

Why Delhi is shaken and stirred

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi's stranglehold on politics and the BJP's Hindutva citadel have been both shaken and stirred by the recent election results, and the coming monsoon session of the 18th Lok Sabha will surely be a teaser of things to come. But in the great game that is being played out in the rest of the world, in which the US, Russia and China remain key poles, it will be interesting to see how these countries respond to India's assertion that it is a stabilising power in a chaotic region. First things first. Earlier this week, National Security Adviser (NSA) Ajit Doval — the powerful 79-year-old former intelligence chief, now in his third term as NSA — and his US counterpart, Jake Sullivan, met in New Delhi to underline the importance of the transfer of critical technologies from the US to India.

The important thing about this meeting, however, is the one that happened before the delegation-level talks — when Doval and Sullivan met without aides, without note-takers or anyone else in the room, for at least 30-40 minutes. For sure, there would have been recording devices embedded in the lamp-base or behind expensive art work — we all know this from the James Bond movies we are addicted to — and both would have later related the key points of their conversation to their respective officers. But make no mistake. No conversation on critical technologies, known as iCET, or the call on PM Modi or the half-hour 'chai pe charcha' between Sullivan and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar would have been as important as this one (note that Kurt Campbell, the US Deputy Secretary of State and America's top diplomat on China, was also in town).

And that is because when all the bells and whistles recede into the background — including the fine dining at Delhi's beautifully appointed Hyderabad House, the venue for all diplomatic engagements at the highest level — it is the exercise of hard power that courteously asserts itself. Some of that conversation definitely revolved around India's alleged attempt to kill Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, a pro-Khalistan activist in New York. According to the US indictment, Indian national Nikhil Gupta — whom the Czechs gave up to the Americans even as Doval and Sullivan talked in Delhi — was allegedly hired by a co-conspirator called 'CC-1', whom The Washington Post recently revealed to be an official of India's external intelligence agency, R&AW, by the name of Vikram Yadav.

We know all this by now. We also know that the Indians, in an attempt to mollify the Americans — when the smelly garbage was hitting the fan — repatriated Yadav to his parent cadre, the CRPF. He is now believed to be back in Chhattisgarh, allegedly swatting both flies and would-be Maoists. The alleged hit job was supposed to have been undertaken exactly a year ago, on June 22 — of course, it was foiled by the Americans, which is how Pannun is still alive, probably chomping on bagels-and-cheese or even aloo ka paratha back home in New York. In the recent Lok Sabha elections, he was reduced to sending Punjabi voice notes urging people to support Sikh radicals like Amritpal Singh; sure, he won from Khadoor Sahib, but that had far more to do with Punjab's forever angst against Delhi, rather than any persuaded emotions of separatism. The point is, dead or alive, Pannun is irrelevant.

Sullivan and Doval would have gone all over this, in their own way. Doval is not the type to apologise — no self-respecting intelligence officer ever does, and why should he, pray — but all sides know that in this high-stakes game in which all nations measure one another up for brains, brawn and potential, India is a quarter of a step down today.

But the Indians also have a long memory. There is the matter of Rabinder Singh, the R&AW agent who was exfiltrated by the Americans in 2004. No one in Delhi has quite forgotten how he was smuggled out, via Nepal, even though both countries had, by then, sworn to be 'natural allies'. Those of you who are spy movie addicts should watch Vishal Bhardwaj's Khufiya today, if you haven't already — and know that the real story is dirtier, sadder and far less glamorous.

The govt must commit itself to undoing injustice

Reparative justice demands that the balance between social groups be re-established, relationships repaired and fraternity rebuilt.

THE first International Congress of Writers for the Defence of Culture was held in Paris from June 21 to 25, 1935. Writers aligned with the Left, surrealists, the avant-garde, liberals and pacifists denounced the rising tide of fascism in Europe before an audience of thousands. The speakers were 'engaged writers' — those who believe that art and politics go hand in hand and that one cannot exist without the other. Held at the Palais de Mutualite, a traditional meeting site for the Left Bank and progressive intellectuals, the conference was swamped by Parisians. This was the same city that had witnessed anti-Semitism during the Dreyfus affair in the late 19th century. By the 1930s, political solidarity among intellectuals could no longer be confined to cafes of radical neighbourhoods. Anxiety over fascism in Europe produced international solidarity. André Gide, a famous French writer and winner of the Nobel Prize for literature in 1947, memorably said that each one of them had a "right to inspect his neighbour's territory".

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights delivered the same message. When regimes violate the basic rights of a section of their citizens, other states and international agencies have the "right to inspect their territory". In effect, the declaration legitimised concern for the rights of all people, even if they live in faraway lands. Rights are universal. Intellectuals, wherever they may be, must speak up against fascism and the harm it causes to vulnerable groups. Over the past decade, a number of international organisations have reported that the authorities in India have violated the rights of minorities, jailed civil liberty activists and journalists and suppressed civil society. In September last year, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues described the deteriorating rights situation in India as 'massive, systematic and dangerous'. At a meeting of the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, the rapporteur, Fernand de Varennes, stated that India risked becoming one of the world's main generators of instability, atrocities and violence. He described the massive scale of violations and abuses that targeted Muslims, Sikhs and Christians as symptomatic of religious nationalism. He especially referred to major violations of basic rights in Manipur, particularly the degrading treatment meted out to two women from the Christian Kuki community. Numerous human rights organisations have expressed concern about hate speech against Muslims, the destruction of their properties and the fundamentally discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act. The Human Rights Watch, in its World Report 2024, stated that India had undermined its aspirations for world leadership as a rights-respecting democracy with persistent policies that discriminated against and stigmatised religious minorities. We find



more of the same in other reports that assert a legitimate right to "inspect their neighbour's territory" to identify injustice.

The leadership and the cadres of the ruling party should learn a lesson from its diminished mandate in the recent General Election. Hopefully, the government will launch a project of reparative justice to right the wrongs committed in the past 10 years in the name of Hindu nationalism. Reparative or corrective justice is different from the principle of redistributive justice. Redistributive justice is a norm that governs the fair allocation of resources in a society. Reparative justice concentrates on the harm done to citizens — violation of physical integrity through lynching and murder and affronts to human dignity caused through slurs and hate speech — and tries to rectify the wrongs. This avatar of justice identifies the offender as well as the person or group that has been harmed. The offender in this case is the government, which inflicted harm through the indiscriminate imprisonment of dissenters and condoned violence unleashed on citizens. The concept establishes a relationship between power elites who harm or tolerate harm and those who have been harmed. It focuses on the restoration of justice in a society that is composed of many social groups, many of whom are extremely vulnerable to majoritarianism. The logic of reparative justice is to repair the harm done to the minds and bodies

of citizens. Reparative justice is, thus, the conceptual companion of redistributive justice. In the case of the former, the government accepts responsibility for past wrongs done for morally arbitrary reasons.

Throughout history, many regimes have apologised for the harm done. But an apology is not enough. An erring government has to commit that these harms will not be repeated and that the dignity and physical integrity of all citizens will be respected. Reparative justice demands that the balance between social groups, fragile at best, be re-established, relationships repaired and fraternity rebuilt. This is important because, as BR Ambedkar told the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949, liberty, equality and fraternity "form a union of trinity in the sense that to divorce one from the other is to defeat the very purpose of democracy... Without fraternity, liberty and equality would not become a natural course of things. It would require a constable to enforce them." Indian society, he said, lacks fraternity: "What does fraternity mean? Fraternity means a sense of common brotherhood of all Indians — of Indians being one people. It is the principle which gives unity and solidarity to social life." The results of the General Election have resoundingly established that the people of India do not want this trinity to be disturbed. The NDA government has to understand the popular mood and launch the project of reparative justice.

Child labour

Madhya Pradesh case a wake-up call

THE harrowing case of child labour that has come to light in Raisen district of Madhya Pradesh is a wake-up call. As many as 58 minors, including 19 girls, were found working in appalling conditions at a liquor factory by a team of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) last week. Many had sustained terrible chemical burns. Now, 39 of those rescued have gone missing. The NCPCR chairperson says the case involves not just child labour, but also human trafficking. Questions are being raised about gross negligence and the collusion of corrupt officials. The regulatory bodies are under the scanner. Stringent action against the factory owners is a must. Any laxity will reinforce the perception that tackling child labour is low on the state's priority list, and that the rule of law can easily be subverted.



According to the International Labour Organisation, more than 16 crore children are working as child labourers globally, and the number is only going up. Cases of human

trafficking have seen a rise since the Covid-19 pandemic. Vulnerable families were further pushed into poverty and a large number of children dropped out of school, exacerbating the risk. The data also points to an increasing number of children being subjected to abuse and violence. Child labour and trafficking are organised crime. The Raisen case is a reminder that efforts must be redoubled to rein in the perpetrators. Rehabilitation of the children remains an underserved aspect.

Eradicating child labour should be a shared moral responsibility of civil society, businesses and governments alike. In India, 11 per cent of the workforce is said to be underage. Child labour laws have proven to be ineffective. Whatever the justification that is offered, the moral quotient is entirely absent from the social sanction to child labour in the country.

Judiciary-military discord worsening in Pakistan

It is the competition for Australia's rare earths, which are important for electric vehicles and renewable energy, which draws the most Chinese interest.

DESPITE the tabling of a forward-looking, even tough budget designed to satisfy the International Monetary Fund and conclude a staff-level agreement for Pakistan's next aid tranche by July, the Shehbaz Sharif government is looking increasingly insecure and lacklustre in its day-to-day functioning. After the Supreme Court advised incarcerated former Prime Minister Imran Khan to seek avenues for political negotiations, he has resorted to the devious stratagem of pushing in Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party veteran Mahmood Khan Achakzai to be his frontman for any possible contact with either President Asif Ali Zardari or the Sharif brothers. These negotiations are going nowhere as Imran has told the sizeable contingent of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) legislators to continue agitating for the restoration of the February 8 electoral mandate. They are threatening street protests, with possible roping in of disgruntled Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) cadres of Maulana Fazlur-Rehman. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP), while supporting the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) from the outside, has expressed unhappiness at not being consulted in the budget formulation. It has been demanding space in the provincial government in Punjab, but Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz seems to be in no mood to oblige.

