

Repatriate's reunion with samosa

Through decades of travel and setting up home in different countries, the search for comfort food often ended with savouring a samosa in its numerous forms. Those stepping beyond Indian shores share an emotional bond with this mildly spicy, crisp savoury snack, always immensely pleasurable and satisfying.

I am reminded of one of my many sojourns into the bylanes of Anawartha Road in downtown Yangon (the erstwhile Rangoon, the commercial capital of Myanmar). I had stepped into a small, non-descript restaurant that claimed to be serving authentic Myanmar cuisine. Tempted by the list of vegetarian dishes, the samosa soup in particular piqued my interest. Like most Indians, the crisp flaky, potato-filled golden triangles were a mouth-watering delicacy that conjured up sweet memories of student days when 'samosa and chai' were a ritual with friends. That day, the picture that stared back at me had some pointed edges peeping out of a bowl of soup. Obviously, the samosa had travelled a long way.

Most of us believe that samosa is an Indian snack that has evolved over centuries. Not quite, since its origin can be traced to Central Asia and the Middle Eastern countries. The first mention of a snack bearing a striking similarity to our modern-day samosa was found in Arab cookbooks dating back to the 11th century. These mentioned the pastry as 'sanbusak' (derived from 'sanbosag', a Persian term). The recipe seems to have reached South Asia through the Middle Eastern skilled cooks who sought employment in the kitchens of the Sultan of Delhi. Mention of the samosa in Amir Khusrau's writings (poet and scholar of the 13th



century) revealed its popularity among the nobility and royal families. By this time, the samosa had been refined to perfection with stuffings of mincemeat, ghee and onions.

Samosa is prepared with a wafer-thin outer pastry that is rolled out and formed into a cone, filled with stuffings ranging from meat and game, to potatoes, cottage cheese and vegetables, before being sealed and deep-fried on a low flame to yield a crisp, golden brown outer crust with a soft filling inside. The basic recipe remains the same but over time, delectable variations have emerged — lukhmi in Hyderabad, samosa chaat is popular as street food in North India, sambosak in Arab countries, somsa in Turkic-speaking nations of Central Asia, bajiyaa in the Maldives, sambusa in Ethiopia and Somalia, and Indonesia's own version of samosa is served with sambal. Samosa wound its way into Myanmar as it did into all South Asian countries. Served as a fried snack in tea shops and as street food, it has also been adapted into a more wholesome dish served in local restaurants, as samosa soup, called samosa thook. Interestingly, this is a jump from an oil wok, into a bowl of lentil soup.

Samosa soup is a combination of lentil soup, samosa, and salad comprising onions, cabbage, carrots, chillies and coriander leaves. Tamarind or lemon juice can be added to make it a bit sour and tangy. A complete samosa soup combines more than 20 ingredients, and the end result is simply delicious.

In front of our flat in Delhi, there is a large silk cotton tree. While this is flanked by other makes and species, and is partially obscured by a brash Ashoka that started as an upstart shrub, it is the 'semul' or cotton tree that dominates the windows and balcony. As the day passes and the seasons change, the tree, expectedly, changes. When the power goes off, as it occasionally does, the drama in the tree provides greater delight than numerous TV shows. The morning begins with a race up and down the tree's trunk by a drey of squirrels — or are those chipmunks? I don't know the difference. But they are frisky, 'kinda cute' and have long, bushy tails. They seem to have nothing better to do than lose calories in their fidgety scurry for food and whatever else that they fill their days with. Having got its waking and sleeping cycles all wrong, the occasional rat also races along a parapet by the tree and dives headlong into the bowl of grain that has been left out for the birds by our neighbours. Then is the turn of the parakeets, who announce their arrival, or departure, with loud screeches. The highest branches are taken by a pair of kites, whose sharp eyes search for prey and then, with a sudden swoop, off they go to grab their next meal. Quite like squatters, bulbuls and barbets arrive to claim space on vacant branches and refuse to budge. When the flowers emerge a bright red in early spring, is when the fruit bats arrive and the evening hours are taken over by these unusual pollinators. The other tree is in the hills and is one that I have known all my life. This is euonymus, sometimes called a mock lemon. This fine person was meant to spend life as a small shrub, but somewhere along the line changed its mind and grew into a delightful, small tree. By its side were three other companions that time has taken to the place where good souls and good trees finally go. One has put down fresh cuttings in the hope that one day they, too, will emerge over the small plants around. Unlike the cotton tree that discourages climbing with its straight trunk and conical spikes along the bark, the euonymus welcomes its scramblers. This tree, with its dense foliage and intricate sculpture, was where we would vanish as children. In its lushness lay castles and forts. Branches could transform themselves into ships or aeroplanes and the occasional spaceship could come visiting and zoom us off to a distant planet.

At other times, this tree could emerge as a real-life hiding place. Take the moment when a good neighbour, somewhat older than me, decided that all the little ones and the somewhat older girls of the area were entitled to the protection of his well-developed biceps. Now,

A tale of two trees

No one climbs the euonymus tree now. Another generation of tree climbers has also grown and gone



someone who had moved more recently into the area, and was far older, did not know this. Nor was he particularly kind or polite to the girls who were now under protection of the aforesaid biceps. A moment of crisis occurred when the new neighbour pushed one of the girls aside while she was skipping on the path that he had to cross. Her legs got tangled in the skipping rope and she hurt herself. The biceps did not approve of this. This required suitable action. Quite like a scene from the inimitable 'Malgudi Days', the biceps were ably assisted by us minions. We waited till the 'person who pushed' was to return home. A confused mass of caws, whistles and barks announced the impending arrival of 'he who had dared push a girl'. The person passed under the euonymus tree where the biceps lay in wait. An arm swinging a frying pan shot out of the foliage, and a certain somebody lay flat on the path. In moments, the biceps and assorted underlings had vanished. None spoke of the incident again.

No one climbs the euonymus tree now. Another

generation of tree climbers has also grown and gone. It has now been passed on to monkeys who, taking their lesson from a frying pan-wielding human, now use this tree to ambush and waylay anyone who is carrying something edible. In winter, the rhesus monkeys give way to the large dark langurs, who eat the leaves and gnaw at the bark. When they are dissatisfied with other nooks and crannies, house sparrows occasionally make their nests in the deep innards of this tree. A few days back, with the first lashes of monsoon rain, a disused nest fell out of the tree. This may not have had the artistry of a weaverbird or the determination that makes a woodpecker's cavity in a tree, but, from a little distance, was neat enough. A closer inspection revealed the materials that it was made of. Here was a sign of our times, the much-threatened sparrows had made their nests from the very materials that endanger them and other birds — the whorls of long pine needles and strands of hair were interspersed with strings of plastic and polyester stuffing.

Triple whammy

Informal sector reeling under job losses

IN recent years, India's informal sector has faced significant challenges due to three major shocks: demonetisation in 2016, the rollout of the Goods and Services Tax regime in 2017 and the Covid-induced lockdown in 2020. These events have collectively led to the loss of 16.45 lakh jobs in seven years, according to the latest Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation. The survey highlights the fragility of unincorporated enterprises. Operating outside the formal regulatory framework, such firms are particularly vulnerable to policy changes and economic disruptions. The employment in these enterprises fell from 11.13 crore in 2015-16 to 10.96 crore in 2022-23, marking a 1.5 per cent decline. This drop reflects the compounded impact of the three exogenous shocks on the sector's capacity to sustain employment. Despite these challenges, the sector has shown resilience. The number of establishments



increased by 5.88 per cent and there was a 7.84 per cent rise in the estimated number of workers between 2021-22 and 2022-23. The sector's Gross Value Added grew

by 9.83 per cent, indicating some recovery. This was supported by enhanced capital investment and access to loans and greater use of IT.

In this context, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laying emphasis on job creation, especially in rural areas and the manufacturing sector, in the lead-up to the Union Budget assumes significance. The informal sector's ability to generate employment remains crucial for economic stability. For a more effective support of this sector, the Union Government must focus on improving Centre-state relations and enhancing programme implementation on the ground. To foster sustainable growth, it is imperative to address the systemic vulnerabilities exposed by the triple shocks. Strengthening the informal sector through targeted policies and ensuring a more robust safety net for workers can help mitigate future risks.

