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LUCKNOW, THURSDAY JANUARY 26, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



Two victims of building collapse die in hosp

Three-member committee to fix responsibility of building collapse

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party spokesman Abbas Haider's mother Begum Haider (75) and wife Uzma Haider (35), both taken out of the rubble on Wednesday morning after a 12-hour-long rescue operation, were pronounced dead by the doctors at the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Hospital (Civil Hospital) shortly after being rushed to the medical facility. Till now 15 others have been safely rescued from the rubble and are recuperating at

the hospital. The survivors include Abbas' son Mustafa and his father Amir who is a Congress party veteran.

Meanwhile, Lucknow Commissioner of Police SB Shiradkar said that as per the latest information, 15 persons had been rescued from the accident site and now nobody was left to be evacuated.

"We have got information that there were only 17 persons of seven families present at different floors of the ill-fated apartment before it collapsed. Since 24 hours have passed, there are little chances of survival of anyone and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) teams are clearing the rubble to clear the site," Shiradkar added.

He said the rubble contained the valuables of the families which lived in the

building and so these will be collected and handed over to the families/victims rescued.

The commissioner of police said an FIR was registered against the builders of the Alaya apartment, identified as Mohammed Tariq, Nawazish Shahid and Fahad Yazdani and Nawazish Shahid had been arrested by the Meerut police and he was being brought to Lucknow. "Five teams have been formed to arrest the remaining two of the culprits named in the Alaya building collapse case," he added.

Shiradkar said that police had registered the FIR under the charges of Indian Penal Code sections 308 (attempt to commit culpable homicide), 420 (cheating), 323 (voluntarily causing hurt), 120-B (criminal conspiracy) against the three accused at Hazratganj police station.

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EAM slams Pompeo over slight to Sushma

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI / WASHINGTON

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has deplored the derisive remarks made by former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo against Sushma Swaraj when she headed the Foreign Ministry.

Jaishankar's sharp reaction came a day after Tuesday's launch of Mike Pompeo's book in which he made disparaging references about the late Swaraj. Writing about Swaraj, Pompeo said he never saw his counterpart Swaraj as an "important political player" but got along famously with S Jaishankar. "I have seen a passage in Secretary Pompeo's book referring to Smt Sushma Swaraj ji. I always



held her in great esteem and had an exceptionally close and warm relationship with her. I deplore the disrespectful colloquialism used for her," Jaishankar said.

In his latest book 'Never Give an Inch: Fighting for the America I Love' that hit the stores on Tuesday, Pompeo

describes Swaraj somewhat disparagingly, using the American slang words 'goofball' and 'heartland political hack' for her. Swaraj served as the External Affairs Minister from May 2014 to May 2019. She died in August 2019.

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'India-Pak came close to N-war after Balakot strike'

WASHINGTON: Former US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo wrote in his book that India and Pakistan came close to nuclear war in 2019 after the Balakot strike and that US intervention prevented escalation. "I do not think the world properly knows just how close the India-Pakistan rivalry came to spilling over into a nuclear conflagration in February 2019," the likely future presidential contender wrote in his memoirs of his time as Donald Trump's top diplomat and earlier CIA chief.

CAPSULE

INDIA INVITES CHINA, PAK FOR SCO MEET
New Delhi: Pakistan's Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and China's Qin Gang are among the Foreign Ministers of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation member nations invited by India for a high-level meeting it is scheduled to host in May.

Happy Republic Day

The Pioneer wishes its readers a very happy Republic Day. Our offices will remain closed on January 26, hence there will be no edition of the paper on January 27, except for the Delhi edition of The Pioneer that will be available for our readers.

'India seen with new respect on global stage'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In her maiden Address to the Nation on the eve of Republic Day, President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday said India is now being seen with "new respect" on the global stage.

She lauded the linguistic diversity of the country, founders of the Constitution for giving a moral framework, and commended the roles of farmers, workers, scientists and engineers whose



combined strength enables India to live up to the spirit of 'Jai Jawan, Jai Kisan, Jai Vigyan, Jai Anusandhan'.

Asserting that the world looked at India now with a "new respect", she pointed to the country's leadership of G20

and said it was an ideal platform to discuss and find solutions to "most pressing" problems such as global warming and climate change that were affecting the poor the most. The President said after a series of initiatives in recent years to transform all aspects of governance and unleash the creative energies of the people, the world has started to look at India with a new sense of respect.

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Padma Vibhushan for MSY, SM Krishna, Zakir Hussain

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Samajwadi Party founder late Mulayam Singh Yadav, former External Affairs Minister SM Krishna, and tabla maestro Zakir Hussain are among the six people listed for this year's Padma Vibhushan awards.

Others who will be bestowed the highest civilian honor are: Balkishna Doshi from Gujarat (posthumously), Dilip Mahalanabis (posthumously) who worked in relief camps during the Bangladesh war and US-based scientist and engineer Srinivas Varadhan.

No one has been named for the Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian award.

In the Padma Awards announced ahead of Republic Day 2023, President Droupadi Murmu also listed out nine names for Padma Bhushan and 91 for Padma Shri Awards.

The nine Padma Bhushan awardees include: Industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla, Infosys founder Narayana Murthy's wife and writer Sudha Murthy, Kannada writer SL Bhyrappa, and singer Vani Jayaram. Telangana's spiritual gurus Swami Chinna Jeevar Kamlesh D Patel and writer and educationist Kapil Kapoor from Delhi as well, and singer Suman Kalyapur from Maharashtra were also awarded Padma Bhushan.

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BBC's docu fuels unrest in varsities

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The proposed screening of the controversial BBC documentary 'India: The Modi Question' became a major flashpoint between students and the police at Jamia Millia Islamia University in the national Capital on Wednesday. The police first detained four students and later many more when the students led a protest to demand their release, the Students' Federation of India (SFI) claimed. The students of the Punjab University also

organised the screening of the BBC documentary which was stalled midway after authorities intervened. In a tweet, the Congress-affiliated students wing NSUI said "@NSUIChandigarh organised a screenplay of the BBC Modi documentary at Panjab University. The state president and many students watched the truth about democracy killers."

The SFI's bid to screen the documentary at the Jamia campus comes a day after a similar

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Swadeshi Resolution, The Only Option

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Har Pal Apke Saath

LDA sets probe into building collapse

JAIDEEP BHALLA ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) on Wednesday set up a probe into the collapse of the five-story Alaya Apartment at Wazir Hasan Road in Hazratganj area on Tuesday evening.

It was confirmed by experts that the apartment collapsed not due to an earthquake witnessed in the city, but the real cause was the unauthorised drilling of its pillars at their base which has weakened the foundation.

The probe committee will ascertain the number of apartments and complexes owned by Ghulam Yazdani, who is engaged in the real estate sector. He has such properties across the country.

The committee will find out whether the builders were following the norms set under the Urban Development Building Act. In case such buildings are located within UP and are violating the norms, they would be sealed immediately, leaving no scope of any more mishaps.

The LDA administration had decided to demolish the entire complex about four months back. Its anti-encroachment squad had pulled down a portion of the apartment, but further action was stopped following the stay awarded by the Allahabad High Court. The purpose of demolishing the building was that it violated rules and regulations.

Yazdani has immense property in western UP, as former MLA Shahid Manzur was his partner in the real estate business. Later, his son Fahad joined his father in running the business.

The state government has also issued a directive to the district magistrates to help the probing team identify their properties.

The LDA vice-chairman said that the probing team would seek the assistance of other departments and agencies in this regard, adding such buildings would be demolished as soon as they were identified in the public interest.

1 killed, 2 injured in clash over allotment of PMAY houses

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

One person was killed and two were critically injured when former village head Shiv Shankar alias Bhurey Singh and his henchmen opened indiscriminate fire on rival Bhim Singh and his supporters at a panchayat in Dakshin ka Pura locality in Azamgarh district.

Azamgarh's Superintendent of Police Anurag Arya said that a dispute between two groups took an ugly turn during a panchayat convened to decide the beneficiaries of a government housing scheme and Bhurey and his supporters opened indiscriminate fire.

"Himanshu Singh (32), Pradeep Singh Bhim (40) and Tavendra Singh Munna (38) suffered bullet injuries. They were rushed to the district hospi-

tal. In view of the critical condition of Himanshu, doctors referred him to a hospital in Varanasi where he died," the district police chief said.

"Five persons have been taken into custody so far. Four teams have been deputed to arrest Bhurey and his accomplices, who managed to escape after opening fire during the panchayat," the SP said.

In initial investigation, it came to light that a meeting was in progress to finalise the list of beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Rural). Former village head Bhurey was present in the meeting along with his henchmen. His political rival Bhim along with Himanshu and Munna were also present there. Bhim and his supporters alleged that Bhurey had ensured inclusion of the

names of his close ones in the list of beneficiaries from which the names of genuine persons of the village were excluded. Following an exchange of heated words, Bhurey and Bhim came face to face and Bhurey and his supporters opened indiscriminate fire with their licensed guns on Bhim and others.

The police said that Himanshu suffered bullet injuries in the chest. Bhim and Munna too, suffered bullet injuries. After the firing, the assailants fled the scene.

On getting information of the incident, Mehnajpur police reached there and rushed the injured persons to a local hospital. Later, Arya along with other officials reached the spot. A car of the assailants was seized by the police at the site of the incident while five persons

were taken into custody for interrogation.

Arya said, "Raids were being conducted at all possible hideouts of the assailants and they would be nabbed very soon."

Meanwhile a 53-year-old Samajwadi Party leader was found dead with injuries on his head at his home in Meerapur area under Katra police station in Shahjahanpur.

Police said the victim, Sartaz Khan, was alone when he was killed.

Police said the murder did not appear to be a fall out of a robbery as nothing was reported missing from the house.

"Prima facie, it appears the assailants knew the victim well," the police said.

An FIR was registered against

unidentified persons based on a complaint filed by the deceased's brother-in-law Mohammad Javed at Katra police station. No one has been arrested in the case yet. Superintendent of Police of Shahjahanpur, S Anand, said, "Footage from CCTVs installed around the area are being scanned. As the victim was wearing shoes when his body was found, it seems he was preparing to go somewhere when he was attacked."

During the probe, police came to know Sartaz's wife Reshma had gone to her relatives' house on Tuesday.

"When she returned, she found the door locked from inside and no one opened it despite several knocks. Later, with the help of locals, Reshma broke the door open and found Sartaz's body," police said.

Sanghamitra supports her father Maurya's remark

Lucknow (PNS): Bharatiya Janata Party MP from Budaun, Sanghamitra Maurya, who is daughter of Samajwadi Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya, came in support of her father over his remarks on Ramcharitmanas, saying there should be a debate on some portions of the Hindu epic.

"We take everything in a positive note; those who are having objections should look at it positively. There should be a debate on the question raised by my father and it should be clarified so that we do not face any kind of problem in future," she told media persons here on Wednesday. The BJP MP said the 'chauptai' (verse) of Ramcharitmanas called by

her father objectionable should be discussed with scholars.

"My father has read Ramcharitmanas. If he has mentioned a 'chauptai', it is probably because that line is contrary to the character of Lord Ram himself. While Lord Ram ate Shabari's berries without giving importance to caste, her caste has been described in that 'chauptai'," Sanghamitra said.

The MP said though she had not spoken to her father but if there was any doubt it should be clarified and there should be no debate in the media.

Sanghamitra claimed that the 'chauptai' was also questioned in a poem by great poetess Mahadevi Verma, saying

she too had said that she was surprised why no woman had raised an objection to it. Swami Prasad Maurya, a prominent Other Backward Class leader in Uttar Pradesh, kicked up a controversy recently by alleging that certain verses of Ramcharitmanas "insult" a large section of society on the basis of caste and demanded that these be "banned".

Samajwadi Party has maintained a distance from Maurya and said the comments were personal. It claimed that the remarks were made by Maurya in his personal capacity and not as a member of the SP. On Tuesday, an FIR was registered against Maurya for his remarks on the epic.



NOTICE

I Prabal Kumar S/o Arjun Singh R/o C-4/8 Lal Colony Nirala Nagar Lucknow have changed my name 'Prabal' and I shall hereafter be known as Prabal Kumar in every record.

NOTICE

I Ali Ahamad Kamal S/o Jamal Ahamad R/o 73Gha Shakti Nagar Lucknow. I have changed my son. Spelling Mounideen in School. So correct spelling is Moinuddin.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Himalaya Chaurasiya to Himalay Chaurasiya for all future purpose, Himalay Chaurasiya S/o Madan Gopal Chaurasiya R/o 141-A Mangla Vihar -2 Kanpur Nagar

NOTICE

In my High School Marksheets my name has wrongly been mentioned as Abhisek Gupta in place of Abhisek Gupta, Abhisek Gupta S/o Sri Devi Prasad Gupta R/o 31 K.R.Puram Saniganow Road, Kanpur Nagar.

NOTICE

I Sania Fatima Mirza daughter of Mirza Sabir Ali Beg, Resident of 16/21, Civil Lines, Flat No. 403 Naveen Enclave, Kanpur Nagar, have changed my name Sania Mirza to Sania Fatima Mirza. In future I shall be known by the name of Sania Fatima Mirza.

NOTICE

I, Manish Pandey S/o Late Surendra Nath Pandey residing permanently at 23/47/111 E-B Kidwai Nagar, Allahpur, Prayagraj, 211006. I have changed my minor daughter name from Amrya Pandey to Aaradhya Pandey born on 15.06.2018 at Cardiff, UK for all future purposes.

सूचना

सूचित किया जाता है कि मैं शपथी मो 0 आसिफ पुत्र मोहम्मद फहीम निवासी 359/335 कटरा खुदायार खां थाना सआदतगंज लखनऊ सूचित करता हूँ कि मेरे पुत्र का नाम पहले केवल जैद था जिसे मैंने अब बदलकर मोहम्मद जैद खान कर दिया है। अब मेरे पुत्र को मोहम्मद जैद खान पुत्र मो 0 आसिफ निवासी 359/335 कटरा खुदायार खां थाना सआदतगंज लखनऊ के नाम से ही जाना जाए।

4-year-old missing boy found dead

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a suspected case of kidnapping and murder, the body of a 4-year-old boy, missing for the last 22 days, was found lying in a sugarcane field in Gangoh police station area of Saharanpur.

The body was sent for autopsy and police started an investigation into the matter.

According to a police official, after getting information about a body from the villagers, they rushed to the sugarcane field in Khanpur Gurjar village under Gangoh police station of Saharanpur district on Tuesday evening and recovered the body. The deceased was identified as 4-year-old Lakshya of Khanpur Gurjar village.