Meanwhile, ever since six judges of the Islamabad High Court wrote a letter to the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) in March this year, alleging interference and intimidation by Pakistan's omnipotent Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), the judiciary has been up in arms to rid itself of the age-old taint of being a handmaiden of the military establishment. Partly, this bravado stems from support among the younger judges for deposed PTI leader Imran's populist narrative.

The Army leadership has been disapproving of these moves. Addressing a passing-out parade at Pakistan Air Force's Raisalpur Academy on May 2, Army Chief Gen Syed Asim Munir observed that the army was "well aware of its constitutional limits" and "expected others



to prioritise the Constitution as well". On May 7, as the anniversary of last year's 'Black Day' violence (May 9) approached, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) clarified that any dialogue with the PTI could happen only if it "earnestly apologises publicly in front of the nation", promises to adopt "constructive politics" and forgoes "politics of anarchy". After the May 29 Formation Commanders' Conference, the ISPR reiterated that without bringing the planners, perpetrators, abettors and facilitators of the May 9, 2023, violence to justice, there would be no stability in the country. It noted with concern that politically motivated and vested digital terrorism unleashed by 'conspirators' (read Imran's troll bands) was inducing despondency and discord among national institutions, especially the

armed forces, which would not be tolerated. Despite these warnings, the courts have been ruling in favour of Imran, holding the procedures and haste employed to imprison him before the February 8 elections violative of natural justice. His indictment in the cipher leaks case was struck down. All these cases have been appealed against. A seven-member larger Bench of the Supreme Court led by CJ Qazi Faez Isa is hearing a suo motu case regarding agency interference in judicial functions. No hearings have been scheduled in the past couple of months. Another CJ Isa-led Division Bench is set to hear the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) petition challenging the Lahore High Court's decision to appoint six more tribunals to settle election disputes in Punjab.

Sargodha Anti-Terrorism Court judge Muhammad Abbas has complained to the Lahore High Court Chief Justice, Malik Shahzad Ahmed Khan, about the alleged role of the ISI in damaging water and electricity meters outside his house. CJ Ahmed Khan, whose elevation to the Supreme Court was announced only recently, has issued showcase notices to police officials concerned. He did not hesitate to profess at a public gathering in Islamabad recently that the days of 'agency intimidation of judges' would soon be a thing of the past. He was summoned before the Supreme Court Chief Justice a few days later for a possible admonition.

The Election Commission's decision not to assign reserved seats of the National Assembly to the Sunni Ittehad Council, to which elected PTI legislators now adhere, was upheld by the Peshawar High Court, but it has been challenged by the PTI in the Supreme Court. Deliberations by a full court Bench there have remained inconclusive. If the SC upholds the ECP's decision, reserved seats in Parliament and provincial legislatures will be allocated to the ruling parties and the JUI-F, enabling the government to pursue constitutional amendments. Reports are rife about the government planning to extend the tenure of the Supreme Court CJ and other judges by two years.

Isa's term of office as CJ lasts up to October 25. Ascending to this post has not been without travails for him as he had to face references against his integrity before the SJC, brought at the behest of Imran, prodded perhaps by military leaders of the day (Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and then Director General, ISI, Lt Gen Faiz Hameed). His January 13 ruling, depriving the PTI of its election symbol (cricket bat), has also been under adverse public scrutiny. He has been responding in a restrained manner to all this venting of ire against the agencies by judges from lower courts. After the Eid vacation, all eyes will be on how the Supreme Court deals with these cases, which could have significant implications for Pakistan politics.

Mcap of Three of Top-10 Most Valued Firms Jumps Rs 1.06 Lakh Crore; HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank Shine

New Delhi: The combined market valuation of three of the top-10 most valued firms jumped Rs 1,06,125.98 crore in holiday-shortened last week, with HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank emerging as the biggest gainers. Last week, the BSE benchmark Sensex climbed 217.13 points or 0.28 per cent. While HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank and Infosys were the gainers from the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC), Hindustan Unilever and ITC faced a combined erosion to the tune of Rs 1,01,769.1 crore. The market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank zoomed Rs 52,091.56 crore to Rs 12,67,056.69 crore. ICICI Bank added Rs 36,118.99 crore taking its valuation to Rs 8,13,914.89 crore. The mcap of Infosys climbed Rs 17,915.43 crore to Rs 6,35,945.80 crore.

However, the market valuation of Reliance Industries tumbled Rs 32,271.31 crore to Rs 19,66,686.57 crore. LIC lost Rs 27,260.74 crore from its mcap which stood at Rs 6,47,616.51 crore. ITC's valuation eroded by Rs 14,357.43 crore to Rs 5,23,858.91 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever dropped by Rs 8,904.95 crore to Rs 5,73,617.46 crore. The mcap of TCS tanked by Rs 8,321.6 crore to Rs 13,78,111.45 crore and that of Bharti Airtel diminished by Rs 7,261.72 crore to Rs 8,04,262.65 crore. State Bank of India's valuation declined by Rs 3,391.35 crore to Rs 7,46,454.54 crore.

In the ranking of the most valued firms, Reliance Industries retained the number one place followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Bharti Airtel, State Bank of India, LIC, Infosys, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.

CNG Price Hiked By Re 1 Per Kg in Delhi, Noida, Greater Noida, Ghaziabad

NEW DELHI: CNG prices in Delhi and adjoining cities have been hiked by Re 1 per kg following a fall in the supply of subsidised input natural gas. After the latest hike, CNG in New Delhi will now cost Rs 75.09 per kg, up from the previous rate of Rs 74.09. In Noida, Greater Noida, and Ghaziabad, the price has increased to Rs 79.70 per kg from Rs 78.70 per kg. Indraprastha Gas Ltd, the firm that retails CNG automobiles and piped cooking gas to households in Delhi and adjoining cities, announced the hike in rates on Saturday on its website. There, however, was no change in piped cooking gas prices.

IGL did not give reasons for the increase but sources said the hike was warranted because the firm now has to buy more imported gas following a drop in domestic supplies. Natural gas pumped out of the ground and seabed is turned into CNG for running automobiles. But supplies from ONGC's domestic fields have not kept pace with the CNG demand. Gas from ONGC fields make up for 66-67 per cent of CNG demand of IGL. The rest has to be imported. Domestic gas supplies are prioritized for piped cooking gas purposes and so there is no hike in that segment, sources said. However, there has been no change in CNG prices in Gurugram, as it is serviced by a different company. Other city gas retailers have so far not announced any change in prices. In Ajmer, Pali, and Rajasamand in Rajasthan, CNG prices have been increased to Rs 82.94 per kg from Rs 81.94 per kg by IGL. CNG prices have also increased in Rewari, Haryana, as well as Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, and Shamli in Uttar Pradesh — towns serviced by IGL.

GST notices pending against less than 2% of taxpayers: FM Sitharaman

NEW DELHI: Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on Saturday that less than 2% of the nearly 59 lakh active taxpayers had pending notices under Central GST (CGST) Act, while asserting that govt wants to make life easier for the assessee. "We want to reassure the assessee that our intent is to make their lives easier. Under CGST, notices are not being sent left, right and centre," she told the media. At the end of Dec, 1,14,939 assesses had been sent notices by CGST authorities.

The comments are aimed at clearing the air on repeated attacks by opposition on GST, which has been dubbed "Gabbar Singh Tax" by Rahul Gandhi. Officials suggested that several opposition-ruled states have been at the forefront of issuing notices and summons under the state laws.

In fact, a rush of notices by state authorities has been particularly troubling for large companies which have to register separately in each state. Consultants and companies routinely complain of "summons" being issued by state authorities on minor issues and several of them being asked to appear in person. Recently, Centre sought to put a check on the issue and issued detailed instructions to its officers that calling for information should not be called a "notice" or "summon" and all such communication should only be sent after it has been approved by senior officers of the department.

"The FM has reassured that GST administration will be reconciliatory, which is very positive from the perspective of ease of doing business and will comfort investors. The steps taken by the GST Council today include several important and trade friendly measures and seek to bring certainty in the tax regime, reduce litigation and improve cash flows," said Pratik Jain, partner PwC India.

Govt officials said that in the last seven years, the overall direction of GST has been to lower the incidence of tax on consumers with products such as atta and honey exempted, while everyday items such as detergents, cosmetics and TV sets now attracting 18% tax instead of 28% pre-GST.

Beyond Nvidia: The search for AI's next breakthrough

TORONTO: For a few days, AI chip juggernaut Nvidia sat on the throne as the world's biggest company, but behind the its staggering success are questions on whether new entrants can stake a claim to the artificial intelligence bonanza. Nvidia, which makes the processors that are the only option to train generative AI's large language models, is now Big Tech's newest member and its stock market takeoff has lifted the whole sector.

Even tech's second rung on Wall Street has ridden on Nvidia's coattails with Oracle, Broadcom, HP and a spate of others seeing their stock valuations surge, despite sometimes shaky earnings. Amid the champagne popping, startups seeking the attention of Silicon Valley venture capitalists are being asked to innovate -- but without a clear indication of where the next chapter of AI will be written. When it comes to generative AI, doubts persist on what exactly will be left for companies that are not existing model makers, a field dominated by Microsoft-backed OpenAI, Google and Anthropic. Most agree that competing with them head-on could be a fool's errand. "I don't think that there's a great opportunity to start a foundational AI company at this point in time," said Mike Myer, founder and CEO of tech firm

Qiqi, at the Collision technology conference in Toronto. Some have tried to build applications that use or mimic the powers of the existing big models, but this is being slapped down by Silicon Valley's biggest players.

"What I find disturbing is that people are not differentiating between those applications which are roadkill for the models as they progress in their capabilities, and those that are really adding value and will be here 10 years from now," said venture capital veteran Vinod Khosla.

