

Editorial

A Path to Personal Liberation

The god is Omnipresent

God is omnipresent. Therefore, His company is available everywhere all the time. However, if someone is very keen on the company of God, He manifests in a 'murti' (idol). This is mostly true for temples, where God is worshipped routinely in a prescribed manner. But God even manifests in murtis kept in home or a photo of God, if He decides that someone deserves this favour. Many sadhus, genuine ones, carry their worshipable God in some form with them. I had the privilege of seeing a sadhu in a park take out His Lord's photo and he worshipped Him before eating his meal. Lord Krishna has stated, "For the conqueror of self, who is blissfully peaceful in cold and heat, in pleasure and pain as well as in honor and dishonor also, he is accompanied by God." (The Bhagavad-Geeta 6.7) Before I go any further, let us understand our relationship with God. Lord Krishna states, "An eternal soul is my part only." (15.7) God is our Swami (Master) and we are His 'sevaks' (servants). God is prepared to give a lot to those who serve Him because He has so much to offer. But God is never attached to anyone. Lord Krishna says, "I am similarly inclined towards all beings, no one is hateful for Me; and no one is dear. However, those who worship Me with devotion, they are in Me, and I am also in them." (9.29) God is not like a parent; we can only make a place in God's heart. Do you realize what this means? This is the only place where there is unmixed joy. What does a company of God feel like? God is watching us all the time. Obviously, His presence can be experienced subtly only, even though He may have manifested in a murti or a photo. Similarly, God communicates mainly in a subtle way except in a rarest or rare case like for a highly advanced devotee such as Sant Tulsidas. We get intuitions. How do we know that these are not our thoughts; the communication could only have come from God? For example, I pray for guidance and help in a medical matter. The answer comes, which could not have been known to me. My Lord has shown His 'kripa' (grace). Then, God uses mediums to communicate. These are people close to His devotees. They come forward and provide the needed information. In rare cases, God speaks in dreams or when we are not in deep sleep, generally around 4 AM. The timing is a big indicator that it is God, who has spoken, not what we have imagined. Whatever God states will also be corroborated in a scripture like the Bhagavad-Geeta. All this happens because a devotee of God has taken the 'chintan' (meditation) option. What does God communicate or what benefits do we derive from such communications? First of all, we begin to become peaceful. Because without peace no enjoyment is possible. If our minds are disturbed, we cannot enjoy even in the most comfortable circumstances. As God is the only source of real peace, not freedom from noise, we become entitled to it. 'Sukha' or genuine happiness follows even in not-so-opulent surroundings. This feeling leads to unmixed joy as our connection with God is strengthened by sustained practice. Our prayers for guidance and help will be answered. Progressively, God becomes the guiding light of our lives. Help, as needed, will become available, God finds mediums, who can provide such assistance. For example, a competent doctor will become available to treat us. It all sounds so easy; it is. Not only will we be healthy but the necessary energies of all kinds will be ours too. One will feel secure, comfortable, relaxed, good, etc. The best emotions like hope, satisfaction, patience and tolerance will become parts of our psyche. Our consciousness will become better, i.e. spiritual over some time. In short, life will become highly enjoyable. Worrying, sadness, depression and anxiety will be gradually replaced by superior emotions. It is up to us to choose between chintan about God or 'chinta' (worry) about material objects, goals, etc.

We are what we repeatedly do, said Aristotle... If we have a look at the dictionary meaning of habit, then it says 'something that you do often and regularly, sometimes without knowing that you are doing it.' To define it simply, habits can be described as involuntary actions. They are a kind of 'automatic behaviour' as it were, for one does not do them after much thought. There is no doubt in it that almost everyone in this world has one or other bad habit. Don't we all have? Like, many people have the bad habit of smoking. But, if you tell them that it is a bad habit, some of them will bring in a little bit of philosophy and some would try to support it with medical opinion also. They will say, "Smoking is very exhilarating. It is good for my brain because it brings me concentration." Others will say, "Smoking keeps my bowels free." Others still will confess that it is a bad habit that they find hard to give up.

