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YOGI HOLDS MASSIVE
ROADSHOW IN SURAT

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PUTIN'S ENDGAME BEGINS
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PM DEUBA WINS FROM DADELHDURA;
NEPALI CONGRESS AHEAD IN POLL TALLY

LUCKNOW, THURSDAY NOVEMBER 24, 2022; PAGES 12 ₹3



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Submit files on Arun Goel's pick as EC, SC asks Centre

We want to see what prompted step to choose EC at short notice, SC tells AG

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting the need for independence of the Election Commission and its members, the Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to produce the original records related to the recent appointment of Arun Goel as Election Commissioner.

The Constitution Bench headed by Justice KM Joseph wanted to know whether there was any "hanky panky" and rejected Centre's objections in producing the original file, saying it wants to know whether everything was "hunky dory" in the appointment process as claimed by the Government.

The five-judge Constitution bench rejected the objections put forth by Attorney General (AG) R Venkataramani over its insistence on going through the file while it was hearing the larger issue of appointment of Election Commissioners and Chief Election Commissioner.

The AG told the bench, also comprising Justices Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy and CT Ravikumar, that the court is

dealing with the larger issue of appointment of ECs and the CEC, and it cannot look at an individual case flagged by advocate Prashant Bhushan.

"I take serious objection to this and have my reservation to the court seeing the file amid the hearing of a Constitution bench," he contended.

Earlier on Monday, the Bench observed that the selection to Election Commission should be by a body headed by the Chief Justice of India. Bhushan argued that when the Bench started hearing a batch of pleas seeking a collegium-like system for the appointment of ECs and the CEC last Thursday, the Government appointed Goel as an EC on November 19.

"We want to see what prompted the step. We want to see what the mechanism is. We will not treat it as an adversarial (move) and keep it for our record, but we want to know as you claim that everything is hunky dory. Since we were hearing the matter and appointment was made amid, this may be interlinked. You have time till tomorrow. Produce the documents," the court told the AG.

The Bench observed that Bhushan had told the court last Thursday that an interlocutory application has been filed seeking filling of one vacancy in the Election Commission and the next day the appointment was made. Bhushan, who



appeared on behalf of petitioner Anoop Baranwal and made his rejoinder submission, said after the court started hearing the matter, the Government hurriedly appointed an Election Commissioner.

"This Election Commissioner was, till Thursday, working as a secretary-level officer in the Government. Suddenly, he was given VRS on Friday and appointed as an Election Commissioner," Bhushan said. He added, they (Government) appointed someone in a single day and no one knows what process was followed and what safeguards were taken. Justice Joseph said, as far he recalls, it takes three months for a person to get voluntary retirement.

"You need to produce before us the original file regarding the appointment of this officer. If there is no illegality, then you should not be afraid," Justice Joseph said. Venkataramani protested the way Bhushan flagged the issue of Goel's appointment amid the hearing of a larger matter and wanted the court to look into it. Justice Hrishikesh Roy told Venkataramani that with his

objection it looked like he was prejudging the mind of the court.

Justice Joseph told the Attorney General, "Please tell us whether you will produce the files or not unless you have an objection to that. If not, we will leave the matter at that and close the hearing." AG Venkataramani said the court need not travel that far and that he was only trying to satisfy himself whether it would be appropriate for the bench to look into the file of an isolated incident amid the hearing of a larger issue.

"If there is a need to show (the files) to the court, we will certainly show it. If any wrong has happened, I, as Attorney General, would myself bring to the notice of the court. It is my duty as the law officer. This court cannot look into an isolated incident just because it was flagged by someone. The post has been vacant since May," he said.

Justice Joseph said the court is only looking into the mechanism and see whether everything was according to the process. "If you feel you should not disclose the file, then let us know. You have time till tomorrow. If you are busy, you can ask someone to place the file before us," he said.

On November 19, Goel, a 1985-batch IAS officer of the Punjab cadre, was appointed as an Election Commissioner.

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Delhi man stabs parents, grandma, sister to death

Drug addict was back from rehab centre recently

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In a gruesome incident, a 25-year-old man, a drug addict who recently returned from a rehabilitation centre, killed all his family members in Southwest Delhi's Palam area.

The accused, identified as Keshav, allegedly stabbed his parents, sister, and grandmother to death over a dispute.

According to police, all four were found lying in a pool of blood. They have been identified as Dinesh Kumar (50), his wife Darshan Saini (40), mother Deewano Devi (75) and daughter Urvashi (18).

As Keshav went on the stabbing spree, the screams of his family members alerted some of their relatives, who live in the same building, and neighbours.

According to a police officer, they received information around 10.30 pm on Tuesday about a quarrel on the upper floor of a house in Palam. Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Manoj C said when a police team reached there, it found four members of the family dead.

The "caller" Kuldeep Saini (26) and his relatives caught hold of the accused and handed him over to the police, he said.



(Inset) Keshav (in red), with his mother, sister, father and grandmother. A cop at their house after the ghastly murders on Wednesday Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

On being handed over to the police, Keshav warned his cousin Saini, "When I come out of jail, it will be your turn."

Saini lives on the first floor of the building and his uncle's family lives on the second.

Preliminary investigation revealed that Keshav did not have a stable job. He used to work in a company in

Gurugram and left the job a month ago, police said. Prima facie it seems the accused killed his family members following an argument, police said.

Keshav's relatives said they are shocked and completely devastated. "Around 10 pm, I heard my cousin Urvashi (Keshav's sister) calling my name and screaming for help.

Married man kills girlfriend, shoots self; hospitalised

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A woman was shot dead by her 38-year-old paramour inside a room at an OYO hotel in Narela area of Northwest Delhi.

The accused, identified as Praveen, alias Situ, had also attempted to commit suicide by shooting himself in the head but he survived and is undergoing treatment at Sanjay Gandhi hospital.

The victim has been identified as 39-year-old Geeta. She checked into the OYO hotel on Tuesday with the accused, officials said.

According to a hotel staff, the couple had a heated argument, and the man, apparently, in a fit of rage, shot his girlfriend in her chest. After killing her, he also tried to kill himself.

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When I went upstairs, I saw that the gate just outside the main door was locked and there was silence. I knocked on the door and asked Keshav to open it. But he insisted that I leave as it was their family matter," Kuldeep recalled.

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Aaditya meets Nitish, Tejashwi in bid to woo Biharis for BMC polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PATNA/NEW DELHI

Shiv Sena (Uddhav) leader Aaditya Thackeray, along with party MP Priyanka Chaturvedi and Anil Desai, met Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and his Deputy and RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav in Patna on Thursday.

Aaditya, who was on a one-day visit to Bihar, was accompanied by Tejashwi when they called on Kumar at his residence. Aaditya's decision to call on Kumar and Tejashwi is seen as a clever move to influence millions of Bihar voters residing in Mumbai and whose support will be crucial for Shiv Sena (Uddhav) in the upcoming BMC elections.

The BJP has already started a campaign to woo the North Indian voters.

Addressing the media after



Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar presents a 'shawl' to Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasahab Thackeray) leader Aaditya Thackeray during a meeting, in Patna on Wednesday. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav is also seen PTI

the meeting, Aaditya said, "We've been in touch with each other but could not meet due to Covid. We discussed various topics but did not discuss politics. Sure this friendship will continue."

Aaditya sought to distance himself from the strident "anti-migrant" stance that the Shiv Sena, founded by his late grandfather Bal Thackeray, has often been accused of.

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Sushant manager's death mystery solved; CBI says 'it's accident'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has concluded that the death of Mumbai-based talent manager Disha Saliyan was an accident and not a case of suicide. Disha's death in 2020 had become a controversial issue following numerous allegations of foul play and cover up.

The 28-year-old had managed several stars in her career, most notably Sushant Singh Rajput, who himself died less than a week after Disha.

Even as there was no separate FIR or complaint into Disha's death, the matter was investigated by the CBI in connection with Sushant's death which is also being probed by the CBI.



Disha died on the intervening night of June 8-9, 2020 reportedly after falling off the balcony of a 14th floor apartment in Mumbai's Malad.

Rajput's body was found five days later, BJP leader Nitish Rane had alleged that the deaths were linked and there was foul play. Now, a CBI probe has reportedly found that Disha fell after losing balance under the influence of alcohol.

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Meghalaya villagers torch Assam's forest office

PNS/AGENCIES ■ MUKROH/GUWAHATI/NEW DELHI

A group of villagers from Meghalaya allegedly torched a forest office in Assam's West Karbi Anglong district late on Tuesday night ostensibly as a reaction to the killing of six people in violence that occurred earlier in a disputed area along the border between the two States.

At least two vehicles — one in Mukroh village where the violence took place on Tuesday and another in Meghalaya's capital Shillong — were set ablaze by separate mobs, officials said.

Mukroh village, 30 km east of West Jaintia Hills district headquarters of Jowai, is located around 10 km from the interstate border inside



Remains of a temple after it was vandalised by miscreants following violence at a disputed Assam-Meghalaya border location that killed six people, in West Karbi Anglong district, on Wednesday PTI

Meghalaya.

In New Delhi, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday said Assam-Meghalaya border is peaceful and the recent clashes along the inter-State boundary had erupted between locals and forest guards.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a function in the national capital, Sarma also asserted that the incident was not at all related to the long-standing border dispute between the two Northeastern States.

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CAPSULE

AFTAB WILL KILL ME: SHRADDHA TOLD POLICE

Mumbai: Shraddha Walkar had two years ago complained to police in Maharashtra that her live-in partner Aftab Poonawala, who is accused of brutally murdering her and then saving her body in 35 parts, tried to kill her and she feared he would cut her into pieces and throw her away.

RANSOMWARE ATTACKS CRIPPLES AIMS

New Delhi: The server for National Informatics Centre's eHospital used at AIIMS-New Delhi has been down since 7 am, affecting the healthcare centre's outpatient department (OPD) and sample collection services. All these services are running on manual mode.

SCOTLAND LOSES COURT FIGHT FOR INDEPENDENCE

London: The devolved Government of Scotland on Wednesday lost a major SC battle in London when judges ruled that a second referendum on its union with the UK cannot go ahead without the approval of the UK Parliament. P9

Didn't invite Naik: Qatar on hate preacher's visit

Canards on Zakir's invite a bid to spoil bilateral ties, FIFA WC host tells India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Qatar has clarified that it did not extend any official invitation to India's fugitive Zakir Naik for the ongoing FIFA World Cup opening ceremony. Doha also said deliberate disinformation was being spread by third countries to damage relations between the two countries.

The reported denial came after India informed Qatar that Vice President Jagdeep Dhankar's visit for the World Cup inauguration on November 20 will be called off if Naik was invited for the event.

Qatar reportedly informed India through official channels that no official invitation was extended to the Indian fugitive to witness the opening ceremony from the VVIP enclosure. Reports said Naik could have travelled to Qatar from Malaysia on a private visit.

In the first response by the Centre to Qatar's reported invitation to Naik, Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas Hardeep Singh Puri on Tuesday said he was sure India will take up the matter and would convey its views in the "strongest possible terms" to the concerned authorities.

Asked about Qatar reportedly inviting Naik to the FIFA World Cup, Puri said, "I have no knowledge of that". When asked if India will lodge a protest, he replied, "I am sure India took it up and will take it up. But the point is he is a Malaysian national and if he is invited somewhere... whether

they knew, I have no knowledge of that. I have as much access to information as you have."

"You can ask me my views on Zakir Naik. My views and your views are the same on that," he said. Replying to a related question, Puri said, "We (India) have our views on him and I am sure they will be conveyed in the strongest possible terms to the concerned authorities."

A BJP spokesperson in Goa had also called for Indians to boycott the World Cup on the issue.

Naik has been wanted by India since 2016 for alleged money laundering and inciting extremism through hate speeches in Malaysia. In March 2022, the Union Home Ministry declared Naik founded Islamic Research Foundation (IRF) an unlawful association under the UAPA and banned it for five years.

Day 2 shocker! Japan vanquish Germany

AP ■ DOHA

Another World Cup day, another World Cup shock. Substitutes Ritsu Doan and Takuma Asano scored late goals on Wednesday to give Japan a come-from-behind 2-1 victory over Germany at the World Cup. Both Doan and Asano play for German clubs.

Ilkay Gundogan had given four-time champion Germany the lead with a first-half penalty. But Doan, who plays for Freiburg, pounced on a rebound to equalise in the 76th minute after Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer blocked a shot from Takumi Minamino.

Then Asano, who plays for Bochum, sprinted clear of Nico Schlotterbeck and beat Neuer from a narrow angle in the 83rd minute of the first competitive meeting between the two nations.

The match was played a day after Argentina's 2-1 upset



Germany's soccer team players cover their mouths as they pose for a group photo before the World Cup group E soccer match between Germany and Japan, at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha on Wednesday AP

loss to Saudi Arabia.

Before Wednesday's game, Germany's players covered their mouths during the team photo in an apparent rebuke to FIFA following its decision to abate plans to wear armbands to protest discrimination in host nation Qatar.

Nancy Faeser, Germany's

Sports Minister, attended the match at the Khalifa International Stadium and was sitting beside FIFA president Gianni Infantino while wearing the same "One Love" armband that FIFA had outlawed with its threats of consequences.

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US's Walmart manager opens fire in break room, kills 6

AP ■ CHESAPEAKE

A Walmart manager opened fire on fellow employees in the break room of a Virginia store, killing six people in the country's second high-profile mass shooting in four days, police and a witness said Wednesday.

The gunman, who apparently shot himself, was dead when police found him, Chesapeake Police Chief Mark G Solesky said. There was no clear motive for the shooting, which also put four people in the hospital.

The store was busy just before the attack Tuesday night with people stocking up ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday, a shopper told a local TV station.

Employee Briana Tyler said workers had gathered in the store's break room as they typically did ahead of their shifts. Detailed report on P10

CM Yogi congratulates cops on Police Flag Day



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, congratulated Uttar Pradesh Police on Police Flag Day. "We are proud of the UP Police which is a symbol of dedication, sensitivity and service," the chief minister tweeted while praising the police force. Uttar Pradesh Police celebrated Police Flag Day on

Wednesday with Director General of Police Devendra Singh Chauhan pinning a flag on Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and handing him the police symbol. On the occasion, Principal Secretary (Home) Sanjay Prasad and ADG (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar were also present. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath tweeted and wished the police of the state on 'Police

Flag Day'. It may be mentioned that UP Police is the first state police force in the entire country which was awarded the police flag by the first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, on November 23, 1952 for its immense contribution. The occasion is celebrated as Police Flag Day every year on November 23, 1952,

flag stickers are issued every year for the welfare of the cops. The flag was also presented to PAC on the same day. On Police Flag Day police flags are hoisted at police headquarters and offices of all the other police wings. The emblem (sticker) of the police flag is pinned on the left pocket of the uniform by the police officers all over the state.

Youth booked in case of 'love jihad'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A Muslim youth, who had eloped with a girl after hiding his religious identity a week back and had allegedly raped her, married her at knifepoint after forcing the girl to convert her religion. A case was registered in this regard at Para police station. The 'nikah' was solemnised at a house in Haryana where relatives of the accused, identified as Salman, live. These stunning facts surfaced after the girl was freed from the house. Police registered a case against Salman for kidnapping and luring the 16-year-old girl to run away from her house for marrying him. As per reports, Salman introduced himself as Shayam when he first met the girl, who is a resident of Para, some time back through their common acquaintance and later trapped her in his love. In the midnight of November 13, the girl was reported missing from her house and her parents had lodged a report. Later, a police team tracked the girl and rescued her. Preliminary investigations revealed that Salman aka Shayam started befriend- ing the girl but he did not disclose his religious identity to the girl till he forced her to marry him on knifepoint at a house in

Haryana where had taken the girl. On the fateful day, he called the girl to meet him at a secluded place in Para and later threatened her to accompany him. It is alleged that the girl was taken forcibly to a house in Haryana where the youth raped the girl after threatening to kill her. Later he forced the girl to convert to Islam and performed nikah with her at the house in Haryana. It surfaced that Salman had not disclosed his real identity to the girl who was their common friend. The girl's family had apprehended the role of 'Shyam' in the disappearance of the girl and so they had provided his mobile number to the police and it helped in tracking his location in Haryana and later the rescue of the girl.

ATTACKED A home guard was attacked, allegedly by his rival, in Nagaram police station area when he was returning home in the morning on Wednesday. Reports said the home guard, identified as Suresh Kumar of Nagarn who is posted at Kotwali and is attached with the PRV, was returning home when he was attacked around 9 am. His rival Suresh Mishra of Vishun Khara in Nagaram, stopped him on the way and attacked him

with an iron rod. He was taken to the community health centre and later was admitted to SPM (Civil) Hospital. Police are investigating the case. **BODY RECOVERED** The body of an unidentified 20-year-old woman was recovered from the Indira Canal in Nagaram on Wednesday. The woman appeared to have died 2-3 days back. The police could not ascertain her identity. The body was sent for autopsy. **ALLEGED** A man accused his rivals of opening fire on him after a court decided a legal case between them in his favour, in the Para police station area in the night on Tuesday. Reports said the victim, Bharat Bhushan aka Babu Lal of Devpur locality in Para, had 3-4 legal disputes with Om Prakash, his brother Shesh Mani and one Sunit Kumar, all of Devpur locality. He alleged that a court decided one of the disputes in his favour on November 21 and this irked the rivals. "I was cleaning the e- rickshaw inside my house when they opened fire on me. Luckily the bullet hit the roof of the rickshaw and I was saved," he said. Police registered a case and were making an investigation.

SCHOOLSCAN

CHIEF JUSTICES' MEET ENDS

The presidents, prime ministers, law ministers, chief justices, judges and legal luminaries of 57 countries, who participated in the 23rd International Conference of Chief Justices of the World, organised by City Montessori School, Lucknow, were taken on a sightseeing tour of the historical monuments and experienced the Ganga-Jamuni tehzeeb of Lucknow. They were overwhelmed by the architecture and beauty of these buildings. The jurists, legal luminaries and other dignitaries who participated in the conference had intense discussions and deliberations on how to ensure a safe future for the world's over 2.5 billion children and generations yet to come. They resolved to continue their efforts till the establishment of a new world order. The chiefjus-

tices and legal luminaries later left for their respective countries. **ANNUAL PARENTS AND GRANDPARENTS DAY** The Annual Parents and Grandparents Day of City Montessori School, Chowk Campus was organised at CMS Kanpur Road auditorium with fervour. CMS founder Jagdish Gandhi lit the lamp to inaugurate the function. Speaking on the occasion, Gandhi appealed to the parents to put their best foot forward to nurture their children as home was the first school of children. He said CMS was committed to providing meaningful education to its students. Earlier, the students of CMS Chowk Campus presented educational-cultural programmes that mesmerised the gathering.

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I have change my name from Asgar Ali Guddu, to Asgar Ali, S/o Mehandi Hasan, R/o, 101/4, Kernalganj, Kanpur Nagar.

NOTICE

I have change my name from Nisha Dayani, to Sanchi Bodani, W/o, Tushar Bodani, R/o 126/18G, Govind Nagar, Kanpur Nagar.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from ZIKRA FATIMA To AIRAH FATIMA For all future purpose, Airah Fatima D/O Zakir Beg R/O101/178 Gammu kha Ka Hata, Colonel Ganj Kanpur

NOTICE

Notify that I have changed my name from Sarah Ali Khan to Sarah Ali for all purposes & records. Sarah Ali D/o Syed Baqar Ali Khan, 54 Badrinath Road, Golaganj Lucknow. UP

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SAMEEM AHMAD To SHAMEEM AHMAD For all future purpose, Shameem Ahmad S/O Naseem Ahmad R/O 89/194 Sohan Lal Compound, Bansmandi Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my daughter's name from Tanpreet Kaur to Tanpreet Kaur Soni. In the future, she shall be addressed as Tanpreet Kaur Soni D/O Harjeet Singh Soni.120/807, Ranjeet Nagar kanpur

NOTICE

I, Hema Bai wife of Rambeer Singh, Village-Ghatra Sherpur, Tehsil-Todabhim, District- Karauli (Raj) declare that my correct name is Hema Bai and my correct DOB is 05-04-1990 according to my academic and other documents. Hence my name Hema Devi and my DOB 30-12-1990 which are erroneously recorded in my husband's army documents be changed as per my correct details as mentioned above.

