



'Strong India will contribute to more prosperous world'

PM NARENDRA MODI ADDRESSES GHANA'S PARLIAMENT

Accra: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said a strong India will contribute to a more stable and prosperous world as he pushed for credible and effective reforms in global governance in the wake of changing circumstances.

In his address to the Parliament in Ghana, Modi also said that progress cannot come without giving voice to the Global South.

"In these times of global uncertainty, India's democratic stability shines as a ray of hope. India's rapid progress is a catalyst for global growth. As the world's largest democracy, India is a pillar of strength for the world. A strong India will contribute to a more stable and prosperous world," the prime minister said.

Noting that India is the fastest-growing emerging economy, Modi said that on the foundations of stable polity and governance, India will soon become the third-largest economy.

"We already contribute nearly 16 per cent to global growth. Our demography is paying its dividend. India now has the world's third-largest start-up ecosystem. India is an innovation and technology hub, where global companies want to converge," he said.

The Prime Minister underlined that the world order created after World



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed upon his arrival at Kotoka International Airport in Accra.

War II is changing fast. "The revolution in technology, the rise of the Global South, and the shifting demographics are contributing to its pace and scale," he said.

"The world is also facing new and complex crises such as climate change, pandemics, terrorism, and cybersecurity. Institutions created in the last century are struggling to respond. The changing circumstances demand credible and effective reforms in global governance," he added.

He said progress cannot come without giving voice to the Global South. "We need more than slogans. We need action. That is why, during India's G20 Presidency, we worked with the vision - One Earth, One Family, One Future," he added.

"We put emphasis on Africa's rightful place at the global high table. We are proud that the African Union became a permanent member of the G20 during our Presidency," he said.

The Prime Minister said India "remains a commit-

ted partner" in Africa's development journey. "We support Africa's Development Framework, Agenda 2063, to secure a bright and sustainable future for its people."

"Africa's goals are our priorities. Our approach is to grow together as equals. Our development partnership with Africa is demand-driven. It is focused on building local capacities and creating local opportunities. Our objective is not just to invest, but to empower," he said.

Boy stripped, stabbed to death

New Delhi: In a horrific incident of brutality, a 14-year-old boy was allegedly killed by a group of eight people, including four juveniles, who took turns to stab him multiple times before dumping his naked body into a canal in outer north Delhi's Haiderpur area, police said on Thursday.

The victim, a resident of Jeevan Park in Siraspur, was reportedly abducted, stripped and killed in a revenge-driven attack.

His body was found with multiple stab wounds and a scarf tied around the neck near the Munak Canal on July 1, officials said.

A PCR call was received around 3:10 pm about a body lying near a Delhi Jal Board water treatment plant. A police team subsequently got the partially-decomposed body identified, the officials said. "Based on initial findings, a case was registered and multiple teams were formed to identify and arrest the accused," Deputy Commissioner of Police (Outernorth) Harehsvar V Swami said.

Using technical surveillance, police first nabbed two key accused, Krishna alias Bhola (19) and a juvenile, who lived in the same locality as the victim.

He said Krishna was assaulted last year by two local criminals, Monu and Sonu, and he suspected that the deceased had acted as an informer in the matter. "He held a grudge and, along with his associates, plotted the killing for weeks," the DCP said.

In the intervening night of June 29 and 30, Krishna and seven others intercepted the victim near the Veer Chowk bazaar, abducted him in front of his friends.



Artists wearing Sri Lankan traditional dress perform at an event organised by the Sri Lanka Convention Bureau (SLCB) in Bengaluru on Thursday.

Have decoded Bihar intensive revision: EC

New Delhi: With political parties flagging their concerns over the ongoing special intensive revision of Bihar's electoral roll, the Election Commission on Thursday said it has decoded the entire exercise to a group of opposition parties to assuage their fears. The poll authority had met representatives of various political parties here on Wednesday and heard their concerns, issues and queries raised by them and "decoded for them the entire special intensive revision".

Representatives of the Congress, Rashtriya Janata Dal, Samajwadi Party, DMK, Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Pawar), Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation, Communist Party of India and Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray) had met the poll panel.

The EC told the parties that the exercise is being

held in a planned, structured and phased manner to facilitate the inclusion of all eligible citizens.

In the first phase, from June 25 to July 3, enumeration forms are being printed and distributed to the approximately 7.90 crore electors in Bihar.

Electoral registration officers are making available partially pre-filled forms, based on existing records through the nearly 78,000 booth level officers (BLOs) pressed into action.

The BLOs are delivering the enumeration forms door-to-door to all the electors whose names are on the electoral roll as on June 24. Booth level agents (BLAs) appointed by political parties can also submit up to 50 certified forms per day.

In the second phase, the enumeration forms will be filled and are to be submitted before July 25. To support this process, nearly four lakh volunteers are available to assist voters

alongside the BLOs.

Electors whose names exist in the electoral roll as on January 1, 2003 are only required to submit the enumeration forms along with an extract of the roll. They don't have to submit any other document.

Those not listed in the 2003 roll will need to submit one of 11 documents for their date of birth/ place of birth.

These physical forms will be submitted to the respective electoral registration officers or assistant electoral registration officers. A facility for online submission of enumeration forms has been developed to ease the process.

In the fourth phase, the draft electoral roll will be published on August 1. The list will include all electors whose forms have been received by the deadline.

Names for which no enumeration form has been submitted before July 25 will not appear in the draft roll.

Law Student Gang-Rape

File affidavit on progress of probe: HC

Kolkata: The Calcutta High Court on Thursday directed the West Bengal government to file a report on the progress of investigation into the law college gang rape case in the form of an affidavit.

A division bench presided by Justice Soumen Sen also asked the state to produce the case diary of the investigation before it on the next date of hearing on July 10.

Three PILs were filed in connection with the alleged gang rape of a student at South Calcutta Law College by an alumnus and two of her seniors on the evening of June 25 inside the campus. The prime accused is the alumnus who is also a contractual staff member of the institute.

The division bench also asked the state to reply in the form of a report on the next date of hearing some questions raised by one of the petitioners in connection with the "appalling incident" involving the female law student.

The state was asked to answer how a former student was permitted entry into the college premises after official hours in violation of access control pro-

ocols, and how staff members present on campus long past college hours without any official purpose or administrative supervision.

It was also directed to state what monitoring or security measures were in place to prevent or detect unauthorised access to the college building.

The petitioner also questioned why the college administration and the local police did not take preventive action, despite having been allegedly informed of threats made to the victim.

He asked, "Why does a reputed law college lack essential surveillance infrastructure, such as CCTV coverage and a functional security apparatus, especially in a time when gender-based violence is on the rise?"

Appearing for another petitioner, senior counsel Phiroze Edulji requested the division bench, also comprising Justice Smita Das De, to ask the state to produce the case diary of the investigators in the alleged rape case, as it enumerates every activity done by the police in probing the matter.



Pilgrims chant religious slogans as they leave for the annual Amarnath Yatra from Ram Mandir base camp in Jammu on Thursday.

Sexually Abuse Of Minor Student

Woman teacher sent in judicial custody

Mumbai: A court here on Thursday denied police further remand of a 40-year-old woman school teacher, arrested for allegedly sexually assaulting a minor student, and instead sent her in 14-day judicial custody.

"The investigating officer asked for further remand, but there is no reasonable ground for extension of police custody," said Sabina Malik, special judge for Protection of Children from Sexual Of-

fences (POCSO) Act cases, in her order.

The English teacher, who is married, allegedly used to take the 16-year-old boy to luxury hotels.

Arrested last week following a complaint filed by his parents, the woman was produced before the special POCSO court at the end of her remand on Thursday. Police sought her further custody for probe.

As per the police, the

woman became attracted to the boy during meetings for the school's annual function in December 2023.

When the student developed acute anxiety following the alleged abuse, she allegedly gave him some anti-anxiety pills. She would also get him drunk during their meetings, the police claimed. The boy cleared his Class 10 exam a few months ago and left the school, but slipped into depression.

Shooting leaves four dead

Chicago: Four people have died from gunshot wounds and 14 others have been hospitalised following a drive-by shooting in Chicago, police said Thursday. At least three were in critical condition.

The shooting happened late Wednesday in Chicago's River North neighbourhood, a popular nightlife destination with many restaurants and bars. Several media outlets said it happened outside a restaurant and lounge that had hosted an album release party for a rapper.

Someone opened fire into a crowd standing outside, police said, and the vehicle immediately drove away.

No one was in custody, police said.

"When I arrived last night it was absolute chaos, from people screaming to blood on the streets, to people laying on the streets," said Chicago pastor Donovan Price, who responds to communities and people in crisis.

He described the scene to reporters as "the worst I've seen".

Provide Jain food to accused: Court

Mumbai: The special PMLA court here on Thursday directed prison authorities to provide Jain food to a money launderer case accused currently in judicial custody.

The fresh instruction to Arthur Road Jail authorities came after accused Ritesh Shah alleged he was not being given Jain food despite an earlier order of the court.

Considering the allegation made by the accused, the jail authority is directed to strictly obey the order passed on May 14 and provide Jain food to him, special Prevention of Money Laundering Act judge Raju Rote said.

Shah, through his lawyer Viral Barbar, had last month approached court seeking Jain food in prison.

BJP encouraging anti-Marathi traders: MNS

By Correspondent

Mumbai: The Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) has alleged that the BJP is encouraging traders and shopkeepers in Mira-Bhayandar and the protest march which took place on Thursday was sponsored by local BJP leaders.

Traders in Mira Road have taken to the streets on Thursday to protest against MNS workers who assaulted a shopkeeper for not speaking Marathi. The incident, which occurred on June 29th, was captured on video and went viral. Thousands of traders have gathered for a march to the shop where the incident took place. The Traders Association has submitted an application to the police, demanding strict action against the attackers.

"Police have assured that a charge sheet will be filed within two days, and traders have requested the addition of IT Act charges to the case. The protest aims to ensure such incidents do not recur in the future," trader association has made it clear.

Significantly, the incident came at a time when the language debate has resurfaced in Maharash-

tra. Against this backdrop speaking to this newspaper MNS Thane chief Avinash Jadhav said, "BJP leaders in Mira-Bhayandar have instigated the shopkeepers and traders to take the issue to the street. The protest march was totally BJP sponsored. I have pictures of some BJP leaders who participated in the protest".

"Looking at the incident we can say the BJP has adopted an anti Marathi stance. The saffron party is putting on a brave face and reluctantly supporting the Marathi issue. But truly speaking BJP is an anti-Marathi party, Jadhav alleged.

The Maharashtra government revoked two government resolutions (GRs) that had imposed Hindi as a third language from class I. This reversal came in response to a growing anti-Hindi movement that threatened to cross political lines. Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis announced the scrapping of both GRs.

Sources said that MNS Marathi language agitation which is being played with an eye on the upcoming municipal elections, will backfire on the BJP.

Vasai-Virar Corporation under ED lens

New Delhi: A "large cartel" of architects, chartered accountants, and officials of the Vasai Virar City Municipal Corporation in Maharashtra colluded for large-scale illegal construction on land meant for sewage treatment plants, and dumping ground was sold fraudulently to the public, the Enforcement Directorate has said.

