexuality, I know it's not makeup but face piercings go hand in hand with a lot of looks," Phia says.

The show Euphoria had a massive impact when it came to the aesthetic of any occasion be it birthday parties, graduation parties, farewell and Pride as well. But this year was massively all about welcoming the fashion trends of the late 1990s and early 2000s. People have been inspired by Pamela Anderson and the signature Asian Y2K makeup look has been the talk through and through. "As a

queer person myself, I value Pride Month a lot because it makes me feel I wasn't a crackpot or something of that kind. There are many more people like me. Fashion has been essential to me my entire life not because I think too much about how people perceive me but rather because I can express myself fully through it, without even saying a word." says Ash Kavya Patel.

From rainbow to neon colours and glitter to gender-inclusive products and sustainable practices, this year's Pride Month trends are as diverse and dynamic as the community itself. Whether you're attending a pride parade, a festival or just looking to celebrate in your own way, there's a makeup trend that can help you express your identity and join in the celebration of love, acceptance, and equality.

influence from shows such as Euphoria. "Those sorts of trends are still being seen especially with LGBTQ+ (the glittery and colourful eye-shadow looks, gems, wet makeup looks etc). But this year especially there's huge amounts of the 1990's makeup trend going on. Dark smokey eyes, a bold lip liner, and gloss. Thin brows with eye-



AS A QUEER PERSON MYSELF, I VALUE PRIDE MONTH A LOT BECAUSE IT MAKES ME REALISE THAT THERE ARE MANY MORE PEOPLE LIKE ME."