Tragedy that every forest fire unfolds for the voiceless

Another monsoon is upon us. It's a time when, ideally, melodies of Malhaar should have been sweetening the misty air of Shimla. However, the first showers rather appear as the strike of Lord Shiva's trident — especially in a city that is still recovering from its frightening monsoonal experience last year. The first rains have fallen and with them have also fallen a few deodars; muck has eroded downstream and engulfed stranded vehicles in its path. One awaits with bated breath the next two months! A forest pond is a blessing for animals. Photo courtesy: Kanwar Singh

Before overcast clouds from the south-west arrived to create romance or pathos in Shimla hills, it was the smoke from forest fires that had filled the cityscape, and also the news columns. I have spent many nights keeping vigil at the Rescue and Rehabilitation Centre at Tutikandi as fires raged far away, and asking the forest guard in charge if he had received enough local help to put out the blaze. The worry, of course, is the safety of the rescued wildlife (mostly leopards and bears) that are housed at this centre for treatment, rehabilitation and even as their permanent home. However, on May 28, luck and efforts did seem to have run out as a fire threateningly approached the caged inhabitants. In a strenuous situation amid choking smoke, the forest staff, led from the front by the Deputy Conservator of Forests (Wildlife), Shimla, did their all to save the wild inhabitants. Miraculously for the wildlife, the blaze took an upward turn, only to create another danger as it then headed in the direction of the Bal Ashram. The news spread and the entire district administration was on the spot taking control of the situation.

Unity is strength, and the joint efforts of the administration and citizens resulted in controlling the fire, averting what could have been a twin tragedy. Countless such tragedies may indeed have been averted



during the past summer, when surging sales of fans were reported in a city where buildings never had the need or provision for one, and daily life now seems to be transitioning into a welcome monsoon.

For those sensitised to walk the earth a bit more gently — a result of their passion and education in wildlife — the

past summer was indeed a forgettable one. They were privy to the disaster that unfolded during the forest fire season. I remember having a discussion with my superior as to the veracity of a social media image wherein a pheasant mother lay charred to death beside its clutch of eggs, obviously choosing death rather than

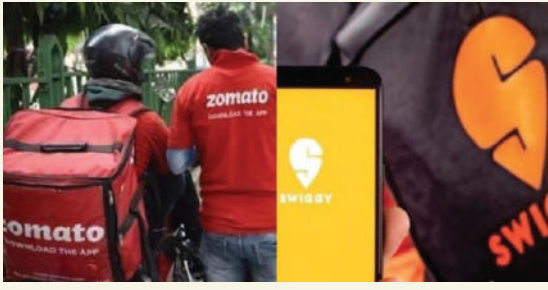
abandoning her maternal instincts. Whether that image was real or not, the forest staff at Mashobra Range did rescue the orphaned cheer pheasant chicks from another forest fire. They are now being nursed at Kufri Zoo. The endeavour has been beautifully filmed by the Conservator of Forests, Shimla, to raise awareness about the silent tragedy that every forest fire unfolds for the voiceless.

Majority of forest fires are caused by humans. Isn't lighting someone's home on fire supposed to be a crime of the gravest kind? Many human hearts still resonate with the pain and suffering borne by the faunal forms of life, but it arguably takes a Bodhisatva-like sensitivity to acknowledge the suffering of the flora. Irrespective of our abilities to be sensitive, that plants are as alive was proved by the legendary polymath, JC Bose. More recently, in the 'Hidden Life of Trees', Peter Wohlleben has postulated strikingly on how floral life-forms feel, communicate, love and form social bonds. The recent forest fires in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have thus been a gigantic disaster in the Wohllebenian or Bosonian sense. In the difficult season gone by, one of the most heartening sights was the monthly report on wildlife monitoring from the Renukaji Wildlife Sanctuary. What a blessing a lone, small water pond in the forest can be to wildlife in the sweltering heat was captured by a camera put at a vantage point. Between June 13 and June 17, the water hole, barely a foot deep, was amusingly used for a cool swim by a porcupine, a masked palm civet, a yellow-throated marten, a barking deer, a mother bear and her cub, and, yes, our omnipresent companions in Shimla — a macaque. Life in the wild is not a rose, so let's not add thorns to it. Those who have survived the fires, now have a monsoon to deal with. Shimla prays to the benignity of the rain gods!

Air India's top executives set to retain roles post Vistara merger: Report

NEW DELHI. Top executives at Air India are set to retain their roles following the airline's merger with Vistara, both operated by the Tata Group. Campbell Wilson will continue as chief executive, Nipun Aggarwal will remain chief commercial and transformation officer, and Sanjay Sharma will stay on as chief financial officer, reported The Economic Times. The report added that Vistara CEO Vinod Kannan is anticipated to return to his parent company, Singapore Airlines. Vistara, a joint venture between Tata Sons and Singapore Airlines, had Kannan seconded to the airline since 2019, initially serving as chief strategy officer. At the time of the merger, Singapore Airlines had the right to appoint the Vistara CEO, while Tata appointed the CFO. Deepak Rajawat, Vistara's chief commercial officer, is expected to be part of the merged entity. The majority of Vistara employees will join the new company, though some roles may become redundant as Air India already has equivalent positions filled. Air India has been actively hiring, bringing in personnel from other Tata entities to overhaul the company. A few Vistara employees have also been transferred to Air India. Non-flying staff from Vistara have undergone the Hogan Test, developed by US-based Hogan, which assesses personality traits essential for job fit, particularly for leadership roles. The Tata Group is working to consolidate its airline operations to improve efficiency and reduce redundancy. As part of this strategy, Air India Express and AirAsia India will merge to form a no-frills airline, while the combined entity of Air India and Vistara will operate as a full-service airline.

Zomato, Swiggy hike platform fee to Rs 6 per order



NEW DELHI. Food delivery platforms Zomato and Swiggy have once again hiked platform fee to Rs 6 per order from an earlier Rs 5 — a 20 per cent increase. Currently being charged in Delhi and Bengaluru, the platform fee is different from delivery fee, goods and services tax (GST), restaurant charges and handling charges. The higher platform fee will roll out to other cities as well. The platform fee goes to the food aggregators to apparently control costs and increase revenues. In April, Zomato hiked its platform fee by 25 per cent to Rs 5 per order. Zomato introduced a platform fee of Rs 2 in August last year and later increased it to Rs 3 to improve its margins and become profitable. The food delivery platforms aim to generate Rs 1.25-1.5 crore a day by levying a platform fee.

Why hunger for knowledge matters

New Delhi. Charlie Munger was no second fiddle. Although he served as the number two to legendary American investor Warren Buffett at their company Berkshire Hathaway, he was no less of a legend. His ideas and thoughts complemented Buffett and expanded the horizon of investing thinking. In a book about his investment style, author Tren Griffin discusses five key aspects. These include continuous learning, simplicity, patience, courage and worldly wisdom. In the context of the record share prices and the attraction towards getting rich quickly, you may want to take a leaf out of Munger's investment philosophy. There are no individuals in India who stand out like Buffett and Munger. The way they led their lives and made money not just for themselves but also for the shareholders and businesses they owned, there are very few parallels in the world. One can say that the organisation that comes close to the 'buy and hold' philosophy and has prospered is the government-owned

Life Insurance Corporation of India, the biggest insurance company.

They have held on to their core holdings in Reliance Industries, ITC and other blue-chip companies for years. The compounding benefit and dividend payout have made LIC the most prominent equity assets owner than most mutual funds. By owning over 90% of LIC, the government effectively follows the strategy of patience. Insurance companies are not active fund managers. They are long-term investors. Patience plays a crucial

role in riding through market cycles. Continuous Learning

According to most studies studying how we think, our brains expand if we learn something new every day. Charlie Munger lived till 99, and Buffett is 94 and going strong. The secret to their long life is their hunger to learn new things. Munger made it a point to study more about worldly wisdom, philosophies, ethics, and many other things unrelated to the world of investment. He used the best knowledge from everywhere to inculcate virtues like simplicity, patience and courage. We all know about the frugal life the two most successful investors in the world led. They barely flashed their wealth. They kept their wants and needs in check so that the focus was always on adding more quality than quantity to their lives. Investing is about never stopping to learn. You must not dive deep into it if you do not fancy such a thing. Buffett advised everybody to invest in passive index funds regularly. That applies to those not interested in finance or keen to learn.

India's WPI Inflation in June 2024 Accelerates To 16-Month High of 3.36%: Official Data

Positive rate of WPI inflation in June 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, manufacture of food products, crude petroleum & natural gas, mineral oils, other manufacturing.

NEW DELHI. India's wholesale price inflation in June 2024 rose to a 16-month high of 3.36 per cent on costlier food items, as compared with 2.61 per cent in the previous month of May 2024, according to the latest official data released on Monday. "The annual rate of inflation based on all India Wholesale Price Index (WPI) number is 3.36% (Provisional) for the month of June, 2024 (over June, 2023).