Scribe lodges report against SP media cell

Lucknow (PNS): After a war of words on twitter, a journalist lodged an FIR against Samajwadi Party media cell at the Hazratganj Kotwali accusing it of posting unsavoury and threatening messages against him on the social media site. The complainant, Manish Pandey, is the resident editor of a news channel in Hazratganj. In the FIR, he stated that the Samajwadi Party media cell posted an inflammatory, controversial and politically motivated tweet on Gorakhnath Mutt from his twitter handle and he posted a tweet on November 20, appealing that they should refrain from making unsavoury comment on the Gorakhnath Mutt as it was centre of devotion of crore of Hindus. "I wrote that they should avoid politicising the Gorakhnath Mutt and keep themselves limited to 5, Kalidas Marg, Bharatiya Janata Party headquarters and chief minister's official residence. Soon after this, I started getting abusive and unbecoming comments," he said.

Pandey said he ignored the comments for a few days but on Tuesday they crossed the limits with their post. "I posted a tweet saying 'UP ke do annol ratan, inki muskurahat dekh kar kaiyon ke kaleje me dhuwa nikalne lagta hai' (there are two stars of UP whose smile may cause heart burns to several). In reply to my tweet, the SP media cell posted abusive and insulting posts against me and their comments humiliated me," he said. Pandey said those who posted abusive tweets against him should be taken for the task. "The twitter handle of the Samajwadi Party is fanning communal tension and hatred among the people when the atmosphere is quiet in UP. They are posting such messages to gain political mileage. So their act needs police action which will prevent them from making unbecoming comments on Guru Gorakhnath Mutt and from vitiating the peace and harmony in society," he said.

A police spokesman said a case was registered under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and also the provision of Information Technology Act against those who posted the tweets from the Samajwadi Party twitter handle.

Minister's kin, 2 others commit suicide

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three persons, including a close kin of Union minister Kaushal Kishore, ended their lives in different parts of the city during the last 24 hours.

In Dubagga, a property dealer, who was a close kin of Union minister Kaushal Kishore, ended his life at his house on Wednesday. He was suffering from some chronic disease and was bedridden for the last few days.

As per reports, the property dealer, identified as Nand Kishore (45) of Begariya village in Dubagga, was found hanging from the ceiling with a gamcha in a room of his house around 8 am.

His son, Vishal, told police that he and his mother were in a room while his sister was sleeping in another room on the second floor of the house at that time.

"My father used to sleep in another room at the entry gate of the house. I woke up and reached the room he was sleeping in and found him hanging from the ceiling," Vishal said.

He said his father was suffering from depression due to his chronic illness and ended his life.

The police sent the body for autopsy.

"MY FATHER USED TO SLEEP IN ANOTHER ROOM AT THE ENTRY GATE OF THE HOUSE. I WOKE UP AND REACHED THE ROOM HE WAS SLEEPING IN AND FOUND HIM HANGING FROM THE CEILING"

Nand Kishore was the nephew of Union minister Kaushal Kishore.

In another incident, the body of a Bihar native was found hanging from a tree inside the Railway Power House campus in Alambagh on Wednesday.

Reports said a cable man, Prem Lal Saini of Damodar Nagar, reached a house in Punjab Colony adjacent to the boundary wall of Railway Power House and felt foul smell after he climbed the roof to fix the snag in the power supply line.

Saini looked around and was shocked to see a man hanging from a tree.

On getting information, a police team led by inspector Brijesh Tiwari reached the spot and brought the body down.

During the investigation, the police recovered an identity card and a job card. The police identified the man as Satyendra Mushar of

Gopalganj. "The man committed suicide 8-10 days back. We are finding his local address on the basis of the job card," the police said.

In Hussainganj, a private company employee ended his life in his house on the intervening night on Tuesday and Wednesday.

The man identified, as Prashant Kumar of Hussainganj, was found hanging from the ceiling with a bedsheet tied around his neck in a room of his house around 11:45 pm on Tuesday.

His family members brought the body down and rushed him to SPM (Civil) Hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead.

Prashant was a native of Sultanpur and worked with a private company in Lucknow. A case was registered at Hazratganj police station as the man was pronounced dead at Civil Hospital which falls in Hazratganj.



Advocates protesting at Parivartan Chowk to demand compensation for the family of advocate Shailendra Awasthi who died in an accident

Pioneer

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Yogi: Congress brings curfews, riots & hooliganism; AAP its carbon copy

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In the election-bound Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath attacked the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party on Wednesday, saying that the Congress brings curfews, riots, and hooliganism while AAP is a carbon copy of the Congress.

Criticising the two parties, the UP chief minister said that since Congress would not even promote prosperity, voters should not support it.

"The Aam Aadmi Party is a carbon copy of Congress. They ruined Delhi and are playing with the lives of youths. During the COVID-19 pandemic, they were messing with the public and spreading chaos. Neither Congress nor the Aam Aadmi Party, only the Bharatiya Janata Party will support you."

Yogi was seeking votes in favour of BJP candidates in three constituencies -- Dwarka, Rapar and Dhrangadhra.

Campaigning in the devbhumi Dwarka, Yogi said, "Lord Krishna was born 5,000 years ago in Mathura of Uttar Pradesh. Mathura, Vrindavan and Barsana are blessed by his childhood pastimes. We made those areas places of pilgrimage. When Lord Krishna came to Dwarka while killing the demons, the public here made him Dwarkadhish -- the King of Dwarka."

Stating that Gujarat was the land of inspiration, Yogi said, "The land of Gujarat gives leadership in times of crisis. For the first time, a prime minister visited Ram Lalla in Ayodhya and took up the work of building the Ram temple."

"The construction of Ram mandir in Ayodhya is pro-

...holds massive road show in Surat

SURAT/LUCKNOW: The people of Surat greeted Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with chants of 'Yogi-Yogi' as he held a road show in support of Bharatiya Janata Party candidate from Varachha Road assembly constituency on Wednesday evening.

During the road show, he also paid floral tributes to the statue of Iron Man Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. Yogi Adityanath first offered prayers at Umiya Mata temple, the clan-deity or kuldevi of the Patidars community. It is worth mentioning that Patidars constitute 14 per cent of Gujarat voters and they play a decisive role in elections in 70 assembly constituencies of the state.

People holding the BJP's saffron flags shouted 'Jai Shri Ram', 'Yogi-Yogi', and 'Baba' during the entire road show, which began at around 7 o'clock in the evening amid tight security.

Yogi Adityanath was also showered with petals by his supporters.

Throughout the road show, crowds gathered on the



pavement and flyovers to greet Yogi Adityanath, who waved at them and accepted their greetings with a smile.

In order to greet the UP chief minister, the highly responsive crowd stood on bulldozers.

gressing fast. This temple will be a 'national temple' by the end of 2023, when Ram Lalla will be enthroned there."

"In Gujarat, a lot of development work is being done. Every development building in this area has Narendra Bhai's (prime minister's) name on it. He is concerned about Gujarat. So, to increase the pace of development, vote for BJP," he added. Highlighting the devel-

opment made by the country under the able leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Yogi said, "India has defeated the United Kingdom which ruled it for 200 years to become the fifth largest economy of the world and is leading G 20 group of 20 most powerful nations that control 80 per cent resources of the world."

Yogi further said, "During

the COVID-19 pandemic, India provided free tests, treatment and vaccines in addition to free ration to 80 crore people. If there had been a government led by the Congress, none of this would have occurred."

Taking a jibe at Congress, Yogi said, "Out of 403 seats in Uttar Pradesh assembly, Congress has won only two seats. Even when a person

dies, at least four people are needed to carry him to the cremation ground."

Yogi Adityanath said that curfews, riots and hooliganism occurred whenever the Congress was in power. It is an inherited trait.

"When Narendra Modi was elected Gujarat's chief minister, all of these activities that had previously taken place ceased. Gujarat has been presenting the development model since then.

Warning people against Congress, Yogi Adityanath said that the grand old party should not be trusted. "The Congress objected when Sardar Patel decided to take on the responsibility of renovating the Somnath temple and when the BJP spoke out in favour of the Ram mandir project. Only the BJP respects the faith of people," Yogi said.

Yogi Adityanath also mentioned the tragic incident that had occurred in Morbi during the Dhrangadhra assembly. "Morbi has a history of overcoming difficulties again and again. Morbi tells a new story of liveliness. Prime Minister Modi expressed sympathy to the victim's family. The double-engine government extended support to these families."

He said that Gujarat was the land of national heroes, sages, and saints. "Leaders like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Dayanand Saraswati, and Father of Nation Mahatma Gandhi are from this land itself. Gujarat gave the nation Narendra Modi as the prime minister." He pointed out.

"Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh share a lot of similarities. Kanha and Lord Swami Narayan arrived here from UP," the UP chief minister remarked.

Tyagi: 'Saifai family' scared of losing Mainpuri LS seat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bharatiya Janata Party general secretary in-charge of Mainpuri Lok Sabha bypoll, Ashwani Tyagi, on Wednesday claimed that for the first time the entire Saifai family has been forced to knock on the doors of voters due to the fear of losing the seat.

Attacking SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's tenure as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, Tyagi said that the state was converted into a large industry of kidnapping, abduction, corruption, extortion and land-grabbing and the future of the young generation was spoiled.

The bypoll to the Mainpuri seat, which fell vacant following the death of SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav, is slated for December 5.

Late Mulayam Singh Yadav's daughter-in-law Dimple Yadav has been fielded by the SP and the BJP has made Raghuraj Shakya its nominee for the seat which is considered to be the stronghold of the SP. Saifai is the native

village of Mulayam Singh Yadav in Etawah district which is also part of the Mainpuri parliamentary constituency.

Tyagi, who along with UP Tourism and Culture Minister Jaivir Singh is camping in Mainpuri to manage and supervise the election, said it was for the first time in political history that the entire Saifai family was doing door-to-door campaigning. Tyagi said Yogi Adityanath's government had dealt with the criminals with an iron hand and had ensured honour and safety to all citizens across the state without discrimination of caste, class, or religion.

The safety of women was a big issue during the previous regimes as incidents of gang-rape with minor girls and women were common, Tyagi said.

He said the BJP government gave special attention to the safety of women and now they felt safe to move around during late night hours. "Girls go to schools in a secure atmosphere and now their parents

never worry about their safe return," he added.

Tyagi also claimed that the BJP governments at the Centre and in the state headed by Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath respectively had given several schemes and programmes for the uplift of economic and social lives of the poor and the downtrodden. "To ensure all-round development, the state government led by Yogi Adityanath has floated plans to achieve the ambitious one-trillion-dollar economy by setting up big industries," he pointed out.

The BJP leader claimed that since law and order in the state had become a model for other states to follow, big industrial houses now preferred Uttar Pradesh as a safe destination to set up their industries and this would also create employment avenues for the young generation. He said with the initiative of the chief minister, big foreign industrialists now preferred UP as a safe place to invest to set up and promote their industries in the state.

Power employees, engineers hold rally in Delhi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Thousands of power employees and engineers from different states all over the country held a massive rally at Jantar Mantar in Delhi on Wednesday.

The call for the rally was given by the national coordination committee of electricity employees and engineers.

A resolution was passed in the rally against any unilateral attempt by the Union government to pass the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2022.

The resolution states that in case the Central government attempts to rush through the Bill unilaterally in Parliament then power employees and engineers across the country will go on strike, the responsibility of which will be

of the government.

Chairman of All India Power Engineers Federation (AIPFE), Shailendra Dubey, said that although the Lok Sabha had referred the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2022 to the Standing Committee on Energy, till date the standing committee had not held any discussions with power employees or electricity consumers who were the biggest stakeholders.

He said any unilateral action to get the Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2022 passed in Parliament without taking the electricity employees and engineers across the country into confidence would be strongly opposed and all 27 lakh electricity employees and engineers of the country would be forced to resort to nation-wide strike in protest against the move.

With an eye on civic body polls, Maya targets rivals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With notification for the urban local bodies' polls expected anytime in the next month, Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Wednesday, targeted the rival parties, saying that her regime was the best in Uttar Pradesh in comparison to any other party, including the governments led by Bharatiya Janata Party, Samajwadi Party and Congress.

"Employment was given to the people during my regime and new pucca houses with basic facilities and land were also allotted free of cost to lakhs of families. Everyone saw the life of the poor being blessed during BSP regimes, but the same thing did not happen in the governments led by SP and BJP," she tweeted on Wednesday while making a direct attack on the BJP government a day after Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath announced plans to invite investment in Uttar Pradesh.

Mayawati said such efforts should not just be limited to



acquiring land or serving electoral interests but must be converted into speedy progress of the state.

Addressing a curtain-raiser ahead of the Uttar Pradesh Global Investors' Summit 2023 in New Delhi on Tuesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said his government planned to organise roadshows in 18 countries and seven major cities of

India to invite investors to the summit. He said the state had set a target of attracting investments of Rs 10 lakh crore through the event, which would be held in Lucknow from February 10 to 12 next year.

Attacking BJP over its claims, Mayawati said, "Continuous efforts of the government for domestic and for-

"EMPLOYMENT WAS GIVEN TO THE PEOPLE DURING MY REGIME AND NEW PUCCA HOUSES WITH BASIC FACILITIES AND LAND WERE ALSO ALLOTTED FREE OF COST TO LAKHS OF FAMILIES. EVERYONE SAW THE LIFE OF THE POOR BEING BLESSED DURING BSP REGIMES, BUT THE SAME THING DID NOT HAPPEN IN THE GOVERNMENTS LED BY SP AND BJP"

ign capital investment in UP are necessary, but they should not be limited to acquisition of agricultural land and serving political and electoral interests. People should also see speedy progress under the double-engine government in a backward state of the very poor like UP."

Mayawati recalled how the BSP government had provided employment and free 'pucca' houses to the poor. "But the same kind of progress was not seen under the erstwhile

Samajwadi Party government or the BJP government," she said.

"Whatever work was done by the BSP government for the overall progress and development of Uttar Pradesh and for the safety and self-respect of the state's people was done on its own," Mayawati said, and added, "Ganga Expressway and Jewar airport would also have been built along with the Yamuna Expressway had the Congress-led government at the Centre cooperated a little."

Body of missing BDC member's wife found

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a suspected case of rape and murder, Mirzapur police recovered the semi-nude body of block development committee (BDC) member's wife lying on the banks of river Harrai in the district.

The incident sent shockwaves in the district. The local police sent the body for autopsy and started investigations. The BDC member expressed apprehension of the possibility of rape before murder and lodged a report against unknown persons.

"The body has been sent for autopsy. Prima facie it appears the victim was raped before being murdered. She was missing for the past three days," police officials said on Wednesday.

The woman had gone to her parents' house to attend a function last Sunday. Her whereabouts were not known since Monday morning when she left the place to catch a bus for her husband's house. The kin of the victim had lodged a missing report at the Vindhyachal police station. On Tuesday evening, some woodcutters spotted the body lying on the banks of river Harrai, and alerted the police.

After getting information about the body, Kotwali's rural police station in-charge Vipin Singh along with his team rushed to the spot for investigation. The body was sent for autopsy. The mangalsutra and the cell phone of the victim were found missing.

"We are probing the case from all angles. The

body has been sent for autopsy. The cause of death will be known after the post-mortem examination," Singh said.

Meanwhile, panic gripped rural Bulandshahr after the body of a 12-year-old girl, who was kidnapped from Ghaziabad, was found in the district, police said on Wednesday.

The body was found after the arrest of the accused involved in the girl's abduction. The victim, identified as Khushi (12), was allegedly abducted by unidentified people from Nandigram police station limits three days ago. Her family had received a call from the unidentified kidnappers who demanded a ransom for the girl's release.

Sonu, the girl's father, told the police that he received the ransom call on Sunday, after which he approached the police and lodged a report. He said the accused demanded Rs 30 lakh within three days for the safe release of the girl.

After registering the report, the police started investigation and detained three persons, including a neighbour with whom the victim was with her grandparents in Ghaziabad. During questioning, the suspects revealed the sequence of events leading to kidnapping and where they dumped the body after killing the girl.

On the basis of the information, the police recovered the body from a farm in Sarai Chhabila village area in the limits of Kotwali (Dehat) police of Bulandshahr on Tuesday. The body was sent for post- and the police were making investigations.

Constable kills wife, makes attempt to end his own life

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Due to family feud in Etawah district, a constable shot his wife dead and then shot himself to commit suicide.

The constable was admitted to Saifai Post-Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences' hospital in a critical condition.

The Friends Colony circle officer reached the spot as soon as he was informed about the incident. The police recovered a pistol from the spot. Constable Brajesh Kumar Yadav (52), a resident of Om Puram Colony under Friends Colony police station, is a driver in Dial 112 at Ervakatra police station in Auraiya. He came home after finishing his shift on Tuesday morning.

The constable's son Vikas said that there was a dispute between his mother Urmila (50) and father in the afternoon over some domestic issue and soon after that he heard gunshots and went inside and found his mother and father lying on the ground in pools of blood. Urmila was dead.

On getting information, Friends Colony police station chief Vivek Kumar, CO Sadar Amit Kumar Singh and forensic team reached the spot. Brajesh was sent to the district hospital in critical condition from where the doctors referred him to Saifai PGI. Urmila's body was sent for post-mortem. The police said the incident took place over some domestic dispute.

Further investigations are on.

Meanwhile, two labourers involved in house construction died of electrocution and three of their colleagues sustained critical injuries, police said on Wednesday. The incident took place in Kirari village under Farah police station. The five men were constructing pillars of the house and the iron bar they were setting touched a high tension wire, leading to their electrocution, the police said.

The deceased were identified as Surendra (50) and Yadram (35). Three others, Arjun, Mukesh and Mahavir, were also electrocuted and are undergoing treatment. A case was registered in this regard.



Deputy CM Brajesh Pathak and Mayor Sankyukta Bhatia greeting Vice President Jaideep Dhankhar at Amausi airport on Wednesday

Pioneer

Uttar Pradesh to implement Indore SWM model in cities

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To ensure cleaner, greener and planned cities in Uttar Pradesh, the Yogi Adityanath government will implement the solid waste management (SWM) model of Indore in the urban bodies of the state.

For a comprehensive

review of the cleanliness model of Indore, considered the cleanest city in the country, a team of Uttar Pradesh assessed the city's strategy last Saturday and Sunday. During its two-day visit, the team also visited Asia's largest bio CNG plant located at Trenching Ground.

About 13 representatives of the urban bodies of places like Mathura-Vrindavan, Jhansi, Aligarh, Saharanpur, Bareilly, Farrukhabad, Kushinagar, Ikdil Nagar, Moradabad, Gorakhpur, including Swachh Bharat Mission Director in Uttar Pradesh, Neha Sharma, went

on the visit.

The team on Saturday observed the bio CNG plant. On Sunday, the team members visited the control command centre. During the visit, a presentation on the initiatives taken for cleanliness in the last six years was made.

The officials of Uttar

Pradesh were informed about the spot fine and garbage collection charges in the Indore city.

Moreover, Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra also visited the bio CNG plant located at the Trenching Ground on Sunday. During his two-hour visit, he understood

the functioning of the plant.