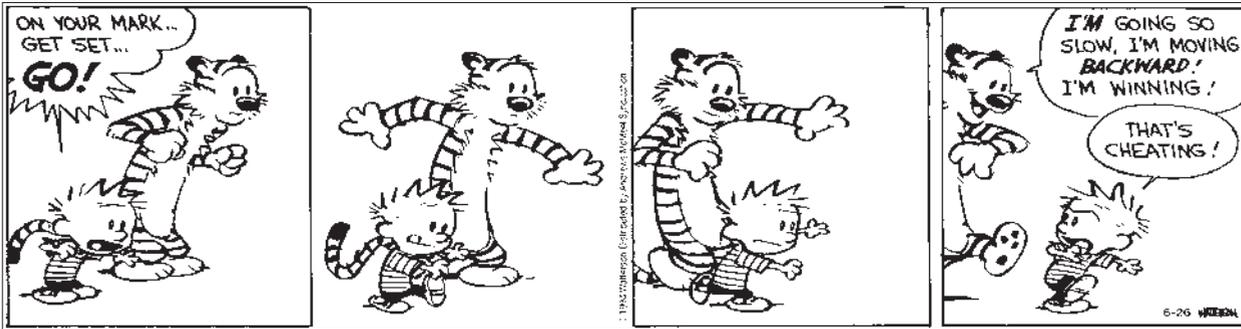
— ASH KAVYA PATEL, *queer person*

PHOTO: PICSART

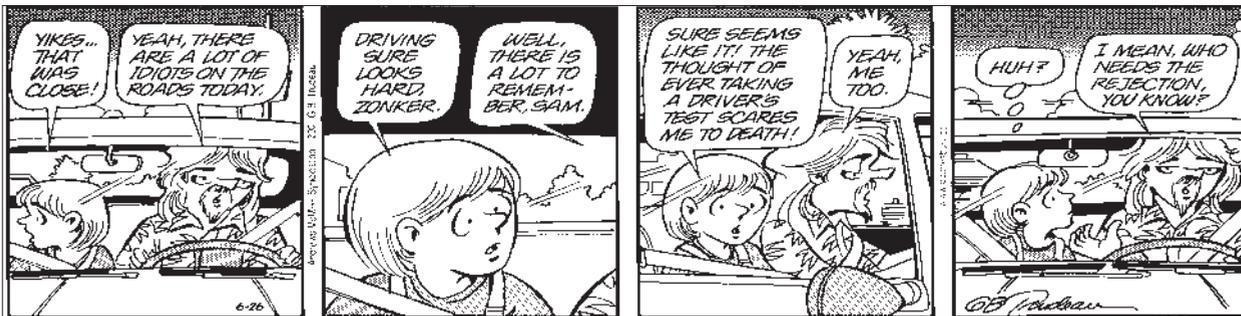


coffee-break

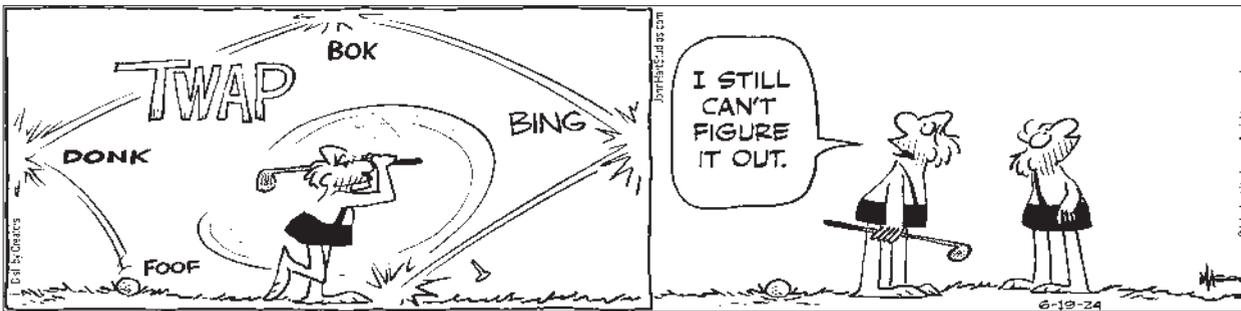
CALVIN AND HOBBS | Bill Watterson



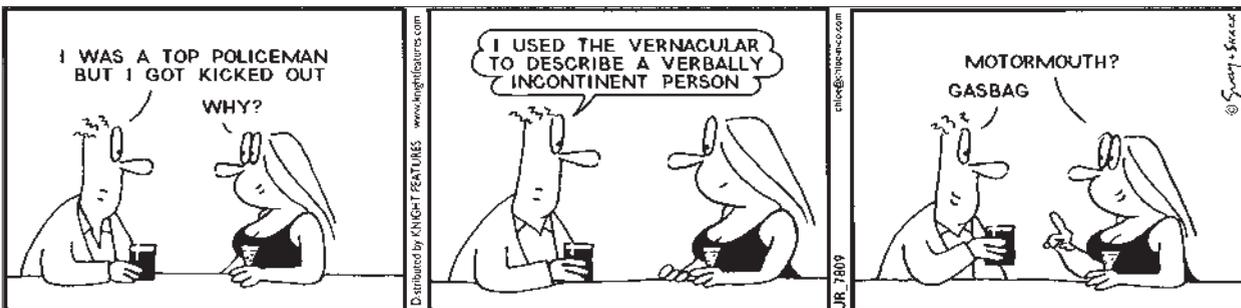
DOONESBURY | Garry Trudeau



B.C. | Johnny Hart



UP AND RUNNING | Gray and Shack



BLONDIE | Dean Young and John Marshall



ANDY CAPP | Reg Smythe



Dennis the Menace



hocus focus



Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Veil is shorter. 2. Hat is shorter. 3. The is different. 4. Mouth is different. 5. Boutonniere is higher. 6. Dress neckline is different.

jumble

GAIME
 NOGIG
 CERNDH
 CANITT

When softball was invented in Chicago in 1887, it was a...
 It's great that we don't need gloves to play baseball now!
 The new size and softness will make it more accessible to players.

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

GAIME
 NOGIG
 CERNDH
 CANITT

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: FATTY VAULT NEATLY DOLLAR
 Answer: The giraffe telling the story to the other giraffes — TOLD A TALL TALE