"Won't keep up" The tough-talking Khosla is one of OpenAI's earliest investors. "Grammarly won't keep up," Khosla predicted of the spelling and grammar checking app, and others similar to it. He said these companies, which put only a "thin wrapper" around what the AI models can offer, are doomed.

One of the fields ripe for the taking is chip design, Khosla said, with AI demanding ever more specialized processors that provide highly specific powers. "If you look across the chip history, we really

have for the most part focused on more general chips," Rebecca Parsons, CTO at tech consultancy Thoughtworks, told AFP. Providing more specialized



processing for the many demands of AI is an opportunity seized by Groq, a hot startup that has built chips for the deployment of AI as opposed to its training, or inference -- the specialty of Nvidia's world-dominating GPUs.

Groq CEO Jonathan Ross told AFP that Nvidia won't be the best at everything, even if they are uncontested for generative AI training. "Nvidia and (its

CEO) Jensen Huang are like Michael Jordan... the greatest of all time in basketball. But inference is baseball, and we try and forget the time where Michael

Jordan tried to play baseball and wasn't very good at it," he said. Another opportunity will come from highly specialized AI that will provide expertise and know-how based on proprietary data which won't be co-opted by voracious big tech. "Open AI and Google aren't going to build a structural engineer. They're not going to build products like a primary care doctor or a mental health therapist," said Khosla. Profiting from highly specialized data is the basis of Cohere, another of Silicon Valley's hottest startups that

pitches specifically-made models to businesses that are skittish about AI veering out of their control. "Enterprises are skeptical of technology, and they're risk-averse, and so we need to win their trust and to prove to them that there's a way to adopt this technology that's reliable, trustworthy and secure," Cohere CEO Aidan Gomez told AFP.

Gautam Adani Receives Rs 9.26 Crore Salary in FY24; Lower Than His Executives, Industry Peers

NEW DELHI: Gautam Adani, India's second richest person, received a total remuneration of Rs 9.26 crore for the financial year ending March 31, 2024. This compensation is notably lower than that of many industry peers and even some key executives within his own conglomerate. The details were disclosed in the annual reports of the 10 listed entities within his extensive ports-to-energy business empire.

While the richest Indian, RIL Chairman and Managing Director Mukesh Ambani has been foregoing his entire salary since COVID-19 broke out, prior to which he had capped his remuneration at Rs 15 crore, Adani's remuneration is much lower than telecom czar Sunil Bharti Mittal (Rs 16.7 crore in 2022-23), Rajiv Bajaj (Rs 53.7 crore), Pawan Munjal (Rs 80 crore), L&T Chairman S N Subrahmanyan and Infosys CEO Salil



S Parekh. Adani became the richest Asian in 2022 but lost that position after a damning report by US short-seller Hindenburg Research wiped out almost \$150 billion of market value of his group stock at its lowest point last year. Gautam Adani is ranked 14th on the world's richest list. Adani's younger brother Rajesh got Rs 8.37 crore, including Rs 4.71 crore commission on profit from AEL, while his nephew

Pranav Adani drew Rs 6.46 crore, including Rs 4.5 crore commission, the annual report showed.

Gautam Adani did not draw any commission from AEL but got Rs 5 crore from APSEZ. The remuneration from APSEZ included Rs 1.8 crore salary and Rs 5 crore commission that will be payable in 2024-25 fiscal, the company's annual report said. His son, Karan earned Rs 3.9 crore from APSEZ. Gautam Adani's brother, nephew and son did not draw salaries from more than one company. Vinay Prakash, key executive and director on AEL board, received a total remuneration of Rs 89.37 crore. Group CFO Jugeshinder Singh got Rs 9.45 crore salary. The group's renewable energy firm, Adani Green Energy Ltd CEO Vneet S Jaan was paid Rs 15.25 crore while Adani Total Gas Ltd (ATGL) CEO Suresh.

Centre buys 71,000 tons of onion for buffer stock; expects retail prices to ease with normal monsoon

NEW DELHI: The government has bought nearly 71,000 tonnes of onion so far this year for buffer stock, out of the total target of procuring 5 lakh tonnes for price stabilisation and it expects retail prices to ease with the progress of monsoon over most parts of the country. According to data compiled by the department of consumer affairs, the all-India average onion retail prices stood at Rs 38.67 per kg on Friday, while the modal price was Rs 40 per kg. Till June 20th, the Centre has procured 70,987 tonnes of onion, as against 74,071 tonnes procured in the same period last year, a senior official in the department of consumer affairs said. "The pace of onion procurement for price stabilisation buffer this year is largely comparable with last year, despite about 20 per cent decline in estimated rabi production," the official



said, adding that the government is on course to achieve targeted procurement of 5 lakh tonnes for price stabilisation. he government will exercise the option of holding or releasing onions from the buffer in order to maintain stability in prices of onion, the official said. The procurement price is a dynamic one, linked to prevailing market prices. The increase in prices of onion is on account of a shortfall in production in

2023-24 by about 20 per cent each in Kharif, late Kharif and Rabi, over the previous year due to less rains in major producing areas, the official explained.

To control prices, the government has been taking measures in a graded manner, from August last year starting with export duty of 40 per cent, followed by Minimum Export Price (MEP) of USD 800 per tonne in October, 2024 and imposition of export prohibition from December 8, 2023. These measures have helped in maintaining domestic availability of onion at reasonably stable prices. Export prohibition had been lifted from May 4, 2024 with MEP of USD 550 per tonne and 40 per cent export duty in view of substantial stability observed in major mandis like Lasalgaon, in Maharashtra and the prospect of good Kharif production on the back of above-normal monsoon prediction this year.

Who profits from the soaring price of cocoa?

PARIS: Though cocoa prices on the financial markets have soared, the rise is benefiting cocoa growers, bean processors, speculators and chocolatiers in unequal measure. In March, prices rocketed to more than \$10,000 a tonne in New York after a poor harvest in West Africa due to a combination of bad weather conditions and disease devastating ageing plantations. They have since fallen back from the peak, yet are still three times higher than last year.

Wide gaps between producers

In Ivory Coast and Ghana, the world's largest cocoa producers, prices are set by the authorities in October on the basis of the previous months. But by that point the harvests "have already been largely pre-sold", said Tancrede Voituriez of the French agricultural research and cooperation organisation CIRAD. This reduces the impact of cocoa price fluctuations -- whether upwards and downwards. As a result, small-scale producers, who generally earn barely enough to live on, did not immediately benefit from the surge. That said, the authorities raised the price of the intermediate crop in April by 50 percent to between \$2,300 and \$2,500 per tonne -- a modest rise compared to what the

farmers could charge on the international exchanges. In countries with less regulated systems, such as Cameroon, Nigeria, Ecuador and Brazil, growers managed to pocket more from the trend.

There, farmers have been allowed to sell their beans to buyers willing to approach the prices paid on the financial markets. But that deregulated approach comes with risks of its own. "Soaring prices have made production more attractive," David Gonzales, coordinator of the Peruvian Chamber of Coffee and Cocoa, told AFP. The fear is that there will be an excess of cocoa in three to five years' time -- the time needed for farmers hoping to cash in to grow new trees -- causing prices to tumble back to earth.

Middlemen in the hunt

The major processors who grind the beans into butter, liquor or powder -- notably Switzerland's Barry Callebaut, America's Cargill, Singapore's Olam -- generally negotiate a large part of their supplies in advance. But some contracts have not been honoured, forcing them to scour for urgently needed cocoa at high cost and in some cases to slow down production. Barry Callebaut reported in



early April that it had drawn more than usual from its cash reserves to finance bean purchases, but had enough cocoa on hand to meet demand. Other smaller intermediaries may find it difficult to advance the funds needed to adapt to the higher prices. Yet there is one group of middlemen who would have been delighted at the price rises.

"The smugglers would have done very nicely there," Steve Wateridge of commodity firm Tropical Research Services told AFP. He said black marketeers could have taken advantage of the system in Ivory Coast and Ghana by buying cocoa at slightly above the fixed prices and selling the beans on the open market in Togo, Guinea, Liberia or Sierra Leone.

Mixed fortunes on the markets Cocoa prices have risen because supply has

fallen short of demand for the third year running, according to the International Cocoa Organization. Investment funds that sensed the changing wind bet on higher prices, pocketing a profit in the process. But from January onwards, prices became very erratic, even beyond the liking of funds with a taste for speculation. Many investors withdrew from the market altogether: the number of traded contracts fell from 334,000 in mid-January to 146,000 in April, according to Saxo Bank's Ole Hansen.

"You can't blame the speculators for artificially inflating the prices," Wateridge added. On the other hand, trading houses and chocolate makers tend to guard against price reversals by betting against the financial markets, in this case on falling prices. Many investors withdrew from the market altogether: the number of traded contracts fell from 334,000 in mid-January to 146,000 in April, according to Saxo Bank's Ole Hansen. "You can't blame the speculators for artificially inflating the prices," Wateridge added. On the other hand, trading houses and chocolate makers tend to guard against price reversals by betting against the financial markets, in this case on falling prices.

First session of 18th Lok Sabha to begin today, PM Modi to take oath

New Delhi: The first session of the 18th Lok Sabha will begin on Monday, which will see newly-elected MPs, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, taking the oath, followed by the election of Speaker and President Droupadi Murmu's address to a joint sitting of both the Houses. This will be the first Lok Sabha session after the general elections were held in April-June. In the 18th Lok Sabha, the NDA has a majority with 293 seats, with the BJP having 240 seats, short of the majority mark of 272. The Opposition INDIA bloc has 234 seats, with Congress accounting for 99. PM Modi and his Council of Ministers will take oath from 11 am onwards. After PM Modi takes oath, other Council of Ministers will take oath. Following this, the MPs from different states will take the oath in alphabetical order. This means that newly-elected parliamentarians from Assam will take oath and those from West Bengal will be the last to do so.