The federal probe agency said in a statement that fresh searches were conducted at 16 locations on July 1 in connection with the money laundering probe into the construction of 41 illegal buildings in Vasai Virar area.

During the raids, bank depos-

its and mutual funds worth Rs 12.71 crore were frozen and cash of Rs 26 lakh was seized apart from "incriminating" documents and devices, it said.

The money laundering case stems from an FIR registered by the Mira Bhayandar Police Commissionerate against some builders, local henchmen and others. The case, according to the ED, pertains to illegal construction of residential-commercial buildings on government and private land under the jurisdiction of Vasai Virar City Municipal Corporation (VVMCMC) since 2009.

Over a period of time, 41 illeg-

gal buildings were constructed on the land reserved for sewage treatment plants and dumping ground as per the approved development plan of Vasai Virar City, the agency said.

"The accused builders and developers deceived the public at large by constructing illegal buildings on such land and subsequently sold it to the general public by fabricating approval documents.

"Even with prior knowledge that these buildings were unauthorised and would eventually be demolished, the developers misled the people by selling rooms in these buildings thereby

committing serious fraud," the ED alleged.

The Bombay High Court issued an order in July 2024 ordering the demolition of all 41 buildings. The residents of these residential units subsequently filed a special leave petition (SLP) before the Supreme Court but this was dismissed and VVMCMC demolished these structures on February 20.

Probe found, the ED said, that a "large cartel of architects, CAS, liaisons and VVMCMC officials are operating in collusion with each other."

"This cartel is responsible for large-scale illegal construction

in the jurisdiction of VVMCMC," it said.

The searches led to the recovery of "incriminating" digital devices which show the "involvement" of VVMCMC officials in perpetrating this illegal construction scam, it said.

The digital devices also show the "close" nexus of VVMCMC officials/officers with the architects, CAS and liaisons and the extent of "large-scale" corruption and black money flowing in the VVMCMC to get the approval for construction of buildings, the ED said. The first round of searches in this case were conducted by the ED in May.

KU VC Releases Textbook on Entrepreneurship



Jasbir Singh Duggal

Kurukshetra: The Hon'ble Vice Chancellor of Kurukshetra University, Prof. Som Nath Sachdeva, formally released a book "Textbook of Entrepreneurship" authored by Dr. Rajni Goyal, Head of the Department of Home Science, IIHS; Dr. Anita Atwal; and former IIHS faculty member Mrs. Shakti Sharma on Thursday. On this occasion, Prof. Sachdeva extended his felicitations to the authors and remarked that the publication will play a significant role in fostering entrepreneurial skills and mindset among students, thereby enabling them to contribute more effectively to the country's dynamic economic framework. Dr. Rajni Goyal informed that the book has been published by Arihant Publications, New Delhi, and is aligned with the vision and objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. The textbook provides an in-depth understanding of the domain of entrepreneurship, encompassing key themes such as types of entrepreneurs, their roles and competencies, the entrepreneurial process, business planning, SWOT analysis, and financial management.

The publication also includes case studies of renowned Indian entrepreneurs, discusses challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, and highlights various government schemes and incentives aimed at promoting entrepreneurship across the country. The release ceremony was graced by the presence of Registrar Dr. Virender Paul, Principal, IIHS, Prof. Rita, Dr. Anand Kumar, Mrs. Shakti Sharma, Mrs. Manju Narwal and Mrs. Anu.

Lala Ami Chand College of Law Felicitates BA.LLB and LLB Toppers



Jasbir Singh Duggal

Shahabad Markanda: Lala Ami Chand College of Law recently honored the semester toppers of its BA.LLB and LLB programs, appreciating their academic achievements. On this occasion, college management, faculty members, and parents jointly congratulated the students and lauded their collective efforts. Among the students who excelled in the BA.LLB program were Bhoomika, Harshita, Nandini, Sonam, Kartik, and Ayushi, who not only achieved personal success through their dedication and hard work but also brought pride to the college. In the LLB program, Isha, Jasmeet, and Simran secured top positions, showcasing their talent and commitment. The college administration stated that the institution offers high-quality education not only in legal studies but also in other fields. Programs include BA.LLB, LLB, LLM, D.Pharmacy, B.Pharmacy, B.Ed, D.Ed, M.Ed, and ITI. The college provides an academic environment focused on holistic development with experienced faculty, modern facilities, emphasis on research and innovation, and student-centered learning. The Lala Ami Chand Group aims to bring about positive societal change through education. The institution is committed not only to guiding students toward successful careers but also to shaping them into responsible citizens and future leaders.

Negligence of government doctors and looting by private hospitals !

DILPREET WALIA

Karnal : Despite being the constituency of the Chief Minister for ten years, the common man of Karnal could not get better health services. Even though Karnal got a medical college in the name of Kalpana Chawla, but this college of Karnal could not prove to be more than a referral center. Ever since Haryana was formed, the people of Karnal look towards Rohtak or Chandigarh for their lives. Karnal has a civil hospital, a medical college. There are many private medical institutions. But the poor patient has no option for treatment. There is open loot in private hospitals. Government hospitals and medical colleges have better equipment. There are qualified doctors but their intention is not to treat poor patients. Here doctors refer patients to private hospitals. Recently, in some private hospitals of Karnal, a case of keeping a patient on ventilator for several hours even after death came to light. Even though two Chief Ministers have won and reached the post in Karnal, they did nothing to improve the health services of Karnal. In medical colleges and government hospitals, if the patient is normal, they send him to a private hospital. If he is poor, he is sent to Rohtak or Chandigarh. In government hospitals and medical colleges, despite the huge salary and facilities, the doctors are not accountable to the patient.

Volt Energy Powers Deco Group with 300kW Rooftop Solar, Reducing Grid Dependency by 25%

Vatika Times

SONIPAT: In a significant push toward sustainable industrial practices, Volt Energy (Volt Capital Private Limited), one of India's most promising clean-tech energy players, has successfully commissioned a 300-kilowatt rooftop solar project at Deco Group Kundli, Sonipat, Haryana facility, a leading manufacturer in consumer electronics. This installation has led to a 25% reduction in electricity drawn from the grid, strengthening Deco Group's commitment to its Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals. Spread across over 30,000 square feet of rooftop area, the solar plant is expected to generate approximately 3.67 lakh units (kWh) of clean electricity annually, equivalent to offsetting over 400 metric tons of carbon dioxide emissions each year - the same as planting



nearly 6,000 trees or taking 90 cars off the road. "This project is a prime example of the power of distributed energy resources such as rooftop solar" said Mr. Rishabh Dev Bajaj, Founder and CEO, Volt Energy. "By utilizing this vast industrial rooftop space, we've turned unused real estate into an energy-producing asset, directly contributing to climate action and long-term cost efficiency at Deco Group. We believe Volt

presents the easiest way for companies to go solar without any technical or financial risk and, our proud to have partnered with Deco group for this project." Deco Group, which runs 10 manufacturing units across India and Sierra Leone, is incorporating renewable energy as a core strategy in its operations. The shift not only boosts ESG performance but also insulates the company from rising electricity tariffs and grid fluctuations. "Our energy costs have

dropped, and our ESG performance has improved. At Deco Group, we see innovation such as solar, BESS, and VPPs as the future of efficient manufacturing," said Mr. Atul Jain, Managing Director of Deco Group. "Volt Energy stood out with their strong PPA model and hands-on expertise. After evaluating several providers, their quality, service, and end-to-end support made the switch to clean energy seamless and impactful," he further added.

Agriculture Department Officials Conduct Raids on Fertilizer and Seed Sellers' Establishments

Five Samples Collected for Fertilizers and Seeds; Three Found Substandard So Far

Jasbir Singh Duggal

Kurukshetra: Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Dr. Karam Chand, stated that during the Kharif season, there is a consistent demand for agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, and insecticides, which are essential for sowing crops. To ensure that farmers receive high-quality agricultural inputs, special instructions have been given to department inspectors to carry out timely sampling of all types of agricultural products available in the market. This will help in providing quality inputs to farmers at the right time.

Dr. Karam Chand informed that so far, 21 samples of fertilizers, 30 of pesticides, and 60 of various crop seeds have been collected and sent to laboratories for testing. Results for 72 samples have been received, out of which three (one pesticide and two seed samples) have failed the quality test. Results of the remaining 11 samples are still awaited.

To continue monitoring the quality of agricultural inputs, a joint team led by Dr. Rakesh Poria, Marketing Officer from the Agriculture Directorate Headquarters, conducted surprise inspections in various markets to check the stock, quality, and availability of agricultural inputs. During the inspections, five



more samples were collected. Due to the strict nature of these surprise raids, many dealers closed their sales outlets and left. Approximately 20 dealers' centers were found shut. Show-cause notices have been issued to all such dealers, and appropriate action will be taken against them. He added that fertilizer, seed, and insecticide inspectors have been strictly instructed to maintain constant surveillance in the markets and conduct surprise checks regularly to ensure that farmers get high-quality agricultural inputs on time and without any hindrance. On this occasion, Quality Control Inspector Shashipal, Sub-Divisional Agriculture Officer Titendar Mehta, and Assistant Plant Protection Officer Anil Chauhan were also present.

State-Level Guru Daksh Prajapati Jayanti Invitation Extended by Sabha



Jasbir Singh Duggal

Kurukshetra: A joint team from Kurukshetra Prajapati Dharamshala and BPHO Kaithal district reached Cheeka to extend invitations for the upcoming state-level Guru Daksh Prajapati Jayanti celebrations, scheduled for July 10 in Kurukshetra on the occasion of Guru Purnima, and July 13 in Bhiwani. Pawan Kumar Kanungo, President of Kurukshetra Prajapati Dharamshala, and Manoj Ramgarh, Urban District President of BPHO Kaithal, informed that the state-level celebration on July 13 in Bhiwani will be held

with great fervor. Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini will be the chief guest, and Cabinet Minister Ranbir Singh Gangwa will preside over the event. During the visit, a publicity team was formed for all villages in the Cheeka region. This team will go door-to-door to spread awareness about the July 13 celebration. The president further informed that a bus will depart from Guru Daksh Prajapati Chabutra in Cheeka village at 5:00 AM on July 13, with arrangements made for food and refreshments for all participants. Present on the occasion were: Pawan Kumar Kanungo (President,

Kurukshetra Prajapati Dharamshala), former president Bhawani Das, cashier Hariom Shokal, BPHO Kaithal Urban District President Manoj Ramgarh, Mam Chand, Suresh Kumar, Ashok Kumar, Krishna Kumar, Dinesh Mator, Surender Kumar, Ishwar Chand, Pala Ram, Baljeet Master, Roshan Lal, Ramesh Kumar, Jasmer, Ruldu Ram Nambardar, Mahavir (Printing Press), Bira Ram, Balbir, Balkar, Karam Singh, Jai Bhagwan, Ramdhari, Shera Ram, Ramkumar Mator, and several other prominent members of the community.