According to the relatives of the deceased, the child had disappeared while playing outside the house at around 4 pm on January 2. An FIR was lodged in the police station when the relatives could not find him. Saharanpur's Senior Superintendent of Police Vipin Tada said that the body looked a few days old, and the exact cause of death was yet to be ascertained. He said the police were probing the entire matter.

Meanwhile, the body of a Class 12 girl, missing for the last fortnight, was recovered in Shahjahanpur on Tuesday evening.

Someone killed the victim, stuffed her body in a gunny bag and threw it in a pond to conceal the crime. The family members accused the local police of negligence which led to the death of the victim.

Reports said that Archana of Shiv Nagar village of Sidhauri area disappeared 15-days back. Her father, Sukhlal, and family members launched a search for her and when their attempts

failed they contacted the local police and senior officers but no one listened to his pleas to help him trace out his daughter.

His son had also died in a similar way seven years back. On Tuesday evening, someone saw a gunny bag lying in the pond and informed the police about it. The cops rushed to the spot and found the body of a girl inside the bag. The deceased was later identified as missing Archana.

The cops sent the body for autopsy and were making further investigations. They claimed that the girl appeared to have eloped with someone who later killed her and escaped.

Meanwhile, in a shocking incident reported from Gorakhpur district, an 18-year-old youth, who worked as a milk distributor, was allegedly beaten to death by a group of miscreants on Tuesday.

The incident took place at Nizampur in Tiwaripur police station area. The victim, identified as Vikas Yadav, was returning home after distributing milk to customers when some miscreants surrounded him and attacked him with rods and sticks, leading to his death. The victim's uncle, Parmeshwar Yadav, who arrived at the scene, immediately informed the police and rushed Vikas to hospital where doctors pronounced him dead.

After this, Senior Superintendent of Police Dr Gaurav Grover and SP (City) Krishna Kumar Bishnoi reached the spot and took the body into custody and started an investigation into the matter.

Family members of the deceased victim have denied any old enmity, said Bishnoi.

Man held for throwing his 4-kids in canal

Lucknow (PNS): A man has been arrested for allegedly throwing his four children into a canal following an argument with his wife, sources said on Wednesday. The 12-year-old daughter, whom the man flung from a 30-foot high bridge, not only managed to swim to safety but also rescued two of her siblings.

However, the fourth child, a five-year-old and youngest of the lot, is still missing. The accused, Pushpendra Kumar, after a domestic dispute, had gone to drop his wife at her father's place, 15 km away from the village. On his return, Kumar told his children that he would take them to a fair at a nearby shrine. On the way, he stopped at the bridge and threw his four kids -- Sonu (13), Prabha (12), Kajal (8), and Hemlata (5) -- into the 15-foot-deep canal. Prabha swam ashore and also brought her sister Kajal by tightly clutching her hand. Once ashore, she called out to her elder brother Sonu, who was drowning, and told

him to hold on to a bridge column till she ensured that help arrived. She then began to scream for help and waved frantically at passers-by who came to her rescue. All the three children were in a stable condition, villagers said, adding that divers had been deployed to trace out the missing child.

Narrating the incident, Sonu said that his father had hired an auto-rickshaw to go to the fair. He added, "We were excited and dressed up well. After travelling for a few minutes, we stopped on a bridge. He took us to show us the canal. He made us sit on the fence. When I asked about the depth of the canal, he pushed us down one by one. We are still unable to find our youngest sister." An FIR was later registered against Pushpendra under Indian Penal Code sections 363 (kidnapping) and 307 (attempt to murder) on the basis of a complaint filed by village watchman Chob Singh.

Woman killed for dowry

Lucknow (PNS): A newly-married woman was killed, allegedly by her husband and in-laws, and was cremated in Alambagh.

The incident took place on January 18, but a case was registered on Wednesday.

The deceased was identified as Khushi (age 20) of Sitapur district. Her brother, Ramji Gupta, said he was informed by the Alambagh police about the death of Khushi around 6:30 pm on January 18. "After the autopsy, Khushi's husband, Sooraj, of Sitapur who is presently living in Alambagh, his parents and his younger brother cremated her in a hurry without informing us about the cremation," he alleged. He said Khushi was married to Sooraj in November 2022, and Sooraj was given an adequate dowry. "After the marriage, Sooraj

and his family members started harassing Khushi for dowry. They were demanding Rs 50,000 in cash and a motorcycle as dowry from us and tortured Khushi to force her and us to pay the dowry," he alleged.

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This is to inform the general public that Smt. Kshama Kashyap, Sri Hari Krishna Kashyap and Sri Rajul Kashyap are availing the home loan facility from ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd. for purchasing house No. 341/283 (15'x16') constructed on plot No. 46 admeasuring area 30.613 sq. Mtr. i.e. 975 sq. feet situated at Purana Tikaitganj and District Lucknow. Sri Ram Dhani Maurya son of Sri Sukru purchased the aforesaid property from its previous owner Pragny Sheel Sahkar Grah Nirman Samiti Ltd, Lucknow having registration No. 301172, and the said sale deed is duly registered in the office of Chief Sub-Registrar, Lucknow at vide book No. 1 zild No. 3117 on pages 364 to 366 at serial No. 9771 dated 16.05.1998. First page of the aforesaid registered original sale deed dated 16/05/1998 is lost, and currently not in the possession of Sri Ram Dhani Maurya son of Sri Sukru. If any person have objection regarding the Mortgage of the aforesaid property than kindly contact Mr. Vishal Yadav Advocate Mob No. 9415164553 Chamber Add- 101/148, Sarsoni Khandak, Model House, Lucknow, within 7 days from the Publication of this Notice and after the expiry of said 7 days my client ICICI Home Finance Company Ltd will have the charge over the aforesaid property.

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Regional Office: Lucknow, Aryavart Bhawan, 569/20/K1, Sneh Nagar, V.I.P. Road, Opp. Awadh Hospital, Alambagh, Lucknow

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- ❖ अपना कार्ड सं., सीवीवी (CVV) नंबर, नेट बैंकिंग यूजर नेम, पासवर्ड, OTP, UPI PIN आदि गुप्त रखें। OTP का एसएमएस किसी को फॉरवर्ड न करें।
- ❖ लॉटर/कैशबैक/रिवार्ड पॉइंट/पेंशन अपडेट/सिम ब्लॉकिंग/KYC अपडेट जैसी लालच/धमकी भरी या सहायताथॉ कॉल धोखेबाजों द्वारा की जाती है। कोई भी जानकारी न दें एवं उनके द्वारा बताया गया कोई भी APP (जैसे ANYDESK, QUICK SUPPORT, TEAMVIEWER, MINGVIEW आदि) अपने मोबाइल में इंस्टॉल न करें।
- ❖ पैसे प्राप्त करने के लिए QR Code को स्कैन न करें और न ही UPI PIN डालें। UPI से भुगतान करने से पहले पाने वाले का नाम अवश्य देखें। जांच परख कर ही भुगतान करें। ध्यान रखें कि UPI पिन डालते ही आपके खाते से पैसा निकल जायेगा।
- ❖ सर्व साइटों से हेल्पलाइन नंबर न खावें, किसी भी समाधान के लिए आधिकारिक वेबसाइट पर ही जायें। डिजिटल लेनदेन सम्बंधी विवादों को कभी भी सोशल मीडिया पर साझा न करें।
- ❖ बैंक द्वारा प्रत्येक डिजिटल लेनदेन के बाद मैसेज (SMS) भेजा जाता है, यदि आपने वह लेनदेन नहीं किया है तो तुरंत उस मैसेज को SMS में दिये गए नंबर पर फॉरवर्ड कर दें।

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Bundelkhand region attracting investments

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bundelkhand region, which remained neglected and underdeveloped during the previous regimes, has attained success in attracting investments under the Yogi Adityanath government ahead of the proposed UP Global Investors' Summit.

District Jhansi has so far broken the record of all the districts in the investors' summits being held at the local level in the districts of UP. So far, more than 146 proposals worth Rs 1,11,610.90 crore have been received by the government, out of which memorandums of understanding (MoUs) have been signed for investment worth about Rs 65,000 crore. Among these, a MoU amounting to Rs 50,000 crore has been signed in the field of energy. Jhansi Investors' Summit was organised on Wednesday for the purpose of encouraging investors, making them aware of the schemes of the government and solving their problems. Local entrepreneurs as well as investors from other

parts of the country also participated in this summit and got their doubts cleared. Before the Global Investors' Summit, more than 146 proposals worth Rs 1,11,610.90 crore have been received in Jhansi district.

At the Jhansi Investors' Summit, Union Minister of State for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma, informed the investors about the schemes and incentives being received from the government.

Most of the investors in Jhansi district have shown a keen interest in the energy sector. Along with this, a large number of investors have shown interest in tourism, housing, defence and MSME sectors.

Jhansi's Chief Development Officer Junaid Ahmed said that the maximum investment in the district was coming in the energy sector. "Many units of tourism and housing are also coming up here. This will result in creation of massive employment opportunities, giving jobs to about 58,000 people," he said.

Govt working to empower disabled, bring them into mainstream: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath stated that the state government is working with determination to empower the disabled and bring them into the mainstream of society and development.

On Wednesday, during the Janata Darshan programme organised at the Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Auditorium of the Gorakhnath Temple in Gorakhpur, the chief minister said, "Divyangjan need encouragement and cooperation more than sympathy. The administration and departmental officers should make sure that the appropriate resources, equipment and certificates are available on a priority basis to Divyangjan."

Over 300 people came to meet the chief minister at the Janata Darshan programme. The chief minister assured them that every problem would be resolved in a quick and satisfactory manner.

Some Divyangjan came to the Janata Darshan to request



a tricycle, while Divyang with mental problems and their family members came to ask for issuance of a certificate.

After learning of their issues, the chief minister gave direction to quickly provide tricycles or motorised tricycles to the needy individuals. Along with this, he gave instructions that no obstacles of any type should stand in the way of giving certificates to people with mental disabilities.

On the requests of several visitors for financial assistance for the treatment of serious diseases, the chief minister said that funds would be provided as soon as the estimates were ready. "No one's treatment will be hampered due to lack of

CM greets people on R-Day, Basant Panchami

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has extended hearty greetings and best wishes to the people of the state on Republic Day and Basant Panchami.

In his message the chief minister said that Republic Day reminds us of the sacrifices of the freedom fighters and inspires us to remain devoted to the Constitution.

"Presently the country is celebrating Amrit Mahotsava of its independence. This special period gives us an opportunity to introspect and commit ourselves to achieve the dreams and goals of the great patriots," he said.

About Basant Panchami, the chief minister said this festival was the day of manifestation of Mother Saraswati, the goddess of learning, wisdom, knowledge, arts and music.

"Saraswati Puja is organised to express gratitude to God for the place man has achieved through contemplation and meditation in various fields, including religion-spirituality, civilization-culture, knowledge-science, art-literature," he said.

The chief minister said that in our tradition, festivals

and festivals were inspiring opportunities to strengthen nationalism and enthusiasm. He said the festival of Basant Panchami was a symbol of pride and prosperity of our culture. "Basantotsav is a festival of joy of nature," he added.

PM SVANidhi benefits over 4L street vendors

Lucknow (PNS): Continuing its thrust on pro-poor initiatives, the Yogi Adityanath government is leaving no stone unturned in uplifting the needy and deprived as 8.76 lakh loans have been disbursed under PM Street Vendor's Atma Nirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi Scheme) in all the districts of UP till December 2022.

"Committed to providing economic and social security to the poor, the state government in the last six years, has not only formulated many schemes but has also effectively implemented the Central schemes for every needy to benefit them. Under the Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) scheme in Uttar Pradesh, over four lakh street vendors are getting benefits. Moreover, till December, about 46 per cent of the active registered vendors have carried out transactions worth Rs 7 crore," a government spokesman said in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

The UP districts where maximum number of street vendors are digitally active are Varanasi, Prayagraj, Firozabad, Lucknow and Meerut. About 34,514 loans have been settled digitally in Varanasi, which has about 25,851 street vendors. Of these, 74.90 per cent have got loans under the scheme. Transactions of more than Rs 32 lakh have taken place here.

Similarly, 25,851 street vendors are active in Prayagraj. Here, more than 37 lakh transactions have been done. As many as 12,347 street vendors are active in Firozabad. Similarly, there are 40,740 active vendors in Lucknow. Here, transactions totaling Rs 1.14 crore have taken place through 77,247 loans. Meerut also has 16,957 active vendors registered. Here, 35,015 loans have been disbursed and transactions of more than Rs 26 lakhs have been completed.

To ensure benefits to maximum vendors, the state government is constantly making efforts to make street vendors digitally active. A survey was conducted in all the districts to identify the vendors who have been using other UPI IDs. The government is also setting up camps to ensure that the vendors become digitally advanced.

Under the PM SVANidhi scheme, the government provides loans to the street vendors to resume their work. These include people like vegetable sellers, fruit sellers and even those having small fast food shops. Under the scheme, the government provides loans up to Rs 50,000. Under this scheme, the government also provides subsidies on the loan. Once the application is approved, the loan amount is transferred to the account in three installments.

Ganga barrage illuminated with tricolor

PNS ■ KANPUR

Ganga Barrage has been illuminated with colours of the Indian flag in celebration of the Republic Day. The contractor company Orient Electric Limited has used indigenously developed Façade lighting solutions to light up the site, with the option to programme lighting levels, colours and effects through controllers. Ganga Barrage is one of the topmost tourist attractions, popularly referred to as best sunset point in the city. Chairman of the Kanpur Smart City Ltd Dr Raj Shekhar said, "The tricolour illumination creates a

mesmerising visual experience for the visitors while igniting the spirit of patriotism". Around 14,000 single chip RGBW LEDs have been used to light up this project using floodlights and wall washers, gobo lights and pixel linear lights. The reflection of the lights can be seen 500 metres away from the ghat which creates a mesmerising visual for the visitors. Executive Vice-President Puneet Dhawan said, "We are proud to have partnered with the government authorities to illuminate the Ganga Barrage in Tricolour for the Republic Day with our advanced façade lighting solutions".



The illuminated Ganga Barrage in colours of Indian flag in celebration of Republic Day.

Kataria's appeal to Kanpur Electricity Supply Company

PNS ■ KANPUR

Chairman of Uttar Pradesh Infrastructure and Civic Amenities Committee Manish Kataria addressing a meeting at Merchants Chamber of UP on Wednesday made a fervent appeal to the Kanpur Electricity Supply Company (KESCO) to remove all electricity poles and transformers kept on roadsides as they were eating into the space meant for smooth movement of traffic.

He said people, especially children, were every day

stranded for over two hours in their school buses on roads on account of these bottlenecks. He said unmanned transformers are also a threat to milk cattle during rains.