Positive rate of inflation in June, 2024 is primarily due to increase in prices of food articles, manufacture of food products, crude petroleum & natural gas, mineral oils, other manufacturing etc," the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said in a statement. Aditi Nayar, chief economist and head (research and outreach) at ICRA, said, "The jump in the

WPI inflation to 3.4% in June 2024 was broad-based, and along expected lines, displaying the third consecutive month of a sizeable sequential step up (+0.3% in March 2024, +1.2% in April 2024 and +2.6% in May 2024). Looking ahead, the headline WPI inflation is expected to dip to ~2.0% in July 2024, driven by a favourable base, as well as some cooling

in global commodity prices." The upmove in the WPI inflation in June 2024 was broad-based, driven by all the major segments except fuel and power, she added. "After rising to seven-month high levels in May 2024, global commodity prices have seen a continuous dip. The Bloomberg commodity price index has eased by 0.9% sequentially to average at 101.2 during July 1-12, 2024 from 102.2 in June 2024 (-1.6% MoM). Notably, in YoY terms, the index contracted by 3.4% in July 2024 (up to July 12, 2024) as against an expansion seen during the previous two months (+0.6% in June 2024; +2.5% in May 2024). This augurs well for the WPI inflation print in the month," Nayar said. The average price of the Indian basket of crude oil has been quite volatile in July 2024 so far, on the back of supply-demand mismatches, witnessing a MoM rise (\$86.6/bbl up to July 11). Higher crude oil prices might exert an upward pressure to the headline WPI inflation in the ongoing month, she added.

HCLTech shares gain after Q1 results. Buy, hold or sell

NEW DELHI. HCLTech shares surged by nearly 5% following the release of its June quarter results, prompting several brokerages, including Nomura, Kotak Institutional Equities, and Citi Research, to raise their target prices for the stock. Brokerages highlighted that HCLTech's performance for Q1 FY25 was solid and met expectations, emphasising the importance of ongoing deal wins and efficient execution to drive future growth. HCLTech shares climbed over 4% to trade at Rs 1,627, making it the top performer in the Nifty 50 index in early trade. At around 12:31 pm, shares of the IT firm were up 1.15% at Rs 1,578.35. Despite today's rally, the stock is down 0.5% in the past six months. omura, Kotak Institutional Equities, and Citi have set new target prices for HCLTech at Rs 1,720, Rs 1,650, and Rs 1,545 respectively, citing a net profit beat as a major factor. However, Citi maintains a 'Neutral' rating due to a 3.5% quarter-on-quarter decline in the ER&D segment and a lower-than-expected total contract value (TCV) of \$1.96



billion. Jefferies has assigned a 'Hold' rating to HCLTech, while JPMorgan also retains a 'Neutral' stance, pointing to ongoing challenges highlighted by cautious comments, signings, and guidance. Meanwhile, CLSA has downgraded HCLTech to a 'Hold' rating. CLTech announced its June quarter earnings on June 12 after market hours, reporting a 20% year-on-year increase in net profit to Rs 4,257 crore. The divestiture of the State Street JV significantly contributed to this net

profit beat, according to multiple brokerages. However, the company's revenue rose 7% Y-o-Y to Rs 28,057 crore, attributed to the offshoring of a major BFSI contract and productivity benefits extended to large customers. The board has announced an interim dividend of Rs 12 per share for 2024-25. In addition, brokerages feel that HCLTech's FY25 growth guidance of 3-5% in constant currency and margin guidance of 18-19% are both attainable.

Zomato founder Deepinder Goyal joins billionaire club

New Delhi. Deepinder Goyal, the founder and CEO of Zomato, has become a billionaire following a record rally in Zomato's shares over the past year. Shares of the online food delivery platform surged 4% today, hitting a fresh lifetime high of Rs 232 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). It may be noted that the stock has increased by over 300% since its low in July 2023. The surge has pushed Zomato's market cap past Rs 1.9 lakh crore and Goyal's net worth beyond Rs 8,000 crore, making him India's richest professional manager at 41 years old. Goyal owns 36.95 crore shares, equivalent to a 4.24% stake in the company. The rise in Zomato's stock price is attributed to the strong performance of its quick commerce business, Blinkit. Blinkit has been outperforming competitors like Swiggy Instamart and Zepto and is expected to turn profitable earlier than



anticipated. Zomato has indicated that Blinkit could achieve EBITDA break-even by the first quarter of fiscal 2025. The profitability of Zomato's food delivery business has also boosted investor confidence. Analysts expect Zomato to increase investments in Blinkit after it reaches break-even, which could lead to Blinkit's gross order value (GOV) to surpass that of the food delivery business sooner than expected. This strategy aims to strengthen Zomato's market position despite growing competition. While it

may take longer for Blinkit to achieve sustainable EBITDA margins, factors such as advertising income, take-rates, and operational efficiencies are expected to enhance profitability over time. A recent Goldman Sachs note highlights that Blinkit now has a higher implied value than Zomato's core food delivery business. Blinkit is valued at \$13 billion, up from \$2 billion in March 2023, with a per-share value of Rs 119, compared to Rs 98 for food delivery. Goldman Sachs predicts Blinkit's GOV will grow at a 53% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from FY2024-27, with its GOV and EBITDA surpassing food delivery by FY29. Acquired by Zomato in 2022 for \$568 million, Blinkit has significantly improved its financial health, making it the most valuable segment in Zomato's portfolio. Deepinder Goyal, an IIT Delhi graduate in Mathematics and Computing,



"The stock has been a stellar performer in the past one year. Recent order wins, both domestically and overseas, have been keeping it in the limelight, given an increase in earnings visibility of the rail PSU," Bathini told Business Today. "Those holding can continue with their positions. Long-term investors should buy this company on every dip," he advised. RVNL serves as the executing arm of Indian Railways, managing projects from conceptualisation to commissioning on a turnkey basis. This includes design, estimate preparation, contract awards, and comprehensive project management.

Budget 2024: What can FM Nirmala Sitharaman do to boost infrastructure

Experts suggest that increasing capital expenditure is needed not only for roads and railways but also for airports, urban infrastructure, the energy sector, and sustainable development projects.

NEW DELHI. The upcoming budget will be the first under 'Modi 3.0' and experts suggest that increasing capital expenditure is needed not only for roads and railways but also for airports, urban infrastructure, the energy sector, and sustainable development projects to help India reach its economic objectives. Kuljit Singh, Partner at EY India, shared some important thoughts on what the government can do to boost infrastructure in the country. "India's upcoming budget must address critical infrastructure reforms to propel economic growth and sustainability. Key expectations include ramping up private



participation in airports and railways by privatising existing airports and privatising or listing Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) corridors. There is also a pressing need to reduce government stakes in rail-related entities like IRCON and IRCTC, thereby enabling the government to recycle freed capital," said Singh. Singh also highlighted the need to focus on the electric vehicle (EV) sector. He believes that declaring the EV sector as infrastructure and extending benefits under the FAME scheme are imperative

steps for enhancing EV penetration. "The declaration of the electric vehicle (EV) sector as infrastructure and the extension of benefits under the FAME scheme are imperative steps for enhancing EV penetration," added Singh. Recognising smart meters as essential infrastructure will enhance efficiency in energy management. Improving electricity distribution, particularly through innovative strategies such as central government takeover of

consistently poorly performing state discoms, is crucial given the preference against privatisation in India. To stimulate the green energy sector, Singh suggests providing viability gap funding to encourage the production of green hydrogen and biofuels. This can help India move towards a more sustainable future. Another key point raised by Singh was the need to rebalance tax structures for domestic investors. He believes that addressing disparities with foreign investors in the same infrastructure investments is essential for equitable growth. This means making sure that domestic investors are not at a disadvantage compared to their foreign counterparts. Alleviating pressure on banks from infrastructure debt is another critical area. This can help ease the burden on banks and provide more opportunities for investment in infrastructure. Singh also mentions the importance of addressing cash flow challenges in infrastructure projects. Allowing infrastructure projects to distribute all available cash to investors.

After Puja Khedkar, Ex-IAS Officer Abhishek Singh Under Fire Over Disability Claim

Abhishek Singh - the 2011 batch IAS officer who resigned last year to become an actor - is under fire after his dance and gym videos went viral on social media.

New Delhi: Amid claims that trainee IAS officer Puja Khedkar allegedly submitted fake disability certificates to get the job, questions are now being raised over another former bureaucrat's selection under the disability criteria. Abhishek Singh - the 2011 batch IAS officer who resigned last year to become an actor - is under fire after his dance and gym videos went viral on social media. Several users commented on the videos shared by Abhishek Singh, calling for greater transparency and accountability in the bureaucratic selection process. Abhishek Singh claimed to have a locomotor disability to avail concessions in the UPSC selection process. Responding to the allegations, Mr Singh said he is being targeted for supporting reservations. "Although I am not affected by any criticism, this is the first time I am answering my critics because my supporters asked me to. Since I started supporting reservations, anti-reservationists have targeted me. They



question my caste and my job. Let me tell you, I have achieved everything through hard work and courage, not through reservation," he said in a post on X - earlier known as Twitter. "I have done social work through my

initiatives like United by Blood and the No-Shame Movement without government help. I believe that reservation in government jobs should be according to the population, and I will work towards that.

If you think you have talent, stop trying for government jobs and excel in business, sports, or acting. There is no reservation there," he added. "I move on the strength of my talent, confidence, and courage, not in anyone's favour."

Puja Khedkar had courted controversy over using a siren on her private Audi and raising demands for a separate house and car - privileges not available to junior officers. But the 2023-batch IAS officer now faces far more serious charges. Ms Khedkar claimed to be visually and mentally impaired in an affidavit submitted to the UPSC, but refused to undergo mandatory medical tests to confirm those.