On Monday, 280 newly-elected MPs, including PM Modi and his Council of

Ministers, will take oath, while 264 newly-elected parliamentarians will take oath the next day (June 25). The row over the appointment of BJP leader and seven-term member Bhartruhari Mahtab as the pro tem Speaker is likely to cast a shadow over the session. The move has drawn flak from the Opposition, which alleged that the claim of Congress member Kodikunnil Suresh to the post was overlooked by the government. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju asserted that Mahtab has had seven uninterrupted terms as a Lok Sabha member, making him eligible for the post. Suresh lost elections in 1998 and 2004, which makes his current term the fourth straight one in the Lower House. Earlier, he was elected to the Lok Sabha in 1989, 1991, 1996 and 1999. On Monday, President Droupadi Murmu will administer the oath to Mahtab as the pro tem Speaker of the Lok Sabha at the Rashtrapati Bhawan. Mahtab will then reach Parliament and call the Lok Sabha to order at 11 am. The proceedings will begin with members observing a



moment of silence on the occasion of the first sitting of the 18th Lok Sabha. This will be followed by Lok Sabha Secretary General Utpal Kumar Singh placing the list of the members elected to the Lok Sabha on the table of the House.

Mahtab will then call upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the Leader of the Lok Sabha, to take oath as the member of the House. The pro tem speaker will then administer the oath to the panel of chairpersons appointed by the President to

assist him in carrying out the House's proceedings till the Speaker's election on June 26.

The President has appointed Kodikunnil Suresh (Congress), TR Bалу (DMK), Radha Mohan Singh and Faggan Singh Kulaste (both BJP) and Sudip Bandyopadhyay (Trinamool Congress) to assist Mahtab in administering the oath/affirmation to the newly-elected members of the Lok Sabha. The election to the post of Lok Sabha Speaker will take place on June 26 and the Prime Minister will introduce his council of ministers to the House soon after. The President is scheduled to address the joint sitting of both houses of Parliament on June 27. The debate on the Motion of Thanks to the President's Address will begin on June 28. PM Modi is expected to respond to the debate on July 2 or 3. Both the Houses are expected to go into a brief recess and reassemble on July 22 for the presentation of the Union Budget.

Unhappy' with girls, Delhi family kills 2 newborns

NEW DELHI: In a shocking instance of female infanticide reported from the capital, two newborn female twins were allegedly murdered and buried by the family that was "unhappy" with the birth of girls. The infants were allegedly taken away from the mother by her husband and family members and killed.

After receiving a complaint, Delhi Police swung into action and got the bodies exhumed on judicial orders. It subsequently filed an FIR and was conducting raids to book the accused, sources said. The woman belongs to Rohtak in Haryana. According to the FIR, the woman got married in a family from outer Delhi's Pooth Kalan in 2022. She claimed that she was regularly harassed for dowry and the family wished her to give birth to a son. In fact, after the woman became pregnant, she was asked to go for a sex determination test which she refused, fearing the consequences. The woman recently gave birth to two girls, soon after which the husband's family came and took away the babies saying they would provide good care and treatment. When the woman recovered from her delivery and asked for the newborns, the family allegedly made excuses and later told her they had died of an illness.

The woman and her family became suspicious and approached the cops. Police approached the sub-divisional magistrate and got orders to exhume the bodies. An autopsy was conducted and legal action initiated on the basis of the medical team's report.

The case has yet again brought to the fore the issue of female infanticide in the country. Although infanticide has been criminalised in India, it remains an under-reported crime due to various factors. While there is no reliable data, police are roped in only in a minuscule number of cases. Section 315 of the Indian Penal Code defines infanticide as the killing of an infant in the 0-1 year age group and is a cognisable and a non-bailable offence.

The section says, "Whoever before the birth of any child does any act with the intention thereby of preventing that child from being born alive or causing it to die after its birth, and does by such act prevent that child from being born alive, or causes it to die after its birth, shall, if such act be not caused in good faith for the purpose of saving the life of the mother, be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to 10 years, or with fine, or with both."

13-year-old detained for Delhi airport bomb scare, sent threat 'just for fun'

New Delhi: A 13-year-old boy was detained for allegedly sending an email to Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport claiming a bomb was on a Dubai-bound flight, police said on Sunday. The boy admitted to sending the email "just for fun" after hearing about another teenager who made a similar hoax threat recently, according to Deputy Commissioner of Police (IGI Airport) Usha Rangnani. On June 17, Delhi Airport received a bomb threat email regarding a flight scheduled for Dubai on June 18. The airport was put on high alert, and emergency protocols were followed to ensure

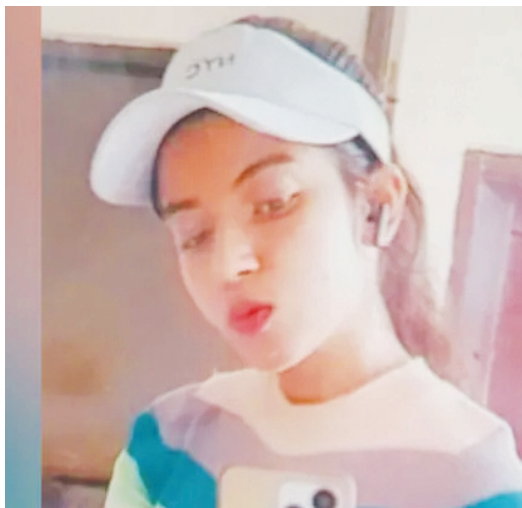


passenger safety. The email was later determined to be a hoax. Investigators traced the email's origin to Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, and apprehended the teen. The boy, a Class 9 student, told police he got the idea from social media reports of another child's hoax threat. He used a mobile phone provided for schoolwork to send the email and then deleted the email account. The boy said he feared telling his parents about the incident. The phone linked to the email was seized by police, and the boy was later released to his parents' custody. Earlier this month, an Air Canada flight en route to Toronto in Canada from Delhi received a bomb threat via email. Later, the police found out that a 13-year-old boy sent the mail from Meerut in Uttar Pradesh.

"Lady Don" Who Honey-Trapped Burger King Victim Spotted At Rail Station

New Delhi: The woman, who had allegedly honey-trapped the 26-year-old man killed in a shooting spree at a Delhi's Burger King outlet, was spotted at the Katra Railway Station on Thursday. She is also known as "Lady Don" among her gang members, was seen carrying her luggage at the Katra railway station on Thursday in a security camera footage. She had covered her face with a scarf. Sources say she boarded a train bound for Mumbai at around 10 am on Thursday. Police sources say the woman - a close aide of fugitive gangster Himanshu Bhou - was part of the trap set up to lure Aman Joon to the Burger King outlet in Rajouri Garden where he was murdered. Anu belongs to Haryana's Rohtak and has a criminal record. "Attempts are being made to track her down," police

said. As many as 38 bullets of three different makes were fired at Aman



Joon inside the fast food outlet, the FIR says. The different bullets suggest that more than two weapons were used by the two shooters.

In another security camera footage, which was released earlier, Anu was seen sitting with Aman when the gunmen opened fire. CCTV footage has shown that Anu took a train from GTB Nagar Metro Station to reach Rajouri Garden and after the murder, she took the metro from Rajouri Garden to Shakurpur Metro Station.

Aman's body was found behind the billing counter, indicating that he tried to flee when the killers opened fire. Himanshu Bhou, suspected to be in Portugal now, has claimed responsibility for the murder in a social media post, calling it a "revenge killing". Himanshu Bhou, whose gang operates across Delhi and Haryana, is notorious for extortion, the police officer said. Bhou, an associate of jailed gangster Neeraj Bawana, fled the country in 2022.

2 stabbed to death for 'revenge' in northwest Delhi

NEW DELHI: Seeking revenge for a fight that occurred at a swimming pool eight days prior, a group went to attack another in northwest Delhi's Jailer Wala Bagh. However, the tables turned when they were attacked by their rivals, resulting in the fatal stabbing of two, including a juvenile. The deceased were identified as Vishal (19) and a 17-year-old boy, police said.

The stabbing took place around 10 pm on Saturday. "We received information around 11 pm, and a team from the local police station rushed to the spot. The victims were taken to the hospital, where both were declared dead," a police officer said.

During the investigation, police found that an argument had occurred between Vishal's friend and two men at



a swimming pool in Shalimar Bagh. "Both groups have been living in the vicinity and had frequent arguments over supremacy. The swimming pool fight was the trigger point," the officer said. Around 9:30 pm, Vishal and his associates came to the area of other group to take revenge from two brothers who were involved in the swimming pool argument and an

altercation broke out between the groups, the officer said, adding, "The other party had more people, and they started beating their rivals". According to another police officer, Vishal and the 17-year-old boy, along with two or three of their friends, assaulted Anuj and his brother Suraj at their residence. Subsequently, Suraj summoned three or four of his friends, leading to clashes between them. This altercation resulted in Vishal and the boy sustaining critical injuries, the officer said, adding that the rival group members stabbed Vishal and the boy approximately six to seven times each before fleeing the spot. A senior police officer said a case has been registered under relevant sections of the IPC and a few suspects have been rounded up. "They are being questioned about the incident," the officer added.

Poor Food, Lifestyle Choices Fuelling Cancer In Indians Under 40: Doctors

New Delhi: Poor lifestyle choices with regular consumption of ultra-processed food, and a sedentary lifestyle are increasing cancer cases among people under 40 years of age in India, said doctors on Sunday. Several factors are contributing to the rise in cancer cases among younger people in India. One of the primary reasons is increased consumption of processed foods, tobacco, and alcohol, sedentary lifestyles, obesity, and stress.