40 Quintals of Wheat Missing from Karnal's Kunjpura Government Godown — Incharge Suspended, Report Sent to Chandigarh

PARVEEN WALIA

Karnal: A major irregularity involving 40 quintals of wheat has surfaced at the government godown of the Food and Supplies Department located in Kunjpura, Karnal. During an inspection by the District Food and Supplies Controller (DFSC) team, this shortage was discovered. The team completed its investigation report on Tuesday, which has now been forwarded to the Chandigarh headquarters. Further action will be decided from there.

Complaints of irregularities were ongoing

There had been continuous

complaints about irregularities in this godown, prompting the department to initiate an official inquiry. Last Friday, Haryana's Food and Supplies Minister Rajesh Nagar made a surprise visit to the location.

Minister's anger over missing key, immediate suspension

During the inspection, the godown key was not available on-site, which angered the minister and he initially left the location. However, he later returned and ordered a detailed count and weight verification of wheat sacks in his presence. He also directed that the

entire process be recorded on video and immediately suspended godown incharge Ashok Sharma on the spot.

Godown already under scanner for past irregularities

This is not the first time the Kunjpura godown has faced controversy. Whistleblower Vikas Sharma had previously filed a complaint with the Chief Minister's Office, alleging that thousands of sacks had incomplete stitching, weights below standard, and up to 4,400 sacks might be missing. He had demanded a high-level investigation into the matter.

Suspended incharge previously jailed for bribery

Ashok Sharma, the godown incharge who has now been suspended, has earlier been accused of bribery and even spent around two months in jail. Despite this, he was reinstated at the same godown. Once again, he faces serious allegations of wheat stock manipulation.

DFSC confirms report; next action with HQ

Investigation team incharge and DFSC officer Anil Kumar stated that one section of the godown had already been inspected

before the minister's visit. On his orders, two more sections were examined, which revealed a shortage of 40 quintals of wheat. The full report has been submitted and sent to Chandigarh HQ for further decisions.

All eyes on headquarters' next move

With the report now in the hands of Chandigarh headquarters, all eyes are on the next steps. Officials suggest that more names could come under the scanner following the minister's directives. The department has confirmed that any further actions will now be decided at the higher level.

Former Chhattisgarh Governor Shekhar Dutt Passes Away; Tributes Pour In



Raipur/Champa: Former Chhattisgarh Governor and ex-IAS officer Shekhar Dutt passed away at AIIMS, New Delhi. A 1969-batch IAS officer, he had a distinguished career in administration and defense. He served as India's Defence Secretary and Deputy National Security Advisor, and was Governor of Chhattisgarh from 2010 to 2014. Before joining civil services, he served in the Army and was awarded the Sena Medal for bravery in the 1971 war. He also played a vital role in organizing the Afro-Asian Games in 2003 as Director General of SAI. Press Club Champa paid heartfelt tribute to Dutt, remembering his contributions and offering condolences to his family.

Former Municipal President Rajesh Agarwal Celebrates 58th Birthday with Community Tributes
Champa, Chhattisgarh: Renowned social leader and former Municipal President Rajesh Kumar Agarwal celebrated his 58th birthday with warmth and devotion.

The event was marked by heartfelt wishes from family, friends, and Press Club Champa members at Kailash Sa Mill. Agarwal, a respected industrialist and president of Nirala Sahitya Mandal, was praised for his humility, cultural contributions, and public service. Spiritual celebrations took place at the 250-year-old Jagannath Temple, where 58 ghee lamps were lit. A poetic tribute by Dr. Ravindra Dwivedi and blessings from literary members highlighted his legacy. Agarwal's commitment to Champa's development and cultural identity earned admiration from across the district.

Amar Sultania Lauds CM Sai's Vision for Industrial Growth in Chhattisgarh
Janjgir-Champa:BJP leader and Chamber of Commerce official Amar Sultania praised Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai's industrial vision, calling it a game-changer for Chhattisgarh's economy. He highlighted the Industry Dialogue-2 event and the launch of the One Click Single Window System 2.0, noting that investment proposals worth 1.23 lakh crore and 20,000+ job prospects show real progress. Sultania welcomed reforms like the new logistics policy and Jan Vishwas Bill, calling them boosts for MSMEs and startups. He also backed CM Sai's plan to make Nava Raipur the "Silicon Valley of Chhattisgarh," citing MoUs in tech, pharma, and green energy as signs of a brighter economic future. He urged entrepreneurs to seize the growing opportunities and support the state's transformation.

Collector Inspects Champa BDM Hospital, Sewage Treatment Plant, and Hanuman Dhara; Expresses Displeasure Over Cleanliness and Delays

Champa (Janjgir-Champa): Collector Janmejay Mahobe carried out a detailed inspection of several important facilities in Champa, including the Bisahu Das Mahant Memorial (BDM) Hospital, the under-construction Sewage Treatment Plant (STP), and the naturally scenic Hanuman Dhara site. He was joined by Champa Municipal Council Chairman Pradeep Namdev, SDM Sumit Baghel, Municipal CMO Bholaram Singh, and other concerned officials during the visit. At BDM Hospital, the Collector assessed the overall condition of healthcare services, sanitation, and infrastructure. He thoroughly inspected various departments such as the male and female wards, toilets, pathology lab, operation theatre, maternity ward, dental and eye sections, Jan Aushadhi Kendra, and the burn unit. Noting a large accumulation of unused and junked hospital beds and equipment, he expressed strong dissatisfaction and directed that all such waste be removed within a month. The Collector also took serious note of the poor cleanliness standards at the hospital and warned officials



that continued negligence would invite strict action. He emphasized the need for a hygienic environment for patients and instructed PWD officials to urgently fix issues such as water seepage and to complete tile installations. A detailed report on all ongoing construction and repairs was also requested. Furthermore, he directed that medical waste be handled in a proper and timely manner and assigned SDM Baghel to conduct regular inspections to ensure compliance. Following this, the Collector visited Hanuman Dhara, a naturally beautiful area with high potential for tourism. He appreciated the site's appeal and directed officials to prepare a structured development plan to enhance its attractiveness for visitors. Instructions were given to improve sanitation, install seating and recreational facilities, put up informative signboards, and ensure proper lighting. As a symbolic gesture of environmental commitment, he also planted a sapling under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' campaign during the visit. Later, the

Collector proceeded to inspect the construction site of a 5.3 MLD Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in Ward No. 13, near Ghoghra Nala and adjacent to the new filter plant. This crucial project, approved by the government, is intended to treat the city's drainage water before it is released into the river. Mahobe instructed the contractor to complete the construction work within the designated timeframe while maintaining high-quality standards. He stressed the importance of accountability and



directed the SDM to monitor the progress closely. The Collector also stated that he would personally inspect the facility after its completion to ensure it functions as intended. This comprehensive inspection reflects the administration's focused commitment to improving public healthcare services, sanitation infrastructure, and promoting eco-tourism in the region. The Collector's directives highlight the emphasis on cleanliness, efficiency, and timely execution to meet the public's expectations.

89 Lakh Rural Projects Approved in Nawagarh

Janjgir-Champa: On the recommendation of MLA Bias Kashyap, development works worth over 89 lakh have been approved under the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Rural Development Scheme in Nawagarh block. Sukli village will receive 5.20 lakh for the construction of Nirmala Ghat. CC roads worth 5.20 lakh each have been sanctioned in Avarid and Bhaisda villages. Jagmahant village will get 6.50 lakh for a new community hall. A 10.40 lakh road is approved from Ashok Singh's farm to the village school. Bodsara will receive 15.60 lakh for a CC road to Hathi Tikra. 5.20 lakh is allotted in Banari and 10.40 lakh in Amoda for vital road work. Semra and Bargaon villages will each get 710.40 and 5.20 lakh respectively for road construction. Locals expressed gratitude to MLA Kashyap for pushing forward essential infrastructure upgrades.



Nothing Launches its First True Flagship - Nothing Phone (3) and First Over-Ear Audio Product - Headphone (1) in India

Vatika Times

KARNAL / SONIPAT : – London-based technology company Nothing today announced the launch of two category-defining products in India - Nothing Phone (3), its first true flagship smartphone, and Nothing Headphone (1), its debut over-ear audio product. Both products reflect Nothing's vision to reimagine consumer tech with intentional design and bold innovation.

Nothing Phone (3)

Nothing Phone (3) introduces a new era of smartphone performance and expression. Designed to make tech feel personal again, it features a pro-grade triple camera system, including a class-leading 1/1.3" main sensor for rich low-light shots, lossless optical zoom, and cinematic 4K 60fps video across all lenses with full optical image stabilisation. A vibrant 6.67" AMOLED display with ultra-narrow bezels, and a powerful Snapdragon® 8s Gen 4 chipset, all wrapped in a premium modular design. With Glyph Matrix, users can receive key information at a glance and engage with playful experiences like Flip to Record and Glyph Toys. The Phone (3) features a new tri-column layout - A redesigned R-angle shape improves ergonomics, while the front features uniform 1.87 mm bezels, 18% slimmer than Phone (2), framing a sharper, more immersive AMOLED screen.

Nothing Phone (3) ships with Android 15 and Nothing OS 3.5 out of the box. The Nothing OS 3.5 brings AI-powered features like Essential Space and Essential Search, helping users stay focused and organised on their own terms. It is future-ready with Android 16 and Nothing OS 4.0 set to arrive in Q3 2025. Nothing is committed to longevity, offering 5 years of major Android updates and 7 years of security updates, ensuring Phone (3) is built to last, both in design and experience. With a 5500 mAh high-density battery, 65W fast wired charging, 15W wireless charging and IP68 rating, Phone (3) is ready for everything life throws at it.

Nothing Headphone (1)

Nothing Headphone (1) marks Nothing's entry into the over-ear audio category. Developed in collaboration with KEF, it combines expressive design with precision engineering. From the custom 40 mm dynamic driver to the real-time Spatial Audio with head tracking, it delivers a deeply immersive listening experience.

KU VC Commits to TB-Free Society as Ni-Kshay Mitra under PM's National Campaign

KU VC Pledges Support to TB Patients, Joins PM's Ni-Kshay Mitra Campaign

Jasbir Singh Duggal

Kurukshetra: In a commendable gesture under the Prime Minister's TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan (TB-Free India Campaign), Kurukshetra University Vice Chancellor, Prof. Som Nath Sachdeva, has pledged his support as a Ni-Kshay Mitra. On Thursday, Deputy Civil Surgeon (TB) of LNJP Hospital, Dr. Sandeep Aggarwal, along with Mr. Vijay Panjeta, met with Prof. Sachdeva at his office and requested him to support the campaign by becoming a Ni-Kshay Mitra. On the occasion, Prof. Sachdeva

emphasized that the fight against tuberculosis requires collective societal involvement, and every capable individual should come forward to support TB patients. Under the Ni-Kshay Mitra Yojana, any responsible citizen, public representative, official, entrepreneur, or organization can adopt TB patients and support them through their recovery. Prof Sachdeva further stated that this initiative exemplifies true community participation. While medication is vital, nutrition and



emotional support play a crucial role in the recovery process. The support extended by society will aid not only the physical well-being of TB patients but also contribute to their mental resilience. Deputy Civil Surgeon (TB), Dr. Sandeep Aggarwal, explained that the Ni-Kshay Mitra Yojana is essentially an adoption-based support initiative for TB patients. Expressing his gratitude to Prof. Som Nath Sachdeva for joining the initiative, Dr. Aggarwal noted that the Vice Chancellor's involvement reflects his strong sense of social responsibility and deep commitment to public health. Dr Sandeep also lauded Prof. Sachdeva's inspiring leadership in supporting this national movement towards a TB-free India.