The Centre has formed a one-member committee to look into the allegations against Pooja Khedkar. Puja Khedkar may be dismissed if she's found guilty, sources said. She may also face criminal action if the allegations of hiding facts and misrepresentation are found to be true, they added.

Delhi Pollution Under Control Centres Shut Amid Protest Over Fee Hike

New Delhi: Around 600 PUC centres across 400 petrol pumps in the national capital will remain closed from Monday in response to a protest call by petrol dealers and pump owners. The closure call of Pollution Under Control Centres (PUCC) by the Delhi Petrol Dealers' Association (DPDA) comes following the Delhi government's proposed hike in pollution certificate charges. DPDA president Nischal Singhania told PTI that the association has decided to go ahead with the



strike as the running of PUC centres have become unviable.

There are 400 petrol pumps in Delhi and all of them have petrol PUC centres. Some of them also have diesel PUC centres, which takes the count to around 600 PUC centres," he added. The Kejriwal government on Thursday increased the PUC certificate charges for petrol, CNG and diesel vehicles after a gap of about 13 years. The hike ranges between ₹ 20 and ₹ 40. The new rates will be effective as soon as it is notified by the Delhi government, Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot had said.

To Con Government With False Compensation, 2500 Houses Have Come Up Along Highway Path In Madhya Pradesh

New Delhi: As Singrauli-Prayagraj highway is all set to branch into 33 villages, many green fields are turning into construction sites. There is a sudden surge in new 'houses' is on the proposed highway path. Around 2,500 new so-called 'houses' have appeared quickly on the proposed highway path in 30 days. Weirdly, these new 'houses' are just four-foot-high walls with a tin roof which is not even suitable for children.

Land acquisition began in March, with a ban on new constructions and land transactions in place. Despite that people hurriedly built these structures after hearing about the compensation. According to Zee News TV, over 2,500 houses were built within a month with the help of government employees. Building a house on farmland increases the compensation significantly compared to just having land. This has led to a phenomenon being called a 'compensation industry'. Local officials and brokers are involved where they will be getting a large share of the money despite a ban on new construction or land deals in the compensation areas since March.

Administration's Response

However, the administration has now declared that no compensation will be given for these new houses. Residents say brokers and local officials are behind this sudden construction surge.

An official explained that compensation varies, but if a house is on the land and someone lives there, the family gets a rehabilitation package, including a job and a house elsewhere. Separate compensation is given for hand pumps, bore wells, or trees on the land.

According to NDTV, Suresh Jadhva, Sub-Divisional Magistrate of Singrauli, said, "The highway, 135 C, will be constructed under the Chitrangi block of the district and 70 km of it will pass through 33 villages of the district. The department's estimate for this stretch is ₹ 759 crore.

A joint survey was done and 500 old houses were found. About 3,200 new houses have been constructed and compensation will not be given for those." Before the highway survey, land was sold for ₹ 8,000 per decimal (about 436 square feet). Now, it has increased to ₹ 80,000.

Fire breaks out at marketplace in Delhi's Mayur Vihar, restaurant gutted

New Delhi: A school uniform outlet and a restaurant were completely gutted when a major fire erupted at a marketplace in east Delhi's Mayur Vihar on Sunday night, officials said.

The blaze, that broke out at around 11:30 pm on Sunday, spread over the commercial complex situated in Pocket-B of Mayur Vihar Phase-II. At least 25 fire tenders were rushed to the spot by the Delhi Fire Service (DFS) department as soon as they received the information, officials added.

The firefighting operation was



immediately launched and went on till Monday morning as visuals showed flames still raging at one of the shops at the break of dawn.

The DFS personnel rescued a 50-year-old man identified as Praveen Pandey. However, a firefighter was

injured during the operation after he fell from the ladder while trying to douse the fire. He was rushed to a nearby hospital. "Delhi Fire Service received the call at 11:40 pm.

When the fire tenders reached the spot, the fire had spread to all three floors of the building. It spread as there was no proper ventilation. Around 25-30 shops are in the complex and 12-15 shops were affected. The blaze is under control as of now", SK Dua, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Delhi Fire Service said. The cause behind the fire is yet to be ascertained, and an investigation has been launched into the incident, he added.

BJP's Rajya Sabha Tally Dips, NDA Now 12 Below Majority Mark

New Delhi: The BJP's strength in the Rajya Sabha fell by four Saturday after as many nominated members - Rakesh Sinha, Ram Shakal, Sonal Mansingh, and Mahesh Jethmalani - completed their term. All four were chosen - as non-aligned members - by President Droupadi Murmu on the advice of the ruling party, and formally allied with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government afterwards. Their retirement brings the BJP's strength down to 86 and that of the party-led National Democratic Alliance to 101, which is below the current majority mark of 113 in the 245-member House.

The Congress-led INDIA bloc has 87, of which the Congress has 26, Bengal's ruling Trinamool 13, and the Aam Aadmi Party and the DMK, in power in Delhi and Tamil Nadu, have 10



each. Parties not aligned with either the BJP or the Congress - such as ex-Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao's BRS - nominated MPs and independents hold the rest.

What Do BJP's Reduced Numbers Mean?

It means the government is now reliant on non-NDA parties - such as ex-ally AIADMK of Tamil Nadu and former

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Jagan Mohan Reddy's YSR Congress Party - to pass bills in the Upper House. As of now, assuming the BJP can count on the 15 votes from NDA parties' MPs, it will need a minimum of 13 additional 'aye's cast in its favour to push through bills. The YSRCP (11) and the AIADMK (4) are the BJP's two most obvious 'allies', even if its relationship with the latter has been fractious since they split in December last year, months before the election. Jagan Reddy's YSRCP has lent issue-based support to the BJP in the past, so at least 11 votes seem assured for Mr Modi's party. Former Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik's BJD lent similar support too but, since it was beaten by the BJP in the May-June state election, has said it will not do so now.

Omar Abdullah's Wife Gets Supreme Court Notice Over Leader's Divorce Plea

New Delhi: The Supreme Court has issued a notice to former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah's estranged wife Payal Abdullah over a divorce petition filed by him.

The National Conference leader had approached the top court against a Delhi High Court decision to reject his plea seeking divorce from his wife on the grounds of cruelty. A bench of Justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and Ahsanuddin Amanullah have sought Ms Abdullah's response on the petition within six weeks. Appearing for Mr Abdullah, senior Advocate Kapil Siba told the court that the couple's marriage was "dead" as they have been living separately for the past 15 years. He requested the top court's intervention under



Article 142 of the Constitution, which has been invoked in the past to dissolve marriages. In 2023, a bench of Justices Sanjeev Sachdeva and Vikas Mahajan upheld a 2016 family court order which had also refused to grant divorce to Mr Abdullah stating that the allegations of cruelty against Payal Abdullah were vague. The court had said Mr Abdullah could not prove his claims of "cruelty" or "desertion". In its order, the High Court had said that it did not find any flaw in the order of the family court and agreed with its decision. "We find no infirmity in the view taken by the family court that the allegations of cruelty were vague and unacceptable, that the appellant failed to prove any act which could be termed as an act of cruelty, be it physical or mental, towards him," the order had said. Omar and Payal Abdullah were married on September 1, 1994 and have been living separately since 2009. They share the custody of their two sons. Earlier, the High Court had also directed the National Conference to pay ₹ 1.5 lakh per month as maintenance to his wife in addition to ₹ 60,000 per month each to his two sons.

Vikram Misri, A China Expert, Takes Charge As India's New Foreign Secretary

New Delhi: Seasoned diplomat Vikram Misri, widely regarded as an expert on China and national security, assumed charge as India's new foreign secretary on Monday. Mr Misri, a 1989-batch Indian Foreign Service officer who was serving as the deputy national security advisor, succeeded Vinay Kwatra. The 59-year-old assumed charge of the key position at a time India is looking to navigate various geo-political challenges, including its frosty ties with China following the lingering eastern Ladakh border row and the consequences of the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

External affairs Minister S Jaishankar congratulated Misri on assuming his new responsibility. "Congratulations Foreign Secretary @VikramMisri as he assumes his new responsibility today. Wish him a productive and successful tenure," he said on X. Mr Misri served in various capacities at the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), in the Prime Minister's Office and in various Indian missions in

Europe, Africa, Asia and North America. He has the rare distinction of serving as private secretary to three prime ministers -- Inder Kumar Gujral, Manmohan Singh and Narendra Modi. As per norms, Mr Misri is set to have a minimum tenure of two years as the foreign secretary.

"Shri Vikram Misri assumed charge as Foreign Secretary today. #TeamMEA extends a warm welcome to Foreign Secretary Misri and wishes him a successful tenure ahead," MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on X. Before he was appointed as the deputy NSA, Mr Misri served as India's ambassador to China from 2019-2021. Mr Misri is believed to have played a key role in talks between India and China after tensions flared significantly following the Galwan Valley clashes in June, 2020.