There are plans to prepare bio CNG plants from 300 tonnes to 400 tonnes of wet waste through the municipal bodies in the cities of Uttar Pradesh.

The chief secretary also visited Gopal Mandir located near Rajwada. Along with the

chief secretary, National Green Tribunal (NGT) Chairperson Adarsh Goyal and two other members also visited the bio CNG plant.

Team Uttar Pradesh studied the various aspects of cleanliness of Indore very deeply in the field, held discussions with the people and

understood the functioning closely.

The chief secretary also expressed gratitude to the district magistrate and municipal commissioner of Indore for conducting the tour of the bio CNG plant and for explaining the functioning of the Indore city cleanliness model.

Gang of thieves busted

PNS ■ KANPUR

The Naubasta police busted a gang of thieves and arrested five persons, including the kingpin, who confessed their involvement in many thefts in the recent past. Police also recovered the goods stolen in thefts committed in Naubasta, Hanumant Vihar, Barra and Rania. Addressing mediapersons, ADCP (South) Ankita Sharma said the accused were identified as kingpin Dharmendra Kashyap of Bhangaha, Hazoorpur (Bahraich), Paramvir Verma of

Payagpur Imaliya, Narendra Verma of Hazipur, Kesharganj, Sunil Kumar alias Mohit of Machhiyahi, Payagpur and Vishal Kumar of Machhiyahi, Chilwaria (Bahraich). She said Dharmendra was arrested with accomplices in a theft case in Lucknow. He had confessed his involvement in theft in the court. After completing his imprisonment he was released from jail three months ago and had again formed a gang with new accomplices. Thereafter, he started committing thefts in Kanpur and Kanpur Dehat areas. She said

gang members identified the shops to be targeted during the day in guise of customers and committed theft at night. Police recovered 1,415 coins of Rs 10, 1,163 coins of Rs 5, 18 mobile phones, five blue tooth, five data cable etc from them. She had announced a cash reward of Rs 10,000 to the police team which busted the gang. She said all the accused were notorious criminals and have been found involved in many cases lodged against them in various police stations of Lucknow, Bahraich, Kanpur and Kanpur Dehat in the past.



The Naubasta police busted a gang of thieves and recovered stolen goods

Lawyers demand early implementation of gazette notification

PNS ■ KANPUR

Dozens of lawyers led under the banners of The Lawyers Association and Bilhaur-Ghatampur Sangharsh Samiti have demanded early implementation of gazette notification about bringing back the judiciary of Bilhaur and Ghatampur tehsils to city courts. They handed over a memorandum, addressed to Chief Minister, to ACM (II) Ramanuj Singh, representative of district magistrate on Wednesday. The event was organised to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the Sangharsh Samiti. President of The Lawyers Association and convener of Sangharsh Samiti Pt Ravindra Sharma said on the recommendation of the state government, governor had issued the gazette notification on June 14, 2019

merging the judiciary of Bilhaur and Ghatampur tehsils in city courts. Since then despite several reminders and persuasion at the level of relevant authorities the implementation of the gazette notification was still awaited. This poses a great problem to victims and the counsel during journey of about 140 kms daily to pursue their cases. After receiving the memorandum ACM (II) said it would be sent to the chief minister for necessary action. Gurmeet Singh, Anoop Shukla, Viprav Tripathi, SK Sachan, Anil Dixit, Vijay Sagar, Ashwani Anand, Satish Tripathi, Mohd Tauhid, Sanjiv Kapoor, Shivam Gangwar, Suja Abbas, Rakesh Siddharth, Javed Ahmad, Mohit Shukla, Ankit Sharma, Nitin Pandey, Indresh Mishra, Sarabjit Singh and Shubham Joshi were present.

Properties of defaulters attached

PNS ■ KANPUR

Deputy Zonal Manager of Bank of India JC Mishra in an official statement issued on Wednesday informed that under the directives of CMM, Kanpur the Panki police attached the properties of the defaulters and vacated the premises and handed over to the bank. The defaulters Pankaj Goswami, Manoj Goswami, Brajesh Goswami and Rajesh Goswami had taken a loan of Rs 67 lakh from the BOI main branch in 2017. The properties were mortgaged with property papers. The defaulters failed to pay instalments and their account in the bank was declared NPA in 2022. He said the case under SARFAE-SI Act was filed in the court of CMM and the case number was 4790/2021. The CMM court issued orders on October 10, 2022 and directed the Panki Police to ensure that the property was attached, the premises



The property of the defaulters was attached at Panki on Wednesday

vacated and the property handed over to the bank. The police team reached the venue and got the property attached and vacated and handed over the possession to the bank

officials who had gone along with the police team. The defaulters had put an appeal in the Allahabad High Court which was rejected. The premises was handed over to

JC Mishra. Others present on the spot of property attachment were BP Nabiyal, Amit Bajpai, Shekhar Singh, Abhishek Tiwari, Mrinal Mishra and several others.

DC inspects Revenue dept offices

PNS ■ KANPUR

Divisional Commissioner, Dr Raj Shekhar carried out an inspection of all the offices of the Revenue department and took a feedback of their working. He said as per government directive all divisional commissioners and district magistrates need to visit all departments and offices under Revenue department and its courts as part of winter session survey. He said during inspection of chief revenue accountant office records till November 15 this year details were found complete as per given target but on recovery front only 59 per cent had been recovered. He said it was found that details fed in the portal and recovery register were not matching. He directed all departments should ensure that data matched and they need to carry out recovery in an effective manner. He said a special software team was being referred so that fault can be located and reasons could also be identified and reports be put up within one month. He said during the inspection of IGRS portal out of total 63,321 issues put up on it only 60,546 had been settled. A total of 772 issues were in the defaulter category. DM Visakh G Iyer said major issues put on the portal were related to Kanpur Nagar Nigam and Kanpur Development Authority. He directed that issues should be settled qualitatively and on top priority.



Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar addressing a meeting at the Commissionerate

He said a kiosk machine had been installed for settling public complaints and this facility was being extended to people free of cost. He said under this one can feed the number and one's mobile number and can take a feedback on current status of complaint. He said it had been decided that this kiosk will be set up in every tehsil as well. He then inspected the multi-level parking being constructed in the Collectorate premises and directed that further momentum be given to work. He also set up a team to monitor quality

of work, its progress and put up its report. He directed the Revenue department officials to carry out a drive in December and ensure that there was no further encroachment. He said survey of gram samaj land also be carried out and a database be prepared. The Commissioner directed the DM to ensure that in issues related to pension and PF pending for the past six months payments be made at the earliest. He also directed the officials to check all the attendance registers of officials in charge.

'Road accidents the serious problem'

PNS ■ VARANASI

Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma, while addressing the students after inaugurating the workshop organised in collaboration with Welspun Foundation along with Muskaan Foundation for Road Safety at Government Queen's Inter College, Lahurabir here on Wednesday, said that it is a commendable work. In view of excessive road accidents in the state, this workshop is being organised so that safe behaviour on the road is inculcated

in the school children from the very beginning. Sharma said that road accidents are a serious problem, for this all the people walking on the road should follow the traffic rules so that the traffic system runs smoothly. He said that after training 30 teachers, they would be used as trainers in government and private schools in future so that more and more school children should be made aware about road safety. "The children will play an important role in making the society aware about road safety," he said.

Trustee of Muskaan Foundation for Road Safety, Dr Mridula Basim said that 30 teachers of 12 schools of the Education Department of Uttar Pradesh would be given training related to road safety. This programme will be for three days. Workshop partner Welspun Foundation for their CSR. Projects are currently being run with Muskan Foundation in Delhi, Bihar, and Haryana apart from UP. The stakeholder departments of road safety are along with education, police and transport departments.

Artistes from Tamil Nadu mesmerise audience

PNS ■ VARANASI

The artistes from Tamil Nadu mesmerised the audience during the month-long Kashi Tamil Sangamam at Amphi-theatre grounds in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Tuesday. The artistes from the Toda tribal community from the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu presented tribal songs and they concluded their performance with Vande Mataram. In the next episode, under the direction of R Sudhakar, the Tamil artistes performed Shiva Parvathi Leela through Kokalikattai on the stage enthraling the spectators with the presentation done through shehnai, dhol and dance. Apart from this, Bharatanatyam was performed on Natya Manjari under the

direction of Balagurunathan, as well as Pambai Vathiyam by G Manikandan's team. The end of the programme, R Ganesan worshipped Lord Shiva through Tamil folk songs. Prior to this in the cultural presentations, the students of Nivedita School (Varanasi) under the direction of Sujata Gupta, presented Kajri song 'Piya Mehndi Manga The Motiheel Se' and other folk songs. In the beginning, the chief guest of the cultural evening was Dr Jayanthi S Ravi (IAS), Secretary, Auroville Foundation, Puducherry, who said that the Kashi Tamil Sangamam is acting as a bridge between the cultures of the North and the South. In her address in Hindi and Tamil languages, she thanked 'Mahamana Ki Bagiya' BHU



Artistes presenting a cultural programme at Kashi Tamil Sangamam in Varanasi on Tuesday.

and said that BHU is doing a great job of organising the confluence of these two great cultures. Besides, the exhibition organised by the Central Bureau of Communications, Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting at the Amphitheatre grounds of Banaras Hindu University

SP workers take out padyatra

Varanasi (PNS): The workers of Samajwadi Party (SP) took out 'Desh Bachao, Desh Banao' (Save the country, make the country) padyatra from Rathayatra to BHU Main Gate here on Wednesday in protest against the anti-people policies of the government. The objective of the march was to create awareness among the public towards prevailing civic problems. Under the leadership of party's candidate from Varanasi Cantt assembly constituency in last Vidhan Sabha polls Pooja Yadav, the

SP workers took out the march from Rathayatra crossing around 11 am. District party president Sujit Yadav Lakkad, city chief Vishnu Sharma and Cantt assembly unit president Dilip Kashyap jointly flagged off the march. The SP workers were welcomed at many places. After passing through Gurubagh, Kamakhya, Bheulpur, Sonarpur crossing, Shivala, Bhadaini, Assi and Lanka, it ended by garlanding the statue of Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya located at BHU's Main Gate (Singh Dwar). Meanwhile, according to information, the academic session will start at 10 am on November 25 at Amphitheatre grounds in which the Governor of Telangana and Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry Dr T Soundararajan will be the chief guest. The topic of this session is 'Inspirations from Mahakavi Subramania Bharti and His Kashi Connect'.

Swimming championship: 13 Knp swimmers selected

PNS ■ KANPUR

As many as 13 swimmers of Kanpur have been selected to participate in the 18th National Master Swimming (Women/Men) Championship to be held in Ambala (Haryana) from November 25 to 27. They were included in the 36-member team selected from Uttar Pradesh. Honorary Secretary of Kanpur District Swimming Association Prakash Awasthi said Saroj Jain, wife of late Padam Kumar Jain of SPFL Group has sponsored a T-shirt for all team members. Former corporator of Shuklaganj Radha Krishna Gupta extended his greetings for the success of city swimmers. TEAM: Prakash Awasthi (70-74 years age group), Ranjana Saffad (60-64), Manoj



Kanpur swimmers selected to participate in National Master Swimming Championship.

Bakshi (60-64), Pankaj Jain (50-54), Pranay Dwivedi (50-54), Vikas Awasthi (40-44), Rajesh Kumar (40-44),

Anubhav Misra (35-39), Krishna Raj Chaturvedi (35-39), Monu Nishad (Nagar Nigam) (30-34), Saurabh

Bhardwaj (Allen House (30-34), Panki); Jyotsna Mishra and Avika Bakshi (Allen House, Khalasi Lines) (25-29).

Students told about adolescence

PNS ■ KANPUR

Chief Superintendent, CHC, Bhitargaon, Dr Manish Tiwari while addressing students on "Adolescence, changes and impact" at Gulabrani Inter College on Wednesday said period of adolescence began with onset of puberty during which certain hormones got activated. He said it was an increase in secretion of sex hormones (testosterone in males, estrogen and progesterone in females). He said puberty merged into adolescence at around 10 years of age and adolescence generally lasted till 19 years of age. He said during the phase significant physical and psychological

changes take place. He said there were two unique features of adolescence the spurt in physical growth when a physical appearance of an individual gradually became different. He said this was due to rapid acceleration in growth of skeletal tissue (bones and cartilage) and muscular and glandular tissue. He said breasts begin to develop in girls due to release of estrogen hormone and changes in voice was quite noticeable among boys. He said this was a time period between onset of puberty and adulthood. He said under the influence of growth hormone body size increased and sex hormones stimulated growth and

maturity of gonads. He said in males, testes grow in size and start producing sperms. He said in females eggs or ova present in ovary since birth began to mature and there was an overall growth in body size. He said as sexual maturity progressed during adolescence hormones acted on growth centres of bones which were responsible for increase in length of bones. He said long bones, the vertebrae and limbs grow and adolescent gained height. He said limbs became stronger and heart, lungs and other internal organs also grew to match increase in body size. He said muscle mass underwent a spurt dur-

ing adolescence. Dr Tiwari said some teens exhibit additional behaviours that might concern parents and these could be warning signs of a more serious problem or mental illness. He said some indications were decreased enjoyment and time spent with family and friends, poor performance in school or resistance to attending school, significant problems with memory, attention or concentration, changes in energy levels, eating or sleep patterns, frequent physical complaints, substance abuse, dangerous and thrill-seeking behaviour and a few more. He advised parents to go for counselling and act with patience.

DRM conducts safety inspection

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In order to ensure protected rail transport, safety of passengers and proper management of passenger facilities by the railway administration keeping in mind the upcoming winter and foggy season, Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Ramashray Pandey, along with divisional officers, inspected Kaptanganj-Thawe railway section on Wednesday and the stations falling in this railway section including Padrauna, Laxmiganj and Ramkola.

The DRM first reached Kaptanganj in his inspection special train and then inspected Padrauna, Laxmiganj and Ramkola stations respectively. At Padrauna station, he also inspected the maintenance register of safety equipment, passenger waiting room, station panel, relay room key transfer register, block machine, station building, platforms etc and reviewed the progress of development works. He also listened to various demands related to rail transport of regional businessmen and assured them to consider their reasonable demands. According to him, improvement of the approach road and beautification of the circulating area would be done



DRM Ramashray Pandey inspecting in Varanasi Division area of NER on Wednesday.

Pioneer

by the municipality soon as NOC has already been given to the latter.

Pandey also inspected Laxmiganj, Ramkola, Badharaganj, Kathkuiyan, Dudhai and Tamkuhi Road stations and inspected the safety equipment and other facilities available there. He directed the concerned officers to speed up the construction work relating to increase of the length of platform according to 24 coaches and foot over bridges. Along with this, dis-

cussions were held with the management of Triveni Sugar Mill and United Provinces Sugar Mill of Tamkuhi Road station located at Ramkola station on maximum freight traffic by Railways. During the meeting, the DRM highlighted the facilities being provided by the Railways in this regard.

He was accompanied by ADRM (Administration) Rahul Srivastava, Senior Divisional Commercial Manager Sanjeev Sharma, Senior Divisional Engineer-II

Satyam Singh, Senior Divisional Operations Manager AP Singh, Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (C&W) SP Srivastava, Senior Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer-II Yashveer Singh, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Traction) RN Singh, Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (Operation) Anil Srivastava, Senior Divisional Safety Officer Ashutosh Shukla, Divisional Electrical Engineer Ramdayal, Public Relations Officer Ashok Kumar and many others.

Tributes paid to serial blast victims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Local advocates paid floral tributes to their three colleagues who lost their lives during the serial bomb blasts that took place in District Court premises on November 23 in 2007. On the occasion of 15th anniversary of the serial bomb blasts, they paid floral tributes to the photographs of advocates Bholanath Singh, Brahm Prakash Sharma and Buddhiraj Patel. At the blast site, they lit candles and prayed for the rest in peace of the souls of all the blast victims.

Former UP Bar Council chairman and current member Harishankar Singh, Banaras Bar Association president Dharendra Sharma, general secretary Ratneshwar Pandey, Central Bar Association chief Mohan Yadav, general secretary Ashwani, Nityanand Rai, Vivek Singh, Nripendra Singh Nanhe, Mithilesh Kushwaha, Satish Singh Yadav, Pratima Pandey, Shakuntala Srivastava, Savita Yadav and many others were present on the occasion. At the end of the condolence meeting, two-minute silence was observed for the peace of the departed souls.

There were a serial bomb



Advocates paying tributes to colleagues killed in serial bomb blast in 2007 in Varanasi on Wednesday.

Pioneer

blasts in both the District Court and Collectorate premises in 2007 in which nine people including three lawyers were killed and 50 were injured. The then Mayawati government appointed Anti-Terrorist Squad (ATS) to investigate the matter. According to the participants after the blast, the gov-

ernment had made tall claims of security but nothing was done in this direction as on April 23 in 2016 there was a recovery of live bomb and on February 21 in 2018 anti-social elements put two bombs at CGM gate in the court.

Meanwhile, ex-BBA general secretary Nityanand Rai has

sent letters to the President, Chief Justice of India, Prime Minister, Union Home Minister, Chief Minister and Chief Justice of UP High Court and demanded a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) inquiry into the security lapses in court premises and action against the guilty persons.

IIT (BHU) teacher gets award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Coordinator of School of Biomedical Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University), Dr Sanjeev Kumar Mahto has been honoured with Dr Arthur Saravanamuthu Thambiah Award by the National Academy of Medical Sciences (NAMS) for the year 2022 in recognition of his research paper. The award carries a scroll, a commemorative medal and a cash incentive. The award was conferred by the chief guest and Speaker of Lok Sabha Om Birla and President of NAMS Padma Bhushan Prof Shiv Kumar Sarin in the convocation ceremony held during the 62nd Annual Conference of NAMS (India) at Sawai Man Singh Medical College, Jaipur recently.

This prestigious award is a result of hard work of the research scholars (led by Neelima Varsheny) working in the Tissue Engineering and Biomicrofluidics Laboratory of the School of Biomedical Engineering, IIT (BHU). In this work, Dr Mahto and his team have prepared polyvinyl alcohol (PVA) and soy protein isolate (SPI)-based scaffolds by physical cross-linking using the freeze-thaw method. The outcomes reveal that PVA/SPI hydrogels can be an ideal candidate for skin tissue engineering, especially for the skin wound dressing material. The in vivo full thickness wound healing assay in rat models supported the potency of PVA/SPI hydrogels as a wound dressing material.

Dr Mahto has also been awarded with membership of



IIT (BHU) teacher Dr SK Mahto being honoured by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla in Jaipur recently.

the NAMS on this occasion. The award of NAMS membership is an honour bestowed upon him as an acknowledgement of his academic excellence and professional achievements. IIT (BHU) Director Prof Pramod Kumar Jain congratulated him for the achievement.

FIR LODGED AGAINST PVT HOSPITAL: Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary has ordered for immediate closure of a private hospital and filing a police case against the same. The private hospital was running without registration and without a doctor in Chhittupur area under Lanka police station. During inspection, the health team was surprised as the name of a doctor mentioned on the display board of

the hospital had died six months back but still the patients were being admitted there for treatment.

In view of the seriousness of the matter, the CMO has given instructions to close the said hospital as well as to file a case against its operator.

According to the CMO, a woman resident of village Chhittupur under Kashi Vidyapeeth block had complained against the same private hospital recently. Responding to the complaint, a surprise inspection was conducted and it was found in the inspection that the hospital was being run without registration and without a doctor. One person was present there during the inspection. On enquiry, it was found that the name of a doctor mentioned on the display

board had died six months ago. This made it clear that the name of the deceased doctor was being misused by the hospital.

During the inspection, two patients were found admitted there and both of them were asked to get treatment elsewhere.