ED Cracks Down on 200 Crore Jaipur Wedding Linked to Mahadev Betting Scam

Raipur: In a sensational development in the Mahadev Online Betting App case, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) team from Raipur raided a grand wedding at Hotel Fairmont, a five-star property in Kukas, Jaipur. The event, reportedly costing over 200 crore, saw the attendance of more than 250 high-profile guests from Dubai, Bhilai, and Raipur. The groom, Saurabh Ahuja—allegedly linked to the Mahadev betting network—fled the venue immediately after completing wedding rituals upon learning of the ED's arrival. Saurabh Ahuja, once a modest resident of Bhopal, is said to have amassed enormous wealth through illegal online betting operations coordinated from Dubai. The extravagant scale of the wedding—lavish décor, international guests, and high-end amenities—stood in stark contrast to his humble past. Acting on specific intelligence



inputs, the ED officials intercepted the celebration, detaining three guests on-site for their suspected involvement in illegal financial activities and seizing several digital devices and documents. The bride was also questioned during the raid as investigators traced hawala links and large money transfers to Saurabh. He is believed to be closely associated with arrested betting operators and has financial ties with Bhopal-based travel agents Dheeraj and Vishal Ahuja. These individuals

allegedly arranged international travel and hotel accommodations for the wedding guests using funds laundered through hawala transactions. The ED's probe has already led to the arrest of 18 individuals in the case, including several police personnel and businessmen. Key promoters of the Mahadev betting platform—Saurabh Chandrakar, Ravi Uppal, Shubham Soni, and Atul Agrawal—remain absconding, with chargesheets filed in their absence. In April 2024, ED teams had also searched multiple Jaipur locations, including the residence of fruit trader Bharat Dadhich, seizing critical evidence linked to the same case. The Mahadev app has become notorious for using extravagant public events to legitimize laundered money. A similar instance occurred in February 2023, when Saurabh Chandrakar hosted a 200 crore wedding in Dubai, financed entirely

through illicit funds. The glitzy event, attended by high-ranking officials and app operators, mirrored the pattern of laundering via luxury. Launched in 2019 from Dubai, the Mahadev Book App grew rapidly during the pandemic, especially amidst the audience-less 2021 IPL season. It allegedly attracted nearly 99 lakh users by offering illegal betting on sports like cricket and football. Operators used cashback schemes and fake winnings to lure users while quietly routing massive sums through hawala channels. The recent Jaipur raid highlights how black money was being masked behind luxury weddings and elite gatherings. With several suspects now in custody and more arrests likely, the ED has reinforced its stance against the deep-rooted betting empire and vowed to pursue action against all involved in the sprawling financial fraud.

SP Honours Outstanding Police Personnel for Exemplary Work in Janjgir-Champa

Janjgir-Champa: Superintendent of Police Vijay Kumar Pandey honored several police personnel of the district for their exceptional service by awarding them certificates of appreciation and recording commendations in their service books. The felicitation ceremony recognized officers who showcased efficiency, promptness, and dedication across various duties during June 2025. Sub-Inspector Manohar Sinha of Pamgarh Police Station was felicitated for recovering the highest number of missing persons under the "Talaash" campaign, run as per the directives of Police Headquarters, Raipur. His performance was noted as a sign of outstanding investigative skills and dedication. Assistant Sub-Inspector Santosh Banjare, also from Pamgarh, received recognition for collecting the maximum number of electronic evidence files using the newly introduced "e-Sakshya" mobile application. This app has been developed to streamline the collection of digital evidence under the new legal framework. Constable Brijesh Dhritilhare of



Shivrinarayan Police Station was awarded for entering the highest number of court judgment forms (IIF-6) into the CCNS Online CAS system during the same month. His consistent data entry work was instrumental in enhancing record accuracy. Constables Sumant Kanwar and Jai Kumar Oraon of Champa Police Station were honored for their swift action in locating a missing four-year-old child. Upon receiving a WhatsApp alert about the child from Mulmula area, the

duo promptly coordinated with RPF and traced the child to Bilaspur, showcasing alertness and responsiveness. Head Constable Dev Ratnakar was acknowledged for his outstanding coordination during the medical camp organized at the Reserve Center. His support ensured the camp ran smoothly and benefited all attendees. Traffic Constable Prashant Sahu was commended for his excellent performance in road safety initiatives under the i-RAD and Road Safety Mitra programs.

His efforts contributed significantly to public awareness and accident prevention. The event was attended by Additional SP Umesh Kumar Kashyap, DSP (AJAK) Jitendra Khunte, senior clerk Rajendra Srivastava, and AJAK Police Station In-charge Ranjeet Kanwar. The SP appreciated the commendable contributions of all honored officers and encouraged others in the force to maintain high standards of service and dedication.

Coal Project Sparks Fresh Unrest in Raigarh as 120 Hectares of Forest Face Destruction

Raigarh, Chhattisgarh: Fresh protests have erupted in the Tamnar region of Raigarh as Jindal Power Limited (JPL) prepares to clear 120 hectares of forest land in Gare Pelma Sector-1 for a new coal project. The move follows ongoing anger over the destruction of 214 hectares of forest in nearby Murgaoon for the Mahagenco coal block. JPL has been granted a 50-year lease to extract 15 million tonnes of coal annually and plans to acquire over 3,000 hectares of land, directly affecting villages like Budia, Raipara, Bagbadi, and Aamgaon. Local communities fear the loss of forest will disrupt water sources, damage livelihoods, and destroy tribal heritage. Many allege that public hearings held for such projects are mere formalities, with their concerns routinely ignored. Activists warn of irre-

versible environmental damage and cultural erosion, accusing authorities of prioritizing corporate interests over community welfare. The Tamnar region is already grappling with displacement due to past mining operations. Residents say each year brings new approvals for destructive projects, despite widespread opposition. A fresh public hearing for the Gare Pelma project is expected soon, and villagers have vowed to resist it strongly. Environmentalists argue that Raigarh's forests are more than timber—they're the lifeline of tribal communities. Calls are growing for the district administration to conduct thorough environmental and social impact assessments before moving forward. If the current pattern continues, activists warn of larger, statewide protests in defense of forests and community rights.

Editorial

Prime Minister Modi Embarks on Landmark 8-Day Foreign Tour: A Strategic Diplomatic Mission to Strengthen India’s Global Influence Across Africa, South America, and the Caribbean

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s eight-day foreign tour includes key visits to Ghana, Brazil, Argentina, and Trinidad & Tobago. The trip aims to enhance India’s diplomatic ties, expand trade partnerships, and engage with global leaders at the BRICS Summit. This strategic outreach highlights India’s growing role in shaping a multipolar world order.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi departed on Wednesday for an impactful eight-day foreign tour that includes his participation in the BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, along with visits to Ghana, Argentina, and Trinidad and Tobago. The journey holds major diplomatic and economic significance, highlighting India’s evolving global stature and strategic engagement with emerging economies. This tour is seen as a vital opportunity to strengthen India’s influence across Africa, South America, and the Caribbean. One of the landmark moments of the visit is the Prime Minister’s arrival in Ghana, making him the first Indian leader to visit the West African nation in over three decades. His visit has been met with great excitement, especially among the Indian-origin community living there. This leg of the tour is expected to enhance bilateral ties in various sectors including trade, health, education, and technology. Ghana already imports a range of Indian products, including automobiles from Tata Motors and Ashok Leyland. Modi’s presence is likely to energize these trade relations further and open doors for collaboration in infrastructure development, digital innovation, and skill-building initiatives. A key focus of the tour is the



BRICS Summit in Brazil, where the Prime Minister is set to meet with the heads of state from the BRICS nations—Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The summit comes at a time when the world is navigating geopolitical tensions and shifting alliances. Discussions are expected to revolve around pressing global issues such as reforming international financial institutions, strengthening intra-BRICS trade, climate

change cooperation, the expansion of the BRICS Bank (New Development Bank), and building a united front to counterbalance Western-dominated global structures. India is anticipated to once again project itself as a voice of the Global South, championing the cause of inclusive development and fair governance on the world stage. In Argentina, Prime Minister Modi will explore partnerships in sectors like agriculture, pharmaceuticals, renew-

able energy, and sports. Both countries have expressed mutual interest in expanding trade and cultural exchange. The visit to Trinidad and Tobago also holds emotional and strategic importance, as it has a large Indian diaspora. Modi’s engagement with the Indian-origin community there is in line with India’s broader foreign policy of strengthening ties with its global diaspora and leveraging those connections to build stronger bilateral relations. This tour is a significant step forward in India’s foreign policy, reflecting its ambition to transition from a regional power to a global influencer. By deepening ties with strategically important yet often under-engaged regions, India is broadening its diplomatic and economic horizons. The visit underscores India’s commitment to multipolar global governance, cooperative diplomacy, and building resilient international partnerships. As Prime Minister Modi takes center stage in various global forums during this tour, he carries with him not only the interests of India but also the aspirations of developing nations looking for balanced and fair leadership in a changing world order. The journey is not merely ceremonial—it is a strategic move to consolidate India’s position as a key player in shaping the global future.

The Burden of Legacy: How Increased Longevity Challenges Modern Power Politics

Since the average lifespan of people in this country has increased, it seems that their relatives, well-wishers, and even close ones are growing increasingly eager for their demise. On one hand, dynastic politics has become a perceived necessity for climbing the ladders of prestige, wealth, and influence in society. On the other, once a son, grandson, brother, or disciple achieves success by standing on the shoulders of their elder, they are often quick to discard the very person who supported them—sending them to an old-age home or exile like unwanted baggage. Just as two swords cannot fit in one sheath, a son can easily walk in his father’s shoes, but the days are gone when a younger brother like Bharat would carry Lord Ram’s sandals to Ayodhya and rule for fourteen years with them on the throne. Today, intentions have changed. If a father helps his son get a powerful position and peacefully passes on, the son will turn him into legend. He’ll make statues, stir public devotion among voters, and strengthen his political ground. But if the elder refuses to die or play puppet to the son’s ambitions, it feels like a curse upon the heir’s fate. In today’s age of opportunistic traditions, if an elder tries to secure his chair while allowing the successor to grow, chaos is almost certain. The heir will label the elder senile or mentally unstable. If that doesn’t work, the next stop is a mental institution. And when all else fails, the argument that the elder belongs to a bygone era and the heir represents a new age is always ready. Meanwhile, the very medical advancements that have prolonged the elder’s life are secretly cursed by those waiting in line for the throne. The heirs don’t mind if the elder shares power—so long as they get a small seat beside him. But if the entire family floods into a single political party, critics raise concerns over the monopolization of power. Savvy political minds then offer a clever solution: "This is democracy, after all!" Let the elder remain in his seat while the heirs join rival parties. That way, even if voters get fed up and throw out the ruling party, the family still holds the reins through the opposition. So, the government may change, but instead of real reform, it’s just Ramnath being replaced by Sham-nath. Gone Ram, enter Gaya Ram—different name, same game. Those in power, regardless of party, are cut from the same cloth. They promise “better days,” but deliver the same old mix of inefficiency, corruption, and bureaucratic traps. The common man, endlessly wandering through this maze, now celebrates his confusion as some sort of golden jubilee. What has increased with longevity is not wisdom or change, but the merging of the old and the young into one corrupt establishment. The heirs were promoted as the "new blood" meant to revive a decaying political system. But their actions, announcements, and hollow slogans all reflect the same familiar political chessboard. The caps have changed, the faces are new, but the voice remains the same.