The ties between the two countries nosedived following a fierce clash in the Galwan Valley that marked the most serious military conflict between the two

sides in decades. In his illustrious career, Mr Misri also served as India's ambassador to Spain (2014-2016) and Myanmar (2016-2018) besides having stints in many Indian missions, including Pakistan, the US, Germany, Belgium and



Sri Lanka. Mr Misri was born in Srinagar and had his early education there (Burn Hall School and DAV School) as well as in Udhampur (Carmel Convent School) in Jammu and Kashmir. He finished his schooling from the Scindia School in

Gwalior and went on to earn a Bachelor's degree with honours in history from the Hindu College in the University of Delhi and an MBA from XLRI, Jamshedpur.

Before joining the government, he worked for three years in the private sector in the fields of advertising and advertising film-making. Mr Misri is a Fellow of the Aspen Institute USA's India Leadership Initiative (now the Kamalnayan Bajaj Fellowship). He is married to Dolly Misri and they have two children. The government is in the process of appointing India's next envoy to the US and New Delhi's permanent representative to the United Nations in New York.

Kwatra is learnt to be among the front-runners for the ambassador's position in Washington. The post has been lying vacant since Taranjit Sandhu retired in January. The position of India's permanent representative to the UN is also lying vacant after Ruchira Kamboj retired last month.

NEWS BOX

Trump rally victim 'died a real-life superhero' while shielding family

Washington, The spectator killed in the shooting that targeted former president Donald Trump has been identified as Corey Comperatore, a 50-year-old firefighter and father of two who died shielding his family from the gunshots.

Comperatore "died a real-life super hero," one of his daughters, Allyson, said in a Facebook post after the attempted assassination of Trump at a rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday. "He threw my mom and I to the ground... (and) shielded my body from the bullet that came at us," she continued. She described her father as "the best dad a girl could ever ask for," someone always ready to help and quick to "make friends with anyone."

The governor of Pennsylvania also described Comperatore as a hero and said state flags would be flown at half-staff in his honor. "We lost a fellow Pennsylvanian last night," Governor Josh Shapiro, told reporters. He said Comperatore was a churchgoing firefighter who "loved his community and most especially... his family." Corey was an avid supporter of the former president," Shapiro added, "and was so excited to be there last night." Shapiro called Saturday's shooting, in which Trump was bloodied but survived and two other spectators were wounded, "shocking, for this Commonwealth (state) and the country." The other victims were identified as David Dutch, 57, and James Copenhaver, 74, according to Pennsylvania State Police on Sunday. Both were also from Pennsylvania, and said to be "in stable condition." The shooter, identified as 20-year-old Thomas Matthew Crooks of nearby Bethel Park, was killed by a Secret Service sniper.

A GoFundMe page created to raise money for the Comperatore family had received donations of nearly \$650,000 as of 7:00 pm (0000 GMT).

3 dead, 2 injured in shooting linked to domestic dispute in Germany

Berlin,UPDATED. A shooting in southwestern Germany linked to a domestic dispute on Sunday left three dead and two wounded from the same family, police said.

The dead included the suspected shooter, another man and a woman, police spokesperson Ramona Dotting told The Associated Press. Police were called to the scene in the town of Albstadt, halfway between Stuttgart and Lake Constance, shortly after noon, she said. The shooting took place in the same family, she said, adding an investigation was underway and there was no information on the motive for the shooting. The two wounded were women who were taken to a hospital in helicopters, Dotting said.

Gunman Acted Alone; Trump Assassination Attempt Being Probed as Domestic Terrorism Act: FBI

Milwaukee. The gunman who shot at former president Donald Trump during an election rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday appears to have acted alone, according to the FBI, which is investigating it as a potential "domestic terrorism" act. The gunman has been identified as Thomas Matthew Crooks (20). "At this point in the investigation, it appears that he was a lone actor, but we still have more investigation to go," said Robert Wells, the executive assistant director of the FBI's National Security Branch.

The FBI, he said, is investigating this as an assassination attempt," and also as a "potential domestic terrorism act." The counterterrorism division and criminal divisions are working jointly together to determine the motive, he added. The FBI is leading the investigation into the assassination attempt of Trump at an election rally in Pennsylvania. Trump was hit with a bullet that



pierced the upper part of his right ear. He is now safe and is continuing with his schedule which includes travelling to Milwaukee to attend the Republican National Convention, which would formally nominate him as the party's presidential nominee against incumbent Joe Biden. "The shooter may be deceased, but the investigation is very much ongoing. And, because of that, we are limited in what we say at this point," FBI Director Christopher Wray said.

"What we witnessed yesterday was nothing short of an attack on democracy and our democratic process," he told reporters at a news conference in Washington DC. According to an FBI official, the investigation into the gunman at Donald Trump's rally Saturday was not yet turned up any mental health issues, threatening posts or other motives, but cautioned it was still early.

The shooter, as per FBI, used an AR-style rifle chambered in 5.56mm, a common calibre for such weapons. The New York Times said authorities were scouring the gunman's social media and other property as they sought to determine a motive for the attack. Biden is likely to address the nation at 8 pm from the Oval Office. He will give "a forceful and needed address to update the nation on the horrifying attack on Donald Trump and the need for every American to come together to not just condemn, but put to an end political violence in this country once and for all," a campaign official told the daily. Crooks graduated from the Community College of Allegheny County two months ago, earning an associate degree in engineering science, school officials said in a statement, adding that they were "shocked and saddened by the horrific turn of events." Kimberly Cheate, the director of the Secret Service, in a memo to her agents said "the attempted assassination of former President Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania, is a moment that will forever be remembered in history."

Israeli strike on Gaza school kills 15, military says targeted 'terrorists'

Gaza civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said the Abu Araban school was housing "thousands of displaced people" and most of those dead in the strike were women and children.

UPDATED The civil defence agency in Hamas-run Gaza said on Sunday that 15 people were killed in a strike on a school sheltering war displaced where the Israeli military said it had targeted "terrorists". The strike on the UN-run Abu Araban site in central Gaza's Nuseirat camp was the fifth on a school-turned-shelter in eight days. The Abu Araban school was housing "thousands of

displaced people", civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told news agency AFP, adding that most of the dead were women and children. Schools in Nuseirat were the target for two of the earlier school strikes as Israel keeps up its offensive against Hamas Palestinian militants who triggered the war with their October 7 attack on Israel. The Israeli military said its air force "struck a number of terrorists who were operating in the area of UNRWA's Abu Araban school building in Nuseirat". It said the building had "served as a hideout" and base for "attacks" on Israeli troops. APTV images showed the three-storey complex standing, with clothes and bedding airing out over its railings. A wall bearing the UN logo had been blown out, and rooms inside were damaged. On July 6, Israeli aircraft hit Al-Jawni



school, also run by the United Nations relief agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA), in Nuseirat. UNRWA said about 2,000 people were sheltering there at the time. The following day, four people died in a strike on the church-run Holy Family school in Gaza City, in the territory's north, according to the Civil Defence agency. On Monday, Israel hit another Nuseirat school, again saying it

was targeting "terrorists". The next day, a hospital source said at least 29 people died in a strike at the entrance to Al-Awda school in the Khan Yunis area, southern Gaza. Israel says Hamas uses schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure for military purposes. Hamas denies the accusation.

France and Germany on Wednesday called for an investigation into the school strikes. After the Al-Jawni strike, UNRWA spokesperson Juliette Touma told AFP that when the war began "we closed the schools, and they became shelters". UNRWA is the main relief agency in Gaza but more than half, or 190, of its facilities have been hit -- "some more than once" -- in the military response to the October 7 Hamas attacks, she said.

Chinese retailers sell 'defiant Trump' t-shirts within hours of assassination bid

Chinese retailers quickly produced and sold thousands of T-shirts featuring a photo of Donald Trump's defiant stance after the assassination attempt.

World Former US President Donald Trump narrowly escaped an assassination attempt on Saturday evening in Pennsylvania during an election rally. Within hours, Chinese retailers and online shops came up with T-shirts featuring photos depicting Trump's 'defiant' stance after the shooting. A photo of an 'unfazed' Trump, with a raised fist, surrounded by security officials, released by the Associated Press, became the centrepiece of the T-shirts on sale on Chinese e-commerce platforms like Taobao. According to the South China Morning Post, the Associated Press published the photo of a fist-waving Trump at 6:31 pm on Sunday. By the time of US President Joe Biden's first remark at 8:00 pm, the Chinese manufacturers were ready with the T-shirts. The first batch went on sale on Taobao, a popular Chinese e-



commerce platform, at 8.40 pm. Li Jinwei, a 25-year-old Taobao seller, listed the T-shirts even while the printing was underway and received over 2,000 orders from both China and the US. "We put the T-shirts on Taobao as soon as we saw the news about the shooting, though we hadn't even printed them, and within three hours we saw more than 2,000 orders from both China and the US," she told the South China Morning Post. This isn't an isolated case. Other retailers also listed their products online after seeing

increased demand for these T-shirts. According to DHgate, a Chinese cross-border e-commerce platform, the market saw a surge in election-related souvenir sales, with a 40 percent monthly increase since January. The total transaction value in the first quarter of 2023 was up 90 percent compared to the previous year. The Chinese retailers primarily produce Trump souvenirs, as demand for them stands higher. Chinese exporters are accelerating shipments to stock US warehouses.