He said the Committee had umpteen times highlighted how these electricity poles in the middle of roads are posing a grave threat to the commuters who have for long been demanding that they be shifted, but in vain.

He claimed that with most of street lights not functional it posed a risk to the lives of commuters driving in the dark at risk. Kataria said

demands to widen roads had been put up.

He said quite a few huge transformers had been installed inside public parks which posed a threat to the lives of the children playing there.

He said transformers have been placed even near schools of children.

He appealed to Managing Director, KESCO, A Dhingra to ensure that all electricity poles which were eating into the space meant for commuters should be removed along with transformers which hinder traffic.

Voters' Day celebrated to encourage youth

PNS ■ KANPUR

National Voters' Day is celebrated on January 25 to encourage the youth to actively participate in voting in the electoral process and also focused on the fact that the right to vote was a basic right. It reflected the importance of voting and was a constitutional right. People must vote as it only helped bring a change.

This was stated by Dr Balkar Singh, observer for the teachers' constituency, while addressing the meeting at Vikas Bhawan. He said it is a matter of grave concern that even today hundreds of Indians are unaware of the importance of voting. He said in the forthcoming elections people need to vote as each vote counts and must remember that vote is their voice. He said by observing the factors and incidents happening in the world it was easy to understand that voting was more important than ever before. He said it was in fact a constitutional right that should be utilised.

He said voting was a great way to reflect people's opinions and demand changes they needed in the country. He said voting is a necessary action that can affect the people, society and the country.

An individual needs to vote to impact a government's policies and laws. Whether someone agrees or disagrees with decisions, people must voice their opinion and vote. He said the graduate and teach-



Dr Balkar Singh and Saurabh Babu, observers addressing meeting at Vikas Bhawan (below) People being administered oath on National Voters' Day on Wednesday.

ers' constituency elections are at the threshold and if people want a change or they feel a change can contribute in uplift

then they will have to vote come what may.

He said that in Kanpur there were 100 polling centres

for graduate constituency while for teachers' constituency it was 63. He said in graduate constituency there were 1,64,428 voters and 11,485 voters in teachers' constituency. He said all had been divided into 11 zones and 30 sectors.

SYMPOSIUM ORGANISED

On the occasion of 13th National Voters' Day, a symposium was organised at the Stepping Stone Inter College, Govind Nagar, on Wednesday. The speakers highlighted the importance of one's vote.

They said the National Voters' Day celebration aimed at inspiring young people to get involved in politics. The first National Voters' Day was observed on January 25, 2011 and since then it has been observed on January 25 with a particular theme. It not only promotes young people's involvement in politics but also emphasises that the right to vote is a fundamental freedom protected by the Constitution.

Thereafter, all participants were administered oath by BLOs for exercising their franchise and spreading awareness among other people. New voters were felicitated with garlands to enthuse them for the cause.

Prominent participants included Prakash Vir Arya, Guddi Sharma, Rajesh Bajpai, Shammi Bhalla, Manoj Pal, Manoj Kushwaha, Vineet Oberoi, Nitin Kumar and Suresh Kumar.

Workshop on river conservation

PNS ■ KANPUR

A special workshop was conducted in Glasgow under the aegis of Centre for Ganga River Basin Management and Studies (cGanga), IIT Kanpur as an extension of the collaborative work being done by India and Scotland to conserve and develop Ganga river and Clyde river in their respective countries.

The two countries took the opportunity to share their knowledge as well as technology that could help address the challenges in the direction of river conservation.

The workshop was addressed by G Asok Kumar, Director General, National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and founding director of Centre for Ganga Basin Management and Studies (cGanga) Prof Vinod Tare of IIT Kanpur.

The workshop saw participation from the representatives of administrative and non-administrative organisations working in the area of river management and welfare of Clyde river in Scotland, researchers working on river science and representatives of private companies working on environment and river conservation.

The constitution of the Ganga-Clyde Environment and Economic Partnership (GCEEP) Forum was also

officially announced at the workshop.

The purpose of this forum was to encourage bilateral trade, investment and exchange of knowledge between the two countries. Sanmit Ahuja, who is an expert of C-Ganga, also gave a presentation on the Ganga-Clyde Environment and Economic Partnership Forum at the event.

The foundation of the collaborative project between India and Scotland was laid in 2017 and the agreement signed between Hydration Initiative of Scotland and Government of India was also documented in 2017. National Mission for Clean Ganga and IIT Kanpur's Centre for Ganga Basin Management and Studies, representing the Government of India, shared techniques that would aid in river conservation as well as the new experiments in this direction with the James Hutton Institute of Scotland.

Following the collaboration between India and Scotland, Glasgow hosted the COP26 conference in November 2021. It organised Ganga Connect exhibition and road show at the venue under the joint sponsorship of the local Indian Embassy and National Mission for Clean Ganga and C-Ganga. An exhibition, centring around Ganga, was also organised in London as well.

The Indian Economic

Embassy of Edinburgh followed it up with a round table-conference in November 2022, which was participated by 25 Scottish companies working in the field of environment. Now, the conduct of this workshop is another step in strengthening this collaboration.

SIX JUDGES SELECTED

As many as six judges have been selected from Kanpur for the successful conduct of the State Taekwondo Championship 2022-23 (cadet, junior and senior Kyorugi and Poomsae categories) to be organised at the Akhil Bhartiya Jangid Brahma Mahasabha auditorium, 2/1 Sector 4, Vidyadhar Nagar, Jaipur (Rajasthan) on January 27 and 28.

They included Prayag Singh, Satyendra Singh Yadav, Basuki Nath Ojha, Dharmesh Kumar, Atul Dubey and Pranav Jha. On the basis of their performance in this championship, players will be selected for the National Taekwondo Championship.

All the judges will proceed for Jaipur on January 26. The office-bearers of the Kanpur Taekwondo Association, including Deepak Chaurasia (president), Dinesh Dixit (vice president) and Pradip Singh (general secretary) congratulated the six judges of the city for their selection.

Canara Bank DGM reviews performance of Knp branches

Kanpur (PNS): Deputy General Manager, Canara Bank, Regional Office Lucknow, Lok Nath, while chairing the Regional Office 2 meeting recently reviewed the performance of Kanpur branches. Assistant General Manager and Regional Head, Mukesh Malhotra also reviewed the third trimester (December 2022) on several other parameters. The officials of 11 districts along with agricultural extension officials took part in the special review meeting.

The DGM reviewed loans provided by the bank and directed that under the government schemes more accounts need to be opened so that more loan benefit can be provided to the beneficiaries. He also emphasised on the need for best customer service. He said that Canara Bank was one of the leading government banks which had always been in the forefront in implementing all schemes introduced by the state and central governments. He directed the branch heads to settle all government schemes put on JanSamarth Portal on priority. He then reviewed the performance of branches relating to retail loans, small and medium industry and directed them to distribute loans as much as possible.

Dhrupad singer felicitated

PNS ■ KANPUR

Noted Dhrupad singer of the city Pt Vinod Kumar Dwivedi has been felicitated with the Bade Ghulam Ali Khan Rangbharti Samman at a function jointly organised by the Rangbharti and Uttar Pradesh Nagrik Parishad in Lucknow.

Deputy Chief Minister Brijesh Pathak was the chief guest on this occasion.

Pandit Vinod Kumar Dwivedi has carved a niche in the field of Dhrupad style of recital by performing in various national and international level musical concerts.

Pandit Vinod Kumar Dwivedi has been felicitated with several prestigious awards, including the UP Sangeet Natak Akademi Award, Kala Vibhushan Award Sri Lanka, Sangeet Naad Yogi, Sangeet Gaurav Samman, Sur Gandharva Mani Gayak Award (Kandy, Sri Lanka) and Dhrupad maestro Award (Abu Dhabi).

Pandit Vinod Kumar Dwivedi is a senior artist of AIR and Doordarshan in Lucknow.

Vinod Kumar Dwivedi is an ICCR panel artist and an examiner at the Bhatkhande University, Lucknow, Prayag Sangeet Samiti, Prayagraj and Banaras Hindu University (BHU).

Vinod Kumar Dwivedi is working as a lecturer (Music) here at the Jugal Devi Saraswati Vidhya Mandir and Director of Ranjana Devi Sangeet Mahavidhyalaya.

Bollywood singers Ankit Tewari and Shivam Pathak are among many of his disciples shining in their field at the national and international level.

Finance Committee of MGKV expects ₹17 crore deficit

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Finance Committee of Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith (MGKV) has approved Rs 105 crore as the expenditure against the revised income of Rs 88 crore for the financial year of 2022-2023. The committee has expected of a deficit of Rs 17 crore in this financial year.

The finance committee of the university met with the Vice-Chancellor in the chair at the administrative building on varsity campus here on Monday and approved the revised budget of the financial year of 2022-2023 and estimated budget of the financial year of 2023-2024.

Against the target of the actual income of Rs 78.13 crore in the financial year of 2021-2022, Rs 64.85 crore was spent and so, the saving was Rs 13.27 crore, the meeting informed, adding that the meeting made a provision of the expenditure of Rs 128 crore against an estimated income of Rs 95 crore in the financial year of 2023-2024 and thus, the deficit of Rs 33 crore has been expected.

The meeting decided that the finance officer Santosh Kumar Sharma and professor in charge of Engineering department Prof Pitambara Das will review the progress in building construction and development projects each week.

The meeting also decided to give away the cash prize of Rs 51,000, Rs 41,000, Rs 31,000 and Rs 21,000 to the players of the university on bagging first position, second position, third position and representing the country respectively in the international sports tournaments.

The Additional Director, Treasury & Pension, Varanasi Division SK Gautam, Regional Higher Education Officer De Gyan Prakash Erma, ex finance officer of Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Awadh University RP Singh, registrar Harish Chand, Examination Controller Prof Vanshidhar Pandey and Finance Officer Santosh Kumar Sharma were present in the meeting.

LADY POLICE OFFICER TO LEAD PARADE: Conveying a message of

women empowerment, a female police officer Shiva Singh will lead the parade in the Police Lines this year on the occasion of the Republic Day on Thursday.

The Additional Commissioner of Police (ACP), Chetganj Shiva Singh will lead the parade on the occasion of the Republic Day to be held in the Police Lines here on Thursday.

She is an IPS officer of 2020 batch. The parade was routine part during the training in the academy but to lead the parade on the occasion of the Republic Day will be special and give a new experience, she said.

The second commander of the parade will be ACP, Kotwali Pratiq Kumar.

He is DySP of the 2018 batch of Provincial Police Service. Republic Day is the special day and to be part of the team leading the parade on this special day is special, he said.

The third commander of the parade is also a female police officer Priyasri Pal who is DySP of 2018 batch of the Provincial Police Service.

Abducted advocate recovered by police

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

District court advocate Ashutosh Dwivedi, who was abducted on the evening of January 19 from Karchhana area of Yamunanagar, has been recovered. He was found lying with hand and foot tied on the roadside in Vindhyachal area of Mirzapur area. However, Karchhana police has taken advocate Ashutosh to Vindhyachal police station.

Ashutosh Dwivedi son of Ashwani Kumar Dwivedi, resident of Achhola village of Manda police station area of Prayagraj is an advocate in District Court and Tehsil Meja. According to family members, on morning of January 19, he had gone to the district court on a motorcycle. After that, he did not return. He was searched throughout the night but there was no trace of him.

His search continued on January 20 as well. Late evening Ashutosh Dwivedi's motorcycle, bag, mobile and Aadhaar card were found lying near the culvert on Bendou Marg of Panasa village under Karchhana police station area. Father Ashwini

Kumar Dwivedi had lodged an FIR against three villagers Vinay Kumar Dwivedi, Arun Kumar Tripathi and Virendra Kumar Tripathi for kidnapping on the night of January 20.

Since then the family members were troubled by the apprehension of untoward incident and the police were also continuously searching for him.

On January 24, the fifth day after the incident, some people saw a man lying with his hands and legs tied on the side of the road leading to Vijaypur hill under Vindhyachal police station area of Mirzapur district.

On the information of the local people, Vindhyachal police reached and freed the advocate from bondage.

During interrogation, advocate Ashutosh told the police that he was abducted by some people. He was being beaten ever since he was abducted.

He was being injected with drugs. At the time when Ashutosh was found, he was feeling dizzy. Vindhyachal police took him to the police station after getting treatment. On the information of

the police, the Karchhana police have left for Vindhyachal.

EMPLOYEES REQUEST FAIR INVESTIGATION

About 150 Hindu-Muslim employees working in the Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Science (SHUATS), Prayagraj have sent a representation to the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Director General of Police, calling the allegations of conversions in SHUATS baseless.

It has been said that the reputation of SHUATS is being tarnished by accusing false conversion allegations by a dismissed employee, some ex-students and anti-social elements and it is disgusting to implicate SHUATS officials in the conversion case.

The employees have pleaded for justice, demanding an impartial inquiry.

Around 150 employees wrote in their representation that they belong to non-Christian religion and have been working in SHUATS for 15-25 years. University education is of high class.

Teachers of all religions working in shuats are given full respect here. They have never given any allurements nor was any pressure made to change his religion. There is no conversion in SHUATS and people of all religions are given the freedom to work with their religion.

The employees said in their report that Yeshu Darbar Church is the university church where worship of Lord Jesus Christ is done and prayer is done for sick people, which is live broadcasted through YouTube. The question of conversion does not arise at all. According to the representation, dismissed employees, former students, who have hatred for the university, along with anti-social elements, are hatching a conspiracy to implicate the SHUATS officials to destroy the 112-year-old prestigious institution, for which false allegations and rumors are being spread.

All the employees requested for a fair investigation of the conversion case and pleaded for justice to save the image of the 112-year-old renowned institution.

'Regular clapping improves blood circulation'

PNS ■ KANPUR

Clapping is known to improve the overall heart health and improve blood pressure. Blood circulation to various organs also improved by regular clapping. Clapping also helped improve asthma related problems by promoting function of nerve endings that connected these organs. This was stated by noted yoga expert Milind Sardar while addressing a yoga workshop on diabetes and heart reversal at Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU).

He said one also clapped

Clapping helps to get relief from heart disease and asthma related problems by promoting functions of nerve endings

when happy and excited. He said clapping will help lot to get relief from heart disease and asthma related problems. He said it helped to a great extent nerves which connected heart, liver, lungs,

etc and if one clapped it helps the nerves to work better.

Milind said it boosted immunity because it strengthened the white blood cells in body and these protected body from any kind of illness. He said clapping stimulated blood circulation and removed all obstructions in veins and arteries, including bad cholesterol. He advised if one clapped 1,500 times a day it will keep one fit. He said clapping can help train children's motor skills so that they can produce neat handwriting, write better and reduce spelling

error.