Little do most people realise, there isn't the



that he who talks and realised, there isn't the

strong desire to get freed from its grip and that is why some people philosophically say; This habit of mine will die only when I die. So what is the solution to get over one's bad habits? Is it practically possible? Yes! With a little effort and attention, it is indeed possible. To start with one needs great enthusiasm which is very essential for leaving bad habits. There is a well-known

proverb in English: "Well-begun is half done". So, after realising that the habit which you have decided to give up is really bad, you should put up a brave and enthusiastic fight against this evil. From the very outset, call forth all your latent energies not only to cut its root and branch but also to destroy its seed, for if the seed remains, the tree is likely to grow up again. When a house is on fire, how promptly and energetically the inmates react? At that time, they are fully concentrated and they use all the means to extinguish the fire. Put your resolve into action immediately. Secondly, remove the words 'impossible', 'difficult', 'I cannot' etc. from your mind. These are the expressions of a weakling or a timid person. Cheer yourself up. Realize the truth that the evil habit is your own creation, you have given birth to it and nourished it to bring its growth and now you should not say with a weak will that it is dif-

ficult to control it. Always remember! habits are not your original nature; they are your second nature. You have acquired them and you say that you cannot give them up? You are their Master and you believe yourself to be their slave? Faith, it has been rightly said, "can move mountains and this your habit is only a molehill. Therefore, rise and take up the bow of endeavour and become an instrument to the Divine to shoot this devil—your bad habit—for, God is with you as He always is on the side of the virtuous. But, remember! A mere wish or desire to eradicate evil is not enough. You must have pure and strong will besides a definite aim and purpose. Wish or desire is a small, temporary ripple in the lake of mind but Will is the power that executes the desire to fulfilment. There is nothing impossible for a man of strong willpower to achieve. So let's make a resolve that we will liberate ourselves in the true sense.

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Budget is pro-growth but stability concern remains

On top of a GDP (gross domestic product) growth of 8 per cent plus for three consecutive years, the

sync with this target, she had projected an investment requirement of over Rs 100 lakh crore to build the

over five years comes to Rs 3800,000 crore which is more or less close to the amount the Centre intended to

prises. In this year's budget, the corporate tax rate on foreign firms has been reduced from extant 40

for 2023-24. But, there is a flip side to it. This has to do with the fiscal deficit or FD (excess of total expenditure over total receipts). Sitharaman has set it at 4.9 per cent of the GDP which is 0.2 per cent less than a target of 5.1 per cent fixed in the interim budget. This has been made possible due to a mammoth dividend transfer of Rs 210,000 crore by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to the Central Government from its operations during the FY 2023-24 which is Rs 130,000 crore higher than the provision of Rs 80,000 crore made in the interim budget. It won't be easy to achieve the 4.9 per cent target during the current year. This is because the gross tax revenue (GTR) target of Rs 384,000 crore is over-ambitious and the budget assumes receipts of Rs 50,000 crore from disinvestment of government shares in PSUs, a program it has decided not to pursue. Even major expenditure items could get out of control as the year progresses. For instance, the 'fertilizer subsidy' is budgeted at Rs 164,000 crore during 2024-25. This is based on the assumption that the declining trend in the

international price of fertilizers and raw materials used in their production seen during 2023-24 continues during the current year as well. It takes a small disruption in the global supply chain (given the current highly uncertain geo-political situation, this is quite likely), for this assumption to go haywire. That apart, to go down from 4.9 per cent to 4.5 per cent next year set by the FM her 2021-22 budget (this by itself is far more generous than FD of 3 per cent that was to be achieved in 2020-21 as per the amendment to the FRBM Act, 2018) can be daunting, all the more when the RBI is unlikely to repeat its bonanza/gift to the Centre. During an interactive with the press, Sitharaman alluded to the Centre's plan to design fiscal trajectory in a manner such that from FY 2026-27 onward, its debt to GDP ratio starts declining. Sans target setting, this may not instil confidence. Yet, she won't set the target as these are often missed. The Centre's debt-to-GDP ratio is currently around 57 per cent against the 40 per cent mandated for 2024-25 under the FRBM Amendment Act (2018).