-Suresh Seth



Current Article

In our hyper-connected digital world, Google knows us better than we know ourselves. We forget things, but Google never does. Our memories fade, our thoughts drift, and our lives become chaotic — but Google’s algorithms store every detail with surgical precision. From our food preferences to fashion choices, from the places we visit to the money we spend, Google, along with countless data-driven marketing companies, has it all. These companies gather data from multiple sources and share or sell it among themselves. As a result, we are left utterly exposed, with no real privacy left. In today’s world, personal information is a commodity, and we are its unsuspecting suppliers. We now live in a reality where marketing dominates perception. Companies no longer present products for what they truly are. Instead, they showcase exaggerated strengths, conveniently hide flaws, and dress up their offerings in glittering packaging designed to manipulate emotions. The truth is diluted, and deception becomes the norm. Every industry — from healthcare to education, fashion to food — is caught in this spiral of presentation over substance. These companies have mastered the art of illusion, and the modern consumer has become their puppet. The obsession with profit has led to a crisis of sensitivity in our world. We are witnessing a society driven by economics, where money trumps ethics, and speed overshadows compassion. Even the sacred domain of healthcare has not been spared. Humans, the so-called most intelligent species on Earth, need vaccines, surgeries, pills, and constant supervision just to stay alive. Ironically, the very institutions meant to protect our health are often the ones exploiting it. There have been countless incidents where hospitals, after a patient’s death, continue to show them as “alive” on ventilators — just to increase billing. Medical professionals them-

In the Grip of Greed and Illusion: A World Stripped of Simplicity and Privacy



selves, in private conversations, admit that for many diseases, the real cause is unknown, the cure is uncertain, and the treatment is mostly trial and error. Diagnosing a disease often depends more on the doctor’s experience and mood than on science. If the doctor is tired, angry, distracted, or emotionally unwell, their diagnosis can be dangerously flawed — even if they are otherwise brilliant. Moreover, many legally approved drugs come with serious side effects — some so extreme that they mimic the symptoms of addiction. Patients who have never touched alcohol or cigarettes may suddenly feel like addicts, simply due to medication. Scientific research, too, is no longer immune. There’s a growing trend of studies being fast-tracked without proper scrutiny. What’s worse, research results are increasingly manipulated to suit the needs of the corporate sponsors funding them. Science has turned into a business, and truth is often the first casualty. Healthcare research is no different. It is increasingly shaped by commercial interests, and very little is

actually designed for the public good. The illusion of progress masks a reality of manipulation. Life, which could be simple and fulfilling, has become complicated and chaotic — not by necessity, but by choice. We have walked willingly into the traps set by corporations, trading peace for speed, simplicity for show, and authenticity for image. Even young schoolchildren have absorbed the culture of comparison. Ask them what they did during vacations, and they’ll tell you which country their parents took them to. Listen to their lunch break conversations, and you’ll hear about weekend dinners at fancy restaurants, birthday party extravaganzas, and branded clothes. Childhood has become a stage for social performance, and every child is trained to play a role. When both parents work, income doubles, and so does the urge to show off. A bit of extra money leads to more luxuries. Luxuries create arrogance. Arrogance demands admiration. Admiration fuels laziness, because when you can afford to outsource everything, you stop doing anything

yourself. The result? A life filled with comforts, but devoid of connection. This kind of lifestyle demands more money, and the pursuit of money leads to relentless running. We are always in a hurry, always late, and always chasing something. We have no time for important conversations or meaningful relationships. We live under pressure — not just financial, but emotional and social. And the result? Relationships are crumbling. Divorce rates are soaring. Families are breaking apart. Brothers turn against each other, children alienate from parents, spouses become strangers. The word "marriage" itself has begun to evoke fear — will the person I marry become the destroyer of my peace? But the solution is within reach. We don’t need revolutions or miracles. We simply need to shed one toxic habit — the fear of “what will people say?”. If we can let go of this one fear, half our problems will disappear. Stop trying to impress others, and your desires will shrink. Once desires shrink, greed fades. Without greed, the need to chase money vanishes. With no need to run, we slow down. And in that slowing down, we rediscover peace — the one thing that truly matters. Life was meant to be peaceful. It can still be. We just have to recognize the lies we’ve been told — that we need more to be happy, that luxury equals success, that speed is power. When we understand that less is more, we’ll find calm in simplicity, strength in stillness, and joy in authenticity. Let the world not be money-centered. Let it be peace-centered. As the ancient spiritual wisdom beautifully says: "Chah gayi, chinta miti, manua beparwah; Jinko kuch na chahiye, woh sahib ke sahib." (Desires are gone, worries have vanished, the mind is care-free; Those who need nothing are kings among kings.)

-Spiritual Healer and Guinness World Record-Holding Author Siddh Guru Pramod Nirvan

The Politics of Language: The Assault on Hindi and National Unity

In a shocking incident from Maharashtra, members of Raj Thackeray’s party assaulted a shopkeeper simply because he couldn’t speak in Marathi. This wasn’t just an attack on an individual — it was an attack on Hindi, the official language of the Union of India. Similar incidents have repeatedly surfaced in Tamil Nadu, where Hindi speakers are often mistreated or harassed. In Mumbai, political goons have long targeted migrants from North India, making language a sensitive and divisive issue. From E.M.S. Namboodiripad’s politics in Kerala to Periyar’s anti-Hindi agitations in Tamil Nadu, Hindi has historically been vilified in certain regions. It has been wrongly labeled as an imperialistic language, accused of threatening regional languages recognized under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. However, these are nothing but myths and political fabrications. Can any imperialist language gain recognition in the Indian Constitution — a document built on democratic values and pluralism? In truth, Hindi was officially adopted as the Union’s official language on 14 September 1949 after extensive debates in the Constituent

An attack on a shopkeeper in Maharashtra for not speaking Marathi reignites the debate over Hindi’s status in India. Despite being the official language and spoken by millions, Hindi continues to face hostility in some regions. Political agendas and linguistic chauvinism threaten national unity and constitutional values.

Assembly. Article 343 of the Constitution designates Hindi in the Devanagari script as the official language of the central government. Part XVII of the Constitution (Articles 343 to 351) deals exclusively with the language policy of India, and Article 351 clearly directs the central government to promote the spread of Hindi, ensuring it can serve as a medium to express India’s rich, composite cultural heritage. Despite such constitutional backing, Hindi remains a target of regional chauvinism. Every year, India celebrates Hindi Diwas on 14th September, though many view it as a mere formality. Still, it is undeniable that Hindi is the language of the majority — spoken, read, or understood by over 60–65 crore Indians. Across non-Hindi states such as Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka, politicians, artists, and parliamentarians often learn Hindi to remain relevant on the

national stage. Eminent non-Hindi writers like Mahasweta Devi (Bengal) and Vijay Tendulkar (Maharashtra) gained national recognition and were awarded honors like the Jnanpith only after their works were translated into Hindi. Similarly, Hindi readers have embraced Bengali authors like Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay and Bankim Chandra Chatterjee, whose novels continue to be widely read. Rabindranath Tagore’s ‘Gitanjali’, too, was translated into Hindi and remains popular among readers to this day. So why is India being divided along linguistic lines? When a Hindi-speaking shopkeeper is assaulted in Maharashtra, or when Hindi is deliberately excluded from the “three-language formula” under the New Education Policy, it is not only a cultural injustice but a clear violation of the Constitution — and, therefore, a criminal act. The motivations behind such actions are

often political. With upcoming BMC elections in Mumbai, the Thackeray brothers appear to be stirring linguistic sentiments to regain relevance. Raj Thackeray’s party has no legislative presence, yet his followers continue to beat up Hindi speakers. Ironically, even the Marathi-speaking public hasn’t supported this brand of politics, as evident from the party’s repeated electoral failures. Mumbai is also home to Bollywood, a multi-billion-rupee industry built largely on Hindi. Yet, many of the superstars who dominate this space — and earn their fortunes because of the Hindi-speaking audience — are notably silent on such incidents. One wonders whether their silence is due to fear or convenience. When it comes to defending Hindi, even these so-called icons of Indian cinema fade into the background. Meanwhile, the film industry today witnesses a massive influx

of South Indian films being dubbed in Hindi. Stars like Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan became national icons only after their films were made accessible to Hindi audiences. These films generate massive profits, yet when the language that brings them national fame is attacked, there is a glaring silence. What kind of morality and nationalism is this — one that profits from Hindi but refuses to stand by it? Globally, Hindi is the fourth most spoken language in the world. A majority of Lok Sabha seats belong to the Hindi belt. Most Indian Prime Ministers have come from Hindi-speaking regions. Even the Oxford English Dictionary has incorporated many Hindi words. Over 150 universities worldwide offer Hindi as a subject of study. So, how can such a language — deeply rooted in the nation’s culture, spoken by its majority, and constitutionally protected — be called imperialistic? It is time India looks beyond divisive politics and regional egos. Language should be a bridge, not a weapon. Hindi, like every other Indian language, deserves respect, dignity, and above all — protection from those who seek to pit Indians against one another.

Hectic parleys underway in Washington



New Delhi: Hectic parleys are underway between officials of India and the US in Washington on the proposed interim trade agreement between the two countries, an official said on Wednesday.

The talks entered the seventh day on Wednesday in Washington, the official said.

While India is seeking greater market access for its labour-intensive goods, the US wants duty concessions for its agricultural products.

The Indian team, headed by special secretary in the Department of Commerce Rajesh Agrawal, is in Washington for negotiations.

The stay of the Indian officials has been extended. Initially, the delegation was scheduled to stay for two days after the talks commenced on June 26.

These talks are impor-

tant as the suspension of Trump's reciprocal tariffs is ending on July 9. The two sides are looking at finalising the talks before that.

India has hardened its position on giving duty concessions to American farm products. It is seeking duty concessions for its labour-intensive goods such as textiles, engineering, leather, gems and jewellery.

On April 2, the US imposed an additional 26 per cent reciprocal tariff on Indian goods but suspended it for 90 days. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed by America remains in place. India is seeking full exemption from the additional 26 per cent tariff.

Thrust on agriculture, dairy

The US is demanding duty concessions in both the ag-

India-US Interim Trade Deal

India's oil concerns shared with US Senator: Jaishankar



Washington: External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar suggested that India has shared its concerns with US Senator Lindsey Graham over his bill proposing a 500 per cent tariff on nations buying oil from Russia.

"I think our concerns and our interests in energy security have been made conversant to him," Jaishankar said while replying to a media query in Washington DC on Wednesday.

A legislation proposed by Graham calls for imposing 500 per cent tariffs on nations buying oil from Russia if Moscow refuses to participate in peace negotiations with Ukraine.