He said if one clapped every day for an hour after a meal one will feel warmth and may be even sweat on both hands and feet. He said this helps in good digestion of food. He said in order to get good results before clapping one should apply coconut or mustard oil on both palms so that it was absorbed by the body.

He said diseases like heart conditions, hypertension and diabetes, depression, asthma, common cold and arthritis, headaches, insomnia and hair loss could be cured by clapping.



KDA Vice-Chairman Arvind Singh administering oath to officers and staff members on National Voters' Day.

Govt depts allowed to open shops at emporium in KV Dham

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In an important decision, the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board has allowed the government departments to open their shops at emporium in Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham premises.

In its 11th meeting held at the auditorium in the office of divisional commissioner here on Tuesday with the Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma in the chair, the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board took the decision that the government departments could open their shops at emporiums developed in the premises of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Dham. The shop will be allotted under the scheme of Come First Get First, the meeting decided.

The booking process for the shop on the ground floor of the emporium has begun, informed the Chief Executive Officer of the Board Sunil Kumar Verma, adding that the shops would be allotted to the government departments at per fixed rate.

The meeting decided to allot the shops on the floors 21 per cent less than the fixed rate, he informed.

The meeting gave its nod to the proposal to make allot-



The DC Kaushal Raj Sharma chairing the meeting of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Special Area Development Board. Pioneer

ment to the institutions publishing the religious books for the spiritual book store at the concessional rate, Verma informed.

The allotment of more than 10 buildings of the premises of the Dham has been made and their use would begin from the next month, informed the CEO, adding that the shops have also been allotted to as many as 77 shop owners.

The arrangement is being made to open ticket counter at each gate of the Shri Kashi Vishwanath Mandir and provide information to the devotees, informed Verma, adding that the new bhogshala to prepare bhog-prasad of Baba Vishwanath in which the bhog-prasad to offer Baba at the time of aarti would soon be prepared.

The District Magistrate S Rajalingam suggested installing

signage in the premises and plates of the same frame and design for the allottee shop owners for the uniformity and beauty of the premises. In the beginning of the meeting, the progress report of the last meeting was discussed and the new proposals were put before the board members.

The DCP, Kadi RS Gautam and VDA VC Abhishek Goel were also present in the meeting.

Cabinet min Nandi sentenced to one year imprisonment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Special MP/MLA Court of Prayagraj held cabinet minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi guilty in an old case of 2014 of an attempt on the life of a Dalit, and pronounced one year jail term against the minister besides a fine of Rs 10,000. A case had been registered against him under SC/ST Act at Mutthiganj police station on May 3, 2014 during elections. Nandi was with the Congress at that time.

Both the parties pleaded the case before the Special MP/MLA Court Prayagraj judge Dr Dinesh Chandra Shukla and presented witnesses. After hearing the parties at length the court pronounced one year jail term for Nandi and a fine of Rs 10,000.

In 2014 Parliamentary Election, Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi was a Congress candidate from Allahabad seat. An FIR was lodged against him on May 3, 2014 at Mutthiganj police station by Venkat Raman Shukla of the Samajwadi Party alleging that Nandi instigated goons to attack SP workers, who had been beaten brutally. Abusive language was used against Dalit workers, and fires were shot with an intention to kill the Dalit workers of the Samajwadi Party.

The advocates of Nandi will move the High Court after procuring the official copy of the judgement of the MP/MLA Court of Prayagraj.

CHC SUPERINTENDENT, HEALTH EDUCATION OFFICER REMOVED:

Superintendent Dr. Anurag Tiwari posted at Community Health Center (CHC) Kaudihar has been removed on the instructions of Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak. Dr. Anurag is accused of performing duty in a drunken state and misbehaving with ASHA workers.

Along with him, the health education officer posted in the hospital has also been removed. Recently, ASHA workers reached the CMO office and made this complaint. A letter was also given to the local public representative a few days ago. The Deputy Chief Minister made the information public by tweeting regarding the action. The matter will also be investigated. Kalpana, President of Asha Karyakarta Sangh, had given a complaint letter to CMO Dr. Ashu Pandey. In this, serious allegations were made against Superintendent Dr. Anurag Tiwari and Health Education Officer (HEO) Dinesh Lal Yadav.

It was said that Dr. Anurag and Dinesh Lal are often found in an inebriated state when ASHA workers reach the hospital at night with a pregnant woman. They allegedly misbehave with ASHA workers. Although the same complaint was also made to former CMO Dr. Nanak Saran, but then Anurag Tiwari was blessed and he remained in his post.

Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak tweeted on his official account and directed CMO Prayagraj to remove CHC Superintendent and HEO with immediate effect, investi-

gate the allegation and send the report in three days.

CMO Dr. Ashu Pandey told that Dr. Anurag has been removed and attached to Sansaripur CHC. Dinesh Lal Yadav has been shifted. No comment was made regarding the absence of action on these two in the past.

KARBALA OUTPOST INCHARGE SUSPENDED: The in-charge of the Karbala police out-post, who had been missing for three days, returned on the fourth day on Tuesday but the pistol was missing. On being asked by the officers, he told them that his pistol was stolen from the car.

After this, after the orders of higher officials, he has been suspended and FIR has also been registered against him. Additional Commissioner of Police Akash Kulhari said that a case has been registered while suspending the outpost in-charge. Departmental action will be taken for this negligence. The information about where he was for three days is not yet available. Inquiries are being done for this purpose. It is wrong to go missing without information, a report has also been filed for this, added the ACP. Sub Inspector Jagannarayan Singh is basically a resident of Sonbhadra district. He was earlier posted at Mauahia police station. For two months, he was in charge of the Karbala Police Station in Khulabad. He had gone missing since Saturday evening. The mobile was also found switched-off due to which even their location could not be

traced. CCTV footage etc. was scanned but he was not traced.

He returned to Khulabad police station on Tuesday evening. Senior police officers also reached on its information. When enquired, the outpost in-charge kept giving irrelevant answers. Giving his clarification, he told that his official pistol was stolen. Perhaps that is the reason why he had disappeared without notice.

DM ORDERS ACTION AGAINST PMAY DEFAULTERS: A large number of people have taken funds under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban). But, they are not getting the house built. The district administration is now identifying such beneficiaries who have taken funds from the government for housing, but the construction work has not yet started. District Magistrate Sanjay Kumar Khatri has instructed all the SDMs to issue RC against such beneficiaries. Along with this, it has been directed that the process of getting the money back from these beneficiaries should be started. The District Magistrate held a review meeting of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) and inquired about it in detail. The DM has instructed all the executive officers and organizations concerned to complete the work of progress and geo-tagging of pending houses within a week. Along with this, instructions have been given to complete the investigation of applications pending at Tehsil level in Nagar Panchayats and Municipal Corporation.

National Voters' Day celebrated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The National Voters' Day was on Wednesday celebrated at the auditorium in the commissioner's Rifle Club, government offices and blocks and the oath to exercise their votes was taken to uphold the dignity of the democratic tradition of the country. The theme of Day was 'Nothing like voting, We shall go for voting'.

In the auditorium of the commissioner, the District Magistrate and District Election Officer S Rajalingam administered the oath to the people that we will uphold the dignity of democratic traditions of our country and uphold the dignity of free, fair and peaceful elections. shall exercise his right to vote in all elections without being influenced by religion, class, caste, community, language or any other inducement. The DM also administered the oath to the officers and employees of the Collectorate in Rifle Club.

Voting is our right and each vote strengthens the democracy, said the DM, adding that more emphasis is being given on adding new voters in the electoral rolls. The BLOs who performed well in generating awareness about voting among the people and the participants who secured positions in the competitions held under SVEEP, were also honoured on the occasion. The volunteers of NSS, BHU staged a play conveying the message of using their franchise to vote. The CDO Himanshu Nagpal, ADM, Administration Ranvijay Singh and others were present on the occasion.

The programme on the day was also held at Parini Bhavan of the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University (SSU) in which the Vice-Chancellor Prof



The DEO/DM S Rajalingam administering oath on the occasion of National Voters' Day. Pioneer

Hareram Tripathy administered the resolution to the teaching and non-teaching staff and students to uphold the democratic tradition by exercising voting rights. The day is celebrated on the foundation day of the Election Commission of India on January 25 with an aim to increase the number of voters in the election, said the V-C, appealing to all to ensure their active participation in the democratic process by exercising their voting rights. The day was also celebrated in BHU, MGKV and other institutions.

The municipal corporation also held programmes at its head office and zonal offices to mark the day. The Additional Municipal Commissioner Sumit Kumar administered the oath in the head office, while the zonal officers administered the resolution at the zonal offices. The

day was also celebrated at the blocks.

The schoolchildren of Harish Chandra Inter College and Harish Chandra Girls Inter College took out a rally from Maidagin to generate awareness about the voting right among the people.

14 candidates file nomination papers for Kshetra Panchayat:

As many as 14 candidates submitted nomination papers for the four seats of Kshetra Panchayat for which the voting is scheduled to be conducted on February 9. The counting will be held on February 10 and the results will be declared the same day.

Parmila filed nomination papers on the Chitauri seat (reserved for women of Scheduled Caste) of Chirgaon block, while Swetaj Pandey, Santosh Kumar Rajbhar, Basanti Devi, Santosh Kumar Singh, Dinkar Chaubey,

Shashikesh Pratap Singh, Sakshi Singh, Kaushal and Ashwani Kumar Singh submitted nomination papers on the seat of Sevo (general) of the same block. Reena, Janaki Devi and Radha Yada filed nomination papers on the Darekhu seat of Arajilina block (Women), while Gayatri submitted nomination paper on the Babatpur seat (Women) of Pindra block. The nomination papers can be withdrawn on January 27 from 10 am to 3 pm and the election symbols will be allotted the same day after 3 pm. The voting is scheduled to be conducted on February 9 from 7 am to 5 pm and the counting will be held from 8 am and onwards on February 10 and the results will be declared the same day.

The nomination papers were submitted at the head office of the respective blocks from 10 am to 4 pm on Tuesday.

IFFCO Phulpur a trustworthy organisation of farmers

PRAYAGRAJ: In the year 1967, around 57 Indian Cooperatives came together to form the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited, known as world's No 1 fertiliser cooperative started with the aim for the betterment of Indian farmers and ensuring food security of the country. IFFCO has five state-of-the-art fertiliser manufacturing plants all over the country. IFFCO contributes about 32% phosphoric and 21% nitrogenous fertilisers demand in India and was ranked 1st among the top 300 cooperatives of the world by world cooperative monitor, ICA this year.



Jordan Besides fertilisers, IFFCO has diversified into sectors General Insurance, Cattle Nutrition, Rural e-commerce, SEZ, International trading, food processing and E-Bazar.

IFFCO is also committed to PM's vision of "Sahkar se Samridhi" and is dedicated towards strengthening the cooperative movement across the country.

IFFCO developed world's first nano fertiliser, IFFCO nano urea and commercially introduced with aim to reduce the use of chemical fertiliser, a giant step towards sustainable agriculture. IFFCO's nano urea has been developed keeping in mind Prime Minister initiative 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Atmanirbhar Krishi' which will lead to increase in farmers income. IFFCO nano urea has a positive impact on the agri-food sector minimising problems on environment, human health thus ensuring good productivity security.

Production of nano urea will reduce subsidy burden of Government of India in the substantial amount. This year 2022 has been a great year as IFFCO's revolutionary product world's first nano urea gained wide scale acceptability and success throughout the nation by the farmers.

IFFCO has commissioned two more nano urea plants at Aonla and Phulpur in December-2022. Production was started from Phulpur on 23rd December-2022. Phulpur unit is producing around daily 30,000 (500ml bottles) nano urea and till date production is 7.0 lakhs (500ml bottles). Production of nano urea till date is 5.5 crores 500 ml bottles (equivalent to 24.7 lakh MT urea).

इंडियन बैंक Indian Bank (A Govt of India Undertaking) **e-Auction**

Zonal Office: 10/379 Rameni (Tarauns), Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh - 210301

Sale notice for sale of immovable properties [See proviso Rule 8 (6)]

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrowers and Guarantors that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank), Zonal Office: 10/379 Rameni (Tarauns), Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh - 210301 as Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 27.02.2023 for recovery of Bank's dues from Borrowers and Guarantors to the Secured Creditor. The details are described as below:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower/ Branch/Phone No.	Name of Property Owner/Mortgagor	Bank's Dues	Details of Property	Reserve Price/Earnest Money	Details of the encumbrance known to the Bank
1.	Sri Prahlad Singh S/o Harpal Singh R/o Village & Post Bewar, District Hamirpur - 210505, U.P. Guarantors 1. Sri Ranveer Singh S/o Sri Ram Singh 2. Sri Ashok Singh S/o Sri Prahlad Singh All R/o. Village & Post Bewar, District Hamirpur-210505, U.P. Branch: Bewar, Hamirpur	Sri Prahlad Singh S/o Harpal Singh R/o Village & Post Bewar, District Hamirpur-210505, U.P.	O/s as on 17.06.2019 Rs. 12,93,486.00 + interest till the date of realization and costs, charges and expenses from 18.06.2019	A Residential Property at Bewar Maudaha Road, Mauza-Bewar, (Near Heeranand Inter College), Pargana-Muskara, Tehsil-Maudaha, District-Hamirpur, U.P. Boundary: East: Prahlad Singh and Ramesh Singh West: House and Shop of Chandra Prakash Gupta North: House of Pyarelal South: Maudaha Bewar Road Property ID No.: IDIBB741PRAHLAD	Rs. 13.58 Lacs Rs. 1.36 Lacs	-

Date & Time of submission of process Compliance form & EMD - 23.02.2023 upto 11 A.M. at and **Date & Time of e-auction 27.02.2023** from 10.00 AM - 4.00 PM with unlimited extension, with Bid incremental Amount, Rs. 10000/-

For further details and Terms & Conditions
Contact: Rajnish Kumar (Auth. Officer)
Mo. No. 9097274267
e-mail: zohamirpur@indianbank.co.in

For downloading further details and Terms & Conditions, Please Visit:
1. www.indianbank.co.in
2. https://www.ibapi.in
3. https://www.mstccommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi

Bidders are advised to visit the website (www.mstccommerce.com) of our e-auction service provider MSTC Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call MSTC HELPLINE No. 033-22901004 and other help line numbers available in service providers help desk. For Registration status with MSTC Ltd. please contact ibapiop@mstccommerce.com and for EMD status please contact ibapifin@mstccommerce.com.
For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and condition please visit: https://ibapi.in and for clarification related to this portal, please contact help line number 18001025026 and 011-41106131

Corporate Office: Avvai Shanmugam Salai Royalpettah, Chennai-600014

Date: 26.01.2023 **Place: Hamirpur** **Authorized Officer, Indian Bank**

Rajdhani Nagar Sahkari Bank Ltd. **E-AUCTION SALE NOTICE**

AO: Sai Tower CP-42, Sector-E, Sitapur Road Yojna, Ring Road, Jankipuram, Lucknow.