The CMO said that in view of medical work being done without registration and without a doctor, instructions have been given to stop the operation of said hospital with immediate effect.

Along with this, a complaint has been filed in Lanka police station for registering an FIR under the relevant sections regarding medical establishment being run/ medical work being done without registration.

Atique's properties worth ₹128 crore attached

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Giving a severe jolt to mafia don Atique Ahmad, his properties worth ₹128 crore were attached on Wednesday under Gangster Act. Properties of Atique Ahmad worth ₹1630 have so far been attached by the police on the orders of the district magistrate.

The most valuable landed property attached on Wednesday in Havelia Jhuni was in the name of Atique's father Haji Feroz Ahmad. Officials said that Atique had used muscle power to grab this huge plot of land on Prayagraj-Varanasi highway, and had registered the same in the name of his father.

The other landed property was situated in Kasari Masari area and it was in Atique's name.

In Jhuni Atique possessed 13 bigha of land which was owned in 2006-07 by his father. The police said that this property was owned by Atique by using muscle power and money earned through criminal means. It was worth Rs 113 crore.

The police have informed the district administration that in Jhuni there were two plots of 1.826 hectare and 1.1300 hectare, while the Kasari Masari plot was of 0.1320 hectare

This property attachment was done by the Dhoomanganj police against mafia don

Atique Ahmad, gang leader of IS 227 gang and history sheeter criminal, son of Haji Feroz Ahmad of 52 Kasari Masari and 95 Chakia under Khuldabad police station of Prayagraj.

STUDENTS INJURED IN BUS ACCIDENT: College bus of United Group college bus met with an accident after it was pelted with stones. Some of the students sustained injuries while the others were taken to the Institute by other buses.

On Wednesday morning a bus of United Group was moving towards the Institute from New Yamuna Bridge side. Suddenly near Sargam tri-junction in Naini a bus collided with a car while trying to

overtake it.

The car rider lost temper and started pelting stones on the bus after a minor altercation, damaging the windscreen of the bus.

To save the life of the students, the driver sped faster from the scene in a haste, and near Chheoki turn, he ran over a bus on a divider and then dashed against an electric pole.

Though the impact was not very serious, some students sustained injuries and they were rushed to a nearby hospital. Other students were taken to the institute by other buses of the group. Crane was called to remove the bus from the road to clear the traffic jam.

UP ATS arrests wanted fake currency smuggler from Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

UP ATS on Tuesday arrested the king pin of international fake currency note racket Deepak Mandal in Shahganj area of the city with fake Indian currency worth Rs 1 lakh. Police had announced a reward of ₹ 25,000 on his head.

Two members of this gang had been nabbed last week in Prayagraj itself while they were trying to push the money in the market after procuring the same from Deepak Mandal

who used to bring the fake currency consignments from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

Arrested Deepak Mandal is a resident of Vaishnav Nagar, Malda in West Bengal. He used to push fake currency in different states of India. He told the police during interrogation that he was involved in this unlawful act for the past 14 years. Deepak used to hand over fake currency of ₹1 lakh for ₹ 40,000.

He had once been arrested by the STF in 2013 in Prayagraj,

but after his release he started the same business, and was caught by the Special Cell of Delhi Police in 2018 with fake currency worth ₹7.5 lakh, and he kept on continuing after his release.

When two members of his gang had been arrested in Prayagraj last week and they revealed the name of Deepak Mandal, the police had raided his hideouts in Malda, but he had left the place and had taken shelter in Thiruvananthapuram in

Kerala, and then he had come here to hand over a consignment here in Shahganj.

The police termed this arrest as a big catch and said that rest of the members of this gang would soon be sent behind the bars.

Days spent by Deepak in jail, came as an opportunity for him, as he groomed criminals and lured them to join this fake currency racket to earn fast money. Persons arrested in Prayagraj last week, had also met him in jail.

NCR GM holds review meeting

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

North Central Railway General Manager Satish Kumar launched Incident Investigation Reporting and Asset Monitoring Portals during weekly safety and punctuality review meetings at NCR Headquarters.

The meeting was attended by all Principal Heads of Departments at North Central Railway Headquarters and Divisional Railway Manager, Prayagraj, Divisional Railway Manager, Jhansi and Additional Divisional Railway Manager, Agra along with senior officers of the division through video conference.

Incident Investigation Reporting Portal has been developed for uploading incident investigation reports. In this, users can upload investigation reports of cases. This can be seen by all the departments and immediate corrective action can be taken by the concerned officers.

Asset Monitoring Portal is designed/developed for real time monitoring of various assets (LC, ROB, RUB, Goods



Shed). Many times complaints or problems regarding various assets come to notice or deficiencies are also detected in the inspection of officers etc. Now photographs of these assets can be uploaded on the portal for viewing by all concerned as and when required. Through this, immediate cor-

rective action can be taken on receipt of information in the form of photo on real time basis about any asset by the concerned officer/department and information about improvement will also be available after the photo of the work done after the work is uploaded. Through this, the

General Manager expressed that these portals will be of great help in security and better maintenance of railway assets.

Various safety and punctuality issues along with infrastructure strengthening works were discussed during the meeting.

Shami takes charge as NCR Principal Chief Material Manager

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Pratap Singh Shami has assumed charge as the new Principal Chief Material Manager of North Central Railway. He succeeded the retiring Principal Chief Material Manager, Kamlesh Shukla. Earlier, Pratap Singh Shami, was holding the same post in Eastern Railway, Kolkata.

Shami did his Bachelor in Civil Engineering from Aligarh Muslim University and M.Tech. from I.I.T. Delhi. He pursued M.B.A. in Operation and Production Management from Sikkim Manipal University in 2017.

He started railway service from Rail Coach Factory Kapurthala and discharged the tasks efficiently on various



important posts in South Eastern Railway/Kolkata, South East Central Railway/Bilaspur, Executive Director/Stores/R.D.S.O., Lucknow and as Divisional Rail Manager (Palghat Division of Southern Railway) from April 2018 to October 2020. His work during floods in Kerala in the years 2018 and 2019 was appreciated.

Body of missing woman found

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

REVIEWED: DIG (Police)

RP Singh while reviewing progress in investigations related to circles city of Mirzapur and Obra of Sonbhadra on Tuesday asked the cops to strengthen beat system with suggestions from reputed people like village pradhans to make policing as effective as possible. Taking pendency of investigation seriously he warned the officials that action could be taken for inordinate delay. He said laxity in disposal of cases related to Sampoorna Samadhan Diwas and Thana Samadhan Diwas will not be tolerated. He directed the officers to take cases of loot, theft and crime against women seriously. solve land disputes with help of revenue officials and continue vehicle

checking, patrolling, etc for effective policing.

ABHYUDAYA SCHEME: Under Abhyudaya Scheme run by Social Welfare department the district level meeting was presided over by Chief Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS at the meeting hall of Vikas Bhawan on Tuesday. Suggestions were sought from members to make coaching centre more useful. Social Welfare Officer Girish Chandra Dwivedi said for next year students will be selected through district level examinations. The meeting was attended by Project Director (PD) DRDA Anay Kumar Mishra, DIOS Amar Nath Singh, Chief Treasury Officer Archana Tripathi, BSA Gautam Prasad, principal KBPG College Dr

Ashok Singh, principal AS Jubilee Inter College Rajendra Tiwari and other officials concerned.

MEETING: A meeting under Mukhyamantri Krishak Durghatna Kalyan Yojana was held at Collectorate on Tuesday which was presided over by Additional District Magistrate (land revenue) Satya Prakash Singh. As many as 24 cases were brought for consideration to benefit victims out of which 15 were approved, four were sent for inquiry again and five were rejected. The meeting was attended by sub-divisional magistrate (SDM/ Sadar) Chandrabhanu Singh, SDM (Lalganj), SDM (Madihan) Ashwini Kumar Singh, tehsildar Chunar Nupur Singh and other officials concerned.



Neutrality needed

The SC has expressed its unhappiness over the appointment of CEC and other commissioners

The Supreme Court's remarks on the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and the specific reference of TN Seshan, the legendary CEC during 1990-96, are allusions to the widespread perception that the poll panel is being managed by the Government. The commission hasn't done much to dispel this perception. It is generally believed that it delayed the announcement of Assembly polls in Gujarat because Prime Minister Narendra Modi had to attend a few functions in the state, and its announcement would have forced their cancellation. Whatever may be the truth, it is undeniable that the apex court's remarks just fell short of calling the incumbent CEC and two commissioners unworthy of the offices they occupy. The five-judge Constitution Bench headed by Justice KM Joseph said that the "situation on the ground is alarming." The Bench included Justices Ajay Rastogi, Aniruddha Bose, Hrishikesh Roy, and CT Ravikumar. It said that the system should be such that the "best man" is selected as the CEC. It also slammed the Government for just paying "lip service" to the independence of Election Commissioners. The court told Attorney General R Venkataramani, "What is important is that we put a fairly good procedure so that apart from competence, someone of strong character is appointed as the CEC." The apex court was responding to four public interest litigations (PILs) urging it to issue directives to the Centre for setting up an impartial and independent selection panel to suggest names to the President for CEC and ECs.



On his part, Venkataramani said the situation has not become such that a judicial interference is required to regulate appointment of CEC and ECs. The court may intervene only if the aberrations in the selection are patently destructive of the independence of the commission or fundamental rights of citizens are impacted, he added. The Bench, however, was far from convinced. "You will have to take some steps," it said. It criticised the political class by saying that successive governments have "completely destroyed" the independence of the commission by ensuring no CEC got the full six-year term. Government supporters may grumble that such remarks are judicial overreach, but then it is the duty of the powers that be to ensure that Constitutional bodies like the EC are not only impartial but also appear to be impartial. If the commission is seen as favouring the party in power, it is the Government's duty to get rid of that impression. Elections are crucial for any democracy, and equally crucial is the neutrality of the people responsible for conducting elections. It is also in the interest of all politicians that institutions like the Election Commission remain neutral and independent. Power being a coquette, it flits around quicker than anyone can imagine. Those who are in power today may not be tomorrow; at that time, they bemoan the undermining of democratic institutions, as many Congress leaders do these days. The commission is one such institution.

PICTALK



Taj Mahal during sunset in Agra.

PTI

Election time Gujarat

The BJP is ignoring AAP and Kejriwal like they don't exist and focusing only on Congress

The Gujarat election is turning out to be quite exciting. The BJP sailed through 2017 even with its low performance though with slim margins. At that time only Congress was its only challenger and it was one to one fight. This time the entry of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has changed the election landscape. Interestingly enough the BJP is factoring in the presence of a third force, either deliberately or oblivious to its growing clout, especially in the cities. Though may not win as many seats as claimed by its leaders but would definitely make a difference especially where the winning margins would be narrow. Even the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has trained his guns on Congress saying it must not be considered a weak opponent, giving the impression that the fight is primarily between Congress and the BJP. AAP is does not figure in its scheme of things. The Prime Minister has served as Gujarat's chief minister for three terms, and knows the state and its people as back of his hand. He is harping upon the development and deliberately underplaying the emergence of Aam Aadmi Party. The prime minister understands that it is not easy this time in Gujarat given the long rule of the BJP in the state and not much to showcase in administration and development, more so after the Morbi bridge disaster so he is skillfully deflecting the attention to the congress misrule and playing victim card with ammunition generously provided by the Congress itself. He lashed out at Congress leader Madhusudan Mistry's recent "aukaat" jab and the old personal attacks on him, including "Maut ka saudagar" -- by



Sonia Gandhi -- and "neech aadmi" and "chaiwala" -- by Mani Shankar Aiyar. But then these are rather old and have been used successfully but will they work this time remains to be seen.

But it is rather surprising or an astute move to ignore AAP which has you like it or not emerged as a potent force especially in the cities, the stronghold of the BJP. The BJP is trying to focus on the south Gujarat which has 35 seats. The BJP returned to power in the 2017 election with support from South Gujarat and this is where AAP is also trying to make inroads. Interestingly Congress which the BJP says is its opponent is silent and rather late. AAP, however, has gone all out in south Gujarat. Will the BJP strategy work, we will know soon.

Putin's endgame begins with Kherson

Russia's Ukraine expedition hasn't gone the way Putin wanted it. With the fall of Kherson, it may not be long before Russian soldiers retreat



DEEPAK SINHA

On 30th September of this year, in defiance of International Law, President Putin in a public display of bravado signed treaties absorbing the four occupied regions of Ukraine into Russia; Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia. In his speech at the ceremony, broadcast live, he stated that the people of those Regions were "our citizens forever".

However, it has not quite turned out that way. Just four weeks later we witnessed a rather bizarre event, as General Sergei Surovikin, Commander of Russian Forces in Ukraine, reported on the ground situation in Kherson to General of the Army and Defence Minister, Sergei Shoigu on live TV. In this, he stated, "that it was impossible to supply the city of Kherson, and that its defense would be futile". He proposed a military retreat "in the near future" to the opposite bank of the Dnipro River. Shoigu agreed with his assessment and ordered him to "start with the withdrawal of troops and take all measures to ensure the safe transfer of personnel, weapons, and equipment across the Dnipro River."

Without a doubt, this televised event was staged for the domestic audience, especially the repeated emphasis on the saving of lives. Conscripted and the humongous casualties being suffered, one report suggests over a lakh killed and wounded, is not doing much for Putin's popularity. It may also have been an attempt by Putin, noticeably absent, to distance himself and blame the military. That would rattle the rank and file who are paying heavily for his initial miscalculations.

What is truly inexplicable, and militarily questionable, is for a division plus of elite Airborne Forces to abandon their positions without a fight. The adverse impact it must have had on their morale is not difficult to gauge. It is true that Kherson, located on the West Bank of the Dnipro River, has been cut off from Russian supply lines due to extensive damage to crossing



sites, but there are ways around that problem. Moreover, no people or government worth their salt, give up their own territory without a fight, especially if it is a vital communication hub. Just because we tend to do so, especially where the Chinese are concerned, does not make it a universal norm!

Defences in built-up areas, if properly organised and planned, can pose all kinds of problems for the attacker, from causing immense casualties to delay and disruption of plans, even allowing own forces to wrest the initiative. After all, Russia's legendary defence of Leningrad for 900 days against the German Army finally put paid for Hitler's ambitions and broke the back of Nazi Germany. More recently, the three months it took the Russians to finally capture Mariupol must have greatly impacted their overall plans and curtailed their ambitions.

There are some suggestions, laughable one may add, that pulling out these troops without getting embroiled in battle has not allowed Ukraine to claim victory. Others have suggested that this was done to make available highly trained forces to reinforce ongoing offensive

WHAT IS TRULY INEXPLICABLE, AND MILITARILY QUESTIONABLE, IS FOR A DIVISION PLUS OF ELITE AIRBORNE FORCES TO ABANDON THEIR POSITIONS WITHOUT A FIGHT

operations in the Donetsk Region. The latter seems unlikely as it would be at the cost of weakening the defensive perimeter, reportedly established east of the Dnipro River, guarding one of the major approaches leading into Crimea. There is absolutely no doubt that the loss of Crimea would be the death knell for the Putin Regime.

Then some suggest that while this has indeed been a tactical defeat, Russia is winning strategically. Protests within Western Europe against rising energy prices and inflation, because of the stoppage of Russian gas and oil supplies and sanctions against it, will result in increasing disunity within NATO and the EU. This, in turn, would adversely impact Ukraine as there would be a drastic reduction in the quantum of material and financial support being provided to it.

They are wrong on two counts. Firstly, Western Europe was staring down the barrel of Soviet guns for nearly fifty years following World War II. The feelings of vulnerability and fear have certainly not vanished overnight and the last thing they need is for Russia to sit on their doorstep once again. Such a

possibility would be sufficient motivation to ensure unity. Secondly, Putin's ambitious attempts at reinvigorating the Russian Empire, however unrealistic that may be, has scared off much of Eastern Europe that sees itself in his crosshairs and made it a fickle and untrustworthy neighbour and trading partner for the West. One that most would wish to avoid having dealings with in the future, especially with Putin there. A shift away from Russian energy supplies is almost a given.

Finally, one cannot help but ask the question as to why are we so keen to keep up relations with a receding power that can only hold us back. Of course, the chances are that the recent visit by the External Affairs Minister to Russia was not just about discussing our energy supplies but at the behest of the Americans who are keen to keep back channels open for dialogue with Russia. More so, since their influence and relationship with the Chinese are at quite a low point.

(The author, a military veteran, is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and a Senior Visiting Fellow with The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

ARMY IS READY TO TAKE POK

Sir — Glad to read that Northern Army Commander Lt General Upendra Dwivedi made a statement on Tuesday, November 22 that the Indian Army is ready to execute orders like taking back Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. He said as far as the Indian Army is concerned, it will carry out any order given by the Government of India. Whenever such orders are given, the army will always be ready for it.

The fact of the matter is that the military is always ready to make sure that ceasefire understanding is never broken as it is in the interest of both nations, but if broken at any time, the Indian army will give Pakistan a fitting reply, on the ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan. However, it is always the government which does not take a decision but keeps the pot boiling. It is about time that the government took a decision which would end the problem once and for all. In fact it would be in the best interest of the people of PoK that its uncertainty ends. With this, the Indian government must immediately give order to the Indian Army to take back PoK rather than being a mute spectator.

Bagwan Thadani | Mumbai

KERALA HC DOES THE RIGHT THING

Sir — The Kerala High Court has denied bail to a 31-year-old man who was charged under the POCSO Act for purportedly impregnating a 15-year old girl who he claims to be his wife. It is an explicit criminal offense where he abducted a minor girl from West Bengal and sexually assaulted her.

The main intent of the POCSO Act is to protect children's safety, and modesty and shield them from any kind of physical, psychological, and mental abuse and clearly states that a child is any individual below the age of 18 years. If this case was child sexual abuse on the cover of marriage, it should not be absolved as it ruins all forms of child rights. It is also terrible to hear that marriage is acting as

Koshyari has lost his hoshyari



It seems Maharashtra Governor Bhagat Singh Koshyari has lost his "hoshyari". The Maharashtra Governor is often making controversial statements that are hurting not only Maharashtrians but all Indians. Now his excellency Governor of Maharashtra state talked indiscriminately about Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Shivaji is not the only idol of Maharashtra and is not only known as a hero of Maharashtra but known as a hero across the country. Koshyari has said that Shivaji was an icon of "older days" and referred to Baba saheb Ambedkar and Union minister Nitin Gadkari as new "icons" of the country. Earlier Koshyari invited ire over a remark about reformist icon Savitri Bai Phule and also

said that Mumbai wouldn't be the country's financial capital if the Rajasthanis and Gujaratis communities were not in Mumbai. People in reputed positions should not talk loosely about the Great son of the soils. The person holding honourable positions should be cautious while speaking in public. The Governor of Maharashtra should understand that the ideals of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj never age and cannot be compared to any other great person in the world.

Another BJP leader Sudhanshu Trivedi has made a controversial statement that Shivaji has written five letters to Aurangzeb and apologized. BJP which is protesting Rahul Gandhi's controversial statements on Savarkar is maintaining a stoic silence on the comments made on Shivaji Maharaj by the Governor of Maharashtra and their parties spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi. BJP should spell out its stand on the comments made by his party men and the Governor of Maharashtra. The Governor of Maharashtra is constantly making statements that hurt the feelings of not only Maharashtrians but all Indians, and it is surprising why BJP is silent.

Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

a 'license' to indulge in these kinds of offences. Given the sharp increase in crimes against the children the government should take a serious note of this and come up with some concrete measures to curb this. Hence, we need more robust and unerring legislation to keep up with the pace of social crimes.