Jaishankar said that the Indian Embassy and officials have been in touch with Graham over the issue while adding that "we'll then have to cross that bridge when we come to it, if we come to it."

Jaishankar added that any development happening in the US Congress is of interest to India "if it impacts our interest or could impact our interest".

riculture and dairy sectors. But these segments are difficult and challenging areas for India to give duty concessions to the US as Indian farmers are into sustenance farming and have small land holdings.

Therefore, these sectors are politically sensitive.

India has not opened up the dairy sector for any of its trading partners in free trade pacts the country has signed so far.

The US wants duty concessions on certain industrial goods, automobiles, especially electric vehicles, wines, petrochemical products, dairy, and agricultural items like apples, tree nuts, and genetically modified crops.

India is seeking duty concessions for labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, grapes, and bananas in the proposed trade pact.

The two countries are also looking to conclude talks for the first tranche of the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) by fall (September-October) this year. The pact is aimed at more than doubling bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the current USD 191 billion.

Before the first tranche, they are trying for an interim trade pact. The US team was here last for the talks.

Tricky areas may be dealt with later on: Memani

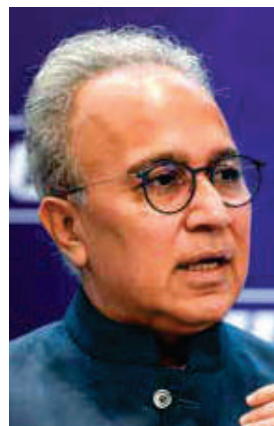
New Delhi: Newly appointed CII President Rajiv Memani on Thursday underlined the need for a "balanced and reasonable" free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the US in the initial phase, saying the tricky areas having political ramifications could be tackled at a later date.

India is negotiating an FTA with the United States, and a team of commerce ministry officials is currently in Washington trying to secure an early agreement ahead of the July 9 deadline set by President Donald Trump for imposition of higher tariffs.

Industry lobby CII is expecting a "balanced, reasonable FTA which will be done in tranches... Those areas which are more tricky, which require more consultation, have greater political ramifications, maybe dealt with later on," said Memani, who took over as CII President recently.

India is reluctant to open access to sensitive agriculture and dairy sectors to the US industry, as opening the farm sector could jeopardise the interest of farmers. Also, India does not want to open the dairy sector because of religious sensitivities.

"I do know that the level of preparation that the Ministry of Commerce has done, and the engagement



that they have had with industry, the engagement that they have had with various industries, in Ministry of Agriculture has been very limited... and I feel very confident that the challenges that Indian industry, and particularly some sectors mentioned, agriculture... those will be adequately addressed.

"Also from an industry standpoint, there are issues and concerns that have been raised, in all these things you will not always have 100 per cent winners...", the CII President said.

On reports of Foxconn Technology Group asking Chinese engineers and technicians to return home from its iPhone plant in India, the CII President, in an apparent reference to China, said that "when a Quad meeting is happening, there is some action that we see from some countries, and there are (certain) messages in a

way".

The four-nation Quad grouping includes India, US, Australia, and Japan.

Big concern for auto

Responding to another question on China restricting exports of rare earth magnets and its impact on India's auto sector, as well as other sectors like electronics, the CII sector said it was a "big concern" for the auto sector and there was a need to look at areas where India has "critical supply chain dependencies", including active pharmaceutical ingredients.

India is heavily reliant on China for APIs, the raw materials for drug manufacturing.

"In auto, I would say a concern is more serious than what's come out till now. In fact, some of the most conservative companies are already starting to give some guidance on lowering their production levels going forward. So definitely, there is a worry, concern, much more than auto in some other sectors as well, but I think it's much more predominant," Memani said.

India imports over 53,000 metric tonne rare earth magnets annually (FY25), with China dominating the global supply chain, accounting for over 60 per cent of global REE mining and nearly 90 per cent of refining.

Liebherr's first Made-in-India refrigerator

By correspondent

Mumbai: Liebherr Appliances India has announced its first-ever Made in India Fully Integrated (FI) Fridge, Freezer and Combination.

Representing the next generation of refrigeration technology, Liebherr blends into modern luxury kitchens, combining minimalist design, precision German engineering and advanced cooling intelligence. This marks the brand's foray into a high-growth segment that caters to the discerning Indian consumer.

India is the only country outside Europe where Liebherr manufactures fully integrated refrigerators. All models have been tropicalised to withstand India's extreme and varied climatic conditions – a vital innovation for optimal performance, cooling consistency, and energy efficiency. With manufacturing based in Sambhajanagar, Liebherr aims to revolutionise the premium built-in segment by offering immediate availability of high-end products.

Tropicalised Liebherr appliances feature enhanced compressors, reinforced insulation and optimised cooling systems. These modifications not only ensure consistent performance in ambient temperatures but also boost energy efficiency and extend product life.

The launch was held at Liebherr Appliances' Mumbai Experience Liebherr appliances: Innovation and quality. Powai bringing together global and India leadership in the presence of key dealers.

Stock markets decline on fag-end selling

Mumbai: Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty pared intra-day gains to close lower on Thursday due to last-hour selling in financial and metal shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex dropped by 170.22 points or 0.20 per cent to settle at 83,239.47. During the day, it jumped 440.4 points or 0.52 per cent to 83,850.09.

The 50-share NSE Nifty declined by 48.10 points or 0.19 per cent to 25,405.30.

Among the Sensex firms, Kotak Mahindra Bank, Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Adani Ports, Trent, State Bank of India, Titan and Tata Consultancy Services were the laggards.

However, Maruti, Infosys, NTPC, Asian Paints, Eternal and Hindustan Unilever were among the biggest gainers.

"Markets traded volatile on the weekly expiry day and ended marginally lower, continuing the ongoing consolidation phase," Ajit Mishra – SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd said.

Sector-wise, the trend remained mixed -- auto and pharma posted gains, while metal and realty were among the top losers, he added. The broader in-

dices also mirrored this movement and closed on a flat note.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 index and Shanghai's SSE Composite index settled higher while Hong Kong's Hang Seng ended lower.

European markets were trading on a mixed note. The US markets ended mostly higher on Wednesday.

The Indian services sector growth touched a ten-month high in June aided by robust expansion in international sales and job creation, amid positive demand trends and ongoing improvement in sales, a monthly survey said on Thursday.

The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index rose from 58.8 in May to 60.4 in June, driven by sharp upturn in new business orders.

In the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 1.03 per cent to USD 68.40 a barrel.



Workers at a grain market in Bikaner on Thursday.

Business Loans No pre-payment charges

Mumbai: The RBI on Wednesday directed banks and other lenders not to levy any pre-payment charges on all floating-rate loans and advances, including for business purposes, availed by individuals and micro and small enterprises (MSEs).

The directions will be applicable to all loans and advances sanctioned or renewed on or after January 1, 2026.

In terms of extant guidelines, banks and NBFCs are not permitted to levy foreclosure charges/pre-payment penalties on any floating rate term-loan sanctioned to individual borrowers with or without co-obligant(s) for purposes other than business.

In a circular, the Reserve Bank said the availability of easy and affordable financing to micro and small enterprises (MSEs) is of paramount importance.

However, the Reserve Bank's supervisory reviews have indicated divergent practices among regulated entities (REs) with regard to the levy of pre-payment charges in case of loans sanctioned to MSEs, which lead to customer grievances and disputes, it said.

Based on a review of the

supervisory findings and public feedback received on a draft circular, the central bank has issued the Reserve Bank of India (Pre-payment Charges on Loans) Directions, 2025.

For all loans granted for business purpose to individuals and MSEs, with or without co-obligant(s), a commercial bank (excluding Small Finance bank, Regional Rural bank and Local Area bank), a Tier 4 Primary (Urban) Co-operative bank, an NBFC-UL, and an All India Financial Institution "shall not levy any pre-payment charges", said the directions.

Reliance Retail Invests in UK-Based FACEGYM, Bringing Facial Fitness to India

Mumbai: Reliance Retail Ventures Limited (RRVL) has made a strategic minority investment in FACEGYM, a UK-based global innovator in facial fitness and skincare. This marks a major step in Reliance's expansion into the fast-growing beauty and wellness segment. Founded by Inge Theron, FACEGYM is known for introducing a new category that blends skincare, wellness, and facial fitness. It offers non-invasive facial workouts combined with advanced skincare products that have gained a cult following in major global markets. Through this partnership, Reliance's beauty platform Tira will lead FACEGYM's entry into the Indian market. Over the next five years, Reliance plans to establish the brand through standalone studios and exclusive sections within select Tira stores across major Indian cities. RRVL aims to use its vast retail network and strong consumer insights to successfully scale FACEGYM in India. This move aligns with Reliance Retail's broader goal to become a dominant player in India's beauty and personal care sector. Bhakti Modi, Co-founder and CEO of Tira, expressed excitement about the partnership. "FACEGYM fits perfectly with the evolving Indian consumer who seeks experience-based, science-backed beauty solutions," she said. FACEGYM's facial fitness concept includes signature massage techniques, electrical muscle stimulation (EMS), and collagen-boosting skincare. These methods aim to sculpt, lift, and improve skin health without invasive procedures. Angelo Castello, CEO of FACEGYM, said, "Our



partnership with Reliance will be a catalyst in bringing facial fitness to a wider audience. India is a key market for our global expansion." The collaboration reflects FACEGYM's ambition to scale in high-growth regions while allowing Reliance to further strengthen its leadership in beauty retail with innovative offerings. RRVL operates over 19,000 stores and multiple digital platforms across grocery, fashion, pharma, and electronics. It reported a consolidated turnover of 3.30 lakh crore and an EBITDA of 25,053 crore for FY 2024-25. This investment enhances Tira's portfolio, which already includes brands like Akind, Dream, Immerse Play, and Nails Our Way. The move also reinforces Reliance's commitment to introducing global innovations to Indian consumers and shaping the future of beauty experiences in the country.

Dubai restaurants feel heat of high costs

Dubai: From suspended tables to underwater lounges, some 13,000 food and drink establishments in Dubai pull out all the stops to attract customers in one of the world's most saturated dining markets.

They cater to all tastes and budgets. Some spots ladle out inexpensive biryani while others offer dishes dusted with edible gold.

These are some of the ways the emirate is competing with its neighbours Saudi Arabia and Qatar for tourist dollars and, so far, it's beating them handily.

Dubai has more restaurants per capita than any major city except Paris.

But the city-state's booming restaurant scene is testing the limits of its growth-at-all-costs model, raising questions about how long Dubai can keep feeding its own ambitions.

Competitive market

The competition is cut-throat, so presentation is key.

"Gone are the days when it just tastes good," said Kym Barter, the general manager of Atlantis The Palm, a resort perched on



a manmade archipelago that boasts more Michelin stars than any other venue in the Middle East.

But dazzling Dubai's food bloggers — the most

popular of whom have millions of social media followers — isn't enough. Staying afloat means battling high rents and winning over a diverse and

demanding group of consumers.

Dubai has roughly nine expatriate residents for every Emirati citizen. Most of its private sector workers are migrants on temporary contracts, and only Vatican City has a higher share of foreign-born residents.