Sale notice for sale of immovable properties

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical (whichever is applicable) possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Rajdhani Nagar Sahkari Bank Ltd. Secured Creditor, will be sold on "AS IS WHERE IS BASIS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS AND WHATEVER THERE IS" on Auction Date as under. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale, please refer to the link provided in website- E Procurement technologies limited Auction Site- Sarfaesi.auctiontiger.net

Sl. No.	Name of the Account / Borrower/s and Guarantor/s	Description of Property Mortgaged/ Owner of the Property & Type of Possession	Reserve Price/ Earnest Money (Amt. in ₹)	Demand Notice / Date of Possession Amount O/s (₹) as mentioned in the notice u/s 13(2) Date of
Last date of EMD 13.02.2023 Date & Time of Auction : 14.02.2023 at 11.00 A.M. to 2.30 P.M (With Unlimited Extension of 10 Minutes)				
Branch: Kasabada, Lucknow				
1.	1- Gupta Hardware & Paints Store, Prop. Rajesh Kumar Gupta (Borrower) S/o Sri B.M. Gupta Shop No-55, Sector-B', Shopping Complex, Aliganj, Lucknow. 2- Smt. Sudha W/o Rajesh Kumar Gupta G/o Gupta Hardware & Paints Store D-82, Viganpuri, Mahanagar Ext. Scheme, Mahanagar, Lucknow 226006. 3- Somesh Gupta G/o Gupta Hardware & Paints Store D-217, Sector-'I', Aliganj Lucknow 226024. 4- Mohd. Iqbal S/o Nurul Islam (Guarantor) FF-10, Khushnuma Apartment, Kandhari Lane, Lalbagh, Lucknow 226001.	Residential House No D-82, Mahanagar Ext. Scheme Viganpuri Mahnagar, Lucknow, in the name of Rajesh Kumar Gupta admeasuring area 150.20 Sq.mt. Boundaries : East - Plot No. D-83, West - Plot No.D - 81, North- 12 Ft wide Lane, South- 30Ft wide road Type of Possession: Symbolic	71,50,000.00 7,15,000.00	02.07.2018 12.12.2018 Amount Due ₹ 40,41,697.00 upto 01.07.2018 + future interest thereon from 30.06.2018, expenses and other charge
Branch: Gomti Nagar, Lucknow				
2.	1- OMAR MARKETING & CHEMICALS CO., Prop. Anil Kumar (Borrower) Add. 45/44 D, Cantt Road, Murli Nagar, Lucknow. 2- Ameerul Huque (Guarantor) S/o Samsul Huque, Add 96 Gandhi Nagar, Khurram Nagar, Lucknow 3- Laxmi Omar (Guarantor) W/o Anil Kumar Omar, Add - 45/44D, Cantt Road, Murli Nagar Lucknow 4- Jitendra Kumar Dwivedi (Guarantor) S/o Ram Sewak Dwivedi, Add - 45, Cantt Road, Murli Nagar, Lucknow	Residential House No. E3781, E-Block, Rajajipuram Lucknow. Boundaries : East - House No. E -3779, West- House No. E-3783, North- House No E-3795, South- 10 Ft wide Road Owner- Laxmi Omar W/o Anil Kumar, admeasuring area 49.30 Sq.mtr. Type of Possession: Symbolic	20,00,000.00 2,00,000.00	27.09.2021 04.12.2021 Amount Due ₹ 10,40,834.00 upto 01.09.2021 + future interest thereon from 31.08.2021, expenses and other charge

You can contact for any Term & Conditions: Authorised Officer, Rajdhani Nagar Sahkari Bank Ltd., AO: Sai Tower CP-42, Sector-E, Sitapur Road Yojna, Ring Road, Jankipuram, Lucknow. M.: 6386662520, for detailed terms & conditions of e-auction rule and other details before submitting their Bids for taking part in the e-auction. Bidder may also visit the website : https://sarfaesi.auctiontiger.net of Service Provider e-Procurement Technologies Limited (Auctiontiger) (Contact Person- Mr. Praveen Kumar Thevar, Mobile No.-+91-9722778828) Email Id: praveen.thevar@auctiontiger.net & support@auctiontiger.net and www.tender.gov.in. The intending bidders must have valid e-mail ID to participate in on-line Auction. The terms and conditions of sale shall be strictly as per the provisions of The Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002.

Date : 26.01.2023, Place : Lucknow **Authorised Officer, RAJDHANI NAGAR SAHKARI BANK LTD.**



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Window of opportunity

India has invited Pakistan Foreign Minister for SCO meeting may not result may break the ice

India inviting Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chief Justice Umar Atta Bandial for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting in Goa has hit the headlines. The SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting is likely to be held in the first week of May. Though officials have made it clear that the invitation sent to Bhutto Zardari is a "routine matter" as India is the current chair of SCO, it has attracted considerable interest. This is mainly because of Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's recent conciliatory remarks vis-à-vis India and his desire to hold talks with India. He said that he had asked the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to facilitate the negotiations. The Pakistan Prime Minister's Office later brought in a caveat—that India must restore Jammu and Kashmir's special status—but it is widely believed that this was the result of the intervention of the deep state. It is a well-known fact that the Pakistani deep state remains wedded to the jihadist ideal of destroying India. A lot many factors ensure that the ideal is poignantly felt and zealously acted upon: revenge for the defeat in the 1971 Indo-Pak War, resulting in an inglorious surrender and dismemberment of the nation; Islamisation, which began under Zia-ul-Haq in the 1980s, and gained depth and breadth in Pakistani society and culture subsequently; birth and development of the terror factory with its various stakeholders entrenched in the Army, government, society, culture, and civil society. Even the

Oxford-educated Imran Khan ended up with the sobriquet 'Taliban Khan.' In such a socio-cultural milieu, it will always be difficult to even find, let alone have dialogue with, people in the Pakistani establishment who are sensible enough to talk sense and courageous enough to walk the talk.

Such is the climate of opinion that anything reasonable attracts flak and obnoxious gets applause. Unsurprisingly, Pakistani leaders regularly indulge in loose talk and make deplorable remarks. Last month, for instance, Bilawal Bhutto called Prime Minister Narendra Modi "the butcher of Gujarat." This is not how foreign ministers talk about the heads of governments of other countries. But then in Pakistan politicians are always mindful of the reaction of the all-powerful Army, which carries out coups, installs and deposes governments. Imran Khan's rise and fall are examples of generals' intervention; they ensured that he won the election and, when he became defiant, kicked him out of power. Pakistani politicians' plight is best summarized in an old Hindi film song by Mukesh: Mujhe raat din yeh khyal hai, kahin woh nazar se gira na de... Therefore, to expect that the visit of Bilawal Bhutto (if it happens, for Islamabad may decide to send the junior foreign minister) would result in a thaw in the bilateral relations would be excessive optimism. Yet, the visit does open a window of opportunity for both nations to have meaningful dialogue.

PICTALK



A man walks with sheep during light snowfall on the outskirts of Srinagar

Unearthing the root of the disaster

If plundering of hill is not stopped, disasters like in Joshimath are bound to happen in the fragile ecosystem of the lower Himalayas.



BRIENDER SINGH PANWAR

The fragile Himalayan mountains of Uttarakhand in the town of Joshimath in Chamoli district, located at an altitude of 6,150 feet, is famous as a gateway to Badrinath, one of the holy shrines 'Char Dhams' as well as the Sikh pilgrimage center at Hemkund Sahib, skiing attraction of Auli and the 'Valley of Flowers' UNESCO World Heritage site, is in news for wrong reasons - it is sinking rapidly all due to human-induced causes. On January 11, 2023, 723 houses in all the nine wards of the town had developed major or minor cracks on the floors, ceilings, and walls. Consequently, 145 families have been moved to safer locations. Joshimath has a population of 23,000 and is heavily built, with hotels, resorts, and a busy market catering to tourists, pilgrims, trekkers, and army and Indo-Tibetan border Police (ITBP) personnel. It emerged as a place of strategic importance in 1962 because it leads to villages along the Indo-China border and falls en route to Barahoti, a disputed territory along the border.



It was clearly indicated that "Joshimath is a deposit of sand and stone...hence was not a suitable place for the coming up of a township. Vibrations produced by blasting and heaving traffic will also lead to disequilibrium in natural factors". Subsequently, several studies flagged similar concerns, but the alarm bells went unheard and timely warnings were ignored.



SUCCESSIVE GOVERNMENTS, HOWEVER, HAVE SANCTIONED BIGGER PROJECTS - HIGHWAYS, HYDROPOWER, INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT, AND HAPHAZARD DEVELOPMENT OF TOWNSHIPS WITH NO REGARD FOR ENVIRONMENTAL FALLOUT

As per surveys conducted by experts, Joshimath falls in Zone V, India's highest-risk seismic zonation scheme and situated between two thrusts, the Main Central Thrust (MCT) and the Vaikrita Thrust (VT) and occupies a seismically active terrain. The town is highly active in terms of slope mobility because it is built on the deposits of an old landslide which means that the slopes can be destabilized even by slight triggers. Climatically, it lies in a region that frequently receives high-intensity, focussed rainfall, is prone to extreme weather, and could trigger landslides because the slopes are precariously balanced. Alarm bells in the region had begun ringing about five decades back when it was part of erstwhile Uttar Pradesh when the government constituted a committee led by the then Garhwal Commissioner, Mahesh Chander Mishra to investigate the cause of land subsidence in the area. The committee's report of 1976 warned against heavy and unscientific construction in the town.

In fact, on the contrary, Joshimath continued to develop exactly against the way the Mishra committee had advised. Successive governments, however, have sanctioned bigger projects - highways, hydropower, infrastructure development, and haphazard development of townships with no regard for environmental fallout. As normally attributed, the local people and climate change are responsible for the disasters. However, in his case, the policy-led disasters are "Made in Delhi". This is apparent from the decision of sanctioning large hydropower projects by the Centre even after the 2013 Kedarnath tragedy. The armed forces and the state and local authorities, in their overenthusiasm, to have a smoother, faster, all-weather connectivity for pilgrims, and tourists, ignored the government's own recommended "best practices norms". The construction of highways and railway tracks

has now become a prime cause for landslides and their occurrences have doubled over the years making the hill slopes extremely unstable. Consequently, recurring landslides have gone up leading to erosions and land shifts.

According to a report published in Current Science in 2010, "Tapovan-Vishnugad hydropower tunnel that passes just below Joshimath, which is sitting on an old glacial deposit, could be contributing factor to this phenomenon. During the construction of the tunnel, a boring machine perforated a water-bearing stratum on the left bank of the Alaknanda river near Shelong village, leading to the discharge of 60-70 million liters per day. This must have led to the gradual depletion of pore pressure within the sediment leading to aquifer compaction and settling of the ground. The role of pore pressure in determining slope stability needs to be studied further in the region. Although the officials of NTPC who are responsible for the construction and maintenance of the 520 MW hydropower project refute these allegations. However, many residents believe that the town would not be facing the current crisis if not for the hollowing of the ground beneath their feet. Moreover, construction along the Helang bypass to build an all-weather road is

also believed to have disturbed the mountain's foundation.

Similar sentiments are echoed by the members of Joshimath Bacho Sangharsh Samiti, which have been protesting against projects detrimental to Joshimath since 2004 and are currently leading protests demanding adequate relief and rehabilitation for Joshimath's residents whose houses have been damaged. They felt that water released in 2009 is a major contributor to the subsidence and the water laden with muck and some volatile chemicals, began surfacing in the town's Marwari from the February 7, 2021 flood that would have entered into the (under construction) tunnel of the Tapovan Vishnugad project and is now surfacing in Joshimath. However, there have been no scientific studies establishing links between the puncture and the subsidence in Joshimath. Refuting these allegations, the NTPC has denied any role in the ongoing crisis. The real cause of this disaster remains a sort of mystery for the authorities as well as the public.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman of the Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal. This is the first part of two-part series on the Joshimath disaster; to be continued)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BAN ON BBC DOCUMENTARY

Sir — This ban on BBC documentary deserves criticism from both angles. Let us first take the ban from BJP's perspective. What is the need for banning the documentary when NDA has been elected twice with a comfortable majority in 2014 and 2019 and the riots took place in 2002? People knew pretty well about the riots and yet they voted for Modi for two consecutive terms with an ascending majority. Unnecessarily, by banning, they are advertising something that in the normal course would have fizzled out.

Now coming from the opposition's angle, a good number of voters were born after the riots if you take the segment of 20-22 years youth. Even assuming the ban is lifted, what impact would it have when Modi followed by courts' verdicts has eclipsed the whole issue successfully, albeit under the garb of truth and nothing but the truth? Amplifying the issue will neither reduce the vote bank of the BJP nor will it increase the same for all other opposing parties. The program, if shown may or may not dent the image of Modi per se.

Let us be reconciled to the reality that we are in an era of 'yatha Raja tatha praja' but rather 'yathha praja tatha raja'.
D. Nagarjuna | Hyderabad

NAMING OF ISLANDS

Sir — Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi named the 21 largest unnamed islands of Andaman and Nicobar Islands after Param Vir Chakra (PVC) awardees in a ceremony on the occasion of Parakram Diwas (Day of Valor) on the day of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's birthday. Before this earlier in 2018, Ross Islands was renamed Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep by the prime minister during his visit to the island. Similarly, Neil Island and Havelock Island were also renamed Shaheed Dweep and Swaraj Dweep. No doubt the decision is heartening, even what will happen when in future more and more PVC awardees will be there? They will create islands to be named.

Actually, after Modi became PM his love towards all-time Congress leader

HC's judgement on abortion



The Bombay High court had delivered a landmark decision on termination of pregnancy and allowed a pregnant lady to terminate in 32 weeks treating in violation of individual liberty which has been exercised by every individual. Court had said that it would be a denial of the woman's right to dignity and her reproductive and decisional autonomy if she is not allowed to undergo medical termination of the fetus with serious abnormalities and 'the decision is hers and hers alone to make, once the conditions in the statute are met. The right to choose is the mothers'. A medical board was constituted as required by the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act. The medical opinion confirmed the diagnosis of anomalies and added the possibility of intel-

lectual disability to the child but said both conditions were not life-threatening. It denied the request for a medical termination of pregnancy in view of the advanced gestation period.