Union Budget for FY 2024-25 presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on July 23, 2024, has all the ingredients to sustain the momentum during the current year as well. For the current year, she has proposed capital expenditure at Rs 111,111 crore, which is 17 per cent higher than the revised estimate (RE) for FY 2023-24. In her Budget for 2019-20, she had laid a roadmap for catapulting the Indian economy to US\$5 trillion by 2024-25. In

infrastructure over five years. Out of this, 39 per cent or Rs 39,00,000 crore was to come from the Centre and states each and the balance was Rs 22,00,000 crore from the private sector. The Centre's capital spend during the previous four years was 2020-21: Rs 439,000 crore; 2021-22: Rs 554,000 crore; 2022-23: Rs 750,000 crore; 2023-24: Rs 1000,961 crore. This adds up to Rs 2700,000 crore. Add to this Rs 111,111 crore for 2024-25, the total

contribute. The Central government has also been helping the states to boost their capital spend. During 2022-23, it provided them with 50-year Rs 100,000 crore interest-free loans. During 2023-24, such transfers were Rs 130,000 crore. For the current year, the transfers are kept at Rs 150,000 crore. To promote investment in the private sector, the Centre has reduced the corporate tax rate to 15 per cent for new manufacturing enterprises and 22 per cent for existing enter-

per cent to 35 per cent. With this and assuming that private consumption/demand remains strong (a relief of around Rs 17,500/- in personal income tax or PIT resulting from the change in tax slabs under the New IT regime and increase in a standard deduction by Rs 25,000/- will give some boost) besides exports getting a leg up, courtesy rebound in the US economy, India could achieve growth even higher than 6.5 - 7 per cent projected in the Economic Survey

YOU WILL BE SURPRISED TO KNOW THAT IF PASTA IS CONSUMED PROPERLY, IT CAN HELP IN REDUCING WEIGHT. TODAY WE ARE GOING TO TELL YOU SOME TIPS TO MAKE HEALTHY PASTA, WHICH WILL MAKE YOUR WEIGHT LOSS JOURNEY

Keep these things in mind while making pasta, the taste will reduce weight easily



Losing extra weight is a very difficult and tiring task. For this people have to follow special diet. Usually people stick to home cooked food during their weight loss journey. But after a point home cooked food starts getting boring and people have no other option but to eat it. If you are also bored of your daily food and are

looking for some healthy and tasty option, then you can include pasta in your diet. Yes, you read it right, eating pasta leads to weight gain. But you will be surprised to know that if pasta is consumed properly, it can help in reducing weight. Today we are going to tell you some tips to make healthy pasta, which will make your weight

loss journey delicious. "Choose the right pasta- If you are consuming pasta to be healthy and lose weight, then it is important to choose the right pasta. Usually people make and eat pasta made of white flour, due to which their weight increases. Instead of pasta made of white flour, choose pasta made of millet, jowar and ragi. Pasta made

from whole grains is rich in many essential nutrients besides being delicious to eat. "Use vegetables- If you are thinking of putting on weight, then consuming only pasta can cost you dearly. That's why you use vegetables in pasta. This will increase the taste and nutrient content of the pasta and will not increase your

weight. You can add vegetables like corn, broccoli, zucchini, bell peppers, onions, olives and jalapenos to pasta. "It is important to use the right oil- Olive oil is considered the best to use for making pasta. Olive oil prevents pasta from sticking to the gut. If you do not have olive oil, you can use mustard oil.