China's Communist Party will signal its approach to the country's challenges at a meeting this week

BEIJING. China's ruling Communist Party is starting a four-day meeting Monday that is expected to lay out a strategy for self-sufficient economic growth in an era of heightened national security concerns and restrictions on access to American technology. While the meeting typically focuses on such long-term issues, business owners and investors will also be watching to see if the party announces any immediate measures to try to counter a prolonged real estate downturn and persistent malaise that has suppressed China's post-Covid-19 recovery. "There's a lot of unclarity of policy direction in China," which is weighing on consumer and investor confidence,

said Bert Hofman, the former World Bank country director for China and a professor at the National University of Singapore. "This is a point in time where China needs to show its cards."

The outcome of the meeting will send a message to local government officials and others about the future direction of policy. The general expectation is that it will confirm a path laid out by Chinese leader Xi Jinping, though some hope for some fine-tuning to address concerns that increasing government control over business and society is stifling economic growth. What is the "third plenum" and why does it matter? The Communist Party's 205-member Central

Committee is holding its third plenum, or the third plenary session of a five-year term that started in 2022. This year's meeting was expected to be held last year, but was delayed. Historically, this third meeting has emerged as one at which major economic and policy decisions have been set, though not every time. Analysts say the plenum often sets longer-term directions impacting the economy. In 1978, the meeting endorsed the "reform and opening up" of former leader Deng Xiaoping, the transformation from a planned economy to a more market-based economy that propelled China's growth in the ensuing decades. In 1993,



conducting a high-profile offensive against the extremist group, which the US has described as one of Al-Qaida's deadliest organisations. Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud has declared "total war" against the extremists, who control large parts of central and southern Somalia and have been the target of scores of US airstrikes in recent years.

Republican National Convention begins amid tight security after Trump shooting

The Republican National Convention commenced in Milwaukee under stringent security measures after a failed assassination attempt on Donald Trump. Trump is set to formally accept the nomination and announce his vice-presidential candidate.

Milwaukee,UPDATED The Republican National Convention, held every four years, began on Monday under an unprecedented security cover in the aftermath of a failed assassination attempt on its presumptive presidential nominee Donald Trump. e former US president, Trump miraculously escaped when a bullet pierced the upper part of his right ear during an election rally in Pennsylvania on Saturday afternoon. Trump would be formally accepting the nomination and deliver the acceptance

speech at the Fiserv Forum in downtown Milwaukee on July 18. A day earlier, he is expected to announce his vice-presidential candidate as well.

Trump arrived in Milwaukee Sunday night around 6 pm local time. He is not expected to speak until Thursday night.

His campaign and convention in a joint statement said that they would proceed with the convention "to nominate him to serve as the 47th President of the United States". More than 2400 elected delegates from across the nation would gather here and formally announce their decision to vote in support of Trump. This is for the third time that Trump would be nominated as the party's presidential candidate. The previous two terms being in 2016 and 2020.

Given the elevated level of security threat to Trump, thousands of security personnel have been deployed at the convention venue. A large part of the downtown in and around the venue and the hotels where the delegates are staying have been



cordoned off. Entry and exit to this bubble is very restricted and only credentialed people are allowed. According to the organisers, upwards of 50,000 delegates, officials, guests, and members of the media from all 50 states, five territories, and the District of Columbia have descended on Milwaukee. Milwaukee schoolchildren have inflated nearly 100,000 balloons that will be lifted into place for the final minutes of the 2024 Republican National Convention. Security forces from various states have been deployed to meet the additional security needs of the convention.

To augment security efforts at the 2024 Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, California has deployed 61 law enforcement officers to Wisconsin through the Emergency Management Assistance Compact (EMAC) in support of local, state and federal law enforcement partners at the Convention.

"Public safety transcends party lines. California is proud to support our law enforcement colleagues in Wisconsin during this important political event. Working together, we are helping to provide a safe and secure environment for all participants at the Republican National Convention," Governor Gavin Newsom said. The Secret Service told reporters that they are not anticipating any changes to their operational security plans for this event in the aftermath of the assassination attempt. Secret Service's RNC coordinator, Audrey Gibson-Cicchino said security planning has been underway for 18 months. It has already been designated the highest level of security event.

NEWS BOX

Harry Kane and Dani Olmo end Euro 2024 in a 6-way tie for Golden Boot top scorer

Berlin England star Harry Kane finished Euro 2024 in a six-way tie for the Golden Boot with Spain's Dani Olmo after his team lost the final 2-1. Despite another individual accolade, Kane is still seeking a major trophy for club or country. Kane ended the tournament with three goals, sharing the top scorer spot with Olmo, Germany's Jamal Musiala, the Netherlands' Cody Gakpo, Slovakia's Ivan Schranz, and Georgia's Georges Mikautadze.

This marks Kane's second consecutive runner-up finish in the European Championship finals, following England's loss to Italy three years ago. He has also been a runner-up in one Champions League final and two English League Cups. Despite winning numerous individual awards, including the Bundesliga top scorer last season at Bayern Munich, the German club experienced its first trophyless season since 2012. Reflecting on England's loss to Spain, Kane told British broadcaster ITV, "It's an opportunity missed. It's not easy to get to these finals. It takes unbelievable resilience and character to get to where we are, but ultimately you have to seize the opportunity when it comes, and we haven't done that again. It's extremely painful; it's going to hurt for a long, long time." Kane is one of four men's players to have been top scorer at both a European Championship and a World Cup, having achieved this in 2018. In the final, Olmo's crucial defensive contribution came when he cleared Marc Guéhi's header off the line, preserving Spain's lead. "I told him that he is my top scorer because his save counts as a goal for me," said goalkeeper Unai Simón. "It was our planned defense for him to protect that post, and he remembered to do just that and cleared it off the line. It was incredible."

For Olmo, sharing the top scorer title at Euro 2024 highlights his resilience after repeated injury setbacks. His journey to the top of European soccer began unconventionally when he left Barcelona's youth academy at 16 in 2014 to debut professionally with Croatian club Dinamo Zagreb. He has been with Germany's Leipzig since 2019.

Sky's the limit: Carlos Alcaraz willing to settle for nothing but greatness

London Did you hear that? I barely saw that?" quipped an on-air commentator when Carlos Alcaraz fired a forehand winner. It was an exhibition of 'wow moments' from the 21-year-old, who took down arguably one of the greatest tennis players of all time in Sunday's Wimbledon 2024 final with relative ease. There was no respite for the seven-time champion. The forehand winners kept coming, the passes kept evading the Serb. The jaws in the packed Centre Court crowd kept dropping. So did Novak Djokovic's shoulders. Alcaraz did to Djokovic what Djokovic had done to Umpteen over the years on the grass courts of London. 6-2, 6-2, 7-6 (4) was the scoreline, unlike last year's final when the two players went the distance. Djokovic did not have it to drag it to the fourth set. At 5-4 in the third set, Alcaraz, for a brief moment, proved he is human. He was up 40-0 and fluffed three Championship points to allow Djokovic back into the game. When most other players give Djokovic a ray of hope even in the toughest of times, they suffer, and they



pay the price. Alcaraz did not. The youngster regrouped and played a sensational tie-breaker to close the match in three sets.

As Nick Kyrgios pointed out, it looked as if a ceremony to announce the change of guard was taking place at Wimbledon's Centre Court. Djokovic has taken light-hearted digs at the 'so-called Next Gen' over the last few years. But it seems, the leader of the Next Gen is well and truly here. Djokovic learnt it the hard way on Sunday.

Euro 2024 glory confirms Spain are 'best in the world': Luis de la Fuente

Berlin Spain's manager Luis de la Fuente believes his team has cemented their status as "the best in the world" following their thrilling 2-1 victory over England in the Euro 2024 final. With an impeccable record of seven straight wins throughout the tournament, Spain showcased their dominance and secured their fourth European Championship title on Sunday in Berlin. "It's difficult to improve something like that, but I would like my players to keep growing and improving," said the 63-year-old de la Fuente. "They are tireless, they will keep improving and trying to win. They all need to feel proud... I hope everyone feels exactly as proud about this generation of players who can make history and have a long future ahead of them." Spain's promising future was epitomized by the young talents involved in their first goal of the final. Seventeen-year-old Lamine Yamal provided a precise cross, which 22-year-old Nico Williams converted into a goal, underscoring the potential within the squad. De la Fuente's journey with this group of players began over a decade ago when he started coaching Spain's youth teams in 2013. Initially mocked as "Luis de la Who?" upon his appointment to the senior team 18 months ago.