The woman, however, said she comes from a humble background and will not be able to provide additional care and meet the expenses of an infant born with such conditions and urged the court to intervene. The court then directed a qualified psychiatrist to assess whether a medical termination of the pregnancy at this stage would pose a physical or mental risk to the woman. The report stated that she has no major medical, obstetric, or psychiatric complications at present but considering the advanced gestational age the medical termination of pregnancy is not recommended. However, Advocate in the court pointed out that the Act does not say what is to happen if a fetal abnormality is detected late in the pregnancy and that the writ jurisdiction of the Court may be invoked. The court on January 20 allowed the termination of the pregnancy. These important decisions should be highlighted by the concerned general public.
Yashpal Rathan | Jalandhar

Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel, and recent respect towards Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose or other freedom fighters is nothing, but to cover up Rashtriya SwayamSevak Sangh (RSS) which is throughout India's freedom struggle, it was subservient to the British, with its leadership prohibiting participation in mass movements. People are fully aware that RSS is the parent organization of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and without RSS, BJP is nothing on the ground. Netaji's daughter Anita Bose said the BJP and RSS do not reflect the idea of respecting all religions as preached by Netaji, who was a devout Hindu but believed in respecting other faiths.

Even that shrewd and politically minded PM Modi created Netaji Memorial (to be built on Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Dweep) and the 21 newly named islands will be a source of constant

inspiration for the young generations. Though I doubt how much respect Modi's PVC winners have, rather than just playing politics by using their great sacrifice.
Bidyut K Chatterjee | Faridabad

HOCKEY IS THE KEY TO MEDAL TALLY

Sir — Hockey is the key that can open the lock of India's medals tally and bring back golden memories. Government, Media, and Trade-business communities have the power to uplift or pull down anything in the country. We have tremendous sports talent available in small towns and villages. We only have to discover and train them to bring out their true potential. Let us remember India's Sports Talent has immense potential.
TS Karthik | Chennai

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

SOUND BITE

If a person is working for the nation, then he may think one day his RAW and IB files can be made public. It is a matter of concern... It is a serious issue.

The Law Minister
— Kiran Rijju

We know the scourge of gun violence across America requires stronger action. I once again urge

both chambers of Congress to act quickly and deliver this Assault Weapons Ban to my desk, and take action to keep American communities, schools, workplaces, and homes safe.
US President
— Joe Biden

I want every film to be a super duper hit. Now Pathaan is releasing and whatever reports we are reading about the advance booking seem fantastic I am very happy about it from the bottom of my heart.
Actor
— Ajay Devgn

India finally committing to playing day cricket the aggressive way makes them Red hot favorites to win the men's World Cup this year.
Former England skipper
— Michael Vaughan

Congress does not need any proof from the armed forces.

Congress leader
— Rahul Gandhi

Kerala govt's U-turn

Despite Centre's rejection the Kerala govt wants to go ahead with the controversial Silver Line project

The Kerala Government which called off the Semi High Speed Silver Line Rail Project connecting Kasaragod in the north and Thiruvananthapuram in the south has made a U-turn from its earlier stance and has decided to approach the Centre for permission for the controversial rail route which generated massive protests across the State. While delivering the customary address to the first session of this year's Legislative Assembly on Monday, Governor Arif Mohammed Khan announced that the Detailed Project Report of Silver Line has been approved by the State Government and submitted to the Ministry of Railways for final approval. But what he did not tell in the speech was the Centre's rejection of the proposal citing issues like ecology, environment and apprehension expressed by the public. The State administration loses nothing if it sees the writing on the wall and calls off the project which has drawn widespread public ire and resistance from thousands of people who would be shunted out of their homes and farm lands for acquisition of land. The Governor's announcement that the State Government would bid seriously for the Angamali-Sabari Rail Project.

The move to go ahead with the Angamali-Sabari Rail Project for the benefit of Lord Ayyappa devotees is a retrograde and regressive measures. Hundreds of people were shocked by the announcement because the State Government has not acquired the land for the implementation of the Railway Line except installing stones along the proposed route and that too without the permission of the land owners. A cabal consisting of railway contractors, land sharks and drug ped-

dlers are reportedly behind the initiative to lay the Sabari rail track to ensure the illegal traffic of high quality marijuana cultivated in the dense forests of the Western Ghats to the outside world, according to B V Kumar, who headed the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence for years and had led many operations against drug traffickers. The Kerala Government has failed time and again to focus on infrastructure projects which are essential for the State's development. Rail journey in the State is a harrowing experience as most of the services between Thiruvananthapuram and Kasaragod are delayed by hours because of outdated signal system and worn-out tracks. The Governor's speech stands out for its rhetoric and absence of concrete proposals. The CPI(M) has disappointed the electorate which re-elected the party to power. People in the State need a better deal.





FIRST COLUMN

IT IS EASIER TO LIVE IN DENIAL OF REALITY

But the lesson of Gita is that we should accept reality



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

One must wonder as to why we do not want to accept reality. Why do the majority of us want to live in denial? Because it is difficult, it is easier to live in denial. It wasn't so, it would not have taken Lord Krishna to speak the entire Gita to convince Arjuna, who accepted what the Lord wanted him to do only in verse #18.73.

What was Arjuna's initial position? He didn't want to fight the inevitable war, and he gave many reasons for it. Sample some of his arguments. Arjuna didn't see the opposition Army consisting of persons who were bent upon perpetrating 'adharma' (injustice) as what they were; he saw them as relatives. (1.28) He could see only adverse consequences, nothing favourable in killing them. (1.31) He would rather die than desire either victory, kingdom or pleasures. (1.32) He was strongly of the opinion that it would be sinful to kill his relatives. (1.36) Arjuna even foresaw sacrosanct family values getting destroyed, predominance of immortality, women of the family getting corrupted resulting in illicit progeny, etc. Such an act by him was surely going to result in a long stay of hell for his side. (1.44)

How did Lord Krishna manage to bring Arjuna around to see the reality? The Lord started with the knowledge of soul, while Arjuna was seeing only material bodies. This is what most of us do too. We don't want to accept the reality of previous lives, future lives, etc. For the ignorant mass, the present life is everything. This wrong perception prevents us from seeing the truth of our existence.



We don't believe in the 'Karmaphala Principle', which is crucial for accepting reality, the system of reward and punishment, which is fate. Once we accept the reality of the soul, we begin to accept death – the most painful reality. This is where actual realism comes.

The next reality is being dutiful. Even animals are dutiful towards their progeny. We cannot be worse than them. We must accept to do whatever is necessary according to time, place and circumstances. If we are mentally prepared to do that, life becomes more meaningful. Because as human beings, being dutiful is the foremost requirement. These duties are towards ourselves, our families, our professions, etc.

We, being small, are incomplete in every sense; we need God's help 24x7. A good connection with God makes us complete, we being parts of Him. (15.7) Then nothing is beyond us. We can accept whatever the realities of our lives.

Then, comes mind control. Aren't we dictated to by our minds? Don't they define us? Therefore, God has insisted that we try to control our minds. We have to be in control, not our minds. Then, where will there be any difficulty in accepting what we must?

'Maya' may try to bemuse, confuse, and make us see everything upside down, which is liking what hurts and avoiding what helps. This is where the human species is well placed; it has all the tools to live a quality life. We just have to accept to be good in all respects, which happens by embracing the mode of goodness in all our activities, as detailed by Lord Krishna in the Gita. Gradually, we will become habituated to accept the ups and downs of life. (2.14) Acceptance makes living easy. It shows faith and hope for the future. Will we then be ready to accept what we must and go on steadily ahead? Those who can live their lives in the way explained by Lord Krishna in the Gita can look forward to a quality life, notwithstanding challenges, which loom ahead.

(The author is a spiritual teacher)

Pariksha Pe Charcha deals with anxiety

Making career decisions is a crucial milestone at the secondary level because it helps students build their identities



PRACHI PANDEY TARA NAOREM

Adolescence is characterised by significant psychological, physical, and social changes. Traditionally, a coming-of-age period, it should be a celebration of life. However, it is alarming how stressed and in the mental health crisis today's pupils are.

Common sources of stress include interpersonal interactions, learning difficulties, and exam failures. Examinations, in themselves, are a cause of stress as they lead to anxiety about opting for higher education or career. Choosing a higher education and future employment is challenging due to the complex options available. The choice of a career among the many possibilities available is one of the major reasons that might cause stress and worry in youth.

Additionally, empirical data has demonstrated that late teenagers with career choice issues frequently have significant psychological issues. Therefore, it is now more crucial than ever to pinpoint the causes of the stress and worry that young people are experiencing.

The pupils' stress may be influenced by what their parents think about them and their prospects. Additionally, a youngster who is unable to express their thoughts, feelings, and plans to their parents may wind up keeping everything buried deep inside, which could be harmful to their health and wellbeing.

In fact, such questions have been raised in previous editions of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha', wherein one student talked about the "huge competition in each field", how at times "they were not selected in any exam due to high competition and pressure". Questions from a societal perspective as to "what can we do for them so that great talent of our nation will not be just wasted and will be useful for the nation?" have been raised.

The Prime Minister's response has, of course, been well-documented but he has also written, "Aspire not to BECOME something but TO DO something. Normally, the desire to become something is driven by the expectations of the family, fashionable professional trends, peer pressure or fantasies about fame, money and power. It distances you from your true potential and gradually snuffs out the innate passion you are blessed with."

When parents don't approve of their child's choices, such as choosing to major in humanities rather than science, the child may experience shame, disappointment, resentment, and despair. Getting influenced by the choices made by their peers and constantly making comparisons with them could add on to their stress.

While it is good to have focus and many children may be able to decide what they want to become, it is important not to let these choices, whether to become a doctor or pilot or civil servant, define our dreams. Rather let the dreams lead you to



IN EXAM WARRIORS, PM HAS WRITTEN, "CREATE YOUR OWN OPPORTUNITIES. BE THE MASTER OF YOUR DESTINY. TODAY, THERE ARE TREMENDOUS OPPORTUNITIES IN FIELDS WHICH WERE UNIMAGINABLE EVEN A DECADE AGO. WHEN YOU MAKE THESE CHOICES, REMEMBER, YOUR PASSION MAKES FOR THE BEST VOCATION"

(Prachi Pandey is Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education; Tara Naorem is Principal Chief Consultant, SS, MoE)



paths determined by how you can make a difference to your family, to society and to the world at large.

Lacking clarity about one's interest areas, aptitude, work preferences, etc. and having a negative self-image could substantially increase the magnitude of stress and anxiety experienced by the students.

Swami Vivekananda exhorted us, "...each soul is a manifestation of divinity. If you have faith in all the Gods...and still have no faith in yourselves, there is no salvation for you." Thus, self-awareness is crucial, leading to identification of both strengths and weaknesses and resulting in increased confidence. This is why it is critical not simply to have a positive outlook, but rather to consciously weed out the negativity in our lives – negative thoughts, negative friends, negative information, etc. Negativity should not be removed by a false sense of superiority but by acknowledging that even our smallest strengths can help in different situations.

Life is a series of new experiences, environments, people, it is multi-faceted and a journey with many infinite destinations and possibilities. But everyone approaches it in a different way. While some are stifled by choices, others are overwhelmed by choices. At another end of the spectrum, some do not even know enough about the choices at hand. Lack of accurate understanding about numerous career options is another issue that stresses out students. This includes diverse work profiles, pay scales, potential for growth, future of certain industries, etc. One can make an informed choice only when they have all the required information. In such a case, not having access to information or

consuming content from unreliable sources (eg. making a career decision based on a random conversation with a friend) could prove to be quite harmful in these circumstances.

In Exam Warriors, PM has written, "Create your own opportunities. Be the master of your destiny. Today, there are tremendous opportunities in fields which were unimaginable even a decade ago. When you make these choices, remember your passion makes for the best vocation."

With these words as a foundation, practically, at the individual level, students can focus more of their time and energy in seeking information, having healthy conversations with friends, family, teachers, and resource persons. The cohort of adults in a child's environment can assist the students by encouraging open communication. They can guide, without being judgmental or forcing their opinions on children, and help children make decisions and become independent while selecting their subjects, colleges and universities.

Having an adult to speak with or discuss their career concerns or to ask questions and have constructive discussions could be significantly important for teenagers deliberating about their future.

Parents and teachers can also help the children by removing the taboo of going to a counselor and seeking professional help, if the need be. Having proper meetings with the parents, teacher and the child present would also be beneficial in discussing the concerns each of them might have, even concerns about resources, and come up with feasible solutions accordingly.

Such discussions could foster an environment of support, and understanding for the student. It is of utmost importance for the students to know that they are not alone in this journey, and that they will be able to figure things out gradually.

Lacking important life skills like time management, goal setting, etc., could further deteriorate their academic situation, and the student might start feeling incompetent leading to a negative self-image.

During PPC, PM Modi counseled students, "Every individual is blessed with unique abilities. These abilities are best channelled through quality time management. So, time management is nothing but ability management." Life skills are built by taking constant care of yourself, mentally, physically and emotionally. The Prime Minister has said that "practising yoga with full awareness is the most effective way to achieve holistic development of the self....one who plays, shines."

Physical exercise, whether in the form of individual games or team sports, not only keeps us physically fit but also helps us to learn life skills, value of team-work, the art of competing with oneself and achieving a better version of your own self. It instills a sense of discipline and also increases focus. Making career-related decisions is a crucial milestone at the secondary level because it helps students build their individual identities in society and prepare for the workforce. The process of making these decisions can be both exciting and anxiety-provoking. This is, why, in this journey, Pariksha Pe Charcha has come to play an important role.

POINT COUNTERPOINT

BJP MEANS BHAGTI JANATA PARTY. TODAY WE DEMAND THAT THE MEETING SHOULD BE CALLED AGAIN AND THE MAYOR'S ELECTION SHOULD BE DONE TODAY ITSELF.

— DELHI DEPUTY CM MANISH SISODIA



WE WERE SITTING IN THE HOUSE TO VOTE & WHEN THE TIME CAME, A RUCKUS BEGAN IN THE HOUSE. DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES MUST BE FOLLOWED.

— UNION MINISTER MEENAKSHI LEKHI

India should win war against cervical cancer fast

The necessary tools to stop this preventable disease and eliminate it completely are available

A Third Front again! Before every Lok Sabha poll, the Third Front idea is floated, and the 2024 polls are no exception. Political pundits predict that there is space for the entire Opposition against Bharatiya Janata Party but not a Third Front, as it will splinter the anti-BJP votes and help the ruling dispensation. The concept was tried and tested in 1977, 1989, and 1996-98, supported by either Congress or the BJP. But they were all short-lived.

A recent tweet by the Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare highlighted a new milestone achieved by India in securing the health of new mothers in the country. Sustained systemic efforts over a decade and targeted health initiatives have helped India

DR SHALINI RAJARAM

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bring down the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births or the Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR) from 130 in 2014-2016 to 97 in 2018-2020.