SUMMER NAIL CARE TIPS

Summer season takes away the shine of nails, take care of them like this

THE BEAUTY OF THE HANDS COMES FROM THE SHINY NAILS, WHICH GET SNATCHED AWAY IN THE SUMMER SEASON. THAT'S WHY PEOPLE SHOULD TAKE CARE OF NAILS IN THE SUMMER SEASON. TODAY, IN THIS ARTICLE, WE ARE GOING TO TELL PEOPLE THE TIPS TO TAKE CARE OF NAILS IN THIS SEASON.



The beauty of the hands comes from the shiny nails, which get snatched away in the summer season. Along with taking care of face, hands and feet in summer, it is also necessary to take care of nails. Nail care is not just limited to beautifying the hands. Actually, hands sweat during the summer season, due to

which the risk of spreading the infection increases. In such a situation, if the nails are taken care of daily, then the risk of infection can be reduced. That's why people should clean their nails properly in the summer season. Today we are going to tell some tips, which will be very useful for you while taking care of your nails. "Keep your nails clean- Because of your nails, you can fall ill in the summer season, so always try to keep them clean. To keep the nails clean, you can wash them

with water. Just washing with water cleans the dirt of hands and nails to a great extent. You can also use soap if you want. "Apply top coat on the nails- In the summer season, our nails are more exposed to sunlight and water, due to which they become weak and break. Always keep a top coat on your nails to prevent them from getting weak. Top coat protects nails from sun and water. Apart from this, it also protects the nails from the damage caused by the chemicals present in the swimming pool.

This small carelessness of yours can be dangerous during dinner, know about it



There are many such habits in our lifestyle that make us suffer from diabetes. If you also want to avoid diabetes, then leave these habits from your lifestyle immediately. You should know that what are the mistakes you do, which increase the level of blood sugar. Today we will tell you about the same mistakes, due to which the problem of diabetes can arise. "eating curd everyday" Curd is considered an important part of our healthy diet. The nutrients present in it benefit the body in many ways. But Ayurveda says that by consuming curd daily, you will gain weight and may face problems like poor metabolism. Which causes the risk of diabetes. "overeating at night" Dinner should always be light and nutritious so that it can be easily digested. But some people eat heavy food at night. Which affects their liver. Due to which their metabolism slows down and the risk of many diseases increases. "overeating" Ayurveda experts say that if you are hungry for two rotis, then eat only one roti. Because eating more can cause you many diseases. Eating more food than your appetite can make you a victim of cholesterol, digestive problems and obesity. "not hungry, still eating" Food should be eaten only when you feel hungry.

If you see these signs on your body then your life may be in trouble

Reasons You May Feel Like Something Is Wrong With You

Blood clot is a problem of blood clotting in the blood vessels, the organs do not get enough blood. Due to which serious problems can arise in the body. That's why today we will tell you how your life can be lost due to the formation of blood clot in some parts of the body. So let's know about him. "lungs" The heartbeat becomes faster due to the formation of a blood clot in the lungs. Blood in cough, difficulty in breathing starts. If you feel something like this, go to your doctor immediately. Because your slight negligence can increase the disease further. "Heart" When a blood clot forms in the heart, you may experience symptoms similar to a clot in the lungs. But if you have had a heart attack, you may also feel nausea and vomiting along with chest pain. "Brain" The formation of a blood clot can cause a serious blockage in the brain. In fact, without oxygen from the blood, your brain cells begin to die within minutes. A clot in your brain can cause pain on one side of the head, confusion, seizures, trouble speaking, and weakness. "Abdomen" The formation of a clot in the veins of the stomach and esophagus can lead to cuts, which can lead to bleeding.