Tourists, in turn, out-number locals about five to one by some estimates, and they spend lavishly. Visitors to Dubai drop an average of over five times more than those travelling to nearby Saudi Arabia or

even the US, according to global restaurant consultant Aaron Allen.

With each new set of illuminated high-rises and hotels, another crop of eateries emerge, vying for patrons. The legions of construction workers powering Dubai's progress also need affordable options.

That growth, propped up in part by investor pressure on some of the world's biggest chains to expand in Dubai, has created what some analysts warn is a bubble.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

"The Services PMI business activity index was up to a ten-month high, led by a sharp rise in new domestic orders. Margins improved, as the rise in input costs was below that seen for output charges."



Pranjul Bhandari,
Chief India Economist, HSBC

‘Gill's strategy: traits of a world class player’

Mumbai: India captain Shubman Gill's clearly thought-out strategy and body language on the opening day of the second Test against England are traits of a world-class player with a bright future, says former cricketer Jonathan Trott.

Gill stood tall with a second consecutive ton in the five-Test series, reaching 114 not out (216 balls, 12 fours) at stumps to take India to a sturdy 310/5 on the opening day of the second Test in Birmingham.

The former England batter and incumbent Afghanistan coach heaped praise on the Indian skipper, who held the innings together on a tricky opening day wherein England threatened to cause more damage than they did.

"What also stood out was his body language and the way he scored his runs. His control against the English bowlers sent a message to the dressing room that he was taking charge (and) leading from the front," Trott said in 'JioHotstar'.

"His intent was clear: 'I'll be there, I'll be not out, and I'll resume tomorrow. I'll make sure we get into a winning position'. (It was) very impressive from such a young man — a world-class player with a bright future."

"Having the confidence

to execute a plan that's not necessarily textbook, but gives you an edge over the opposition, is remarkable. As captain, that has a significant impact not just out in the middle, but also for those watching from the team balcony," he added.

Difference in approach

Trott pointed out the difference in Gill's approach while facing England pacers Brydon Carse and Chris Woakes as one of the highlights of his innings.

"Carse has a bit more pace than Chris Woakes, but what's impressive is Gill's understanding of how to counter both," he said.

"He knows Woakes will try to attack the stumps, and without express pace, Gill formulated a plan to handle that — not something he came up with

on the day, but a strategy clearly thought out well in advance. This is what separates good players from average ones and world-class play-

ers from the rest."

While Gill crossed the triple-figure mark, opener Yashasvi Jaiswal missed his second hundred when he fell for 87 but his performances in England so far have impressed the former batter.

"There was a bit of a contrast — some play and misses, but also some exquisite cricket shots. We've spoken about how he tends to chase the ball outside off at times, but when he plays straight, he times the ball so well."

"He doesn't need to over-hit. We've seen him dismantle bowling attacks before, and he's shown he can hit sixes almost at will. But across these three innings in England, he seems to be in much better control."

Trott added, "He has developed a game plan; he knows where and when to score. England will

try to challenge that with tricky field placements, testing his patience and ego. But overall, (he is) very impressive. He is a fantastic player for India."

"Frustrated" Woakes rues missed chances

Seasoned England pacer Chris Woakes admitted to feeling "frustrated" after a couple of tight umpiring calls went in India's favour against his bowling on the opening day of the second Test here.

Woakes, with his immaculate line and length, turned out to be the stand-out bowler for the hosts as he ended day one with figures of 2 for 59 from 18 overs.

However, two key reviews off his bowling -- both ruled umpire's call -- did not go England's way.

"It was a pretty frustrating morning, really," Woakes told reporters after stumps on the opening day on Wednesday.

"Obviously emotions run high when you are desperate to do well for the team, do well for yourself and it would have been nice... had those decisions gone our way, the day looks completely different, but that is Test cricket and we move on," he added.

Both decisions involved India's top order.

First Khelo India Water Sports Festival

New Delhi: Srinagar will host the inaugural Khelo India Water Sports Festival at its iconic Dal Lake where more than 400 athletes from all over the country will compete in disciplines like kayaking and canoeing, water skiing and rowing from August 21 to 23.

Sports minister Man-sukh Mandaviya announced this in an interaction with the media here and said it would add to the government's push for expansion of the Khelo India movement that recently added the first ever Beach Games in Diu to its roster.

The festival is scheduled to be held under the vertical of Sports Competition and Talent Development of Khelo India Scheme.



"This initiative aims to promote water sports and enhance the reach and popularity of water sports," Mandaviya said.

Apart from Kayaking and Canoeing, Rowing, and Water Skiing, Shikara and Dragon Boat races will also be held.

The ministry is expecting more than 400 athletes from 36 States and Union Territories to participate in this first of its kind event.

The nomination of athletes will be done by the National Sports Federation from their National Championships or other suitable events.



Poonawallas support CJ Club's revamp

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Industrialists Yohan and Michelle Poonawalla have extended their support towards the creation of a world-class floodlit, multipurpose sports complex at the Cowasjee Jehangir Colony (CJ Club), Mumbai. The newly inaugurated sports facility will feature courts for tennis, pickleball, volleyball, throwball, basketball and sepak takraw.

The initiative aligned with CJ Club's 25th Silver Jubilee year, the new facility was unveiled by the Managing Committee Members and Club Members. Designed to promote wellness, inclusion and youth development, the

complex is fully equipped with professional-grade sports kits, surface finishing, lighting systems, and civil infrastructure.

Commenting on the initiative, Yohan Poonawalla, Chairman of the Poonawalla Group, said, "For us, giving back to society isn't just a responsibility, it's a way of life. This sports facility is our tribute to the spirit of youth and to nurture the growing athletic potential in the city."

Michelle Poonawalla, Director, Poonawalla Group and artist, added, "We are deeply committed to supporting projects that drive impact at the grassroots. Access to quality recreational spaces is es-

sential, not just for physical fitness, but for overall well-being. This sports complex is a space of joy, inclusion, and aspiration."

The new endeavour adds to the Poonawallas' growing legacy of philanthropy. From the acclaimed restoration of Pune's iconic Turf Club to the recent establishment of a cutting-edge Neurological and Trauma Care Unit at Ruby Hall Clinic, their initiatives span across healthcare, education, heritage preservation, and public welfare and many more, consistently reflecting their vision of building a better and a more equitable society.

Grand Chess Tour

Gukesh in joint lead with Carlsen, Wesley

Zagreb (Croatia): World champion D Gukesh came up with two straight victories to tie for the top spot along side world No. 1 Magnus Carlsen of Norway, Duda Jan-Krzysztof of Poland and American Wesley So at the end of the first three rounds of Super United Rapid and Blitz Chess tournament, a part of the Grand Chess Tour.

Starting the day with a loss against Duda, Gukesh overpowered a reckless Alireza Firouzja of France before defeating compatriot R Praggnanandhaa to reach on four points out of a possible six.

Carlsen beat Wesley So and drew his remaining two games against local star Ivan Saric and Duda to match Gukesh on points, while Wesley was the only other player involved in all decisive games, apart from Gukesh, as he put it across his US compatriot Fabiano Caruana and Anish Giri of Holland.

In-form Praggnanandhaa had a

tough day in office as he drew with Firouzja and Nodirbek Abdusattorov of Uzbekistan with the loss against Gukesh costing him dearly.

With six rounds still to come in the rapid section, and 18 thereafter in the blitz, it's early days but Carlsen still remains the firm favourite in his second favourite version after freestyle chess.



With four players in front, Giri and Saric are close behind with three points apiece and then a group of four players -- Caruana, Abdusattorov, Firouzja and Praggnanandhaa -- follow then with two points each.

In the rapid section, two points are awarded for a victory while in blitz there will be one point for each win.

Gukesh was not disheartened after his first-round loss and came up with a fine effort. "Duda just got a nice position and played well," said Gukesh after the end of the day.

Firouzja got a bit impatient against the Indian, while Praggnanandhaa simply blundered.

Carlsen was held by Saric in a game played well by the Croatian, and his second-round victory was pretty much as he ground down Wesley in the endgame that lasted 75 moves.

Junior Ageis Of Roller Skating



National Skating Championship

Jeshtha Pawar wins three golds

By Correspondent

Mumbai: Mumbai's seven-year-old Jeshtha Shashank Pawar performed brilliantly at the recently held National Road Skating Championship in Kolkata and won three gold medals.

Jeshtha, who participated in the six to eight age groups, also won the title

of the fastest and youngest skater in the competition. She became the first skater from Mumbai to achieve such a feat.

Jeshtha is studying at I.E.S. Orion School at Hindu Colony, Dadar. She is being trained by Mehmood Siddiqui, Rajsingh and Ajay Shrivani at Speedx Skating Academy.

Jeshtha had also won three gold medals in the 11-country international skating competition, called Endurance World Federation International Championships Cup tournament, held in Thailand last year.

Jeshtha has previously won many awards at the district, state and national level tournaments.

Shotgun shooters set to compete

New Delhi: An experienced bunch of shooters, comprising the likes of Olympian Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, Lakshay Sheoran and Mairaj Ahmed Khan, will compete in the ISSF Shotgun World Cup commencing in Lonato, Italy, from Sunday.

After a practice day on Saturday, the skeet shooters will be the first to take aim when the qualifying rounds in the men's and women's sections are held, with the finals scheduled for Tuesday.

Angad Bajwa, Anantjeet Singh Naruka and Mairaj Ahmad Khan will compete in men's skeet, while in the women's category Olympians Maheshwari Chauhan and Raiza Dhillon along with Ganemat Sekhon will be seen in action.

Former Asian Games silver medalist Lakshay Sheoran will lead India's challenge in men's trap alongside Jaswinder Singh and Zoravar Sandhu. In women's trap, Neeru, Preeti Rajak and Pragati Dubey will represent the country.

In mixed team trap, Lakshay will pair with Neeru, while Sandhu will team up with Preeti.

"The squad has settled down and is training in



right earnest," said coach Vikram Chopra in a National Rifle Association of India release.

"This will be the last World Cup stage before the World Championships in Athens and it is important that things start falling into place at the right time," he added.

As many as 551 athletes from 73 nations will compete in the event here.

Indian squad:

Skeet (Men): Angad Vir Singh Bajwa, Anantjeet Singh Naruka, Mairaj Ahmed Khan. (Women) Maheshwari Chauhan, Raiza Dhillon, Ganemat Sekhon.

Trap (Men): Lakshay Sheoran, Jaswinder Singh, Zoravar Singh Sandhu. (Women) Neeru Dhandu, Preeti Rajak Pragati Dubey.

Trap Mixed Team: Lakshay Sheoran & Neeru Dhandu and Zoravar Sandhu & Preeti Rajak.

Player's loneliness revives debate over mental health

London: When Naomi Osaka opened up about her anxiety and depression at the 2021 French Open, it sparked a conversation in sports — and society at large — about mental health and the importance of addressing such issues.

In the time since, more and more players have spoken about the topic and seeking help, and whatever taboos there were seem to have faded. Still, the way three-time Grand Slam finalist Alexander Zverev discussed his state of mind

after a first-round exit at Wimbledon this week revived the conversation.