Environmental pollution is another critical factor. India's cities are plagued by high levels of pollution, which has been linked to various types of cancer. Air and water pollution expose individuals to carcinogenic substances, significantly increasing their cancer risk. "Ultra-processed foods and sedentary lifestyles are emerging as significant contributors to the rising cancer rates among young Indians. "The high intake of these foods, laden with unhealthy additives, combined with physical inactivity, is creating a health crisis," Dr. Rahul Bhargava,



Director and head of the Department of Haematology and BMT at Fortis Memorial Research Institute told IANS. "It's imperative to adopt healthier dietary habits and an active lifestyle to curb this alarming trend," he added. According to a recent study by Cancer Mukh Bharat Foundation, a Delhi-based non-

profit foundation, 20 per cent of cancer cases in India are now being diagnosed in people below 40 years of age. The study shows that men constitute 60 per cent of these young cancer patients, while women make up the remaining 40 per cent. The gender disparity may be due to higher rates of tobacco use, occupational

exposure, and lifestyle choices among men in India. "In our country, escalating rates of obesity, change in dietary habits, specifically the increase in consumption of ultra-processed food, and sedentary lifestyles are associated with higher cancer rates," said Dr. Ashish Gupta, principal investigator and senior oncologist at Unique Hospital Cancer Center, Delhi, told IANS. The doctors called for the urgent need for lifestyle interventions to combat the rising cancer rates among young Indians. Dr. Ashish, also heading Cancer Mukh Bharat Campaign in India, emphasised the importance of a "combined effort from the government, healthcare professionals, and the community to tackle the rising cancer rates among young adults". "Policies promoting clean air and water, regular physical activity, and access to nutritious food must be prioritised. Additionally, we must invest in better healthcare infrastructure to ensure timely diagnosis and treatment," he said.

Remembering Air India 'Kanishka' Bombing 39 Years Later: What Happened On June 23, 1985?

New Delhi: External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar on Sunday paid tribute to the victims of the Air India Flight 182 'Kanishka' bombing, in which 329 people lost their lives almost four decades ago. The Montreal-New Delhi Air India 'Kanishka' Flight 182 exploded before it was slated to land at London's Heathrow Airport on June 23, 1985. The blast killed all 329 people on board, most of them Canadians of Indian descent. In a post on X, Jaishankar said, "The anniversary is a reminder why terrorism should never be tolerated."

WHAT HAPPENED ON JUNE 23, 1985

On June 23, 1985, Air India Flight 182, operating as 'Kanishka', was blown up by a bomb mid-air while en route from Montreal to London. The explosion claimed the lives of all 329 passengers and crew aboard, making it one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in Canada's history. The tragedy occurred 45 minutes before the aircraft was scheduled to land at London's Heathrow Airport. A bomb, concealed in a suitcase checked into cargo during a stopover in Vancouver, exploded above the Atlantic Ocean in Irish airspace. The explosion happened as Air India Flight 182 was cruising at an altitude of 31,000 feet. According to BBC, only 131 bodies were retrieved from the sea. Officers, Irish sailors and rescue workers look on as bodies the 329 victims of the Air India jumbo jet which crashed in the Atlantic Ocean are lined up on the docks in Cork, Ireland June 24, 1985.

REUTERS/Rob Taggart (IRELAND) About an hour before Air India flight 182 was downed, a bomb detonated inside Tokyo's Narita airport terminal. The explosive had been placed in a bag and checked onto a Canadian Pacific Airlines flight from Vancouver, destined for Air India Flight 301 bound for Bangkok. The blast occurred during the transfer to the aircraft at Narita, resulting in the deaths of two Japanese baggage handlers. Investigations linked both bombings collectively termed the "Kanishka case."

WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE?

The bombing was attributed to Sikh extremists seeking retribution for "Operation Bluestar", a military operation by the Indian government aimed at flushing out militants from the Golden Temple in Amritsar, Punjab, in 1984. Members of the Sikh terrorist outfit Babbar Khalsa had targeted the flight. In the aftermath of the bombing, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) launched an extensive investigation, which has been described as one of the longest and most complex domestic terrorism probes in Canada's history. Investigations into the bombing of the Air India Flight 182 remain "active."

NEWS BOX

2 Bihar men killed after their SUV veers off road in southern Nepal

Kathmandu Two Indians died in a road mishap in southern Nepal, police said here on Saturday. Tamanna Seikh, 35, and Irfan Alam, 21, both residents of East Champaran district of Bihar, were killed as the Scorpio jeep in which they were travelling fell down a hilly road in Chandranigahpur section along East West Highway. Four others were injured when the vehicle with Indian number plate met with the accident in Rautahat district of Southern Nepal on Friday evening. Jeep driver Sohel Amir, 22, was among those injured in the incident, and they are all undergoing treatment at a private hospital in Birgunj, police added.

1 dead, 7 injured after shooting at US nightclub

Louisville One person is dead and seven others were injured after a shooting at a Kentucky nightclub early Saturday morning, authorities say. Louisville Metro Police Department officials said they responded to a call of several people shot at the H20 nightclub in Louisville just before 1 am. One man, 40-year-old Joseph D Bowers of Indianapolis, was pronounced dead at the scene. Another adult was transported to UofL Hospital with gunshot wounds police believe to be "critical and life-threatening." Six other people transported themselves to area hospitals with injuries that were not life-threatening.

The Louisville Metro Police Department's Homicide Unit is investigating the case. There are currently no suspects. "The relationship of the victims, if any, is not known at this time," police said in a statement later Saturday.

Cops stop US man attempting to drown his children at beach

West Haven. A man trying to drown two small children at a Connecticut beach early Saturday morning was thwarted by police officers, according to authorities. An officer spotted an SUV parked on a beach in West Haven at about 2.30 a.m. and heard "significant screaming" from the water as he approached. As the officer entered the water, the man continued to drift further away with the two children while screaming, "Stay back!" according to a social media post by the West Haven Police Department. It had become obvious that the man "was deliberately drowning his children," according to the post. Responding officers went out nearly 100 yards (91 meters) from shore and were joined by other rescuers on a fire boat. The first officer to arrive was able to take the children and other officers helped get them to shore. Lifesaving measures were provided to the children and they were taken to a hospital, where they remained in intensive care on Saturday, according to police.

The man was in custody. It was not clear Saturday if he had an attorney. "It is without a doubt the swift response by our patrol officers saved the lives of these children," police said in the post. A call seeking information on possible charges and additional information was made to police.

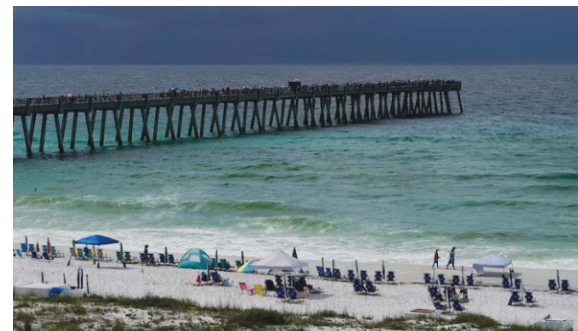
Yemen's Houthis claim attack on 4 ships at Israel's Haifa port

Cairo,UPDATED. Yemen's Houthis said early on Sunday that they had conducted a joint military operation with the Islamic Resistance in Iraq militant group, targeting four ships at Israel's northern Haifa port. CThe Houthi military spokesperson, Yahya Saree, said in a televised statement that the two groups launched a drone attack on two cement tankers and two cargo ships at the Haifa port on Saturday. He said the ships belonged to companies that "violated the ban on entering the ports of occupied Palestine". The Israeli military did not immediately comment, though it had previously denied a similar claim by the Houthis early this month.

Saree also said the Houthis had attacked the Shorthorn Express in the Mediterranean using drones as part of the group's campaign to disrupt shipping in key waterways, which they say is an act of solidarity with Palestinians in the Gaza war. "The two operations successfully achieved their objectives, and the strikes were precise and direct," Saree said.

There was no independent confirmation of strikes, and Reuters could not verify the claims. The Iran-aligned Houthis first launched drone and missile strikes in shipping lanes in November. In dozens of attacks, they have sunk two vessels, seized another and killed at least three seafarers.

3 Alabama men dead after becoming distressed while swimming at Florida beach



Panama City Beach. Three Alabama men have died from likely drowning after becoming distressed while swimming at a Florida Panhandle beach, authorities said Saturday morning.

The young men had travelled to the Panama City Beach area Friday evening, the Bay County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post. The sheriff's office received an emergency call about the distressed swimmers shortly after 8 pm, officials said. The US Coast Guard and others began rescue efforts. The men, who were not immediately identified, were found separately and eventually pronounced dead at local hospitals. Earlier this week, single red flags had been posted at the beach, indicating high-hazard surf and rip current conditions.

On Thursday, a Pennsylvania couple visiting Florida with their six children drowned after they were caught in a rip current while swimming. The man and woman were caught in the current on Hutchinson Island, along Florida's southeast coast, the Martin County Sheriff's Office said in a Facebook post.

Floods maroon Iowa, heatwave in other states: US faces double whammy

➔ **The US faced contrasting weather with Iowa getting hit heavy rain in the past few days while the remaining parts of the country reeled under an intense heatwave and the weather office issuing a heat advisory for the next few days.**

Washington Floodwaters forced people out of their homes in parts of Iowa, the result of weeks of rain, while much of the US longed for relief on Saturday from yet another round of extraordinary heat.

Sirens blared at 2 am in Rock Valley, Iowa, with a population of 4,200, where people in hundreds of homes were told to get out as the Rock River could no longer take the rain that had slammed the region. The city lacked running water because wells were unusable. Mayor Kevin Van Otterloo said a state helicopter was on its way to help

but was called off when boats were able to reach stranded residents. "We've had so much rain here," he said. "We had four inches last night in an hour and a half. Our ground just cannot take anymore." Governor Kim Reynolds declared a disaster for 21 counties in northern Iowa, including Sioux County, which includes Rock Valley. In a drone video posted by the local sheriff, no streets were visible, just roofs and treetops poking above the water.

In South Dakota, Gov. Kristi Noem declared an emergency after the southeastern part of the state received heavy rainfall. The town of Canton, 48 kilometres southeast of Sioux Falls, has received 18 inches of rain.

Several highways were closed, including a key stretch of Interstate 29 south of Sioux Falls that later reopened. Sioux Falls, the state's largest city, had more than seven inches of rain in three days.