Feyenoord knocks AC Milan out of Champions League

PTI ■ MILAN
Seldom has a player's sending off had such an influence on a game. AC Milan was to rue Theo Hernandez's second yellow card — for diving — as Feyenoord advanced to the Champions League last 16 at the former European champion's expense with a 1-1 draw in the second leg of their playoff on Tuesday, giving the Dutch team a 2-1 win on aggregate. Bayern Munich, Club Brugge and Benfica also won their playoffs, eliminating Celtic, Europa League winner Atalanta, and French team Monaco, respectively. "In soccer everything changes in a second," said Milan forward Santiago Giménez, who scored one of the competition's fastest goals against his former team, Feyenoord, in the first minute.

Hernandez was sent off for a dive in the 51st when Milan was dominating after Giménez's opener had leveled the tie. Feyenoord had won the first leg of the playoff 1-0 last week. But Milan's defense looked anything but assured after referee Szymon Marciniak showed Hernandez another yellow card for his dive. The France defender had earned his first before the break for lashing out at a Feyenoord player after a foul on teammate João Félix. Hugo Bueno crossed for Julián Carranza to head Feyenoord level on the night in the 73rd, enough to put the Dutch team into the next phase. "We're very disappointed. We started well and scored straight away. It seemed like Feyenoord couldn't hurt us," Giménez said of the game's pivotal moment. "Today it happened to Theo but it can



happen to anyone, this is soccer. We have the utmost respect for Theo. We will give him all our support." Feyenoord's Givairo Read was shown a red card following another melee after the final whistle. Feyenoord will play either Inter Milan or Arsenal in the round of 16. **Davies to Bayern's rescue** Alphonso Davies scored in the fourth minute of stoppage time for Bayern to reach the last 16 with a 1-1 draw against Celtic. Davies, a substitute, bundled the ball over the line after Leon Goretzka's effort was kept out, saving Bayern the ordeal of extra time after German player Nicolas Kühn had scored against his former club to draw Celtic level on aggregate. Davies' goal gave Bayern a 3-2 win over two legs. Next for the Bavarian powerhouse is either Bundesliga rival Bayer

Leverkusen or Atlético Madrid. **Atalanta's efforts in vain** Club Brugge eliminated Atalanta with a 3-1 win in Bergamo for a 5-2 win on aggregate. The 19-year-old forward Chemsidine Talbi scored twice as the visitors gave Gian Piero Gasperini's team a lesson in efficiency. Atalanta had 29 efforts at goal, compared to seven from the visitors, and tried 89 attacks compared to 16 from Brugge. Halftime substitute Ademola Lookman scored seconds after the restart to unleash hopes of a miracle — Atalanta just needed three more goals to level the tie — but Simon Mignolet saved Lookman's penalty in the 61st as those hopes gradually faded. Benfica reached the last 16 with a 3-3 draw against Monaco in Lisbon, giving the Portuguese team a 4-3 win on aggregate.

Indian women's football team begins Pink Ladies Cup campaign

PTI ■ SHARJAH
A new-look Indian senior women's football team will be eager to take on Jordan in the opening match of the Pink Ladies Cup, in its first game under new head coach Crispin Chettri, here on Thursday. The tournament, which is being held during the FIFA International window, also has Russia and Korea Republic as other teams. Notably, the Indian team does not have senior players Ashalata Devi and Bala Devi, while a few young players have been pencilled in. India are ranked 13th in Asia (69th in the world), while Jordan are 14th in the continent (74th in the world). The two sides have played three matches against each other, having won one each, and drawing one. Chettri, who was appointed as head coach earlier this month, feels it is imperative for India to win matches in order to progress as a team at the continental level. "Jordan have progressed in a



good way over the last few years, but I think these are matches that we have to win if we want to progress," said Chettri. "We have a good mix of young and experienced players, so it will be a competitive game," said the 50-year-old who has played for the Indian youth team. The Blue Tigresses had a 10-day camp in Anantapur, Andhra Pradesh, before travelling to Sharjah, where they will have two training sessions, before their first match. Chettri brushed aside talks of

the difference in rankings among the teams, choosing instead to focus on the fact that the Blue Tigresses are currently seeing a transitional phase. "It's a transitional phase for the team, where we have brought in a lot of new players. We are all willing to suffer for the overall good of the team," he said. "I think it's important to support and encourage these girls because most of them are breaking a lot of barriers just by being here. We must focus on the positives right now."