Ramala Divya | Hyderabad

A THRILLER OF A MATCH

Sir — It was a great thrill to watch the match between Argentina and Saudi Arabia in the FIFA World Cup tournament. Though Messi scored one goal within 10 minutes through a penalty and hoped to score many more, Saudi Arabia shattered his hopes by scoring two goals in less than ten minutes of the second half, much to the shock and disbelief of his team and everyone in the

football arena.

The last 30 minutes of the game was a fierce and terrific battle. Though Argentina strived hard and created many opportunities, it could not succeed, as the defence and goalkeeper of Saudi Arabia stood like a rock and effectively resisted every effort of the former. Nobody would have ever thought that Messi had to face such a crushing defeat, against Saudi Arabia, which is far behind in the FIFA ranking. While the game was a sumptuous feast for viewers all over the world, it will persist forever as a painful and shameful experience for Messi and his team, which remained unbeaten in the previous 36 matches.

TT Sarkaria | Delhi

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

Swami Vivekananda was the golden representative of India's youth potential and talent... his message is always relevant for society.



Vice president — Jagdeep Dhankhar

We must reiterate always that we stand with you in defence of rules and norms, (in the South China Sea).

US Vice President — Kamala Harris

It's not just that audiences have seen much more content during the pandemic, it's also the way production technology has changed.



Actor — Ajay Devgn

It's a very heavy blow, a defeat that hurts, but we must continue to have confidence in ourselves.

Argentina Soccer Player — Lionel Messi

The people of Gujarat expect much from Arvind Kejriwal and that will propel the Aam Aadmi Party to victory in the state.



AAP Gujarat leader — Gopal Italia

FIRST COLUMN

WHERE SPIRITUALISM AND TOURISM CO-EXIST

Rishikesh welcomes tourists and spirituality buffs alike



NIHARIKA NIGAM

Do you know a place where the concept of heaven and hell go hand in hand? Where sacred chants on the Ganga are on one side and adventure sports are on the other? This is where tourists gather from all across the globe to seek peace and mastery in the art of life. Yes, we are talking about the mystic land of Rishikesh. Known for thousands of years for its cultural significance and lush green mountains with therapeutic waterfalls, here you can jump, float, relax, meditate, enjoy an evening by the bonfire and enjoy a cup of chai in the arms of nature!

Did you know that the Lakshman Jhula has a historical significance from Ramayana? Placed on the mystic Ganga, standing here will leave you mesmerised by sacred chants and the serenity of the river. If you want solitude to post on your Instagram, this is the place! Just like Lakshman Jhula, there are many stunning spots in Rishikesh: Triveni Ghat, Neer Garh Waterfalls, caves, ashrams, temples, Yoga retreats and much more. Oh! And while you are wandering the streets, do not forget to explore the shopping hubs, Teesri Manzil Temple and exotic cafes.

Extreme adventure sports are one of the significant reasons to visit Rishikesh, making it the official adventure capital of India. Barring the monsoons from mid-august to mid-September, adventures go on throughout the year here. As rafting resumes, tourism floods back into Rishikesh, and if you are looking for something mind-bending and



oh-so-exhilarating, bungy jumping is what will have brought you to Rishikesh. It is at Rishikesh that Bungy jumping began in India 12 years ago. Jump amidst the glorious natural landscape of the hilly region to experience the real deal. This also happens to be India's highest bungy platform.

Along with outward adventures, you can visit one of the yoga retreats in Rishikesh. The holy city is a hub for yoga training and meditation centres. There is a thriving culture of Ashrams which offer a myriad of workshops and stay options to harmonise from within—a much needed reset from the bustling city life. Get a pair of active wear that you can practice breathing exercises and yoga postures in. And if you are planning for a long vacation like a month, you can take one of the yoga certification courses to delve into the experience in detail.

The spot is filled with innumerable cafes. The Beatles cafe, themed upon the famed Beatles band, known to have composed some of their best works in Rishikesh, is one of the most popular touristy ones but there are so many more. Overlooking the Ganges, or the mountains, they offer a sight to behold and delicious pahaadi khaana with trance music- and even live bands often! Most have the classic hippie touch and feel, while some are the small Maggi shops that everyone loves amidst the mountains. Do not forget to wake up early and catch the classic aloo puri available locally.

Even if you are in Rishikesh for just a few days, brace yourself and enjoy every moment you spend in Rishikesh. As one of the most unique places in India, it is truly a treasure trove. Take back a huge bag of memories enough to last a lifetime!

(The author is Director, Business Development at Jumpin Heights)

India can play big global role with G20 Presidency

In a polarised world, India will set the global agenda with 200 G20 meetings across the country



SHIVAJI SARKAR

India takes the first step to assume the G20 presidency for the next one year in a world that is increasingly becoming complex. Prime Minister Narendra Modi leads the presidency in a world that is becoming more difficult to communicate. It is not similar to the Non-Aligned Movement, which was a third world action of balancing between the two key powers – the US and Russia.

India has given a call to end the Ukrainian War and Russian President Vladimir Putin has lauded Indian diplomacy from being free from pressure. India plans to make the presidency a grand show of diplomatic business. It will host over 200 meetings, addressing 32 different

(The author is a policy analyst)

Unlock potential of MSMEs with schemes



DINESH KUMAR TYAGI

The MSME sector does not need more laws and regulation but handholding and government support to play a vital role in nation building

The importance of the MSME in the economic and social development of the country, especially for developing nations, has been established in various studies conducted by the international institutions. In India, the role of SME is proven by the fact that they contribute about 30 per cent of the GDP and 45 per cent of the total export. The MSME sector is the main source of providing employment opportunities in India – about 12 crore people are employed, thus playing a significant role in promoting equitable and inclusive growth.

The government mission of promoting startup culture in the country also hinges on the growth and development of the MSME sector, thereby, encouraging innovation and creativity among the youth and budding entrepreneurs. Despite the role MSME plays in socio-economic development, this sector is unable to perform up to the immense potential and talent of Indian entrepreneurs.

The challenges faced by the sector have been discussed many times by the academicians and government, which include non-availability of adequate credit, regulatory issues, skill development technology upgradation and marketing the products, beside procurement of raw materials. Non-realization of dues /bills timely for goods and services provided from large firms has also been a matter of major concern for the sector.

Another serious challenge has been the non-availability of reliable data about the MSME. Though there are reported to be more than 70 million MSME in the country, the registration on the government portal has been only 11 million of them.

The government policy has been to make it voluntary for registration and despite the simplification of the process and online system designed, the registration of MSME is very less at 15 per cent. Existing approach may need to be revisited to ensure every MSME register, which is the basis on which any support or policy initiative can be designed and made effective for addressing the sector's challenges.

Fortunately, the government initiative for labor registration through the Ministry of Labour and farmer registration by the Ministry of agriculture has been quite successful. More than 90 million farmers registered after the announcement of the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojna. These are all E-KYC authenticated and land details verified through land registration database.

Farmers' data is now very useful for the government to address some of their concerns. Even the Kisan Credit card scheme has a database of more than 50 million farmers. Thus, an appropriate incentive scheme, benefitting each one, can help and support the government in developing a reliable data base of the MSME sector. The other example is that of labour registration. The Ministry of

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THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR UTILISED THE NETWORK OF FIVE LAKH COMMON SERVICE CENTER WHO SUPPORTED IN ADVOCACY, MOBILISATION AND REGISTRATION OF MORE THAN 170 MILLION LABOURERS OUT OF TOTAL 283 MILLION REGISTERED SO FAR

(The author, an ex-IAS officer, is former CMD, Common Service Centre, IT Ministry)



Labour utilised the network of five lakh common service centres (CSCs) who supported in advocacy, mobilisation and registration of more than 170 million labourers out of 283 million registered so far. The registration exercise was taken as a mission and every agency of the government provided the desired support.

The incentive of Rs 20 provided by the Ministry to the CSCs for every registration played a significant role in this. Thus, the MSME Ministry needs to organize the registration on a war footing in a mission mode and utilize the CSC and postal department network with appropriate incentive. The MSME are generally apprehensive of the government regulation. The MSME units need to be locally supported in explaining the benefits of the registration.

In the case of MSME, some more incentive may be required to allay fears of government regulatory overreach. Universal Insurance scheme, similar to PM Fasal Bima Yojna can be one incentive. Beside every MSME shall be provided an MSME card like the Kisan credit card with three years cash credit limit (this will also help in addressing the liquidity issues). A digital identity for each MSME with a free domain name and a website can be other incentives.

The pension scheme designed for the MSME needs to be revisited and the limit of pension be enhanced to Rs 10,000 from the existing Rs 3000 (the existing scheme has been a non-starter for traders).

With such a comprehensive package and mission mode approach, all the MSME in the country can be registered on the Udyam Portal and sectoral intervention by the various Central Ministries and state governments can be designed and implemented effectively, more transparently and within a defined time frame. Once there is an API for account, PAN and e-KYC, a reliable database for the MSME in the country can be developed and made the stepping stone for sustainable growth and exploitation of sectors full potential in nation building.

The issues faced by the MSME are quite similar to the ones faced by farmers. The MSME contribution to the nation's GDP is also significant. The MSME provides employment to a large section of the population and addresses the unemployment issues. The criticality of MSME in nation development can in no way be underestimated as compared to agriculture. Why is the requirement of MSME not supported as comprehensively as in the case of the farmers? One reason is that the collective bargaining power of MSME is not as strong as that of the farmers due to diversity in the activity and spread. The trader's organization CAIT needs to play a more effective role in enabling the sector to get government support.

There is a need to appreciate the role being played by the MSME in the country and reexamine the policy intervention. The approach to resolve the issue of untimely or nonpayment of dues of the MSME units by large companies or government agencies by enforcing the provisions of "the interest on delayed payment to small scale and ancillary industrial undertakings Act 1998" has not been much relevant in Indian Context. Similar provision has been made in the MSMED Act 2006. Even the requirement to mention the outstanding of the MSME in the annual account of the companies has not been able to solve the liquidity issues of the MSME.

There is a need to relook at the Factoring Act and free the sector from regulations which are hindering the growth and evolution of this intermediary who can to a great extent address the issues of liquidity of the MSME sector. There is a need to relook at the stamp duty provision for assignment of the debt. Making factors more flexible and incentivising them may be desirable as they can be an effective tool to enable to a large extent meet the liquidity concern of the MSME. Even the approach of including lending to MSME under priority sector and fix limit has very limited impact in resolving the issues of credit access to this sector.

The MSME sector does not need more laws and regulation but handholding and support in India. The inherent ability and talent of Indians to set up and build sustainable enterprises is widely recognized. Regulation should not impinge on innovation, flexibility and capability of this vast pool of resources, who are mainly youth, especially in small and medium towns and rural India. With digital India Initiatives, the approach to the MSME sector needs to redefine both at the Central and state level

POINT COUNTERPOINT

THE 14 NATIONS SUPPORT THE NEED FOR THE COUNCIL TO CONDEMN NORTH KOREA'S ACTIONS WITH A UNIFIED VOICE AND TO TAKE ACTION TO LIMIT ITS UNLAWFUL WEAPONS OF MASS DESTRUCTION

— US AMBASSADOR TO THE UN

LINDA GREENFIELD



THE LAUNCH OF THE NUCLEAR-CAPABLE Hwasong-17 MISSILE PROVES WE HAVE A RELIABLE WEAPON TO CONTAIN U.S.-LED MILITARY THREATS.

— SUPREME LEADER OF NORTH KOREA

KIM JONG-UN





SHIVAJI SARKAR

sectors, during the period between December 1, 2022, and November 30, 2023, starting from Jammu and Kashmir.

The diplomatic effort could be unique to exemplify India's concern for global issues where G20 definitely occupies a significant position for controlling the major part of the globe's wealth, resources and the clout in the course of economic and other actions. For Modi, it will be significant to establish brand India for which he has already decided on a lotus G20 logo. Could it be a revival of an era where Gamal Abdel Nasser, former Egyptian President, Marshal Tito, former Yugoslav president, and Jawaharlal Nehru, first Indian prime minister, enjoyed a pivotal role in world politics?

The first spark was seen as Modi spoke in Bali, Indonesia, for a ceasefire in the Russia-Ukraine War in what is clearly an act of diplomatic grandstanding. Two months ago, Modi met Russian President Vladimir Putin and said something about this not being an "age of war" in what might be seen by some as an act of belting the cat. Has that set space for a possible Indian role?

The US has just at the nick of the G20 summit accepted India's right to access Russian oil. Is that a grand stand or just routine? The enthusiasm of the Indian diaspora is exhilarating. Heading a multilateral organisation even for a period of one year means a lot for a country that has been in the forefront of many diplomatic activities, including during the pandemic.

Still Indian ceremonial ascendancy at G20 has not made big news. Instead, the international media concentrated on the three-hour meeting of US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping to hash out some of the thorniest issues in their relationship, including tensions over Taiwan, the economy and return to climate negotiations. Biden and Xi made cautious promises to improve the relationship that is at its most acrid point in decades and he pledged his envoy to visit China soon.

That has not taken away the thunder out of Modi's move but it must have made him rethink that the media reach of India needs a lot to do and remains as vantage as that of Indira Gandhi, who despite her NAM-Pool move could not do much to widen the Indian news coverage beyond a point. These well could be the guiding mantras for Modi as he leads India's presidency in the club of elite nations.

The next 200 G20 events in India would need a better glare to establish internationally an effort that the country would be making not only for itself but for a possible effort to mark Indian stamp on the global scenario. G20 Presidency is not merely a diplomatic meeting for India, it is a new responsibility and a measure of the world's trust in India. It needs a news system that can penetrate and make a mark. The minister for external affairs S Jaishankar would have to walk that extra mile.

That apart, Prime Minister Modi knows how to utilise an elite forum to give the best impressions. He has decided to widen the Indian ambit. India with G20 presidency will be inviting Bangladesh, Egypt, Mauritius, Netherlands, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Spain and the UAE as guest countries, as well as International Solar Alliance, Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure, and Asian Development Bank as guest international organisations. It will be a new dimension for the G20, which otherwise keeps to a restricted norm.

The Finance Ministry has allocated Rs 100 crore for hosting the G20, which will have a grand summit in September 2023. It will be spent on the meets, summit and security arrangements for the world dignitaries. The 200 meetings would be held across the country, starting from Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh, a sharp move for pronouncing that a ticklish problem has been solved.

Whatever, it will be an eventful 2023, which will be occupied with critical international functions as also prepare for eight state assembly elections. It will be a rich and action-packed prelude to India's 2024 general Lok Sabha elections.

(The author is a policy analyst)

Why did Cong not support tribal woman Prez: Modi

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Citing how the Congress did not support Droupadi Murmu in her election as the first tribal President of the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday questioned how could the Opposition party and its leader Rahul Gandhi talk about tribal welfare. Continuing his offensive against the opposition party in poll-bound Gujarat, Modi also said the "Congress model" meant "nepotism, casteism, sectarianism and vote bank politics".

Modi returned to Gujarat after a day's break and held a series of public meetings. The BJP is seeking the mandate for the seventh time facing Congress and AAP as its political rivals in the two-phased poll slated December first and 5th.

Addressing a public rally at the tribal-dominated Mahuva village in Surat dis-

trict where Rahul also had held his first election meeting taking time off from his 'Bharat Jodo Yatra', the Prime Minister asked "why Congress did not support tribal woman in presidential election if the opposition party was so concerned about tribals?"

In his rally, Rahul had accused the BJP of taking away the rights of tribals and alleged that soon their 'jungles' too will be taken away by 'two-three industrialists'.

Modi referred to Rahul and his ongoing 'Bharat Jodo Yatra' saying "a person is conducting a foot-march to get back power. In his speech, he talks about tribals. I want to ask him, why Congress did not support the BJP's woman tribal candidate in the presidential election? Instead, they fielded their own candidate to defeat her," the prime minister asserted.

"Despite Congress' efforts Droupadi Murmu became



President "with the blessings of tribal people," he added.

"Why did Congress never think of making an Adivasi (tribal) our President? It was the BJP which made a tribal person, that too, a woman, our country's President for the first time and sent a message to the world," Modi said.

Continuing his offensive against the Congress, Modi in another rally at Mehsana in North Gujarat said the "Congress model" meant nepotism, casteism, sectarianism and vote bank politics. "This

model has not only destroyed Gujarat but India too. That is the reason why we have to work hard to take the country ahead today," he said.

He said the BJP compelled other parties to talk about development during polls. The prime minister also addressed poll rallies at Dahod, Vadodara, and Bhavnagar during the day.

Modi hoped that Gujarat will witness a record voter turnout in the upcoming state polls, particularly by the youth and first-time voters.

Experts rush to areas hit by measles

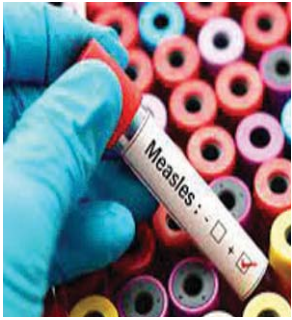
ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

With the number of cases of highly-infectious measles on the rise in Ranchi, Ahmedabad, and Malappuram as in Mumbai, the Centre on Wednesday rushed teams of high-level experts to these areas. Measles death count has surged to 11 in Mumbai alone while the case count there has reached 220.

The officials in the Union Health Ministry are keeping their fingers crossed, fearing Measles outbreak in more States as they cited the WHO and UNICEF observations shared early this year on the global status of the air-borne viral disease mainly affecting kids aged 1-2 years. The spike in cases may hamper the Ministry's aim to eliminate Measles in the country by 2023. The global agencies had noted that pandemic-related disruptions, increasing inequalities in access to vaccines, and the diversion of resources from routine immunization are leaving too many children without protection against Measles and other vaccine-preventable diseases. The Ministry has already shot off a letter to all the States to keep a tab and take pre-

cautions against the air-borne viral infection. "Recently, increased numbers of measles cases are being reported from certain districts of Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Kerala and Maharashtra. A rapid rise in the number of cases and some mortality due to Measles has also been observed specifically in the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and certain other Districts of Maharashtra. "This is of particular concern from a public health point of view. It is also clear that in all such geographies, the affected children were predominantly unvaccinated and the average coverage of Measles Rubella Coverage vaccination (MRCV) among the eligible beneficiaries is also significantly below the national average," says the circular.

According to the WHO, Measles cases increased by 79% compared to the previous year in the first two months of 2022. In India, the first dose coverage of the measles vaccine dropped to 88% in 2020 from 100% in 2018. The relaxation of movement restrictions is another factor that heightens the risk of large outbreaks.



The agencies had flagged concern that outbreaks of measles could also forewarn outbreaks of other diseases that do not spread as rapidly. According to data released by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), India has reported the highest number of measles cases in the world between April and September 2022. Measles is a severe viral respiratory illness that is marked by a prodrome of fever (can go as high as 105 F) and persistent cough, malaise, coryza, and conjunctivitis. These symptoms are followed by a maculopapular rash. The rash usually appears about 10-14 days after a person is exposed to the virus.

For achieving the goal of

elimination by 2023, each district must mobilise all resources optimally to achieve at least 95% measles rubella coverage vaccination ll by 2 years of age or at the latest by 5 years of age, as per the Ministry.

"States have been advised to administer one additional dose [special dose for measles and Rubella for Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) to all children of 9 months to 5 years in vulnerable areas ie geographies which are showing recent increase in numbers of Measles cases. This dose would be in addition to the primary vaccination schedule of first dose at 9-12 months and second dose at 16-24 months," as per the Ministry's circular.

Rajnath calls for resolute global efforts to counter transnational terrorism

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday called for urgent and resolute global efforts to counter transnational and cross-border terrorism.