Copa America Final: Tears turn into joy as Lionel Messi celebrates record triumph

- [An ankle injury does not dampen Lionel Messi's joy in Miami](#)
- [Argentina win Copa America crown after edging past Colombia](#)
- [Coach Lionel Scaloni leads Argentina's celebrations in Miami](#)

Miami. Lionel Messi was careful not to push himself too much and run around the Hard Rock Stadium even as his joy knew no bounds after Argentina defended their Copa America crown. On Monday, July 15, Lionel Scaloni's men beat Colombia 1-0 in a hard-fought slug fest that was delayed by close to 90 minutes after crowd trouble in Miami, but nothing could deter the spirit of the La Albiceleste. After more than 125 minutes on the pitch, Argentina were crowned champions of the Copa America as Messi's



men extended their incredible run, completing the double of the FIFA World Cup and the Copa America title. Lionel Messi could not hide his smile. Only an hour ago, he was in tears, reduced to the bench after picking up a nasty ankle injury. Messi was taken off in the 64th minute in regulation time as he could not continue and as later

seen with a swollen knee. At that moment, Colombia felt they had the upper-hand, but Argentina were at their grimmest best to push the game to extra-time and then win it after late brilliance from Lautaro Martinez, who scored the winner in the 112th minute. Messi was limping, but he made sure he was in the team huddle, acknowledging the applause

from the packed stands, dominated by Argentina fans. Lionel Messi shared a warm hug with coach Lionel Scaloni, the man who has given arguably the greatest footballer the accolades he deserves in the last few minutes. Messi walked straight to Angel di Maria, who was about to bring the curtains down on his decorated international career on a winning note. Messi embraced Lautaro Martinez, who allowed his happy tears to flow. The Argentina fans brought the drums and trumpets out as the national team completed a hat-trick of major titles, including two Copa America and the World Cup. Messi was not able to flaunt his footwork to the celebratory tunes at the Hard Rock Stadium, but he was enjoying every bit of it. Lionel Scaloni made up for it as he ran across the length of the field to acknowledge the support from the fans after the final whistle was blown. It remains to be seen if Messi, an eight-time Ballon d'Or winner, will continue his run in international football. If he doesn't, he couldn't have asked for a better finish as Argentina reigned supreme in a new home of their superstar - Miami.

India vs Zimbabwe: I look up to captain Rohit Sharma, says Shubman Gill

New Delhi Young opener Shubman Gill said he has taken inspiration from former captains, including Virat Kohli and MS Dhoni, and that he looks up to T20 World Cup-winning skipper, Rohit Sharma. Gill spoke about captaincy and handling pressure as the leader of the team after overseeing India's 4-1 win over Zimbabwe in a recently-concluded T20I series. It did not begin well for Gill as India lost the series opener to Zimbabwe in Harare in a shock result. However, it all ended well for the Men in Blue who celebrated another trophy triumph, this time in Harare.

Speaking after the series triumph, Gill did not shy away from conceding that he felt pressure at the start of the tour, but ended the series with a lot of satisfaction.

"You can take qualities from Rohit bhai or even Mahi bhai, Virat bhai, Hardik bhai, all of them," he said. "All of them have great qualities. I have played the most under Rohit bhai, so he is someone who I look up to and really enjoy playing under," Shubman Gill



said. Shubman Gill had headed into the series on the back of a disappointing season as the captain of Gujarat Titans in the IPL. The young opener was not able to emulate Hardik Pandya's success with the franchise in IPL 2024 and he had to deal with the disappointment of missing out on the T20 World Cup squad. However, the 24-year-old put the disappointments behind him and made the most of the opportunity to lead the second-string side on their tour of Zimbabwe. Gill not only led the team to victory, but also top-scored with the bat, scoring 170 runs in five matches. Gill hit two

important fifties in the third and fourth T20Is and proved his mettle at the top of the order.

'CAPTAINCY BRINGS THE BEST OUT OF ME' While Hardik Pandya is the frontrunner to replace Rohit Sharma as the T20I captain, India are not short of options. And Shubman's Zimbabwe audition is something that the selectors will keep in mind, going forward. "It (captaincy) is something that I definitely enjoy. I think it brings out the best in me when I am out there because I look to be involved in the game. It is something that really brings out the side of me which I enjoy being on the field."

"There was pressure, I wouldn't say extra pressure but obviously even when you are playing just as a batsman when you don't perform there is a certain kind of pressure that comes along with it. But I think that's the fun part of it. You kind of feel so many different emotions. Pressure is one of them. And when you get out of that, the satisfaction that you feel is immense," he added.

Copa America final: Argentina beat Colombia to win record 16th crown

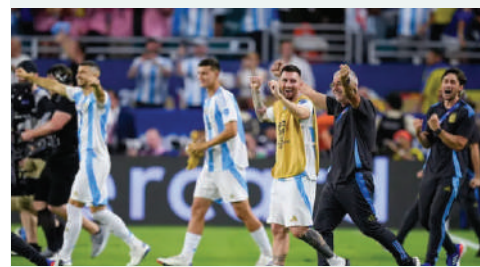
New Delhi. Defending champions Argentina secured their record 16th Copa America title by defeating Colombia 1-0, thanks to an extra-time goal from substitute Lautaro Martinez at Hard Rock Stadium in Florida on Sunday. Martinez, the tournament's leading scorer, received a precise through ball from Giovanni Lo Celso and lifted his shot over the advancing Colombian goalkeeper, Camilo Vargas, in the 112th minute, igniting wild celebrations amongst Argentina fans. Lautaro Martinez's goal was his fifth of the tournament, cementing his position as the top scorer and earning him the Copa America 2024 Golden Boot. The match, held at Hard Rock Stadium, started 1 hour and 20 minutes late due to crowd trouble. Colombia started the match with high pressure, and Jhon Cordoba hit the post in the seventh minute. Jefferson Lerma and Richard Rios also had long-range efforts saved by Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez. In the 36th minute, Messi appeared to hurt his ankle after a collision with Santiago Arias. Though he got back on his feet after receiving treatment, he was

clearly hampered for the rest of the half. Colombia continued their offensive in the second half, with Arias and Davinson Sanchez coming close to scoring. Argentina absorbed the pressure well but suffered a setback in the 66th minute when Messi limped off due to his ankle injury. They grew into the contest and had a goal disallowed for offside, but Colombia held on as the match went to extra time. The defending champions kept pushing forward in extra time, testing Vargas with a shot from Nico Gonzalez before Martinez finally found the breakthrough.

After a goalless 90 minutes and a grueling extra-time effort, the Inter Milan star delivered once again, as he had done throughout the past month. Messi appeared to sustain a non-contact injury while running and falling in the 64th minute, covering his face with his hands as he sat on the bench. After scoring the decisive goal, Martinez ran to the bench to embrace his captain, celebrating Argentina's record 16th Copa America title. With this victory, Argentina secured its third consecutive

major title, following the 2021 Copa America and 2022 World Cup, matching Spain's achievement of winning the 2008 and 2012 European Championships alongside the 2010 World Cup. Additionally, Argentina ended Colombia's 28-game unbeaten streak, which had lasted since a February 2022 loss to the Albiceleste. As the Golden Boot winner with six goals, Martinez's late strike stands as his most crucial.

Despite tiring legs and heightened emotions, he surged through the defense and calmly picked his spot. Such decisive moments had eluded Argentina in previous years, but not this time. Meanwhile, Messi could only watch. An injury forced him off early, leaving his ankle swollen. Initially in tears of sadness, as he exited the pitch in the second half, Messi's emotions turned to joy when Martinez found the net. On this night, Messi's teammates rose to the occasion. Argentina are champions once more, and their legacy continues. The Messi era may be nearing its end, but Argentina's dominance persists.



Argentina and Colombia was delayed by over an hour on Sunday after thousands of fans without tickets rushed security and attempted to force their way into the stadium, according to organizers. Video on social media showed security clashing with fans as they ran across concourses and tried to breach the gates of Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida. Police managed to close the gates and initiate a lockdown, resulting in scores of people stuck outside trying to enter before the match kicked off. Both teams were taken off the field as the chaos unfolded. According to reports, several people were ejected from the stadium by security staff, while some players reported that their families were caught up in the chaos and were unable to enter the venue, which is set to host matches during the 2026 World Cup. South American football's governing body CONMEBOL pushed the start time back three times: from 8:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., then to 8:45 p.m., and finally to 9:15 p.m., when the teams were able to line up for the national anthems and begin the match.