Gujarat's Priyank plays solid knock against Kerala Ranji Trophy semifinal

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD
Gujarat's seasoned batter Priyank Panchal played a solid knock, remaining unbeaten on 117, as the former champions reached 222 for 1 at stumps on Day 3 of their Ranji Trophy semifinal against Kerala, here on Wednesday. Trailing by just 235 runs with two full days remaining, Gujarat's batting unit showed resilience and intent on a placid Motera surface, where it seemed Kerala found themselves 100 runs short, having scored at snail's pace. Resuming their first innings at 418/7, Kerala added 39 more runs before being bowled out for 457 just 10 overs into the morning session. Mohammed Azharuddeen remained stranded on a magnificent 177 off 341 balls, his career-best knock featuring 20 fours and a solitary six. His innings provided the backbone to Kerala's total as wickets tumbled around him. Gujarat skipper Chintan Gaja provided the first breakthrough of the day, dismissing Aditya Sarwate with a delivery that



straightened from middle stump to clip the off-stump. Sarwate managed just one run before becoming Gaja's 200th first-class victim in his 59th match. Sensing the urgency to add quick runs, Azharuddeen took Kerala past 450 with a boundary off Arzan Nagwaswalla. However, with wickets falling at the other end, the Kerala wicketkeeper-batter was left stranded as Nidheesh MD (run out) and Nedumankuzhy Basil (bowled by Gaja) perished in quick succession. In response, Gujarat began their innings with a positive intent as openers Panchal and Aarya

Desai put together a solid 131-run stand in 36.4 overs. Desai, aggressive yet composed, scored 73 off 118 balls, striking 11 boundaries and one six. He looked assured before losing control and dragged a wide delivery from Basil onto his stumps. Despite that breakthrough, Kerala's bowlers struggled to make further inroads. Panchal, a veteran of the domestic circuit, anchored the innings with a mix of caution and aggression. Panchal reached his 29th first-class century — his second of the season -- off just 155 balls, bringing up the milestone in

style with a six over long-on against Sarwate. The 34-year-old, once on the fringes of the Indian team after Gujarat's maiden Ranji Trophy triumph in 2016-17, has had an ordinary season with only one century (against Rajasthan) and a half-century (against Vidarbha) prior to this match. However, he delivered when his team needed him the most. Hingraja provided solid support at the other end with a patient, unbeaten 30 off 108 balls, hitting three boundaries. For Kerala, veteran spinner Jalaj posed some questions and induced a few edges, but the lack of support from the field meant Gujarat kept consolidating. **Brief Scores:** Kerala 457; 187 overs (Mohammed Azharuddeen 177 not out, Sachin Baby 69, Salman Nizar 52; Arzan Nagwaswalla 3/81, Chintan Gaja 2/75). Gujarat 222/1; 71 overs (Priyank Panchal 117 batting, Aarya Desai 73, Manan Hingraja 30 batting; Nedumankuzhy Basil 1/40). Gujarat trail by 235 runs.