Stressing this point, he also said India advocates a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and underlined the need for peaceful resolution of disputes while respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

The minister made these observations in the 9th Association of Southeast Nations (ASEAN) Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) Plus in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The ADMM Plus is an annual meeting of Defence Ministers of ten ASEAN countries and its eight dialogue partner countries, viz., India, USA, Russia, China, Australia, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea. The year 2022 also marks the 30th Anniversary of India-ASEAN relations.

During his address, Rajnath called for urgent and resolute global efforts to counter transnational and cross-border terrorism, terming it as the gravest threat to regional and global security.

He pointed out that the global security environment has transformed fun-



damentally over the last few decades, with terrorist groups creating inter-linkages across continents backed by new-age technologies to propagate ideologies, transfer money and recruit supporters.

Rajnath reiterated India's commitment to nurturing practical, forward-looking and result-oriented cooperation between India and ADMM Plus countries for enhancing the maritime security in the region and safety of the global commons. He asserted that India advocates a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific region and calls for peaceful resolution of disputes while respecting the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of all nations.

In this context, he stated that the ongoing ASEAN-China negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea should be fully consistent with international law, in particular United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and should not prejudice the legitimate rights and interests of nations that are not party to these discussions.

He called upon all the member states to work together with a positive intent, towards a stable, safer and more secure world for our future generations.

Waiting period for business, tourist visa to US nearly 3 years

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the US recently assured that the waiting time for visa clearance for Indians will be reduced, those wanting to travel there on a business or tourist visa will have to wait for nearly three years or nearly 1,000 days.

This long period is for those Indians wishing to travel to the US on a visitor visa-B 1(business) and B-2(tourist). A search on the US State Department website shows that the waiting period for B1/B2 visa interview is 961 days (as on November 23).

For those living in Delhi, the waiting time is 961 days while for Hyderabad, it is 994 days. Chennai residents will have to wait for 948 days to get an appointment, while in

Kerala, the waiting period is 904 days. Residents of Mumbai will have to wait for 999 days. The astronomical wait times mean that a first time B1/B2 applicant may now get date for interview in the year 2025.

The US State Department had said earlier this month that it is committed to facilitating legitimate travel to there while safeguarding national security.

The issue of long wait time for Indians was flagged by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar during his visit to the US in September where he had raised the issue of visa applications backlog with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

A few days back, the US State Department said visa processing is rebounding faster than projected and is expected to reach pre-pandemic levels in Fiscal Year 2023.

Cong leader moves SC seeking review of verdict upholding 10% reservation to EWS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A Congress leader on Wednesday moved the Supreme Court seeking review of its verdict upholding the 10 per cent reservation introduced in 2019 for the economically weaker sections (EWS) in educational institutions and government jobs that excluded the poor among the SC/ST/OBC categories.

The plea filed by Jaya Thakur has sought review of the November 7 verdict saying there was error apparent on the face of records in the judgement.

The review petition has been filed through advocate Varinder Kumar Sharma.

In its landmark judgement, a five-judge Constitution bench had said that the use of basic structure doctrine as a "sword" to "stultify" the State's effort to do economic justice cannot be countenanced.

It had delivered a 3:2



majority decision in favour of the 103rd Constitution Amendment.

While upholding the 10 per cent reservation introduced in 2019 for EWS in admissions and government jobs that excluded the poor among the SC/ST/OBC categories, the apex court had said it is not discriminatory or violative of any essential feature of the Constitution.

Treating the EWS as a separate category is a reasonable classification and the 50 per cent ceiling on the total reservation under the Mandal judgement is "not inflexible", the judges had said while dismissing the petitions challenging the validity of the law.

Prosperous Indo-Pacific hinges on peaceful maritime domain: Indian Navy chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With increasing tension in the Indo-Pacific region as China is flexing its muscle there, Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar said here on Wednesday a prosperous Indo-Pacific hinges on a peaceful maritime domain. He also said India has all along called for a "free, open, inclusive, peaceful and prosperous region."

Underlining this factor, he also said maritime terrorism and proliferation of advanced technologies have "further complicated the security matrix."

The Navy chief said the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) holds immense potential for synchronising and syn-



ergising the collective efforts towards achieving a peaceful region.

He made these assertions in his inaugural address at the three-day fourth edition of Indo-Pacific Regional Dialogue (IPRD) here. The IPRD is an apex-level international annual conference of the Indian Navy that seeks to foster exchange of ideas and promote deliberations on regionally relevant maritime issues.

The theme of IPRD-2022 is

"Operationalising the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)", which was articulated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 14th East Asia Summit (EAS) in Bangkok on November 4, 2019.

"It is amply clear that a prosperous Indo-Pacific hinges on a peaceful maritime domain. The maritime security pillar of the IPOI seeks to manage this crucial element through cooperative engagement between friends and partners," the Navy chief said.

In this, the Indian Navy has been guided by the inclusive vision of SAGAR which literally means oceans, and expands as 'Security and Growth for All in the Region', and is underpinned by the values of 5 Ss - 'Samman' (Respect),

'Samvaad' (Dialogue), 'Shanti' (Peace), 'Samridhi' (or Prosperity) and notably, 'Sahyog' (or Cooperation), he said.

Elaborating upon the security environment in general, and maritime security in particular, the Navy chief said while the possibility of a traditional inter-state conflict cannot be ruled out, there is an increased risk to the rules-based order emanating from disputes of jurisdiction, undermining of UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea), piracy and armed robbery, illegal human migration, drugs and arms trafficking, and illegal unreported and unregulated fishing.

Maritime terrorism and proliferation of advanced tech-

nologies have further complicated the security matrix. Inevitably, given its increased centrality in global affairs, the Region has witnessed increased presence of maritime security forces from a multitude of nations - regional as well as extra-regional, Kumar said.

He said the Indo-Pacific today represents a "strategic geography where most of us have found convergence in our interests and aspirations". However, in navigating the path together, there are numerous challenges that must be overcome.

Kumar said these challenges could be viewed as a "trinity of 3 Is" — imperatives at home, influences from outside and some intrusive paradigms".

Special forces of India, Indonesia engage in joint exercise 'Garuda Shakti' in Indonesia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Special Forces of India and Indonesia are currently engaged in a joint exercise 'Garuda Shakti' in Sangga Buana training area Karawang, Indonesia. It is the eighth edition of the series of bilateral exercises under this banner.

The latest 13-day exercise commenced on November 21 and aims at enhancing understanding, cooperation and interoperability between the Special Forces of both armies.

The scope of the joint exer-



cise includes orientation to advance special forces skills, sharing of information on weapon, equipment, innovations, tactics, techniques and procedures and lessons learnt from various operations under-

taken. The joint training will also focus on a high degree of physical fitness, tactical drills, techniques and procedures and will culminate in a 48-hour long validation exercise.

US women diplomats take to streets of Delhi with 'personalised auto-rickshaws'

ANI ■ NEW DELHI

Leaving behind their bullet-proof vehicles, four US women diplomats have taken to the streets of the capital with their "personalized auto-rickshaws" in their "out-of-the-box" diplomacy style.

Ann L Mason, Ruth Holmberg, Shareen J Kitterman and Jennifer Bywaters love to go with their Black and Pink three-wheelers by driving themselves for all their work including the 'official trips'.

These diplomats have taken to the common man's commute not just for fun, but also to set an example. Speaking to ANI, the diplomats shared their experience of learning this distinct mode of transport and how diplomats driving the auto-rickshaws is a rare exception!

"From Detroit to my auto rickshaw, I've had a lifelong love of vehicles and so everywhere I've been there's been something special about a vehicle but really none more special in my opinion than an autorickshaw. When I was in Pakistan, before coming to India, I was in armoured vehicles and they were big, beautiful vehicles. But I would always look out on the street and I would see the autorickshaws going by and I always wanted to be in the autorickshaw. So when I got to India and had the opportunity to buy one, I took it immediately," said Ann L Mason to ANI.

"For me it was terrifying. Yes, learning to drive the autorickshaw was completely new for me. I had never driven any vehicle with a clutch, never driven a motorcycle only automatic cars, my whole life," she



said when asked about how hard was it to learn, maintain an auto and get a license.

On being asked about her inspiration behind the idea, Ann said that her mother is her inspiration who inspired her to take chances and experiment in life.

"My inspiration is my mother, my mother always took chances. She travelled around the world, she was in

the Vietnam War and she did so much with her life. Life and she always taught me to do interesting things and take a chance because one you might not get another opportunity and two you never know what you might experience. My daughter also drives the autorickshaw and so learning from them every day, the interesting things that how they see the world," she added.

ED seizes ₹16 cr of Alphageo in form of fixed deposits under FEMA

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has seized Rs 16 crore of Alphageo (India) Ltd. in the form of fixed deposits under the provisions of Foreign Exchange Management Act.

An investigation against Alphageo India Ltd. was initiated by ED on the basis of information received that the company had transferred and parked certain funds in the United Arab Emirates in contravention of FEMA.

In a separate case, the agency has attached Rs 3.25 crore in a money laundering case linked to dacoity in Kerala.

"During investigation, it was revealed that Alphageo is a Hyderabad-based company which is engaged in providing seismic survey services to various oil exploration and production companies in India, and abroad.



The company has been importing various equipment for seismic data acquisition from several suppliers based in France, Singapore, Netherlands, etc," the ED said in a statement.

Investigation further revealed that equipment for seismic data acquisition was directly received from various suppliers by Alphageo. However the payment for the same has been routed through an entity Matrix Group DMCC, maintained and controlled by Rajiv Saxena, a Chartered Accountant based in Dubai and a hawala operator for these imports, the ED said. Further investigation

revealed that by way of over invoicing bills for these imports, Alphageo has parked funds into the account of Matrix Group DMCC for the personal benefit of Dinesh Alla, Chairman and Managing Director of Alphageo (India) Limited in contravention of provisions of FEMA.

An amount of USD

25,34,628 was held outside India in contravention of Section 4 of FEMA.

The equivalent value of the foreign funds parked in the United Arab Emirates by Alphageo amounting to Rs 16 crore has been seized in India under FEMA. Further, investigation in the matter is under progress, it said.

ED attaches ₹3.25 crore cash as proceeds of crime relating to robbery, kidnapping under PMLA

New Delhi: The ED has attached cash to the tune of Rs 3.25 crore for being 'Proceeds of Crime' relating to a robbery and kidnapping case under PMLA. The ED initiated money laundering investigation on the basis of scheduled offence invoked in the FIR registered by Kottakkal Police Station, Kerala in the said case. "The amount attached by ED is the Proceeds of Crime which was recovered by the Kottakkal Police from the possession of two robbers while they were trying to escape after robbing and kidnapping an auto rickshaw driver who was carrying this huge amount of cash in his auto," it added.

No Maha village will go anywhere: Fadnavis on Bommai's remarks

Due to water crisis Maharashtra border villages wanted to merge with K'taka, CM had claimed

PTI ■ NAGPUR | MUMBAI

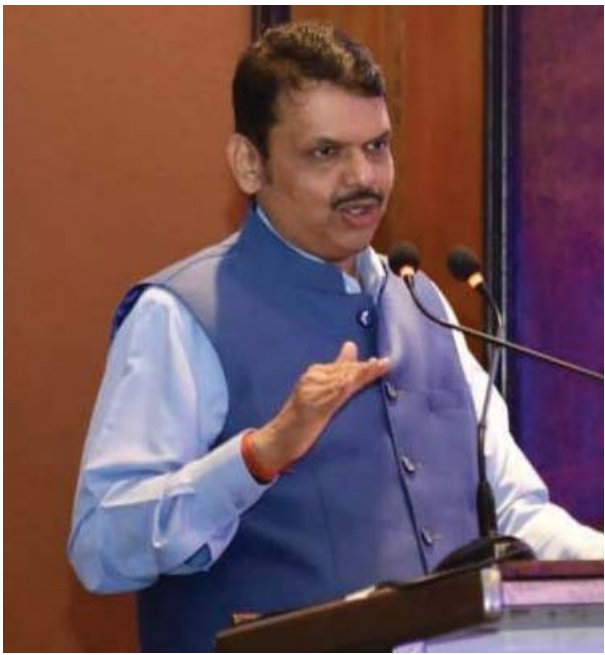
Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday said no village in Maharashtra has sought merger with Karnataka recently, and there is no question of any border village "going anywhere".

Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai had claimed on Tuesday that some village panchayats in Jat taluka of Maharashtra's Sangli district had passed a resolution in the past seeking to merge with Karnataka when they were facing a severe water crisis.

The Karnataka Government had devised schemes to help them by providing water, and his Government was seriously considering the proposal of Jat villages, he said.

"These villages had introduced a resolution on the issue of water scarcity in 2012. Presently, none of the villages have introduced any resolution," Fadnavis told reporters in Nagpur. When he became Maharashtra Chief Minister, his government entered into an agreement with Karnataka to sort out the water issue, he said.

A water supply scheme was chalked out for the Jat villages when Girish Mahajan was water resources minister in his cabinet, the BJP leader added. "We are now going to give approval to that scheme. Perhaps because of Covid, the previous (Uddhav Thackeray-led) government could not approve it," Fadnavis added.



"Presently, none of the villages have raised such demand (of merger with Karnataka). The demand is of 2012," he said.

"Not a single village of Maharashtra will go anywhere," Fadnavis stressed. Sudhir Mungantiwar, BJP leader and Maharashtra minister, blamed Jawaharlal Nehru for the long-pending dispute.

"The dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka is actually the gift of late prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru," he said without elaborating.

The case is now before the Supreme Court and any resolution passed by village panchayats would not affect the court's verdict, he told reporters.

"If resolutions are to be taken so seriously, then what about the villages in Karnataka which have passed resolutions seeking to join Maharashtra," he asked. Earlier in the day, another Maharashtra Minister Shambhuraj Desai said the Karnataka Chief Minister's

claims should not be taken seriously. The decades-old border dispute over Belagavi (earlier Belgaum) between Maharashtra and Karnataka is in news again due to recent

statements from both sides.

On Monday, Bommai had said he had formed a formidable legal team of senior lawyers to deal with the border dispute when it comes up in the Supreme Court.

On Tuesday, the Maharashtra government appointed Chandrakant Patil and Shambhuraj Desai as nodal ministers to coordinate with the state's legal team regarding the pending court case. Talking to reporters here, Desai said, "As Maharashtra has reconstituted its team to take forward the Karnataka border dispute in the Supreme Court, Bommai has come up with some ridiculous old demand. It should not be taken seriously.

The villages in Jat tehsil had reportedly passed a resolution more than a decade back to pressurise the then state government to address their demand of water supply from the Krishna river." There is no such official documentation or resolution available with the Maharashtra government, he added.

21 TMC leaders, MLAs in touch with me, says Mithun

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Weeks after top Bengal BJP leadership declared that the Mamata Banerjee Government would not sustain beyond the month of December leading to speculations about central designs vis a vis Bengal cinestar-turned saffron politician Mithun Chakrabarty has said that atleast 21 TMC leaders including MLAs were in direct touch with him. Chakrabarty who was in Bengal to campaign for the BJP in several districts ahead of the next year's panchayat elections said: "not all the Trinamool men are corrupt

... and those who are not corrupt prefer to maintain silence in that party ... among these silent leaders atleast 21 are in direct touch with me ... take this hint and track them you will find why some people have started saying that TMC is on the verge of a big fall."

State BJP president Sukanto Majumdar however, was quick to dispel "rumors" saying his party in the Centre had no intention to pull down the TMC Government. "We will not topple the Government ... it will fall on its own ... we will come to power through democratic means and getting people's mandate," he

'Aftab will cut me into pieces' Shraddha filed plaint in 2020

She withdrew complaint after cops visited their house, says Mumbai Police

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Call centre employee Shraddha Walkar had two years ago complained to police in Maharashtra that her live-in partner Aaftab Poonawala, who is accused of brutally murdering her, tried to kill her and she feared he would cut her into pieces and throw her away, an official said here on Wednesday. Based on her written complaint dated November 23, 2020, the personnel of Tulj police station in Palghar district visited the place, where Walkar and Poonawala resided, twice and recorded her statement. Walkar then told the police that she had lodged the complaint "in a fit of rage" and the issues between her and Poonawala were resolved. She



told the police that she was withdrawing her complaint, after which the case was closed, he said.

The official said the officer who visited their house at that time had counselled them and also warned Poonawala.

In her complaint to Tulj police in Palghar in November 2020, Walkar alleged that, "Poonawala has been abusing me and beating me up." "Today, he tried to kill me

by suffocating me and he scares and blackmails me that he will kill me, cut me up in pieces and throw me anyway. It's been six months he has been hitting me. But I did not have the guts to go to police because he would threaten to kill me," Walkar said in the complaint.

"His parents are aware that he beats me and that he tried to kill me," she told the police. Walkar also said in the letter that Poonawala's parents

knew about them living together and they visited them on weekends. "I lived with him till date as we were supposed to get married anytime soon and had the blessing of his family. Henceforth, I am not willing to live with him so any kind of physical damage should be considered coming from him as he has been blackmailing me to kill me or hurt me whenever he sees me anywhere," she stated in the letter.

Talking to PTI, a top official of the Mira Bhayandar-Vasai Virar (MBVV) police commissionerate, said that after Walkar's complaint, police officials twice visited Regal Apartment, Vijay Vihar Complex near ARC Bhavan in Vasai town, where the live-in partners resided, and recorded her statement, in which she said she was withdraw the case against Poonawala as the issues between them were resolved. "Our officer counselled them properly and warned Aaftab too. He recorded Walkar's statement and closed the case," the official said.

Govt staff, cops clash at DA rally

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Several Government servants and many pensioners were injured and detained by the police following a skirmish between the men in uniform and government staff, thousands of whom on Thursday marched towards the State Assembly demanding hike in the dearness allowance.

Thousands of State Government employees marched towards the Assembly pulling down the barricades leading to the police crackdown, on Thursday noon sources said. The employees had been asking for a hike in DA as per a Calcutta High Court order.

The High Court had earlier ruled that the DA a rightful claim of the employees and directed the Government to clear the dues within a given deadline. The Government however failed that deadline and pleaded that it did not have sufficient funds.

SUBMIT FILES ON ARUN GOEL'S PICK AS EC, SC ASKS CENTRE

He was to retire on December 31 on attaining the age of 60 years. Goel would be in line to be the next CEC after incumbent Rajiv Kumar demits office in February 2025. He will join Kumar and Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey on the poll panel.

There was a vacancy in the Election Commission (EC) following the retirement of previous CEC Sushil Chandra in May. Goel was the Secretary in the Ministry of Heavy Industries till recently and his voluntary retirement came into effect on November 18. He has also served in the Union Culture Ministry.

DELHI MAN STABS PARENTS, GRANDMA, SISTER TO DEATH

Saini said he later saw Keshav trying to flee on a scooter, but managed to get hold of him and handed him over to the police. "When the police were taking him away, he told me that he will be in jail for 10 to 15 years and when he finishes his term, he would kill me," Saini said. He said he and his parents opened the gate outside Keshav's main door after cutting the iron mesh and found his grandmother and Urvashi lying in a pool of blood in one room, and Keshav's parents dead in the washroom.

He further said Keshav used to quarrel with his family over money for his drugs. On Tuesday also, Keshav and his mother had a heated argument over money. On November 2, Keshav had allegedly stolen batteries from the first floor and returned home last night to get some money. He was in jail for sometime in connection with an ATM robbery case, Saini said.

Keshav's another cousin Rajneesh demanded death penalty for him.

"A case under section 302 (murder) of the Indian Penal Code has been registered with the Palam police station and further investigation is on," police said.

MARRIED MAN KILLS GIRLFRIEND, SHOTS SELF; HOSPITALISED

According to the police, the suspect was initially charged with a different murder case on September 21 but later received bail. He had shot a man named Gaurav, and the victim's father had complained about him, leading to his arrest.