A decade back, deaths due to cancer of the uterine cervix and maternal deaths were both pegged at around 72,000 per year. However, cancer cervix has rapidly surpassed maternal mortality and has become the second common cause of cancer deaths amongst women in India. This is a distressing sign for a life-threatening disease that is almost entirely preventable. In 2020, over 120,000 women in India were reported to have cancer of the cervix, resulting in more than 77,000 deaths. Human Papilloma virus (HPV) has been established as a cause of cancer of

the cervix. More than 90 per cent of cancer cervix cases are due to high-risk HPV type. HPV, much like the influenza virus, is a ubiquitous virus and can enter the body through small abrasions in the skin and mucosa.

While most low-grade infections spontaneously resolve within two years, persistent infection results in cancer of the cervix. Early cancer can be completely asymptomatic. Hence, we may not know when a woman will develop pre-invasive or invasive cancer and a woman could be harboring a cancer for several years only discovering it at an advanced stage. Symptoms usually include irregular vaginal bleeding, post-coital vaginal bleeding and sometimes between men-

strual cycles.

Invasive cancer of the cervix can cause a foul-smelling vaginal discharge or pelvic pain and is undeniably the most dreaded form when it invades adjacent organs like the bladder and rectum.

Beyond mortality, the long-term effects of cervical cancer can severely impact the quality of life. In addition to undergoing the harrowing experience of cancer treatment and associated toxicities, cancer survivors also have to battle with long term issues such as menopausal symptoms, severe leg swelling (lower limb lymphedema), sexual dysfunction, infertility, social judgement and rejection, difficulty in social functioning, reduced self-esteem, negative body image, as well as finan-

cial issues.

Unfortunately, this cancer is mostly diagnosed in young women between 35 to 45 years of age when they are in the prime years. Only silver line is that the cancer of the cervix is almost entirely preventable. We know that it is caused by a virus and that there are effective vaccines already used globally to help prevent it. Vaccinating young girls long before they are exposed to this virus can aid primary prevention. Regular screening after the age of 30 and effective treatment through surgery or radiation, can eliminate what currently stands as the second most common cancer in women in India. Advocating the vaccine to every young girl between the age of 9-14, that they see

in their practice, and advising screening of women between 30-49 years with a high precision HPV DNA test will be the two strongest pillars in this fight against cancer cervix.

As a member of the World Health Assembly, India committed to WHO's Global Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative to accelerate the elimination of cancer of the cervix by 2030. The 90-70-90 target set by the initiative requires 90 per cent of girls to be fully vaccinated with HPV vaccine before the age of 15, 70 per cent of women to be screened with a high-performance test by the age of 35 and again by the age of 45, and 90 per cent of women identified with cervical cancer to receive treatment. In an endeavour to meet the commitment and

protect our girls, the Government of India must consider launching HPV vaccination funded and implemented under the immunization programme. As we celebrate the cervical cancer awareness month this January, each one of us can play a part in helping the country secure the health of its women.

Women represent the cornerstone for a family's overall health and hence investing in their health and ensuring their access to quality care goes a long way in ensuring the well-being and future of a society. The necessary tools to stop women from suffering and dying from this preventable disease and eliminating it completely are available; thus our girls will live to see a world free of this deadly disease.

SC verdicts to be had in 4 bhashas from today: CJJ

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a first, the Supreme Court has decided to make available judgments into regional languages. To start with, the judgments will be translated into four languages — Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Odia.

Speaking at the inauguration of Delhi High Court's Online e-Inspection Software, Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud said on Tuesday "English is not a comprehensible language to 99.99 per cent of the citizens" in the country.

The CJI said the apex court will operationalise the part of the electronic-Supreme Court Reports (e-SCR) project for making available verdicts in some scheduled languages free of cost.

"We have the e-SCR (PROJECT), which now has nearly 34,000 judgments and an elastic search facility. We also now have 1,091 judgments in regional languages which will be launched tomorrow on the Republic Day," the CJI said.

"We have 21 in Odia, 14 in Marathi, four in Assamese... 17 in Kannada... 29 in Malayalam, three in Nepali, four in Punjabi, 52 already in Tamil, 28 in Telugu, and three in Urdu," he said, adding that the apex court was on "a mission" to provide its judgments in all scheduled languages.

The Chief Justice has constituted a committee headed by Justice AS Oka for translation of top court's judgments into regional languages.

Besides Justice Oka, the committee consists of Justice Suraj Govindaraj of Karnataka High Courts- Sharmistha from National Informatics Centre; - Mitesh Kapra from IIT Delhi; - Vivek Raghavan from Ek step foundation; - Supriya Shankaran from Agami.

"I have constituted a committee chaired by Justice AS Oka, a dynamic judge of the Supreme Court, and the first step taken is to ensure that the Supreme Court judgments will at least be translated in four languages; Hindi, Tamil, Gujarati and Odia," the CJI said. There are 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution including Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani,



Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri. The verdicts, as part of the e-SCR project, are available on the apex court website, its mobile app and on the judgment portal of the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).

The top court, on January 2, had announced the launch of the electronic-Supreme Court Reports (e-SCR) project to provide free access to its about 34,000 judgments to lawyers, law students and the common public.

"This is a free service available for lawyers across the country. Young juniors do not have to pay. There is an elastic search facility. We are improving upon the search engine by incorporating the following, distinguished and incorporated judgments in a few weeks..." the CJI had said.

Lawyers, while arguing in courts, refer to the reported judgments supporting their matters by using law journals including the 'Supreme Court Reports'.

The Electronic Supreme Court Reports (e-SCR) project was an initiative to provide the digital version of the apex court's judgments in the manner as they are reported in the official law report - 'Supreme Court Reports'.

The Supreme Court has developed a search engine with the help of the National Informatics Centre comprising elastic search technique in database of e-SCR and the search facility in e-SCR provides for free text search, search within search, case type and case year search, judge search, year and volume search and bench strength search.

901 police, paramilitary personnel bag service medals on R-Day eve

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre on Wednesday announced service medals to a total of 901 police and paramilitary personnel on the eve of the Republic Day, 2023.

"A total of 901 Police personnel have been awarded Police Medals on the occasion of the Republic Day, 2023. The Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG) has been awarded to 140, the President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service (PPM) to 93 and Police Medal for Meritorious Service (PM) has been awarded to 668," the Union Home Ministry said in a statement.

Among the majority of the 140 gallantry awards, 80 personnel from Left Wing Extremism or Naxal-affected areas and 45 personnel from Jammu and Kashmir region are being awarded for their gallant action, it said.

Among the personnel receiving Gallantry Awards, 48 are from Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the maximum among all the forces, 31 are from Maharashtra, 25 are from Jammu and Kashmir and Kashmir police, nine from Jharkhand, seven are each from Delhi, Chhattisgarh and BSF and the remaining from the other States/Union Territories and Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) of armed forces of the Union.

The Police Medal for Gallantry (PMG) is awarded on the grounds of Conspicuous Gallantry in saving life and property, or in preventing crime or arresting criminals. The President's Police Medal for Distinguished Service (PPM) is awarded for a special distinguished record in Police Service and the Police Medal for Meritorious Service (PM) is awarded for valuable service characterized by resource and devotion to duty. No President's Police Medal for Gallantry (PPMG), the top category of bravery decorations among the police forces, has been awarded.

A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) jawan who "overpowered" his armed colleague after the latter allegedly killed four personnel at a power plant located in Bihar in 2017 has been awarded the police medal for gallantry on the occasion of 74th Republic Day.

Officials said this is one of the rare times when a PMG has been given to



a personnel who showed courage to end a fragging incident. Head constable (HC) Rajesh Singh was posted at the Nabinagar Power Generation Company Ltd (NPGCL) in Bihar's Aurangabad district on January 12, 2017 when his fellow constable Balveer Singh allegedly opened fire from his rifle and killed four colleagues.

Constable Balveer Singh reached the roof top of the new barracks in the campus and was "challenged" by Rajesh Singh, who was unarmed, the CISF said in a statement.

"Knowing that constable Balveer Singh was in a fit of rage and had a deadly assault weapon with him and it could result in loss of his life, Rajesh Singh with sheer sense of determination and to save human lives, confronted Balveer Singh and snatched the INSAS rifle and threw it, thus disarming him," the force said.

He also overpowered constable Balveer Singh and pinned him to the ground, who was later handed over to the local police, the CISF said. Rajesh Singh's "act of valour and courage" saved many precious lives, at a time when others were running to save their lives, the CISF said.

The PMG, his citation said, is being awarded for his "conspicuous gallant action, courage and devotion to duty during major indiscriminate firing incident while he was posted at CISF unit NPGCL Nabinagar at the time of incident."

The CISF unit is deployed at the NPGCL, a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC Limited, to provide it with anti-terror cover from Maoists and similar extremist elements.

Head constable Rajesh Singh is currently posted at the CISF unit that guards the ISRO Telemetry Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) in Uttar Pradesh's Lucknow.

Prez gives 6 Kirti Chakras, four conferred posthumously

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu has conferred six Kirti Chakras, including four posthumous and 15 Shaurya Chakras, including two posthumous for gallantry on the occasion of the Republic Day. Kirti Chakra is the second highest peacetime gallantry medal while Shaurya Chakra is the third highest.

Major Shubhang of Dogra Regiment was awarded Kirti Chakra for his gallant action in April last year while fighting terrorists in Budgam, Kashmir. He sustained bullet wounds in his shoulder during the encounter.

Naik Jitendra Singh of Rajput Regiment was awarded Kirti Chakra for his action while in anti-terrorist operation in Pulwama district of Kashmir in April last year. Despite getting injured, he managed to neutralize two ultras.

The seven Shaurya Chakras awardees include Major Aditya Bhaduria, Captain Arun Kumar, Captain Yudhvir Singh, Captain Rakesh T R, Naik Jasbir Singh (posthumous), Lance Naik Vikas Choudhary and Constable Mudasir Ahmed Sheikh (posthumous) of Jammu and Kashmir police. All the medals were awarded for actions in Jammu and Kashmir.

The President in all has approved 412 Gallantry awards and other defence decorations to Armed Forces personnel and others on the eve of 74th Republic Day.

SCO chaired by India invites Pak in FMs' meet; no reply as yet

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as relations between the two countries are frosty, India, as the Chair of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), has invited Pakistan Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial to participate in the SCO Foreign Ministers' and Chief Justices' meetings. However, Pakistan is yet to respond to the invitation extended through the Indian High Commission in Islamabad recently.

The Foreign Ministers' conclave is scheduled to take place on May 4-5 in Goa and if Bilawal Bhutto accepts the invitation it will be the first such visit by a Pakistan foreign minister to India since 2011.

Then Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Khar had then visited India. Incidentally, the last Indian external affairs minister to visit Pakistan was Sushma Swaraj in 2015. Now External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar accompanied her as Foreign Secretary.

India took over the chairmanship of the nine-member grouping last September and will host the key ministerial meetings and summit in Goa in May. New Delhi has also extended the invitation to Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov. It will be their second visit to India as both the ministers are expected to take part in G-20 Foreign

Ministers' meet on March 1-2. The invitation to Pakistan comes at a time when its Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif last week called for a dialogue with Prime Minister Narendra Modi to discuss all contentions issues.

However, Prime Minister's Office in Islamabad later said till Article 370 is restored in Jammu and Kashmir talks cannot be held.

Moreover, the Indian invitation came days after Bilawal Bhutto's controversial remarks against Prime Minister Modi in the United Nations session.

The SCO also includes China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Invites have also been sent to the foreign ministers of China and Russia along with the other Central Asian countries.

Iran is the newest member of the organization and, under India's presidency, will, for the first time, attend the grouping's meeting as a full member. Its last meeting was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.

While ties are not normal between India and Pakistan, its officials have visited each other's country to participate in the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) meetings under the aegis of the SCO.

However, Pakistan will not participate in the SCO Film Festival to be held in Mumbai later this month.

While all countries have sent entries, Pakistan is the only country that did not send any film for screening in the group's third such film festival.



UP Govt yet to announce State advisory price for sugarcane



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Even as the current cane crushing season 2022-23 is close to halfway mark, the Uttar Pradesh government is yet to announce the state advisory price (SAP) for sugarcane. The sugar mills are paying the cane farmers as per the SAP fixed for the last cane crushing season 2021-22. "Nothing can be ruled out," said UP Cane Minister Laxmi Narayan Chaudhary, deepening the suspense over the delay in announcement of a revised cane price.

He said that a meeting would be convened soon to take a formal decision on the SAP. The issue has been attaining political colours with the opposition parties including the Samajwadi Party-Rashtriya Lok Dal combine attacking the Bharatiya Janata Party government for not announcing the SAP.

Official sources indicated that SAP for sugarcane was unlikely to be announced in current crushing season. The sources said that a hike was expected in 2023-24 crushing season, ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha election. The SAP for sugarcane in Uttar Pradesh is third highest in country after Haryana and Punjab. Sugar mills started cane crushing in November and are making pay-

ment to farmers according to the SAP decided for 2021-22 season. "If the government still decides to increase SAP over next few days, it will be announced and farmers will also be paid arrears for revised rates," said a Sugar Industry and Cane Development department official.

In 2021, the UP Government had announced a hike in the SAP for sugarcane in September, over a month before the crushing season started and ahead of the Uttar Pradesh assembly elections that were held in March 2022.

The UP government had then announced an increase of Rs 25 per quintal in the SAP. After the hike, the revised SAP was Rs 350 per quintal for the early variety of sugarcane, Rs 340 per quintal for the general variety and Rs 335 per quintal rejected variety.

In December 2022, a delegation of Bharatiya Kisan Union (Apolitical), a farmers' organisation, had met Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Lucknow and urged him to announce the SAP for sugarcane with a hike of Rs 50 per quintal vis-a-vis the SAP of the previous season.

Rashtriya Lok Dal, which counts west UP's sugarcane farmers among its support base, has launched a "Kisan Sandesh Abhiyan" to send letters signed by sugarcane farmers to Chief Minister demanding announcement of SAP. "There is a target to send over one lakh letters to Chief Minister and almost 10,000 letters have already been sent. The state government must clarify at which rate it is purchasing the crop from farmers," said RLD spokesperson Anil Dube.

Youth will be biggest beneficiaries of developed India, says Modi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday the youth will be the biggest beneficiaries of a developed India and the biggest responsibility to build it also rests on their shoulders.

Addressing National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets and National Service Scheme (NSS) volunteers who will be part of the Republic Day parade, Modi said they represent the country's aspirations and dreams in the ongoing "amrit kaal".

He said there are a lot of opportunities for youngsters in the country as India is working for the future of the entire world in sectors ranging from space to environment. "The world sees a new future for itself in India's achievements," Modi added.