Gopi T, Ashwini return to Apollo Tyres New Delhi Marathon

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Defending men's and women's champions Gopi Thonakal and Ashwini Madan Jadhav will headline in the 10th edition of Apollo Tyres New Delhi Marathon scheduled to take place here on February 23. Recognised by Athletics Federation of India (AFI) as a national event, the marathon will also see participation from the country's top runners including Anish Thapa, Belliyappa, Man Singh, Akshay Saini and Vikram Bangriya the men's section. The likes of Laxmi KM, Nirmaben Thakor Bharatje and Disket Dolma will feature in the women's field. The event, which is also recognised by World Athletics, is a qualifying race for International Amateur races. Runners will compete across four categories — full marathon, half marathon, 10k and 5k. Former Indian cricket team captain Ajinkya Rahane and head badminton coach Pullela Gopichand will flag off the marathon. "The Apollo Tyres New Delhi Marathon is not just a race; it's a celebration of human spirit, perseverance, and unity. As the organisers, we are thrilled to see the incredible participation from athletes across the world, and we are proud to continue fostering an inclusive, inspiring event," said Nagaraj Adiga, Race Director and CMD - NEB Sports. "Our goal is to create a platform where every runner, from elite athletes to first-timers, can push their limits and be part of something much larger than themselves," he added. The event is supported by Delhi Metro, offering free rides to and from JLN Stadium for participants with bibs.

Jamshedpur FC look to cut down gap with FC Goa

PTI ■ KOLKATA
Jamshedpur FC will get a chance to cut down the gap with FC Goa for the second spot if they beat bottom-placed Mohammedan Sporting in their Indian Super League (ISL) match here on Thursday. Jamshedpur are third in the table with 34 points from 20 matches. However, they have ended up losing thrice in their previous five encounters. Their away form has been concerning, having faced six defeats on the road, but Mohammedan Sporting have not really optimised their home advantage either. In fact, the Kolkata-based side is presently on a four-game-long losing streak and have garnered just 11 points from their 20 games until now, with both of their wins coming



away from home. In the reverse fixture, the Khalid Jamil-coached Red Miners had clinched a convincing 3-1 win, and they will have to iron out their offensive concerns, having gone scoreless in their previous two outings, to repeat that feat. Mohammedan, on the other hand, will eye their first win in

11 attempts at home -- having drawn thrice and lost seven times in their backyard this season. Jamshedpur are realistically chasing a second-placed finish, but they trail FC Goa (39) by five points. Ending up in the second spot will see them qualify directly for the semifinals and not participate in the one-legged knockout,

but they cannot afford to drop any more points hereon for that. Jamshedpur FC have won the only game played between these two teams this season. Jamshedpur head coach Khalid Jamil assured that his team is committed to registering a win from this away game. "It's an away game. We need to get a positive result. Everyone is working hard and the team needs to continue doing that moving forward," he said. Mohammedan SC's Indian assistant coach Mehrajuddin Wadoo praised Jamshedpur FC and the season they had had so far. "We know Jamshedpur FC have performed well this season. It's not going to be an easy game for us, but we are going to try our best to put our best foot forward," he said.

Fonseca loses in first round in Rio Open

PTI ■ RIO DE JANEIRO
Teenage tennis sensation João Fonseca frustrated his home fans at the Rio Open in a first-round loss, two days after winning his first ATP title. Fonseca lost 6-1, 7-6 (4) to No. 60-ranked Alexandre Muller of France, making 34 unforced errors and appearing to be exhausted during the match. The 18-year-old Brazilian won his career first title at the elite level with victory in the Argentina Open final on Sunday. Muller will meet Argentina's Tomás Martín Etcheverry in the next round. "It was tough to play against such a great player and perhaps 5,000 (fans), but I'm very happy to get the victory today," Muller said. "I was



feeling calm in half of the match. I didn't take my chances to take the break in the second set and then he was playing better and better. I played a great tiebreak to finish." On the weekend, Fonseca became the first man born in 2006 or later to win a top-level ATP singles title, the

10th youngest champion in ATP Tour history and the youngest South American player to win a title in the ATP Tour era (since 1990). Last year, the rising star reached the quarterfinals of the tournament in Rio, an ATP 500, and finished off 2024 by winning the Next Gen ATP Finals in December.