The shooting incident caused panic, which prompted the police officials to arrive at the scene.

When Geeta was taken to the hospital, the medical staff pronounced her dead on arrival.

Sushila, Praveen's wife, and their kids

reside in a village with Praveen, who is critically ill, reports said.

MEGHALAYA VILLAGERS TORCH ASSAM'S FOREST OFFICE

"I am in touch with the Meghalaya CM... The Assam-Meghalaya border is peaceful and it has always been peaceful. Force has been used... However, in my view, it has been used a little arbitrarily. That should not have happened," he said. Six people, including a forest guard, were killed in violence at a disputed location in West Karbi Anglong district along the Assam-Meghalaya border in the wee hours of Tuesday, after a truck allegedly laden with illegally felled timber was intercepted by forest personnel.

Armed with machetes, rods and sticks, the village residents allegedly gathered in front of a beat office under the Kheroni Forest Range in Assam along the inter-State border on Tuesday night and set the structure on fire, they said. The mob vandalised the forest office and torched properties such as furniture, documents and motorcycles parked in the complex. However, no injury to the forest personnel posted there has been reported so far. The villagers had left the area before a team of Assam policemen and other security personnel reached the spot, reports said.

An Assam Government vehicle that was found abandoned at Mukroh village was torched by locals.

The influential Khasi Students' Union took responsibility for the torching of the forest beat office and the Assam Government vehicle at Mukroh and alleged that the Government in Meghalaya failed to protect its citizens. Members of the students' union held demonstrations at the Jalong Civil Hospital where the bodies of all the six people were brought for post-mortem examinations and demanded that those responsible for the killing be handed over to the Meghalaya Police.

Following reports of attacks on vehicles from Assam in Meghalaya, the Assam Police continued to advise car owners to avoid entering the neighbouring State for safety. At various entry points in Assam, including at Guwahati and Cachar district, the police personnel put up barricades and asked people not to travel to the hill State in a vehicle bearing a number plate from Assam.

"Since yesterday, we have been advising people not to go to Meghalaya till the situation completely normalises. We are only requesting the private and small car owners not to travel as miscreants are targeting such vehicles there," Deputy Commissioner (East) of Guwahati Police Sudhakar Singh reportedly said.

He, however, said the commercial vehicles have not been stopped as of now. A car with an Assam number plate

FROM PAGE 1

was burnt in Shillong on Tuesday evening after miscreants asked the passengers to leave the vehicle.

Some taxi drivers, who returned to Guwahati on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, said the Meghalaya Police escorted them to the border, but still, their vehicles were pelted with stones by onlookers while on the move. Cachar Superintendent of Police Nunal Mahanta said they asked passengers of vehicles from Assam and other states not to travel through Meghalaya as per requests from the hill State.

"The Meghalaya Police had requested us to control vehicles going inside their state following the disturbances. Restrictions have been put in place as a precautionary measure for the safety of the people," he added.

Six people, including a forest guard, were killed in violence at a disputed area on the Assam-Meghalaya border in the early hours of Tuesday after a truck allegedly laden with illegally felled timber was intercepted by forest guards from Assam. The Meghalaya Government suspended mobile internet services in seven districts, while the Assam Police sounded alert in the border districts and also ordered an inquiry by a retired High Court judge into the matter. In a tweet tagging Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Sarma, Meghalaya CM Conrad Sangma had on Tuesday complained that the Assam police and forest guards "entered Meghalaya and resorted to unprovoked firing". However, Assam Police officials asserted that the truck was intercepted in West Karbi Anglong district of the State by a forest department team and a mob from Meghalaya had later attacked the forest guards and policemen from the state, which led to firing by the Assam side to bring the situation under control.

Five of the six killed at Mukroh village were Meghalaya residents and one is an Assam forest guard, Sangma said. The Meghalaya CM announced an ex gratia of Rs 5 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased. The Assam government too said that it will provide Rs 5 lakh to the families of each deceased as compensation. A team of Meghalaya Ministers will meet Shah on Thursday to seek a central agency probe into the matter.

The Assam Government, however, said it will hand over the probe to a Central or neutral agency. The Sarma Government in Assam also said it has transferred the district SP, and suspended the officer-in-charge of Jiriking Police Station and the Forest Protection Officer of Kheroni range.

The two States have a longstanding dispute in 12 areas along the 884.9-km-long inter-State border, and the location where the violence took place is one of them. The two Northeastern States had signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in March this year in the presence of Shah in New Delhi towards end-

ing the dispute in six of them. Meghalaya was carved out of Assam in 1972 and had since then challenged the Assam Reorganisation Act, 1971, which had demarcated the border between the two States.

Mukroh village (Meghalaya) along the disputed Assam-Meghalaya border on Wednesday wore an eerie calm, a day after six people were killed in the inter-State clash.

AADITYA MEETS NITISH, TEJASHWI IN BID TO WOO BIHARIS FOR BMC POLLS

The Shiv Sena (Uddhav) leader and former Maharashtra Minister, whose first trip to Bihar intensified the buzz around "Opposition unity", claimed that those who have been hostile towards the Hindi-speaking north Indians were now "with the BJP" and asserted that all communities had "co-existed peacefully when we were in power in Maharashtra".

Notably, Thackeray's father Uddhav headed the "Maha Vikas Aghadi" Government that also included Sharad Pawar's NCP and the Congress.

He said price rise and unemployment are major challenge and it is time that youth leaders come together to address the situation across the country due to the poor governance of the BJP.

"The current challenge is to save the law and the democracy and we will do anything to save it," said Tejashwi after meeting Aaditya. Tejashwi presented the Aaditya with books based on the life of his father and RJD president Lalu Prasad and the entire delegation with Mithila paintings.

BJP criticised the meeting between Tejashwi and Aaditya on planks as varied as insult to the "greatness" of Bal Thackeray and insensitivity to Bihari sentiments. Tejashwi hit back, claiming that the BJP was rattled by "Opposition unity", which has been achieved in Bihar and was taking shape in other states.

"Late Bala Saheb Thackeray was a pious soul. He must be turning in his grave to learn what Aaditya, his grandson, is doing. What does the young leader expect to learn from Tejashwi who has accomplished little except amassing huge wealth in a short period of time?" said Jivesh Kumar, a former Bihar Minister and BJP leader.

RJD spokesman Mrityunjay Tiwari responded to the BJP's tirade saying "it is Aaditya who is coming all the way to meet Tejashwi, and not the other way round. It shows the stature of our young leader and, indeed, is a matter of pride for Bihar, which has shown the way to all anti-BJP forces".

The BJP should remember the abominable attitude of its leaders in states like Gujarat from where migrant workers were compelled to flee during the

Covid lockdown. The aggrieved Biharis are going to punish the BJP, which also rules the Centre, in the next Lok Sabha polls," Tiwari added.

SUSHANT MANAGER'S DEATH MYSTERY SOLVED; CBI SAYS 'IT'S ACCIDENT'

"Since serious allegations were levelled in the Disha matter and claims were made that the two deaths were linked, as Saliya had briefly worked for Rajput, her death has been probed in detail. The investigation has revealed that Disha had been organising get-togethers at her residence in the run-up to her birthday. The party on June 8th night was part of it. However, that night, Disha, who had consumed alcohol, lost her balance and slipped from the parapet of her flat," a news report quoted an unnamed official as saying.

The official reportedly said there was no proof to suggest the two deaths were linked or that Disha's death triggered Sushant's suicide.

The report further quoted another CBI official as saying, "The probe hasn't found any substance in the allegations levelled by Rane that Disha was assaulted and had approached Rajput for help and that there is a larger political conspiracy at play. It was necessary to probe the circumstances owing to the sensitive nature of the case and the nature of allegations."

The CBI is investigating the death of Sushant, which is being probed from suicide angle. However, no closure report has been filed in the matter so far by the agency.

DAY 2 SHOCKER! JAPAN VANQUISH GERMANY

It was only the third time Germany had lost its tournament-opening game after defeats against Algeria in 1982 and Mexico in 2018. In the other World Cup openers for Germany, the team had won 13 matches and drawn four.

Germany outplayed Japan for much of the match with 24 attempts on goal compared to Japan's 11. Despite giving away the penalty, Japan goalkeeper Shuichi Gonda made a string of saves.

Germany next faces Spain on Sunday, while Japan takes on Costa Rica.

Germany's buildup was fraught by protests and political statements because of Qatar's human rights record and its treatment of migrant workers and members of the LGBTQ community.

Germany was playing at the World Cup for the first time since its shocking group-stage exit as defending champion in 2018, while Japan is appearing in its seventh straight World Cup and is looking to reach the quarterfinals for the first time.

CV Anand Bose takes oath as Bengal Governor

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

CV Anand Bose a retired IAS officer of the 1977 batch on Thursday took oath as the new Governor of Bengal. He replaced La Ganesan the acting Governor who was given the joint charge of Manipur and Bengal after former Governor Jagdeep Dhankhar was elevated to the post of Vice-President of India.

Bose, whose father was a member of Indian National Army and was an associate of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose gets the last part of his name from the iconic freedom fighter.

"My father who was an associate of Netaji kept my name after him," the new occupant of the Kolkata Raj Bhavan earlier said. He was selected by the Centre as the new Governor of the State on November 17.

CV Anand Bose was administered the oath of office by Calcutta High Court Chief Justice Prakash Srivastava in the presence of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, Speaker Biman Banerjee, former Governor Gopal Krishna Gandhi, Left Front Chairman Biman Bose and other dignitaries.

After SC's observations, Opp parties accuse BJP Govt of weakening EC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Opposition parties on Wednesday accused the BJP government of weakening the Election Commission and raised doubts over the selection of poll panel members after the Supreme Court asked the Centre to produce the file on the recent appointment of Arun Goel as election commissioner. The Congress, TMC, JD(U), RJD and the Left parties said the Election Commission should be above board to ensure free and fair polls, and some of them demanded that key appointments of the poll body be made by a special panel like in the case of the CBI Director.

Congress spokesperson and senior lawyer Abhishek Singhvi said the Centre should never object to showing appointment papers regarding Arun Goel to the apex court, especially since a Constitution bench is seized of the issue of appointment of EC members.

"Does the Centre have something to hide? Daal mein kya kuchh kaala hai? Yaa daal hi kaali hai?" Singhvi said.

JD(U) secretary general K C Tyagi said the Supreme Court's remarks are very alarming and depict the state of affairs in the Election Commission. "The Election Commission should be neutral and fearless. The SC's remarks reflect the manner in which the EC has been lax in some cases and sometimes tilts in favour of the ruling party. We welcome the SC remarks and the EC should draw lessons from it," Tyagi told PTI.

6 people, assailant dead in US shooting: Police

AP ■ CHESAPEAKE (US)

A shooter opened fire in a Walmart in Virginia late Tuesday, leaving six people dead, police said, in the country's second high-profile mass killing in a handful of days.

The assailant is also dead. The store in Chesapeake is now safe and will likely be closed for several days during the investigation, Officer Leo Kosinski said in the early hours of Wednesday.

It was not clear who the shooter was or what their motive might be.

"I am devastated by the senseless act of violence that took place late last night in our city," Mayor Rick W. West said in a statement posted on the city's Twitter account. "Chesapeake is a tightknit community and we are all shaken by this news."

A database run by The Associated Press, USA Today and Northeastern University that tracks every mass killing in America going back to 2006 shows this year has been especially bad.

The US has now had 40 mass killings so far this year, second to the 45 that occurred for



all of 2019. The database defines a mass killing as at least four people killed, not including the killer.

The attack at the Walmart came three days after a person opened fire at a gay nightclub in Colorado, killing five people and wounding 17. Earlier in the year, the country was shaken by the deaths of 21 when a gunman stormed an elementary school in Uvalde, Texas.

Tuesday's shooting also brought back memories of another at a Walmart in 2019, when a gunman police say was

targeting Mexicans opened fire at a store in El Paso, Texas, and killed 22 people.

Kosinski said he couldn't say how the shooter died but that he didn't believe police fired shots.

The shooting had apparently stopped when police arrived at the store in Chesapeake, which is Virginia's second-largest city and lies next to the seaside communities of Norfolk and Virginia Beach.

Mike Kafka, a spokesman for Sentara Healthcare, said in a text message that five patients from the Walmart were being

treated at Norfolk General Hospital. Their conditions weren't immediately available.

Walmart tweeted early Wednesday that it was "shocked at this tragic event."

US Sen. Mark Warner said in a tweet that he was "sickened by reports of yet another mass shooting, this time at a Walmart in Chesapeake."

State Sen. Louise Lucas echoed Warner's sentiment, tweeting that she was "absolutely heartbroken that America's latest mass shooting took place in a Walmart in my district.

PM Deuba wins from Dadeldhura; Nepali Congress ahead in poll tally

Nepal elections

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was elected on Wednesday with a huge margin of votes for the House of Representatives for the seventh consecutive time, with his ruling Nepali Congress party leading in the election tally by winning 13 seats so far.

Elections to the House of Representatives (HoR) and seven provincial assemblies were held on Sunday. The counting of votes started on Monday.

Deuba secured 25,534 votes against his nearest rival Sagar Dhakal, an independent candidate in the Dadeldhura constituency in far west Nepal. Dhakal received just 1,302 votes. Deuba has never lost any parliamentary election in the five decades of his political career.

The 77-year-old Nepali Congress president Deuba is currently holding the post of Prime Minister for the fifth term.

Dhakal is a young engineer, who had a verbal squabble with Deuba during a public debate at a BBC's Sajha Sawal programme five years ago, after which he decided to challenge Deuba saying that now youths should get a chance in politics and senior people like Deuba should retire.



The ruling Nepali Congress has so far bagged 13 seats in the House of Representatives (HoR) while it is leading in 54 other constituencies.

Its ally parties -- CPN-Maoist and CPN-Unified Socialist, Lokatantraik Samajwadi Party -- are leading in 17, 7 and 3 seats respectively.

The CPN-UML led by former prime minister K P Oli has so far bagged three seats and is leading in 45 constituencies. Its ally parties -- the Rastriya Prajatantra Party and Janata Samajwadi Party -- are leading in 5 seats each.

The newly formed Rastriya Swatantra Party has won three seats in the Kathmandu district.

Rastriya Prajatantra Party and Nagarik Unmukti Party

have bagged one seat each.

The CPN-UML has received the highest number of votes under the proportional electoral system with the party bagging 2,07,299 votes followed by the Nepali Congress with 1,83,352 votes. Rastriya Swatantra Party is in the third position with 95,598 votes while CPN-Maoist has received 86,433 votes. Similarly, the CPN Unified Socialist got 10,919 votes.

Out of 275 Members of Parliament, 165 will be elected through direct voting, while the remaining 110 will be elected through a proportional electoral system. Similarly, out of a total of 550 members of the seven provincial assemblies, 330 will be elected directly and 220 will be elected through the proportional method.

UK top court rules against Scottish independence vote plan

AP ■ LONDON

The UK Supreme Court ruled on Wednesday that Scotland does not have the power to hold a new referendum on independence without the consent of the British government.

The judgment is a setback for the Scottish government's campaign to break away from the United Kingdom.

The top court ruled that the Scottish Parliament "does not have the power to legislate for a referendum on Scottish independence."

Supreme Court President Robert Reed said the five justices were unanimous in the verdict, delivered six weeks after lawyers for the pro-independence Scottish administration and the Conservative UK government argued their cases at hearings in London.

Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said she was disappointed but would "respect" the judgment.

But, she said on Twitter: "A law that doesn't allow Scotland to choose our own future without Westminster consent exposes as myth any notion of the UK as a voluntary partnership and makes case for (independence)."

Trump's long-teased White House bid low key in 1st week

AP ■ NEW YORK

From the moment he left the White House in defeat last year, Donald Trump had teased the prospect of a third presidential campaign.

But in the week since he officially declared his candidacy, the former president has been uncharacteristically low key. There has been no massive stadium kickoff rally, notable for someone who has turned such events into a signature of his public life.

His newly reinstated Twitter account, which helped fuel his political rise nearly a decade ago, sits silent with its more than 87 million followers.

He hasn't announced plans to visit the key early voting states that will shape the contest for the Republican nomination, nor has he sat for a round of high-profile interviews. Indeed, since his announcement speech, Trump hasn't held a public event.

"His lack of a schedule makes you wonder if he's really running or if this is just a business development opportunity or a diversion from the DOJ activity," said veteran GOP strategist Scott Reed, referring to Department of Justice probes into Trump's handling of classified documents and his efforts to overturn the 2020 election, which are expected to intensify in the coming weeks.

Trump, who never held public office before winning the presidency in 2016, has never valued the cadence and organization associated with traditional campaigns. And several aides noted



that Trump, who made his announcement unusually early and a week before the Thanksgiving holidays, is wary to draw attention away from the December 6 Senate runoff in Georgia, which will close out this year's midterm elections.

The aides, who insisted on anonymity to discuss campaign strategy, said Trump

will ramp up his schedule soon.

But the light-touch start to the campaign reflects the rushed and chaotic nature of his announcement, which came as midterm election votes were still being counted and even as some of his closest aides and allies had urged him to postpone until after the

Georgia runoff. It also comes at a moment of unique political vulnerability for Trump.

The former president, who has spent his post-White House years positioning himself as the undisputed leader of the GOP, is now facing heated criticism inside the party for contributing to a disappointing showing in this month's midterms.

And other Republicans are openly teasing presidential runs of their own, making clear they won't stand aside for Trump's nomination.

Meanwhile, the legal pressure on Trump is intensifying. Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed a special counsel last week to oversee the Justice Department's investigation into classified documents recovered from the former president's Mar-a-Lago

club in Palm Beach, Florida, as well as key aspects of a separate probe involving the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol and efforts to undo the 2020 election.

And on Tuesday, the Supreme Court cleared the way for the imminent handover of Trump's tax returns to a congressional committee after a three-year legal fight.

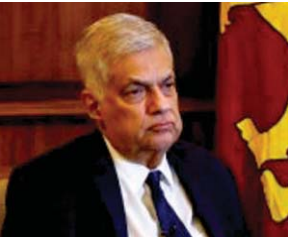
Still, Trump begins the race with an obvious head start. The former president had been acting like a de facto candidate for months and had long had a political operation in place.

After two presidential campaigns and four years in office, he also has longstanding relationships with state and local party leaders, including many who remain loyal to him.

Lanka Prez rules out early polls

Vows to crush anti-Govt street protests

PTIC ■ COLOMBO



Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Wednesday rejected the opposition's demand for early parliamentary elections and vowed to use the military to crush any future anti-government protests aimed at regime change.

Wickremesinghe, 73, who took over as the President of Sri Lanka in July this year after then-president Gotabaya Rajapaksa fled Colombo in the face of the country's worst economic crisis since 1948, said that he will not dissolve the parliament until the economic crisis is resolved.

"I will not dissolve parliament early until the economic crisis can be resolved," he said while speaking in Parliament.

Wickremesinghe has a mandate to serve out the rest of Rajapaksa's term, which ends in November 2024. However, the opposition parties are demanding early parliamentary elections, claiming that Wickremesinghe's government lacks electoral credibility. The next presidential election is scheduled to be held in 2024.

Sri Lanka has witnessed its worst economic crisis since early this year, with running out of reserves to pay for imports. The country experienced long queues for fuel, and cooking gas while all essential supplies ran dry.

In mid-April, the country declared its first-ever sovereign debt default before approaching the International Monetary Fund for a bailout facility.

The island nation survived with essential supplies being made available through dedicated Indian credit lines.

The Indian assistance was worth 4 billion dollars to help Sri Lanka tide over the economic crisis in the first half of the year.