"Even though the rain is slowing down, we need to keep vigilant," said Noem. "The worst of the flooding along our rivers will be Monday and Tuesday." Elsewhere in



the US, the miserable grip of heat and humidity continued. The National Weather Service said roughly 15 million people were under a heat warning — the highest level of alert — while another 90 million were under a heat advisory. Millions across the country have had their lives disrupted by stretches of unusually high temperatures. Last year, the US experienced the most heatwaves since 1936, experts said. An AP analysis of data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that excessive heat contributed to more than 2,300 deaths, the highest in 45 years of records. Temperatures around 37.8

degrees Celsius were predicted for Washington, DC, and Richmond, Virginia, while Philadelphia, Newark, New Jersey; Columbus, Ohio; and Detroit were bracing for temperatures above 32 degrees Celsius. Heat-related hospital visits in New York state lately were 500 per cent higher than on the average June day, according to the Department of Health. "We still have this prolonged heat wave across portions of the Ohio Valley and into the Northeast," weather service meteorologist Marc Chenard said. "We get a little bit of relief by early in the week, at least in the eastern US, the Northeast, but in general above-normal temperatures are going to cover a large portion of the country even into next week." In southeastern Michigan, DTE Energy said 7,400 customers remained without power as of Saturday afternoon due to storm-related outages, down from 75,000 earlier in the week. A heat index of 37.8 Celsius didn't stop Florida couple Judy and Bill Watson from watching the Tigers play the White Sox at Detroit's Comerica Park.

Iran overturns death sentence of rapper over lyrics about Mahsa Amini's death

Dubai, Iran's Supreme Court overturned the death sentence of a government critic and a popular hip-hop artist, Toomaj Salehi, who came to fame over his lyrics about the death in police custody of Mahsa Amini in 2022, his lawyer Amir Raisian said Saturday.

In a post on X, Raisian said the court assessed the case and found Salehi's past six years in prison as "excessive" since the punishment was more than what was allowed by law. He added that another branch of the court will now review the case. Salehi's death sentence in April by a Revolutionary Court in the central city of Isfahan created confusion as even Iran's state-run IRNA news agency and the judiciary did not formally confirm it. Such courts in Iran often involve closed-door hearings with evidence produced by a secretary and give limited rights to those on trial. The news quickly drew

international criticism from the US and UN experts, who condemned it as a sign of Tehran's continuing crackdown against all dissent following years of mass protests. Salehi was released from



prison last November after spending a year there on charges that his supporters said were based on the hip-hop artist's music and participation in the protests that broke out in Iran over the death of Mahsa Amini, 22. Amini died in the custody of the country's

morality police after being detained for wearing her hijab too loosely. Salehi rapped about Amini in one video, saying, "Someone's crime was dancing with her hair in the wind." In another verse, he predicts the downfall of Iran's theocracy.

Shortly after his release last year, Salehi was sent to prison again after saying in a video message that he was tortured after his detention in October 2022. State media at the time released a video showing him blindfolded and apologising for his words, a statement likely to have been made under duress. Later, in 2023, a court sentenced Salehi to more than six years in prison.

UN investigators say Iran was responsible for Amini's death, and that it violently put down largely peaceful protests in a months-long security crackdown that killed more than 500 people and saw over 22,000 detained.

Egypt cracks down on tourism companies after death of 530 pilgrims in Mecca

The Egyptian authorities have launched action against several tourism companies after the death of at least of its 530 citizens during this year's haj pilgrimage to Mecca

Cairo,UPDATED Egypt withdrew the operating licenses of 16 tourism companies and referred them to the public prosecutor, accusing them of being responsible for the deaths of Egyptian pilgrims in Mecca, a crisis unit tasked with addressing the situation said on Saturday.

Medical and security sources say at least 530 Egyptians died during this year's haj pilgrimage to Mecca, while the statement from the unit, formed on Thursday and headed by Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly, said 31



deaths were confirmed as a result of chronic illness. The tourism companies which facilitated the travel of those who died did not provide them with services of any kind, including medical, the statement said without naming the companies involved. The agencies are being blamed for sending pilgrims to Saudi on personal visit visas, rather than haj visas that allow access to Mecca where haj rituals take place. Medical services offered by Saudi

authorities to alleviate the hardships of the pilgrimage are not offered to those traveling with a personal visa. The pilgrims who died had to walk through the desert into Mecca to avoid arrest or deportation, the statement added. Egyptian authorities also say those travel agencies did not provide the pilgrims with "appropriate accommodation," adding that this caused pilgrims' "exhaustion due to the high temperatures." Egyptian authorities also documented 31 deaths among registered Egyptian pilgrims, citing "chronic diseases" as the cause of deaths. Most of those who died were unregistered, the statement said. In recent days hundreds of people from different countries have died in punishing conditions for the haj pilgrimage in the Saudi city, where temperatures have at times exceeded 51 degrees Celsius (124 Fahrenheit).

Donald Trump called on religious supporters to go to the polls in a speech to conservative Christian activists on Saturday, but mentioned only briefly the politically sensitive issue of abortion, a topic of central importance to the group. Speaking at an event organised by the Faith & Freedom Coalition in Washington, the former president reiterated his position that abortion restrictions should be decided by voters on a state-by-state basis. That stance contradicts the view of most conservative Christians, and Trump's reticence to push for or even discuss additional federal regulations speaks to how sensitive the issue has become for Republicans. Trump has repeatedly said Republicans risk electoral defeat if they take too stringent a line on abortion rights. The party's underwhelming performance in the 2022 congressional midterm elections has been widely attributed to the Supreme Court's Dobbs ruling that year, which removed most constitutional protections for the procedure. "We've gotten abortion out of the federal government and back to the states. The people will decide, and that's the way it should be," Trump said.

"Like Ronald Reagan, I believe in exceptions for the life of the mother - rape and incest ... You have to go with your heart. You have to also remember you have to get elected," Trump said. Trump's comments on abortion appeared to receive a lukewarm reception. Some in the crowd broke out in chants of "No dead babies!" as he discussed the topic. But there was no indication the heavily pro-Trump audience would support another candidate as the November 5 general election rematch with Democratic President Joe Biden approaches.

Trump received heavy applause when he discussed several other proposals, including eliminating the Department of Education, a measure favoured by many conservative Christians who accuse the federal government of attacking faith-based teaching methods. At multiple points during his speech, Trump called on Christians to show up to the polls in November, prompting chants of "Vote!" from the crowd. Trump has claimed credit for appointing three conservative justices to the Supreme Court who helped overturn the Roe v. Wade decision two years ago this Monday, eliminating a nationwide right to abortion in a moment of triumph for conservatives. Trump has repeatedly said he would not support a federal ban on abortion, however, preferring to leave the issue to individual states. Ralph Reed, the founder and chairman of the Faith & Freedom Coalition and a key Trump ally, has previously said his group would continue to work towards restrictions at both the state and federal levels.

ON TO PHILADELPHIA
Later on Saturday, Trump will hold a campaign rally at Temple University in a historically Black area of Philadelphia, long a stronghold for Democrats.

Hindujas 'appalled' by Swiss court's jail term order, file appeal

Four members of the Hinduja family, the UK's richest, are sentenced to up to 4.5 years for exploiting servants over human trafficking charges. It is claimed they spent more on their pet dog than on an Indian help's salary. The Hinduja family have countered the charges.

London Britain's wealthiest family, the Hinduja, have said they are "appalled" by a Swiss court's ruling of jail terms for some members and have filed an appeal in a higher court challenging the verdict finding them guilty of exploiting vulnerable domestic workers from India employed at their villa in Geneva.

A spokesperson for the affected family members, Kamal and Prakash Hinduja and their son Ajay and his wife Namrata — who are all Swiss nationals, pointed out on Saturday that neither of them have been subjected to any "imprisonment, conviction, sentence or detention."

"Per Swiss law procedures, the lower court's judgement is rendered ineffective and inoperative as the presumption of innocence is paramount until and unless a final judgment by the highest adjudicating authority is enforced," the

family's spokesperson said. "It may be noted that the case has no complainants left anymore and they had declared in the court that they were led into signing statements that they didn't even understand. They had neither intended to nor initiated such proceedings. All of them further testified that the four Hinduja Family Members treated them with 'respect, dignity and like family'," the spokesperson added.

Earlier on Friday, in a statement issued on behalf of the family by their lawyers from Switzerland stressed their clients had been acquitted of all human trafficking charges. They also dismissed media reports that any members of the family faced detention after court reports from Geneva said the four were sentenced to between four and four-and-a-half years in prison. "Our clients have been acquitted of all human trafficking charges. We are appalled and disappointed by the rest of the decision made in this court of first instance, and we have, of course, filed an appeal to the higher court, thereby making this part of the judgement not effective," reads the statement signed by lawyers Yael Hayat and Robert Assael and Roman Jordan. "Under Swiss law, the presumption of innocence is paramount until a final judgement by the highest



adjudicating authority is enforced. Contrary to some media reports, there is no effective detention for any members of the family," they said. The lawyers also pointed out that "it should also be recalled that the plaintiffs in this case had withdrawn their respective complaints after declaring to the court that they had never intended to be involved in such proceedings." "The family has full faith in the judicial process and remains confident that the truth will prevail," they conclude.

The statements follow a hearing in the Swiss city of Geneva after prosecutors opened the case for alleged illegal activity, including exploitation, human trafficking and violation of Switzerland's labour laws. The family members were accused of seizing the workers' passports, barring

them from leaving the villa and forcing them to work very long hours for a pittance in Switzerland, among other things. Some workers allegedly spoke only Hindi and were paid their wages in rupees in banks back in India that they could not access. During the trial, prosecutors alleged the family spent more on their dog than on their servants.

The family's legal team had countered the allegations and told the court the staff were treated respectfully and provided with accommodation. According to The Sunday Times Rich List' released last month, the UK-based Hinduja family once again emerged as the country's richest, with wealth estimated at around GBP 37.196 billion. They saw this tally increase over the previous year in the wake of the opening of the brand-new luxury OWO Raffles Hotel in the heart of London. The UK-based family's group of companies, headed by chairman G P Hinduja, operates in 48 countries and across several sectors - automotive, oil and specialty chemicals, banking and finance, IT, cyber security, healthcare, trading, infrastructure project development, media and entertainment, power, and real estate.