Athletes deserve a future beyond 'saluting bureaucrats', says Gopichand

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
India's chief badminton coach Pullela Gopichand on Wednesday called for respect for sportspersons after retirement, saying athletes deserve more than "saluting bureaucrats" after dedicating everything to the country during their playing days. The 51-year-old from Hyderabad also emphasised the need for better post-career opportunities, stressing that financial stability is crucial for athletes to transition into meaningful roles after calling time on their careers. While sport is now seen as a viable career path in India, Gopichand highlighted a pressing issue: What happens to athletes who dedicate their lives to sports but don't reach the top? "Many years ago, this question wouldn't have come up because sport was not big enough. The mass of people

taking up sport as a profession was not significant. But today, we have players who are completely dedicated to sport, who do not pursue education. "My challenge is, how do I put them in meaningful roles that offer respect and financial stability, like every other profession?" Gopichand said. Gopichand said that while elite athletes who achieve national and international glory are well taken care of, the concern lies with those who fall just short. "If you make it to the top, the government takes care of you very well. They give jobs, land, money. Fantastic, no complaints," he acknowledged. "Say, for example, you continue playing the sport and reach age 24 or 25, but haven't made it to the Indian team. You're next to Manu Bhaker, Nikhat Zareen, or Aman Sehrawat — you're



second, third, or fourth in the field. What happens to them? There are many of them. Their life is gone because they have nothing else." Even for those who win Olympic medals, their careers after sport are often frustratingly limited. "You take Sakshi Malik, Aman Sehrawat, or Vijay Kumar. They have won an Olympic medal, the pinnacle of sport, but will go to his office every day and salute a junior-level IRS officer... Why

should I still salute you?" Gopichand questioned. The former All England champion said that athletes must be given the opportunity to transition into meaningful roles. "Send us to Mussoorie Institute, teach us administration. Send us to ISB, teach us business. And if we fail, that's different. But you didn't even try. We have given our whole life to sport, to the country, and then we get nothing," Gopichand said.

He also stressed that society must change its perspective on athletes and their post-sport careers. "Sportspersons need respect. We don't want to just salute bureaucrats for 30 years. We have given our all to the sport and the country, and we deserve better opportunities." Gopichand acknowledged cricket is an exception where money flows easily, but for most sports, even making it to the top doesn't guarantee a financially secure life. He pointed to global models where universities integrate sport and education seamlessly. "If you get 25 medals in Stanford, 17 medals in Loughborough, sport is so big in those universities that they are studying and competing. Eighty percent of Fortune 500 companies have professional sportspersons in leadership roles," said the Dronacharya awardee. "Education is important for sport, and sport is important

for education. This doesn't happen by doing it separately." Despite initiatives like Khelo India and private sponsorships, the system remains incomplete, he said. "You're giving them (athletes) a turbo scholarship to swim in the sea. You turbo-charge them for 2 km, then they look back and there's no one, and if they go ahead, there's nothing," Gopichand explained. Highlighting the issue of affordability, Gopichand said: "If you are middle-class and earning, say, two lakhs a month, you would want your child to earn more. But if there's so much uncertainty in sports, why would a parent push their child into it? "If you are very rich, no problem. But for the others, it's an issue." According to Gopichand, middle-class families need to recognize that not every young athlete will become a Sachin Tendulkar or a PV Sindhu.



Murray to continue as Djokovic's coach

PTI ■ DOHA
Andy Murray looks set to remain as Novak Djokovic's coach likely through the French Open. The 24-time Grand Slam champion told the ATP Tour's in-house media channel on Tuesday that Murray has agreed to stay on as coach. Djokovic and Murray joined forces ahead of the Australian Open in what initially was seen as an unlikely pairing.

After Murray retired last year, Djokovic reached out with the coaching proposition. The 37-year-old Serb reached the semifinals at Melbourne Park but retired from the last-four match against Alexander Zverev because of a hamstring injury. "I expressed my desire to continue the collaboration with him, so I am really glad he did accept," said Djokovic, who was facing Matteo Berrettini in the opening round of the Qatar Open later Tuesday.