Widespread unrest over the government's handling of the economic crisis turned into a political crisis. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets for months-long protests and ousted the former president Gotabaya Rajapaksa in mid-July. Wickremesinghe succeeded him after Rajapaksa had fled the country and ordered the military to crackdown on protesters who had occupied government buildings.

On Wednesday, Wickremesinghe said that even if the protesters call him a "dictator" they would need to obtain police permission to stage street protests.

"They can call me a dictator but must obtain police permission to stage street protests and cause road traffic," he said.

"There is a plan to stage another Aragalaya (mass public protest) to oust the government. I will not allow that. I will put the military and use emergency laws to stop them if they try it again," Wickremesinghe said.

Wickremesinghe faced criticism for ordering the crackdown and detaining at least two protesters under the draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act.

One person dead, 21 injured after two explosions rock Jerusalem

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

One person was killed and 21 others injured in two separate explosions at bus stops at the entrances to Jerusalem on Wednesday, in what seemed like a coordinated terror attack, Israeli police and rescue officials said.

The first explosion occurred close to the main entrance of Jerusalem in Givat Shaul, shortly after 7 AM when people were on the way to their offices and students to their educational institutions.

Seventeen people at the bus stop were injured in the blast, including two critically and two seriously, medical officials said.

One of the victims later died at Shaare Zedek Medical

Center, hospital officials said.

A second blast occurred shortly after at 7:30 AM at Ramot junction, another entrance to Jerusalem, which is normally jam-packed in the morning. Four people were injured in the explosion.

The devices were packed with nails to maximise casualties and controlled by nearly identical remote devices, the police said in its initial response.

Israel Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai said that "this is a framework of attack that we haven't seen for many years".

He called on the public to be alert for suspicious packages and said officers were scanning the city for other possible devices. It seemed like a coordinated terror attack, he said.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility, however, the Hamas terror group hailed the twin attacks.

"The action conveyed the message to the occupation by saying that our people will stand firm on their land and cling to the path of resistance," Mohammad Hamada, a Hamas spokesperson said in a statement.

The main road leading to Jerusalem was closed as the police launched a massive search operation. Public Security Minister Omer Barlev spoke with the police chief and was expected to visit the scenes of the attacks, his office said.

Defence Minister Benny Gantz held an assessment with

the Shin Bet security agency chief, deputy army chief, and other senior military and police officials, following the attack.

Prime Minister Yair Lapid was to hold a separate assessment later in the day. The explosions came amid a tense phase of instability when concerns have been raised about a weakening Palestinian Authority and its slipping control over the West Bank.

The past several months have seen a series of attacks in Israel leaving 29 people dead.

The Israeli military has been carrying out a major anti-terror offensive in the Palestinian Authority-controlled West Bank following the attacks which have left over 130 Palestinians dead.

Workers protest, beaten at virus-hit Chinese iPhone factory

AP ■ BEIJING

Employees at the world's biggest Apple iPhone factory were beaten and detained in protests over pay amid anti-virus controls, according to witnesses and videos on social media on Wednesday, as tensions mount over Chinese efforts to combat a renewed rise in infections.

Videos that said they were filmed at the factory in the central city of Zhengzhou showed thousands of people in masks facing rows of police in white protective suits with plastic riot shields.

Police kicked and hit a protester with clubs after he grabbed a metal pole that had been used to strike him.

Frustration with restrictions in areas throughout



China that have closed shops and offices and confined millions of people to their homes has boiled over into protests.

Videos on social media show residents tearing down barricades set up to enforce neighborhood closures.

The ruling Communist Party promised this month to try to reduce disruptions by shortening quarantines and making other changes.

But the party is sticking to a "zero-COVID" strategy that aims to isolate every case while other governments relax controls and try to live with the virus.

Last month, thousands of employees walked out of the iPhone factory operated by Taiwan's Foxconn Technology Group over complaints about unsafe working conditions following virus cases.

A protest erupted on Tuesday over complaints Foxconn changed conditions for new workers who were attracted by offers of higher pay, according to Li Sanshan, an employee.

Li said he quit a catering job in response to advertising that promised 25,000 yuan (USD 3,500) for two months of work.

Search effort intensifies after Indonesia quake killed 271

AP ■ CIANJUR (INDONESIA)

More rescuers and volunteers were deployed on Wednesday in devastated areas on Indonesia's main island of Java to search for the dead and missing from an earthquake that killed at least 271 people.

With many missing, some remote areas still unreachable and more than 2,000 people injured in the 5.6 magnitude quake on Monday, the death toll was likely to rise. Hospitals near the epicentre on the island were already overwhelmed, and patients hooked up to IV drips lay on stretchers and cots in tents set up outside, awaiting treatment.

Taliban lash 12 before stadium crowd in Af

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

The Taliban lashed three women and nine men in front of hundreds of spectators in a provincial sports stadium on Wednesday, signalling the religious extremist group's resumption of a brutal form of punishment that was a hallmark of their rule in the 1990s.

The office of the governor of Logar province, south of the capital of Kabul, invited "honourable scholars, mujahideen, elders, tribal leaders and local people" to the stadium in the town of Pul Alam in Logar. The invitations for the 9 am event were extended via social media.

Those being punished received between 21 and 39 lashes each, after being convicted in a local court of theft and adultery, said an official in the

governor's office who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not allowed to share details with the media.

The official said hundreds of people attended the lashings and that a ban was imposed on taking photos and video.

Such public lashings, as well as public executions and stonings for purported crimes, were common during the first period of Taliban rule, from 1996 until 2001 when the militants were driven out in a US-led invasion.

After a 20-year insurgency, the Taliban returned to power in August 2021, coinciding with the withdrawal of US and other foreign troops from the country.

In the immediate aftermath of their second takeover of the country, the Taliban promised to be more moderate and allow for women's and minority rights.

I'VE MATURED AS LEADER, CAN TAKE TOUGH DECISIONS: DHAWAN

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Dithering and indecision is a thing of past for Shikhar Dhawan, who as the leader of the pack does not hesitate in taking decisions which individuals may despise but are beneficial for the Indian team.

The left-handed batter is getting ready to lead India in the three-match ODI series against New Zealand, starting Friday.

It won't be the first time that Dhawan will wear the captain's hat as he has led a second-string Indian team in the past and enjoyed good results against Sri Lanka (2-1), South Africa (2-1) and West Indies (3-0).

The Delhi batter says his decision-making has improved over time, courtesy his presence of mind.

"As you play more, you get confident in the decisions you take. Earlier, there used to be instances where I would give an extra over to a bowler out of regard (for him). But now, as I have matured, even if someone is feeling bad, I will take a decision that will help the team," Dhawan told ESPNcricinfo.

Further talking about leadership skills, Dhawan said the key is to maintain balance and earn the players' faith. He is hardly seen feeling any pressure and keep the environment around him happy.

"When you play music on a string instrument, if the string is too loose, it won't sound right, or if it's too tight, it will break. So it is a question

of creating a balance. (As a captain) creating that balance is very important.

"You need to understand when to pull the string tight and when to leave it a bit loose. That is an art. It is a matter of timing. At this stage I also understand when to say things to the players and how much to say.

"If a bowler gets hit, it's important to know when to speak to him. I will not do it when they are hot in the head, but instead approach them later and speak with care. It also depends on the level you are leading at.

"If it is at the IPL, most players are mature, so you need to consider if you have to pull the string or not. At Ranji, you have to, at times, show firmness, because a youngster at that level is like a kaccha ghada (an unbaked clay pot), so you have to be firm to mould him. Finding that balance is the key," he explained his philosophy.

The 36-year-old was recently handed the captaincy of IPL side Punjab Kings, which has been struggling to reach the play-offs.

In season 2018, 2019, 2020 and 2022 the side came close to making the play-offs but fell short of one or two wins.

"We can learn from our past and improve on our mistakes. Other than that, I won't dwell much on anything else and neither will I want my team to do that. There is no need of dragging back the past baggage," he insisted.

So how does he plan to



make a difference there?

"I will make sure that the support staff and I create an environment where the players are comfortable. I want my boys to be themselves while also understanding their responsibilities. I want us to be relaxed but also focused.

"We are playing the IPL. We are living our dream. And when you are living your dream, it should be full of happiness and not stress. With love you can conquer anything. The (IPL) trophy is not a challenge too far out of our reach," he said.

And he feels he can be that lucky charm for Punjab Kings as the IPL team he was part of have played finals -- Mumbai Indians, Sunrisers Hyderabad and Delhi Capitals.

He was also part of Deccan Chargers but that team did not qualify for title clash. The same side had been rechristened Sunrisers Hyderabad.



SKY continues to stay at top

PTI ■ DUBAI

Star India batter Suryakumar Yadav retained his top spot while all-rounder Hardik Pandya reached joint-50th position in the latest ICC men's T20I batting rankings released here on Wednesday.

Suryakumar consolidated his position at the top of the rankings after his stupendous 111 not out in the second T20I against New Zealand.

Suryakumar has gained 31 rating points from the series and his 890 points keep

him 54 ahead of Pakistan's Mohammed Rizwan, who is placed second.

On the other hand, Hardik, who led India in the series against New Zealand, reached joint-50th among batters courtesy his unbeaten 30 in the final match.

In the bowlers' chart, seasoned pacer Bhuvneshwar Kumar has climbed two places to 11th, with left-arm seamer Arshdeep Singh moving up a place to 21st.

Spinner Yuzvendra Chahal has jumped eight places to 40th.

Arshdeep says tricks of trade he learnt from Bhuvi is helping him

PTI ■ NAPIER

Young India left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh says the tricks of trade he has learnt from senior pros like Bhuvneshwar Kumar has helped him add variety in his bowling.

Arshdeep (4/37) registered career-best T20I figures on Tuesday against New Zealand in the rain-affected third match of the series, which ended in a rare tie via Duckworth-Lewis method here.

"I always try to learn from the

senior bowlers in the team (on knuckle ball), just like I am learning the hard length from you and the knuckle ball from Bhuvi bhai (Bhuvneshwar Kumar) and yorkers from (Mohammed) Shami bhai," Arshdeep said in an interaction with Siraj on bcci.tv.

"I always try to improve myself everyday and contribute for the team whenever needed and hope to step-up and perform well."

Arshdeep was on the verge of taking a hat-trick towards the close of



New Zealand innings, removing Daryl Mitchell and Ish Sodhi in the first two deliveries of the 19th over, but failed to achieve the feat in the end.

New Zealand lost Adam Milne in the next ball but it was from a direct hit from Siraj from backward point.

"I even had a thought that I can take a hat-trick or a five-wicket haul. But you did make a run-out and gave a team hat-trick. The seniors advised me to bowl length and slower balls to deceive the opponent," Arshdeep said.

Siraj, who also registered career-best figures of 4/17 in Tuesday's match, said his plan to bowl hard lengths paid rich dividends for him.

"It feels great to perform like this for the country. I have been preparing myself for a long time to bowl hard length. It was not easy to bowl hard length here. My simple plan was to play hard length," Siraj said.

"Representing India is a different feeling altogether. My target in T20s is to pick up wickets but I always try to give less runs."

PCB to felicitate members of Pak team

PTI ■ KARACHI

The country's cricket board (PCB) will felicitate the members of the Pakistan team that finished runner-up at this year's Asia Cup and T20 World Cup at a grand reception in Islamabad on Thursday.

Members of the Pakistan Test squad have also been invited for the function which will be attended by diplomats, political personalities, former captains and players.

"The purpose is to honour and appreciate the players for their performances in two major tournaments," a source in the Pakistan Cricket Board said.

The source said that the players might also get some financial rewards for reaching the two finals.

Pakistan lost the final of the Asia Cup to Sri Lanka in UAE and then were beaten by England in the T20 World Cup summit clash in Melbourne earlier this month.

Last year also the Pakistan team led by Babar Azam managed to get into the semi-finals of the T20 World Cup in Dubai but were outdone by Australia.

The source said the PCB Chairman had already met with Babar Azam and the head coach, Saqlain Mushtaq and discussed with them future plans and the happenings and performances of players in the two big tournaments.

The source said there was

no danger to the captaincy of Babar as Ramiz had assured him of full support and backing.

FIRST TEST TO GO AHEAD

The first Test between Pakistan and England in Rawalpindi from December 1 to 5 will go ahead as scheduled despite the expected political unrest in that city and adjoining Islamabad, according to sources.

The decision to hold the Test at Rawalpindi Stadium came after PCB Chairman Ramiz Raja and the British High Commissioner in Pakistan met main opposition party chairman Imran Khan who has planned a massive rally in the twin cities on November 26 and 27.

According to sources, Imran, himself a former Pakistan captain, assured Ramiz and the British High Commissioner that there would be no disruption to the match nor would there be any security concerns for the English players.

The England team which is presently holding a training camp in Abu Dhabi will reach Islamabad on November 27.

The other two Tests will be played in Multan (December 9-13) and Karachi (December 17-21). The England team is touring Pakistan for the first time in 17 years. The PCB has already begun selling tickets for the first Test.

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Former Australia coach Justin Langer has hit out at the "cowards" in the national team, saying he "hated" that some players were going behind his back and leaking details from inside the dressing room.

The 52-year-old, who guided Australia to a 4-0 series win in the Ashes at home and a maiden T20 World Cup title last year, stepped down as chief coach in February after he was not offered a long-term contract

extension by Cricket Australia.

Langer had faced complaints about his "rigid" coaching style from senior players such as Aaron Finch, Pat Cummins and former Test captain Tim Paine.

"Everyone was being nice to my face, but I was reading about this stuff and half of it, I swear to God and on my kids' lives, I could not believe that is what was making the papers. A lot of journalists use the word 'source'. I would say, change that word to 'coward'," Langer was



quoted as saying by News Corp media.

"Because what do you mean 'a source says'? They've either got an axe to grind with someone and they won't come and say it to your face, or they're just leaking stuff for their own agenda. I hate that."

There have been numerous media reports in the run-up to the T20 World Cup about alleged discontent in the dressing room due to Langer's coaching style.

Langer, who had taken

Tanvi, Nishant lift national titles

Lucknow (PNS): Tanvi Patri of Odisha defeated Divyanshi Gautam of Uttar Pradesh 21-7, 21-10 to win the 34th Sub-Junior National Badminton Championship at UP Badminton Academy on Wednesday.

In the boy's category, 4th seed Nishant Bukya of Telangana edged past Akhil Reddy Bopa of Andhra Pradesh 19-21, 21-12, 22-20 to claim the title. Lakshya ND/Deeksha SR and Martin Engudum/Rishav Nagnom bagged the girl's doubles and boy's doubles title respectively.

ACA Navneet Sehgal gave away the prizes to the winners. Others present were director (sports) RP Singh, BAI observer Balbir Singh Jamwal, SAI asst director Arun Lal, UPBA secretary Sudharma Singh, Arun Kackker and Anand Khare.



Anurag Thakur interacts with youth delegation

PTI ■ PARIS

Sports Minister Anurag Thakur held an interaction with a 100-member youth delegation from Central Asian countries during a banquet dinner hosted by him here.

The delegation visited Pradhan Mantri Sangrahalaya, War Memorial in Delhi, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai Film City, Gateway of India in Mumbai during its stay in India from November 17 to 23.

Thakur said, "This is a one-of-its-kind International Youth Exchange Programmes having delegates from four central Asian countries together."

Tamanna began the day for

India on an aggressive note as she outperformed Japan's Juni Tonegawa by unanimous decision in the women's 50kg quarter-final. Devika also notched up an easy 5-0 win against Germany's Aya Ari.

Muskan (75kg) and Kirti proved too strong for their respective opponents -- Mongolia's Zyeinyep Azimbai and Livia Botica of Romania - - as they were declared winners by the 'Referee Stops the Contest' verdict within the first three minutes of the bouts.

Vanshaj (63.5kg), Vishwanath Suresh (48kg) and Ashish (54kg) will lead India's charge in the men's semifinals at the prestigious event.

TN, Kerala qualify for Vijay Hazare knockout from Group C

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Tamil Nadu and Kerala qualified for the knockout phase of the Vijay Hazare Trophy one-day tournament after their Group C matches here on Wednesday were washed out.

Sent in to bat by Tamil Nadu captain B Indrajith, Kerala made 287 for 8 in 50 overs, thanks to a 95-run knock by Vathsal Govind (126 balls, 6 fours) and useful contributions from Vishnu Vinod (45), Abdul Basith (41) and Rohan Kunnumal (39).

Openers P Rahul (16) and Rohan Kunnumal (39) provided a rapid start for Kerala, taking the score to 44 in 5.3 overs before the former fell to M Mohammed (2/51).

Vathsal Govind joined Rohan and added 34 runs before the latter was castled by

R Sai Kishore (1/46).

Though skipper Sachin Baby fell after making only 4, Vishnu Vinod (45) and Vathsal Govind were involved in a 78-run stand for the fourth wicket.

Handy knocks by Abdul Basith (41, 35 balls, 2 fours, 3 sixes) and a four-ball 15 (2 fours, 1 six) by Nedumanuzkhy Basil (41) towards the end boosted Kerala's score to 287.

When Tamil Nadu began their chase, all eyes were on the record-breaking pair of N Jagadeesan and B Sai Sudharsan.

However, Sudharsan fell to Vaisakh Chandran for 5.

Jagadeesan, fresh after a world record 277 in the previous game against Arunachal Pradesh was on 23 (21 balls, 3 fours) with the score on 43 for 1 (7 overs) when rain halted proceedings and forced the



game to be called off.

Jagadeesan and Sudharsan had put on 416 for the opening

wicket on Wednesday for a new List A record. Tamil Nadu with five wins

from seven games and two no-results topped the group with 24 points while Kerala finished

second with 20 (4 wins, 1 loss and 2 no-results).

Andhra's defeat to Chhattisgarh in the final game on Wednesday hurt their chances of advancing to the next phase and they finished with 18 points.

As the group topper, Tamil Nadu secured a berth in the quarterfinals while Kerala would play the pre-quarterfinals.

PUNJAB, J&K QUALIFY

Mumbai: Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir qualified for the knock-out stages of the Vijay Hazare Trophy from Group D with convincing wins over their respective rivals.

While Punjab beat Nagaland by six wickets, Jammu and Kashmir defeated Uttarakhand by nine wickets.

In another Group D match at the D Y Patil Stadium in Navi

Mumbai, Madhya Pradesh defeated Baroda by a massive 290 runs.

ASSAM, K'TAKA WIN

Kolkata: Assam and Karnataka qualified for the knock-out stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy from Group B after winning their respective matches.

Both ended on 24 points with identical six wins and a loss but Karnataka topped group on better net run rate of 1.721 as against 1.360 of Assam.

Assam beat Delhi by 25 runs in their last group match to notch up their fifth win on the trot.

In another match here, Karnataka thrashed Rajasthan by 60 runs.

SAURASHTRA, UP IN K/O

New Delhi: Former champions Saurashtra and Uttar Pradesh

advanced to the knock-out stage of the Vijay Hazare Trophy from group A.

Four teams ended with 20 points each at the end of the group stage matches. However, Saurashtra (1.737) and Uttar Pradesh (0.604) qualified for knock-outs based on superior net run rate than Hyderabad (0.513) and Chandigarh (-0.031).

Akshdeep Nath and Saurabh Kumar scored fifties to help Uttar Pradesh notch a two-wicket win over Saurashtra.

In another match, Hyderabad thrashed Chandigarh by 110 runs.

Gujarat hammered defending champions Himachal Pradesh by eight wickets while Tripura inflicted a 240-run defeat on Manipur in the other games.

Giroud equals Henry mark as World Cup holders France sink Australia

Both United and Liverpool were involved in the failed European Super League (ESL) project that sought to create a US-style closed league format for Europe's elite clubs without the need to qualify or promotion and relegation.