- [Daniil Medvedev expressed satisfaction with the victory, highlighting the importance of Wimbledon for him. He emphasised his motivation to improve his results at the tournament, as it has been his least successful Grand Slam.](#)

New Delhi. Argentina great Lionel Messi added another feather to his illustrious cap by winning the Copa America for the second time, as La Albiceleste defeated Colombia 1-0 in the final on Monday morning. The Copa America title victory elevated Messi to a historic milestone: 45 trophies with both club and country, surpassing the previous record held by Brazil's Dani Alves. The journey from a young boy in Rosario to the

most decorated player in football history has been nothing short of remarkable. Once criticized for his lack of international silverware, Messi has now won four major titles with Argentina in just three years: one World Cup, two Copa Americas, and a Finalissima from 2021 to 2024. During his illustrious club career, Messi has won four Champions League titles and ten La Liga championships with Barcelona. Individually, he boasts a record eight Ballon d'Ors and six European Golden Boots. Overall, Messi has accumulated an astounding 1,212 goals and assists in 1,068 games, comprising 838 goals and 374 assists. Out of Messi's 45 titles, 39 have been achieved at the club level. The majority of these triumphs came during his 17-year tenure with Barcelona. His accolades include 12 league titles (10 with Barcelona, two with PSG), four UEFA Champions



Leagues (all with Barcelona), and 17 domestic cups (15 with Barcelona, one each with PSG and Inter Miami). Additionally, he has won the UEFA Super Cup three times and the FIFA Club World Cup three times. With Argentina, Messi's victories include the

2005 U-17 World Cup, the 2008 Olympic Games, the 2021 Copa America, the 2022 Finalissima, and most memorably, the 2022 World Cup, where Argentina triumphed over France in the final. Messi's journey to victory was not without its challenges in the Copa America final against Colombia. Despite being substituted in the 64th minute due to a nasty ankle injury, Messi's presence and leadership were felt throughout the match. Argentina, demonstrating their resilience, pushed the game into extra time. Lautaro Martinez's brilliance secured the win in the 112th minute, ensuring Messi could celebrate with his team and acknowledge the adoring Argentina fans in the stands. Lionel Messi's career continues to be a testament to his unparalleled talent, determination, and passion for the game.



Priyanka Chopra

Reunites With Daughter Malti After '42+ Hours Of Travel Around The World'

Talk about having a work-life balance, Priyanka Chopra surely acs it. Amid all the busy shoot schedules and professional commitments, public appearances, the global icon always manages to spend quality time with her daughter Malti. On Sunday, the actress shared a happy photo reuniting with her baby girl, after almost 42 hours of travel. Priyanka shared an adorable photo of herself hugging Malti and wrote, "After 42+ hours of travel around the world in a couple of days, this is all I needed??."

Earlier in an interview with Quint, Priyanka was asked how she balances her work and motherhood duties. The actress shared that even she was raised by a working woman and added that it has greatly helped her take care of Malti.

"I was raised by a working mom and my mom's sisters were working moms. Even the moms who are not working (hold a job) are working all day. Working women don't get enough credit... you have to surround yourself with a village, you have to make sure that you find a supportive partner. I have so many people around my daughter, but I still feel guilty when I go to the set," Priyanka said.

Earlier this week, Priyanka Chopra made a grand appearance at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding with hubby Nick Jonas. She brought the house down with her stellar dance moves in Anant Ambani's baraat on Friday, July 12. The was seen dancing her heart out in the baraat as Nick stood by, clapping for his stunning wife. In one video, Priyanka was seen dancing to Katrina Kaif's iconic song, Chikni Chameli with Isha Ambani. Nick Jonas clapped along as Akash Ambani joined in the dance. Nick also gave Akash a warm hug before the brother-of-the-groom flaunted his dance moves.



At Anant and Radhika's wedding, Priyanka stunned in a gorgeous yellow lehenga, while Nick looked dapper in a powder pink sherwani. Fans were enchanted by their chemistry and the ease with which they complemented each other, both in style and demeanour. Priyanka Chopra has now resumed shoot for The Bluff in Australia.

Ranveer Singh Poses With Kim Kardashian at the Ambani Wedding, Breaks the Internet



A photo of Ranveer Singh posing with Kim Kardashian has now gone viral. Ranveer and Kim attended Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding this weekend. While Kim has been sharing pictures from the event on her Instagram, popular Instagram page Diet Sabya shared a picture of Kim posing with Ranveer at the event. Kim and Ranveer were at the Shubh Aashirwad ceremony on Saturday night. In the photo, Kim was seen wearing a white outfit with a diamond-studded nath while Ranveer looked handsome in a colourful outfit. Both the stars flashed their smile as they posed together. The photo has caught the internet's attention. Check out the photo below:

Kim also made headlines after a video went viral showing her seated behind Bollywood legend Amitabh Bachchan. She was accompanied by American jewellery designer Lorraine Schwartz, and the two were seen smiling and chatting, enjoying the festivities. Amitabh Bachchan, meanwhile, was seated with his granddaughter Navya Naveli Nanda and son-in-law Nikhil Nanda, adding to the star-studded ambience of the event. The video begins with Kim arriving at the ceremony, surrounded by her security detail and staff. The presence of cameras indicated that she was also filming for her popular reality show, "The Kardashians," during her visit to Mumbai. Kim's graceful entry and her stunning Tarun Tahiliani dusty peach lehenga instantly made her the centre of attention.

Adding to the excitement, Khloe Kardashian was also present at the Shubh Aashirwad ceremony. Khloe looked vibrant in a pink lehenga designed by renowned designer Manish Malhotra. The Kardashians were not the only international stars who graced the Ambani wedding on July 12. Bollywood's own Priyanka Chopra, accompanied by her husband, American singer Nick Jonas, WWE superstar John Cena and FIFA President Gianni Infantino also attended the wedding.

Mahesh Babu's Daughter Sitara Meets Kim Kardashian at Ambani Wedding, Pouts in Selfies With Her; See Pics



Mahesh Babu's daughter Sitara met Kim Kardashian at Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding. The teenager proved to be quite the influencer when she shared not one but multiple pictures with Kim on her Instagram on Saturday night. In the photos, Sitara and Kim were seen showing off their contagious smiles and were also seen pouting in a couple of pictures. Sitara shared the photos with the caption, "@kimkardashian #anantradhikawedding." Fans went gaga in the comments section. "Bro chose Kim Kardashian out of all the celebrities over there. Certified Gen Z girl," a comment read. "We got Kim and Sitara in one frame before gta 6," another added. "Insane crossover," a third fan said. "And she says she's a swiftie," a fan said, referring to Kim and Taylor's beef.

Sitara joined her parents, Mahesh Babu and Namrata Shirodkar at the wedding. The family was seen posing together on the red carpet and even exchanged pleasantries with Shah Rukh Khan at the baraat. Meanwhile, Kim K landed in Mumbai on Friday. She was joined by her sister Khloe Kardashian. The Kardashian sisters attended the wedding and the Shubh Aashirwad ceremonies. They decked up in traditional Indian outfits while for the wedding ceremonies. While Kim was seen in red and white outfits, Khloe was seen wearing shades of pink and beige.

Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant's wedding took place on Friday. The family hosted the auspicious Shubh Vivah or wedding function. The dress code was Indian traditional. On July 13, the Ambani family hosted 'Shubh Aashirwad' and the dress code is Indian formal. July 14 will be the Mangal Utsav or the wedding reception and the dress code is Indian chic.

Preity Zinta

Sends Blessings To Anant Ambani, Radhika Merchant For Their Marriage, Photo

Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant recently tied the sacred knot in a grand wedding ceremony in Mumbai. It was a dreamy affair, with their closest friends and family in attendance, along with the who's who of the film industry. The newlywed couple is being showered with love and blessings from all over the world. Having said that, Bollywood actress Preity Zinta also dropped in her happy wishes for them. Sharing a bundle of happy photos from Anant and Radhika's big day, Preity penned a heartwarming note that read, "Congratulations to Anant, Radhika & the entire Ambani & Merchant family on the occasion of the beautiful union of Anant & Radhika. Wish you both loads of love, happiness, laughter & togetherness as you both embark on a new & exciting journey together as husband & wife???? #AnantRadhika #Wedding #Congratulations #Celebration #Ting."



Several Bollywood and international stars were present at the wedding. These included Kim Kardashian, Khloe Kardashian, John Cena, Salman Khan, Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Priyanka Chopra, Nick Jonas, Vicky Kaushal,

Katrina Kaif, Ranbir Kapoor, Alia Bhatt, Deepika Padukone, Ranveer Singh and Janhvi Kapoor, to name a few. The pre-wedding festivities for Anant and Radhika commenced in Jamnagar back in March, spanning three days of merriment and hospitality. Notable personalities like Diljit Dosanjh and Arijit Singh graced the event, with a show-stopping performance by pop icon Rihanna that captivated all in attendance. The main wedding ceremonies of Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant started on July 12, with the auspicious Shubh Vivah or wedding function. Yesterday, marked the day of Shubh Aashirwad, and the dress code was Indian formal. July 14 i.e today will be the Mangal Utsav or the wedding reception, and the dress code is Indian chic. All these functions will be held at the Jio World Centre in BKC.