NEWS BOX

AUS vs AFG: Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran stitch record 100 partnership in T20 World Cup 2024

New Delhi. Rahmanullah Gurbaz and Ibrahim Zadran equalled the all-time record of most 100 run partnerships in the history of T20 World Cups. The Afghanistan pair achieved the feat in Afghanistan's Super 8 match against Mitchell Marsh's Australia on Saturday, June 22 (Sunday, June 23 in India) at the Arnos Vale Ground in Kingstown, St Vincent. The duo put on a huge partnership of 118 runs for the opening wicket off 15.5 overs on a difficult pitch to bat on.

With their 3rd 100 partnership in the T20 World Cups, Gurbaz and Ibrahim equalled the record of the Pakistani pair of Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan. In the ongoing mega event, while the Afghan duo has crossed the 100-run mark thrice, no other pair has put on a century stand. Gurbaz and Zadran also notched the second-highest opening stand against Australia in the T20 World Cups. As a pair, they have scored 408 runs from 6 matches at an average of 68. After being asked to bat first, the Afghans put up a decent score of 148 for the loss of 6 wickets. Gurbaz scored quickly as he made 60 runs off 49 balls with the help of 4 fours and as many sixes. Zadran was effective as well, scoring 51 runs. Even as Gurbaz got out to Marcus Stoinis, Adam Zampa accounted for the wicket of Ibrahim.

Back on June 3, Gurbaz and Ibrahim put on 154 runs for the opening wicket against Uganda at the Providence Stadium in Guyana. Thereafter, they stitched together a 103-run partnership against New Zealand at the same venue. The duo went from strength to strength and carried their form against the Aussies.

AUS vs AFG: Pat Cummins creates history, gets 2nd hat-trick in T20 World Cup

New Delhi. Pat Cummins made history on June 23, Sunday as he became first player to pick up 2 hat-tricks in T20 World Cups during the Super 8 clash between Australia and Afghanistan in St. Vincent. Cummins picked up the wickets of Rashid Khan, Karim Janat and Gulbadin Naib to achieve the feat. Cummins had picked up a hat-trick during Australia's first Super match against Bangladesh as well. During the match against Afghanistan, Cummins had picked up a wicket in the form of Rashid with the last ball of the 18th over and he was given the job to close out the innings. The pacer would dismiss Janat and Naib off the first two deliveries of the 20th over to become the first player to pick up 2 hat-tricks in T20 World Cups. This was the 5th hat-trick by an Australian player in T20Is and the third one in the World Cup.

What Cummins said about his historic hat-trick?

Cummins joked that he had remembered about his hat-trick this time around and said it was crazy to get two hat-tricks in a row. Yeah I remembered that one (hat-trick). Crazy. Played 100-odd games for Australia, (now) got two in a row. Afghanistan put on a total of 148 for 6 on a challenging track. They looked set for an even bigger total before Cummins and Co pegged them back. Cummins said it was a decent bowling effort in the end. "I thought they batted well. But I also thought we restricted the boundaries. They obviously ran well. Overall, decent bowling effort. Not our tidiest day in the field. Happy with the total," said Cummins. Australia need a win to ensure they and India qualify for the semi-finals.

T20 World Cup: Harry Brooks hopes to give USA a 'battering' as England eyes semi-final

New Delhi. England's Harry Brook has set his sights on delivering a decisive victory against the United States, aiming to secure England's place in the semi-finals of the ongoing ICC T20 World Cup 2024. Brook, who fell just short of clinching a win in a nail-biting encounter against South Africa, expressed his determination to ensure England dominates their next match. Brook's valiant effort of 53 runs in the final over wasn't enough to secure victory in the tightly contested match against South Africa, which ended in a seven-run defeat. As England transitioned from St Lucia to Barbados for their third game in just five days, Brook emphasized the importance of winning to stay in contention for the knockout stages.

"We've got to win and that's the main thing," Brook stated. "Let's see how we are on net run-rate after that, but the main thing is to definitely get that win. We've played in Barbados quite a lot in the last six months or so. We know the conditions, we know the wind and the pitch as well, so hopefully we can go out there and give them a good battering."

England's familiarity with the conditions in Barbados could prove advantageous, as Brook and his teammates look to exploit their knowledge of the pitch and weather patterns to their benefit. Brook's determination reflects the team's overall focus on not just winning, but doing so convincingly to improve their net run-rate, a crucial factor in progressing to the semi-finals.

Reflecting on the team's recent experiences, Brook shared a glimpse into the squad's mindset. "I watched (Australia v Scotland) in a bar in Antigua but we were all knackered. I watched the first half then went to bed and watched the second half," he recounted.

Azhar Mahmood to take legal action against 'false allegations' after Pakistan's T20 WC exit

Azhar Mahmood slammed false allegations and said that will take legal action against the wrongdoers. Earlier, Pakistan failed to advance to the T20 World Cup 2024 Super 8.

New Delhi. Pakistan men's assistant coach Azhar Mahmood hit out at 'false allegations' after Pakistan's disastrous campaign in the T20 World Cup 2024. Babar Azam's men failed to make their way

through to the Super 8 of the mega event after initially losing to the United States and India. Expectations were high from them after they finished as the runners-up last time around in Australia. However, the Men in Green flattered to deceive big time and slumped to back-to-back defeats. Although they beat Canada and Ireland, it was all too late for them. In the meantime, after Pakistan's exit, reports of PCB paying for the trips of cricketers, their families and support staff to the USA circulated. But Mahmood dismissed the allegations as false and baseless. The former Pakistan all-rounder said that he would be taking legal action against the people who are responsible for circulating the 'unacceptable' rumours on social media platforms. "I have heard some false allegations and narratives circulating on social media and other media platforms. I



categorically state that these allegations are entirely baseless and false, and it is extremely upsetting to hear them," Mahmood wrote on 'X'.

This culture of falsely accusing and misleading people to believe a false narrative is now getting ridiculous and dangerous. Speaking without evidence and misconstruing facts is a criminal offence, and those engaging in such behaviour will

be dealt with through legal action." "Pursuing an increase in followers and media attention by spreading falsehoods is downright unacceptable. I will be pursuing legal advice against those responsible for making these false allegations towards me and my family, and strict action will be taken accordingly. We will not be discussing this matter further on social media," Mahmood wrote. "I urge everyone to avoid engaging with or entertaining these harmful narratives as it is essential to put an end to such behaviour in our media culture," he added.

Earlier, reports also suggested that skipper Babar Azam would take legal action against former cricketers and YouTubers, who accused him of misconduct during the mega event in the West Indies and the USA. Earlier this year, prior to Pakistan's T20 series against New Zealand, Babar had replaced Shaheen Shah Afridi as the white-ball skipper, but the decision hasn't worked out well until now going by the results.

Not a dead rubber: Deepti Sharma refuses to relax before 3rd ODI vs South Africa

New Delhi. Deepti Sharma said that India would not be approaching their last ODI against South Africa as a dead rubber. Harmanpreet Kaur and Co. have already claimed the 3-match series after winning the second ODI on June 19 by 4 runs at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru. The match went down to the wire where Pooja Vastrakar held his nerves to take India home. Prior to the third game of the series, Deepti said that it is important for India to carry the momentum into the one-off Test to be held from June 28 at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai. Yes, we have won the series but we will not approach this match as one of academic interest. We look to learn from whatever opportunities we get, as we will be going into the one-off Test (in Chennai) later this



week," Deepti said in the pre-match press conference.

Love to tackle pressure

Deepti, herself, has been in decent form as he is the leading wicket-taker of the ODI series. The off-break is currently the joint-highest wicket-taker in the series along with Asha Sobhana with 4 wickets to her

name. "I love to tackle pressure situations. My thought process is very clear. I always want to make the team win or place the team in a winning position, whether it is with my batting or bowling," she said.

Deepti also lauded the Indian batters for understanding the conditions well and moulding their game as per that. Their opener Smriti Mandhana has looked in red-hot form after racking up back-to-back hundreds. "The openers played as per the conditions. The ball was moving around a little bit in the initial overs, and they played within themselves. They adapted well. After 10-12 overs, we built some good partnerships. They used every scoring opportunity in that area and that's a positive for us - the way we capitalised later on," Deepti added.

T20 World Cup: Finch impressed as Kuldeep Yadav trumps Rishad Hossain in IND vs BAN

New Delhi. India spinner Kuldeep Yadav took 3 wickets against Bangladesh in India's Super 8 match at the T20 World Cup 2024. Kuldeep bamboozled the Bangladesh batters with his spin off the pitch. The spinner choked out the opposition in the middle overs and bowled in tandem with Jasprit Bumrah, who was once again superb on the day. Former Australia captain Aaron Finch lauded Kuldeep's ability to outfox the batters and said that the spinner's redemption arc was beautiful to look at. Kuldeep Yadav was dropped from the Indian team due to criticism over his lack of pace. The spinner strengthened his body and came back with vengeance in 2022 and since then, has been a permanent fixture with the Indian team.

"Kuldeep copped some criticism early in his career, that he was too slow through the air, which you can deceive people out of the hand. But unless you can beat them off the wicket as well, guys had time to adjust.



So what did he do? He went away and he got stronger, physically stronger so he could sustain himself for longer, and he certainly showed that right throughout," Finch said on Star Sports.

Now his ability to set batsman up with going pace on or quicker through the air, turning it a bit each way and then using the subtle changes of slower paces to deceive as well. It's wonderful bowling. It's beautiful to watch, especially when guys are unsure which way it's turning," Finch

further added. Kuldeep was in battle with Bangladesh's Rishad Hossain in the match as both spinners found turn and bounce from the Antigua pitch.

Kuldeep, however, was much more miser than Rishad, giving away just 19 runs. Veteran Sunil Gavaskar hailed Kuldeep for his subtle variations. "Kuldeep really bowled well. That wrong one that he bowled to get the dangerous looking Tanzid out, that was very well bowled.