"I feel very alone out there at times. I struggle mentally. ... I'm trying to find ways to kind of get out of this hole. I keep kind of finding myself back in it in a way," said Zverev, who was the runner-up at the Australian Open in January but then went through a rough stretch of results this season when he had a chance to overtake Jannik Sinner at No. 1 in the rankings.

Alexander Zverev says at Wimbledon he feels quite alone in life.

"I feel, generally speaking, quite alone in life at the moment, which is a feeling that is not very nice," Zverev said. "It's not a feeling on a tennis court, it's just a life feeling in general."

Players at the All England Club were asked Wednesday about Zverev's words.

They could empathize, some said.

Others offered advice.

Amanda Anisimova was a French Open semifinalist as a teen in 2019, then announced two years ago she was taking time off because of burnout. She's been back for a while now and reached the third round at Wimbledon with a victory Wednesday.

"It's definitely tricky. Each and every one of us goes through something at some point in our lives. We have our bouts of negative times. It honestly takes some self-reflecting, figuring out what's going wrong

or how can I create a lifestyle that I enjoy. I feel like there are so many factors. For me, personally, it was finding people that I could confide in and I trusted. People that I could talk to," Anisimova said.

"What Alex said about feeling lonely ... a lot of people struggle with being lonely, especially on the pro circuit," she said, adding that taking a break from tour life "really helped me and I'm happy I did that, because I came back with a new perspec-

tive, felt refreshed, and I feel like I learned a lot about myself."

Therapy for help

Top-ranked Aryna Sabalenka, who owns three major trophies, said that she worked with a therapist for five years.

"It's really important to talk openly about whatever you're dealing with. ... It's really important to be open and to talk about what are you experiencing, because if you're going to keep it inside, it's just going

to destroy you. I think that's kind of like something happening to him," Sabalenka said. "I think (Zverev) just needs to open up to whoever is close to him."

At the Australian Open, title

Madison Keys addressed her reliance on therapy and the ways in which it both allowed her to be happier, in general, and more successful at tennis — a sport in which losses are frequent and expectations can be a burden.





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KALEIDOSCOPE

1. The irst batch of pilgrims leaves from a base camp at Baltal for the annual Amarnath Yatra in Ganderbal district on Thursday.

2. Tribal priests carrying idols perform rituals of 'Kharchi Puja', near the Howrah river, on the outskirts of Agartala on Wednesday.

3. Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Upendra Dwivedi during a visit to the Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) in Bhutan.

4. People cool off at Trocadero fountain near the Eiffel Tower during a heat wave on Wednesday.

5. Farmers plant rice saplings at a field in Nagaon district, Assam on Thursday.



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CINEMA STORIES

Televised Paranoia, Directed by Chaos:
Reassessing *The Osterman Weekend*



By
Shoumojit Banerjee

I have never cared for Robert Ludlum's airport reads. While the Bourne trilogy promised glimpses into the shadowy world of the terrorist Carlos the Jackal, Ludlum's bloated doorstops, with titles sounding like offshore holding firms ('The Icarus Agenda,' 'The Scorpio Illusion') featured convoluted conspiracies that invited instant forgetfulness. The unbearably bland prose seemed like a briefing note from Kafka's least imaginative bureaucrat.

That said, Ludlum's earlier output in the 1970s had some teeth. The most compelling was perhaps his second novel, 'The Osterman Weekend' (1972). More intriguing still was the fact that its film version was the last hurrah of director Sam Peckinpah, American cinema's enfant terrible known as 'Bloody Sam.'

However, few farewells in American cinema have been as derided as 'The Osterman Weekend' (1983). Peckinpah the auteur, who once made violence operatic in 'The Wild Bunch' (1969) and existential in 'Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia' (1974), was seen as bowing out with a whimper. Released to critical hostility and commercial indifference, 'The Osterman Weekend' was swiftly dismissed as a hopelessly muddled thriller.

Yet such a view underestimates the film's sinister prescience. While time has not softened the film's edges, those edges are well-worth admiring today.

Ludlum's original book was a white-knuckle, paranoid fever dream in which a smug liberal television host is manipulated by the CIA into uncovering a Soviet spy ring among his closest friends over a weekend.

Peckinpah, working with an edgy script by Alan Sharp (who penned brilliant screenplays for 'Ulzana's Raid' and 'Night Moves'), elevated Ludlum's novel into something entirely different - a fractured, fatalistic study of institutional rot and the poisoned well of American trust, overlaying the film with prescient depictions of hyper-surveillance, media manipulation and a blistering commentary on television itself.

The result is an uneasy (sometimes unpleasant) but often electric cocktail of thriller, avant-garde media satire and chamber drama with a heavyweight cast.



At the film's core is Dutch actor Rutger Hauer as the slick, vaguely narcissistic John Tanner - the TV journalist whose credibility rests on exposing political rot. He is a man constantly performing on-air and off, and whose trust in truth as spectacle is fatally exploited towards the end.

Tanner is approached by a shadowy CIA operative Lawrence Fassett (a magnetically reptilian John Hurt), who tells him that his closest friends are KGB moles and part of a Soviet spy cell named 'Omega.' A reluctant Tanner agrees to help flush the traitors out, allowing Fassett to bug his home and monitor his friends.

Tanner's weekend gathering of his college friends - played respectively by Craig T. Nelson (as Bernard Osterman, in whose honour the weekend is named), the nervous Dennis Hopper, and Chris Sarandon - soon becomes a cauldron of suspicion as a slow psychological detonation unfolds.

This tangled web of manipulation presided by the film's other major character - CIA chief Maxwell Danforth (superbly essayed by the towering Burt Lancaster). Danforth is a Cold War relic, a mandarin with political ambitions. With imperial weariness, he presides over the mayhem executed by his acolyte Fassett.

However, Hurt's Fassett has other plans. As an agent in East Berlin, Fassett's wife was killed by the KGB as part of a trade-off acceded to by Danforth. Out for revenge, Fassett manipulates Tanner to settle scores with Danforth, weaponizing the journalist's ego and thirst for righteous exposure. Tanner, in turn, is pitted against his college friends - each of whom now lives a life of upper-middle-class hedonism, far removed from their youthful Berkeley idealism. No one is in control for long.

There is a sense that both the Lancaster and Hurt characters loathe Tanner and his jet-set friends not just as potential 'traitors' but as symbols of a generation that sold out.

Overhauling this tangled web of deception is Peckinpah's contempt for television as a medium of manipulation and spectacle. The media circus, in Peckinpah's hands, becomes not just a symptom of rot but the rot itself.

The cast matches the film's grim vision. John Hurt is brilliantly unreadable; his Fassett may be mad or merely broken. Lancaster brings a fading patrician menace to Danforth, his icy detachment only amplifying the horror. And Hauer, as Tanner, strikes the right balance of smugness and desperation, his cool European detachment unravelling into moral panic.

'The Osterman Weekend' seemed peculiarly apt for a post-Watergate world. But in today's age of deep-fakes, data leaks and ambient paranoia, its resonance feels prophetic. Time to ignore the critics and take another look.

EXPLAINER

Can Trump Beat the
'Second-Term Curse'?



While he likes to provoke opponents with the possibility of serving a third term, Donald Trump faces a more immediate historical burden that has plagued so many presidents: the "second term curse".

Twenty-one US presidents have served second terms, but none has reached the same level of success they achieved in their first.

Second term performances have ranged from the lacklustre and uninspiring to the disastrous and deadly. Voter dissatisfaction and frustration, presidential fatigue and a lack of sustainable vision for the future are all explanations.

But Trump doesn't quite fit the mould. Only one other president, Grover Cleveland in the late 19th century, has served a second non-consecutive term, making Trump 2.0 difficult to measure against other second-term leaders.

Trump will certainly be hoping history doesn't repeat Cleveland's second-term curse. Shortly after taking office he imposed 50 per cent tariffs, triggering global market volatility that culminated in the "Panic of 1893".

At the time, this was the worst depression in US history: 19 per cent unemployment, a run-on gold from the US Treasury, a stock market crash and widespread poverty.

More than a century on, Trump's "move fast and break things" approach in a nonconsecutive second term might appeal to voters demanding action above all else. But he risks being drawn into areas he campaigned against.

So far, he has gone from fighting a trade war and a culture war to contemplating a shooting war in the Middle East. His "big beautiful bill" will add trillions to the national debt and potentially force poorer voters - including many Republicans - off Medicaid.

Whether his radical approach will defy or conform to the second term curse seems very much an open question.

No kings
The two-term limit was enacted by

reelection, however, the Democrats lost the House, the Senate, a Supreme Court nomination, and faced scandals over the Snowden security leaks and Internal Revenue Service targeting of conservative groups.

Truly disastrous examples of second term presidencies include Abraham Lincoln (assassination), Woodrow Wilson (first world war, failure of the League of Nations, a stroke), Richard Nixon (Watergate, impeachment and resignation), and Bill Clinton (Lewinsky scandal and impeachment).

Monumental honours
It may be too early to predict how Trump will feature in this pantheon of less-than-greatness. But his approval ratings recently hit an all-time low as Americans reacted to the bombing of Iran and deployment of troops in Los Angeles.

A recent YouGov poll showed voters giving negative approval ratings for his handling of inflation, jobs, immigration, national security and foreign policy. While there has been plenty of action, it may be the levels of uncertainty, drastic change and market volatility are more extreme than some bargained for.

An uncooperative Congress or opposition from the judiciary can be obstacles to successful second terms. But Trump has used executive orders, on the grounds of confronting "national emergencies", to bypass normal checks and balances.

As well, favourable rulings by the Supreme Court have edged closer to expanding the boundaries of executive power. But they have not yet supported Trump's claim from his first term that "I have an Article 2, where I have the right to do whatever I want as President".

Some supporters say Trump deserves a Nobel Peace Prize. And he was only half joking when he asked if there is room for one more face on Mount Rushmore. But such monumental honours may only amount to speculation unless Trump's radical approach and redefinition of executive power defy the second-term curse.

the 22nd Amendment to the Constitution in 1951. Without a maximum term, it was feared, an authoritarian could try to take control for life - like a king (hence the recent "No Kings" protests in the US).

George Washington, James Madison and Thomas Jefferson all declined to serve a third term. Jefferson was suspicious of any president who would try to be re-elected a third time, writing:

Should a President consent to be a candidate for a 3d. election, I trust he would be rejected on this demonstration of ambitious views.

There is a myth that after Franklin Delano Roosevelt broke the de facto limit of two terms set by the early presidents, the ghost of George Washington placed a curse on anyone serving more than four years.

At best, second-term presidencies have been tepid compared to the achievements in the previous four years. After the second world war, some two-term presidents (Eisenhower, Reagan and Obama) started out strong but faltered after reelection.

Eisenhower extricated the US from the Korean War in his first term, but faced domestic backlash and race riots in his second. He had to send 500 paratroopers to escort nine Black high school students in Little Rock, Arkansas, to enforce a federal desegregation order.

Reagan made significant tax and spending cuts, and saw the Soviet Union crumble in term one. But the Iran-Contra scandal and watered down tax reform defined term two.

Obama started strongly, introducing health care reform and uniting the Democratic voter base. After