And then again, getting the batters out with that slightly tossed up delivery, he varied his pace well, using the crease, not too much this time around, he uses the crease quite nicely, but this time around he hardly use the crease. You are only looking for variation in the air and off the surface and you got three wickets for that," Gavaskar said. "Three wickets for 19 for a wrist spinner in four overs is outstanding, simply outstanding," concluded the legendary cricketer.

India vs Bangladesh: Life comes full circle for Hardik Pandya in T20 World Cup

New Delhi. Vice-captain Hardik Pandya delivered a near-perfect performance during a crucial Super Eight clash against Bangladesh to help India inch closer to a semi-final spot in the T20 World Cup 2024. Hardik looked like finding his old spark during his near-perfect all-round performance (unbeaten 50 off 27 balls and a wicket) in India's comprehensive 50-run victory at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in North Sound, Antigua. As Hardik said 'it felt like god had planned this comeback' as his fortunes went downhill after a significant injury setback during an ODI World Cup match against Bangladesh. Incidentally, it is also against Bangladesh, albeit in a different World Cup format, Hardik seemed to have found his 'power-hitting mojo'. Mind you, Hardik's journey back to form wasn't easy. After consecutive injuries sidelined him for

four months, his return to the MI was fraught with many challenges. As captain, he struggled to inspire his team and was trolled by fans across the country, further denting his confidence. Hardik's big-hitting prowess, once feared by bowlers worldwide, seemed to be fading.

However, a return to India colours during the T20 World Cup 2024 marked a turning point for Pandya. During the Super Eight match vs Bangladesh, Hardik's aggressive batting in the slog overs was a sight to behold. With India teetering after Rishabh Pant's dismissal in the 12th over, Pandya stepped up along with Shivam Dube, blasting 62 runs in the final five overs and steering India to a formidable total of 196. His innings, studded with four boundaries



and three towering sixes, silenced his critics and reminded every one of his destructive capabilities.

The climax of Pandya's innings came in the final over bowled by Mustafizur Rahman. Displaying finesse and power, Pandya edged the first ball to the boundary and sliced another to the third man. When Rahman tried

to outsmart him with a full ball outside off, Pandya elegantly pinged it to the third-man boundary again, reaching his half-century in style. India's bowlers, inspired by Pandya's knock, performed admirably. Kuldeep Yadav's spell was particularly noteworthy, as he spun a web around the Bangladeshi batters, claiming three crucial wickets including that of Shakib Al Hasan. Bangladesh crumbled under the pressure, unable to chase down India's challenging total. After the match, Indian captain Rohit Sharma praised Pandya's impact. "Hardik being Hardik, we know what he is capable of. He is a very important player for us. If he can keep doing that, it will put us in good positions. Everyone adapted well with our bowling plans and executed them perfectly," Rohit said during the post-match presentation.



Pooja Sawant

Shares Glimpses From Her First Vat Purnima



Prominent Marathi actress Pooja Sawant tied the knot with Siddesh Chavan, an Australia-based banker, this year. On June 21, the actress celebrated the day of Vat Purnima, an occasion where married women observe a fast for the health and long life of their husbands. On her social media handles, Pooja Sawant shared celebratory images from the day. She shared the series of images from her first Vat Purnima on Instagram. In the first image, she is captured radiating happiness in a gorgeous kanjeevaram saree, carrying a pooja thali. Her breathtaking saree is hued with the bright colours of red and orange, with gold embroidery, while she has chosen to pair it with gold choker, mangal sutra, along with green bangles on each wrist. The whole look is completed with a delicate nose ring and small but striking gold earrings. She has left her hair open, styled to her left shoulder.

The following images show her circumambulating the wada tree, tying it with a white thread. The caption on the post read, "First Vat Purnima. @siddy.16 I miss you the most today," indicating that her husband could not be with her for the day. Fans shared their congratulatory messages in the comment section. The first user wrote, "So so cute." A second user stated, "So beautiful." A third fan shared, "Absolutely beautiful and gorgeous, looking very pretty." The post has amassed more than 1,78,000 likes on the platform.

Pooja Sawant tied the knot with Siddesh Chavan on February 28, this year. The marriage was conducted in a Marathi-style ceremony. Pooja opted for a traditional Marathi wedding ensemble, wearing a bright pink and orange silk saree. Her husband Siddesh was seen in a cream coloured sherwani, completed with a matching sehra.

On the day of Vat Purnima, married women are expected to keep a fast for the long life of their husbands and worship the wada tree. The day is celebrated on a full moon of the Jyeshtha month.

When Deepika Padukone Didn't Invite Amitabh Bachchan To Piku Success Bash: 'Have Not Had Courage To..'



As Kalki 2898 AD is nearing its release, fans are excited to watch Amitabh Bachchan and Deepika Padukone reunite on screen after the success of Piku. The Shoojit Sircar directorial film was released in 2015 and became a hit both critically and commercially. However, in an unfortunate turn of events, Deepika Padukone forgot to invite Amitabh to the success bash she hosted for the film. Piku's success bash was attended by several big names like Shah Rukh Khan and Alia Bhatt. However, Amitabh Bachchan's absence caught everyone's attention. While it was first speculated that the superstar might be sick, it was later revealed that was not invited to the event. It was a major technical error on my part and by the time it came to my notice it was too late and I'll never forgive myself for it," Deccan Chronicle quoted Deepika Padukone actress as saying. "I am so embarrassed that I have not even had the courage to call him after that. I did eventually text him a couple of days ago but I have still not had the courage to pick up the phone and even explain myself to him. But I will. It was a major technical thing," she further added. When asked about this incident during the promotion of Wazir, Amitabh Bachchan said, "Jo beet gayi so baat gayi. There are too many things that happen. You can't keep mulling over what's already happened." few years ago, it was reported that after Piku, Deepika and Amitabh would be reuniting on screen for the Hindi remake of Anne Hathaway starrer The Intern. While there are no updates about that film, fans are eagerly waiting to watch the duo on screen in Kalki 2898 AD.

Directed by Nag Ashwin, the trailer of the film was released earlier this month and it will be a futuristic take on the Mahabharat. The cast includes Prabhas, Amitabh Bachchan, Deepika Padukone, Kamal Haasan and Disha Patani. Amitabh Bachchan will be playing the role of Ashwatthama in Nag Ashwin's film. During the pre-release event, Big B opened up about his first reaction when he was offered the role of Ashwatthama. "When Nag Ashwin came and explained his idea to me, for the long time after he left I was thinking, 'what the hell is Nagi drinking?'" Amitabh said.

Singer Asees Kaur Welcomes Baby Boy With Husband Goldie, Hina Khan and Others Congratulate



Asses Kaur has become a proud mother to a baby boy. The singer and her husband, Punjabi music composer Goldie Soheli, welcomed their first child on Friday, June 21.

The couple shared a joint post on Instagram announcing the good news with a photo in which Asees was seen flaunting her baby bump while resting on her husband. "Waheguru Tera Shukar Hai ?? With immense joy and gratitude, we announce the birth of our precious BABY BOY on World Music Day! This special day has blessed us with the sweetest note in our life's symphony. Our hearts are overflowing with love, happiness & gratitude ??," she wrote. Check it out here:

Soon after the post was shared, fans and friends rushed to the comments section to congratulate the couple. Reacting to the news, Hina Khan wrote, "Yayyyyyy congratulations to both of you." Gauahar Khan also commented, "Congratulations ?? god bless ur family." Comedian Bharti Singh also wrote, "congratulations ji whereas Ridhima Pandit dropped red-heart emojis in the comments section.

Music director Rochak Kohli also added, "Wow! What a khabar! What a day! Mubarak ho guys.. zindagi badalne waali hai." Asees Kaur and Goldie Soheli tied the knot in June 2023. Their wedding ceremony took place at a Gurudwara in Mumbai. Recently, the couple celebrated their first wedding anniversary when Asees dropped their love-filled pictures on Instagram and wrote, "365 days of Us ???? making memories that will last a lifetime Can't wait for the next chapter unfolding soonest Here's to being weird & wonderful together ?? Happy 1st Anniversary love @goldiesoheli"

Asees Kaur is known for songs like Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya, Ve Kamleya (Lofi), Raataan Lambiyan, Madhaniya, Bolna and Makhna among others.

Sara Ali Khan

Reflects On Grounded Upbringing: 'We Didn't Grow Up Thinking Paparazzi Is Our Birthright'

Sara Ali Khan, raised by her mother and veteran actress Amrita Singh, expresses deep gratitude for her grounded upbringing, which has kept her away from the glaring spotlight associated with stardom. In the latest episode of Mid-day's 'Sit With Hitlist,' Sara reflects on her early experiences with the paparazzi and her time at the prestigious Dhirubhai Ambani school, where she wasn't given special treatment despite her background. Sara candidly shared, "I'm trying not to sound wrong, but I'm trying to be honest also, the more grateful I am for the upbringing that I've had. The more years I'm spending here, the more I'm realizing how easy it would have been for my mom to have brought me up differently and how grateful and thankful I am that she didn't. We didn't grow up thinking that paparazzi is our birthright."



Sara Ali Khan reminisced about the time when she was photographed even before her debut film 'Kedarnath' hit the screens. She articulates this experience by saying, "I was trying to strike the balance between being rude to them (paparazzi) because I didn't want to be, but also not being photographed because what have I really done to be here? Like why am I being photographed? And all this happened before the whole nepotism chapter and chatter had started like a year into my work. I myself had started feeling that yes my mother is an artist, my father is an actor, but I am not, so why are they behind me? I am really grateful that I kind of grew up thinking like that because now when they photograph me, I have a very good equation with them because somewhere I think I've earned it." Sara Ali Khan emphasized how her upbringing with her mother, Amrita Singh, kept her grounded and authentic, with little connection to the film world. She explained, "Radhika Madan, Janhvi Kapoor, and Ananya Pandey are friends I made at work. I was not like, 'Oh, our parents have been actors previously', so now we have special pani puri together. That was not the vibe at all."

Sara also shared that, for a long time, she didn't require personal security. "I didn't grow up having seven people around me handing me things," she noted. "Mom was very certain that she wanted us to have a full life external to the films," she further added.