He said it was encouraging to see youngsters taking part in various programmes in increasing numbers.

Referring to an event on Parakram Diwas to mark Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's birth anniversary, he said it was the first time that many children dressed up as Netaji had come to the prime minister's residence. "The mantra of 'Jai Hind' inspires one and all," he said.

The NCC and NSS link the young generations with national goals and aspirations, he said, adding that his government has been working to encourage and expand their activities. Interacting with the youth is always special for him, he added.

He noted that different challenges come up in border and coastal areas and special training is being given so that



the youth can play the role of "first responders", if needed. The prime minister said his government has been working on making border areas vibrant by boosting development and creating various facilities there.

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday arrested Deepak Ranga, the main shooter in the attack on Punjab Police Intelligence Headquarters in Mohali in May 2022. Ranga was nabbed from Gorkhpur early on Wednesday. He has been absconding since May.

Ranga of Surakpur village in Jhajjar district of Haryana, is a close associate of Canada-based gangster-turned-terrorist Lakhbir Singh Sandhu alias Landa and Pakistan-based gangster-turned-terrorist Harvinder Singh Sandhu alias Rinda, the NIA said in a statement.

"Apart from his involvement in the May RPG attack, Deepak has been involved in a number of other violent terrorist and criminal

offences, including violent killings. He has been actively receiving terror funds and logistical support from Rinda and Landa," it said.

The NIA had registered the case suo moto on September 20, 2022 after it emerged that terrorist outfits and terror elements based abroad were operating in tandem with leaders and members of organized criminal gangs operating in northern States of the country to commit targeted killings and violent criminal acts, it said.

It had also emerged that the terror-gangster-drug smuggler network was also engaged in smuggling terrorist hardware, such as arms, ammunition explosives and IEDs across borders through a widespread inter-State network of gun runners, illegal arms and ammunition manufacturers, suppliers and explosive traffickers.

Cong, AAP question Centre's clean chit to China

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress and Aam Aadmi Party have questioned the Centre's "clean chit" to China after a new report revealed that India has lost access to 26 of 65 patrolling points in Eastern Ladakh.

"Modi Government's continued denial of illegal occupation and construction of infrastructure by the Chinese has 'endangered' our borders," Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge wrote in a tweet sharing the news report. Attacking the PM, the Congress chief said,

"Your 'clean chit' to China is costing the nation's territorial integrity."

Kharge further said that PM Modi must take nation and Parliament into confidence over this issue. Congress has been asking the government to take concrete steps over alleged Chinese incursions in various border areas, including in the Northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh. The party had accused the government of running away from a debate on Chinese issue in the recently concluded Winter Session of the Parliament.

Addressing a Republic Day function organised by the Delhi government, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal alleged that China is procuring more weapons to use against India with the very money it earns doing trade with us.

"We read about Chinese aggression on our borders as how the Chinese have encroached upon some of our territory near the border. Our soldiers put in all their might to fight the Chinese on the border.

It is now the duty of all citizens and all governments to stand shoulder to shoulder with our soldiers and support them. It is our duty to send a strong message to China against its

aggression. It is our duty to boycott China, look into its eyes and make it clear that we will not compromise on national security," Kejriwal said. He also lamented that over the last few years, the country has seen a rise in trade with China despite its forays on the borders.

Media reports quoting a note PD Nitya, the Superintendent of Police of Leh, Ladakh's main city said out of 65 patrolling points between Karakoram pass to Chumur India's presence is lost in 26 PPs (i.e. PP no. 5-17, 24-32, 37, due to restrictive or no patrolling by the Indian security forces.



People walk during light snowfall on the outskirts of Srinagar on Wednesday. Light to moderate snowfall was recorded at most places of Kashmir while the higher reaches witnessed heavy snowfall PTI Photo

Flyers entitled to 75% of ticket refund from Feb

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Air passengers will now be entitled to get 75 per cent of the ticket cost refund from the airline whose domestic flight tickets have been downgraded.

For downgrading of international tickets, the reimbursement amount will vary from 30 per cent to 75 per cent of the ticket costs, including taxes, depending on the distance covered by the particular flight. The directive comes at a time when there have been several complaints about airlines such as Air India downgrading



passengers to a lower class than the one they booked because of issues such as unserviceable seats. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Wednesday

informed that it has amended facilities to be provided to passengers by airlines due to denied boarding, cancellation of flights, and delays in flights. "The new norms will be

effective from February 15. This step is taken to strengthen the rights of air travellers affected by the downgrading of their tickets, it said.

"The amendment will allow the passenger, who is downgraded involuntarily and is carried in a class lower than that for which the ticket is purchased, to be reimbursed by the airline.

For the downgrade of a domestic flight ticket, the passenger concerned will get 75 per cent of the cost of ticket, including taxes, from the airline. In the case of a downgrade of an international ticket, a passenger will receive 30 per cent

of the cost of ticket, including taxes, for flights flying 1,500 kilometres or less. Inclusive of taxes, the amount will be 50 per cent if the flight covers a distance between 1,500 and 3,500 kilometres," the DGCA said in a statement. "The reimbursement amount will be 75 per cent of the cost of ticket, including taxes, for flights covering more than 3,500 kilometres," it said. In December last year, DGCA had proposed that airlines should have to refund the full value of such tickets, including taxes, and also that affected passengers will be flown free of cost in the next available class.

K'taka HC okays marriage of bride aged below 18



PTI ■ BENGALURU

The High Court of Karnataka has held that a marriage under the Hindu Marriage Act cannot be termed void even if the bride is below 18 years of age.

A lower court had declared a marriage void under Section 11 of the Act but the High Court pointed out that this section does not include the condition of the bride being 18.

Overturning the Family Court order, the High Court Bench of Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice S Vishwajith Shetty, in their judgement, on January 12, said, "Section 11 of the Act deals with void marriages. The Act provides that any marriage solemnised after the commencement of the Act shall be void and the court may on the petition presented by either of the parties thereto, declare the same to be nullity if it contravenes the provisions of Clauses (i), (iv) and (v) of Section 5 of the Act. Thus, it is evident that clause (iii) of Section 5 of the Act, which provides that the bride has to be 18 years of age at the time of marriage, has been omitted from the purview of Section 11 of the Act."

Setting aside the trial court order passed on January 8, 2015, the High Court said, "The trial court has, however, failed to appreciate the aforesaid aspect of the matter."

Sheela from Chennapatna Taluk had approached the High Court in 2015 against the order of the Family Court.

She had married Manjunath on June 15, 2012. After the wedding, Manjunath realised that Sheela's date of birth was September 6, 1995 and she was a minor at the time of marriage. So, he filed a petition before the Family Court to declare the marriage null and void under Section 11 of the Hindu Marriage Act.

The Family Court held that on the date of marriage, Sheela was 16 years, 11 months and 8 days old and had not completed 18 years of age as was required under Clause-3 of Section-5 of the HMA. It, therefore, declared the marriage void under Section 11 of the Act.

However, her appeal before the High Court was admitted as it found that Clause-3 of Section-5 was not applicable to Section 11 which deals with void marriages.

UNNAO RAPE CASE Victim seeks cancellation of Sengar's interim bail, HC calls for reply

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi High Court on Wednesday sought the response of the CBI and expelled BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar, who is serving a life term for raping a minor girl in Uttar Pradesh's Unnao in 2017, on a plea by the victim seeking cancellation of his interim bail.

Sengar has been granted interim bail to attend his daughter's wedding. His sentence has been suspended from January 27 to February 10 in the rape case and in another for which he is serving 10 years'



imprisonment for the death of the rape victim's father in custody.

The victim, who was present in court, submitted in her application that there is a threat perception to her and her family and she has received information that Sengar is allegedly likely to harm them after being released.

Antony's son quits Cong in Kerala

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The resignation of Anil Antony, son of veteran Congress leader AK Antony from all party positions comes at a time when the CPI(M) and the Indian National Congress were publicly screening the controversial BBC documentary on Gujarat riots across Kerala. Anil Antony, leader of the digital wing of the Congress resigned from all positions except his primary membership of the party.

While the octogenarian Antony, former Chief Minister as well as a Union Minister refused to comment about his son's decision.

CBI unearths another 153 fake bank accounts in WB's cow smuggling case

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

As a part of its investigation process into the multi-crore cow smuggling case the Central Bureau of Investigation on Wednesday unearthed another lot of 153 fake bank accounts opened in the names of villagers who had no inkling of their presence.

All the accounts opened in the Birbhum district Cooperative Bank were frozen by the agency. Early this month the CBI had grubbed up 177 similar accounts. The Wednesday's expose take the total number of fake accounts to 330 CBI sources said adding there were possibilities of many more fake accounts getting



exposed.

On whether the accounts could be related to cow smuggling case — that has already seen Trinamool Congress national executive member and Birbhum strongman Anubrata Mondal go to jail — sources said most of the fake accounts had transactions with two rice mills linked to Mondal.

Villagers in whose names the accounts were opened and

who were interrogated regarding the transactions said they had no idea of the accounts having existed. Some villagers said that though they had accounts in their names they were so poor that their savings hardly crossed three-figure mark.

When asked as to how the accounts came into existence in their names some villagers said that they had never gone to the banks, neither shared their personal details with anyone save on the occasions when they gave away the copies of their Aadhar and Voter ID cards to local panchayat or ruling party members for the purpose of receiving wages under MNREGA.

Bodies of 7 of family found in Pune river: 5 relatives arrested for murder

PTI ■ PUNE

An investigation into the death of seven members of a family, whose bodies were found in a riverbed in Pune, has indicated they were murdered allegedly by their rela-

tives over a previous incident involving the death of the son of one of the accused, a police official said on Wednesday.

Mohan Pawar (45), his wife Sangita Mohan (40), their daughter Rani Fulware (24), son-in-law Shyam Fulware

(28), and three children aged between three and seven years were found dead in the Bheema riverbed near Pargaon bridge in Duanad tehsil of Maharashtra's Pune district between January 18 and January 24.

Police have arrested five

siblings - Ashok Kalyan Pawar, Shyam Kalyan Pawar, Shankar Kalyan Pawar, Prakash Kalyan Pawar and Kantabai Sarjearao Jadhav - who are cousins of the deceased Mohan Pawar, an official said.

Pune Rural Superintendent

of Police Ankit Goyal said during the investigation, some facts came to the fore which indicated all the deceased were murdered.

Prima-facie, it is understood that Dhananjay Pawar, son of accused Ashok Pawar,

died a few months ago in an accident and a case related to it was registered in Pune city, he said.

"The prima-facie probe indicates Ashok was angry and held Mohan's son responsible for Dhananjay's death.

SC asks CBI, Guj why they want activist Teesta, her husband back in jail

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday questioned the CBI and the Gujarat government as to why they want to send social activist Teesta Setalvad and her husband Javed Anand back in jail after they have been out for over seven years on anticipatory bail. A bench of Justices Sanjay Kishan Kaul, Abhay S Oka and BV Nagarathna said, "Question is how long can you keep someone in custody. Seven years have passed since anticipatory bail was granted. You want to send her back to custody." Advocate Rajat Nair, appearing for the CBI and the Gujarat government said some additional material needed to be placed before the court with regard to the cases and, therefore, four weeks time may

be given. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal and advocate Aparna Bhat, appearing for Setalvad and her husband Anand, said in one of the proceedings in which the CBI has come in appeal, anticipatory bail was granted following which a charge sheet was filed and after that regular bail was granted to her. He said since a regular bail was granted, the appeal of the probe agency against anticipatory bail does not survive.

Nair said this had happened in one case but there are more than one case against her and requested the court to grant him four weeks to place additional material on record.

"A bench of two judges has referred this matter to a larger bench and has framed questions which need to be decided by this court," Nair said.



Tourists ride a jet ski, fitted with the national flag, on the eve of Republic Day on Wednesday

PTI

FROM PAGE 1

TWO VICTIMS OF BUILDING COLLAPSE DIE IN HOSP

"We arrested former minister and Samajwadi Party leader Manzoor Ahmed's son Nawazish in connection with the building collapse. As per the records available with the district administration the land agreement of the plot on which the apartment was constructed, is in the name of Nawazish. We have made five police teams to arrest the other two and raids are going on at all the possible hideouts of the two accused," he said.

As per the FIR, the owners of the apartment were drilling the basement for some construction for the last two days and it was opposed by the residents of the flats as it was consistently shaking the building but the protests fell on the deaf ears. The building had 13 flats. Poor construction material was used and despite disapproval construction was done in the apartment.

Minutes after doctors pronounced the death of Uzma and her mother-in-law, Abbas alleged that the NDRF team did not drill the spot suggested by them. He further alleged that water and oxygen was not supplied to the victims, including his mother Begum Haider, and wife. Abbas made the allegations while talking to journalists at SPM Hospital. He said the policemen and rescue teams officials were busy in photo sessions by the media persons present at the scene in large numbers. He said the officials kept saying that they would supply water and oxygen but did not do so.

He further alleged that the administration was not handing over the bodies of his wife and his mother though he had given an undertaking for autopsy.

Abbas and his supporters were seen accusing the administration of being unsympathetic to him in a video which went viral on social media and WhatsApp groups in the afternoon. The bodies were later handed over to the family.

However, Shiradkar, on being asked about the allegations, said that the rescue operation was done in front of all and the best possible effort was made to rescue the residents. "We have full sympathy and express condolences to the family," he said.

Meanwhile, on the directions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a three-member committee headed by Lucknow Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob and comprising Joint Commissioner of Police (Law and Order) Piyush Mordia and a PWD chief engineer, has been constituted to fix responsibility for the building collapse.

The four-floor Alaya Apartment situated on Wazir Hasan Road in upmarket Hazratganj area of Lucknow had collapsed on Tuesday evening.

Senior officials said that the mandate of the committee was to fix the responsibility of all those who passed the apartment project and were involved in the site visit and approval of the map. A report has to be prepared and submitted to the government in seven days.

BBC'S DOCU FUELS UNREST IN VARSITIES

event was organised at the Jawaharlal Nehru University during which students claimed that power and Internet were suspended and stones hurled at them. The campus witnessed heavy deployment of police and the anti-riot units Rapid Action Force (RAF) personnel. Secretary of SFI Delhi State committee, Pritish Menon said the police detained the protesters who had gathered there. "We were about to begin the demonstration but they were detained before that. They were taken to the police station," Menon said. The SFI's Jamia unit had released a poster announcing that the documentary would be screened at the MCRC lawn Gate Number 8 at 6 PM. The police said it detained four students after the SFI announced its plan. The university administration said the screening of the controversial documentary would not be allowed. They said they were taking all measures to prevent people and organisations with a "vested interest to destroy the peaceful academic atmosphere of the university".

In a statement, the varsity said no permission had been sought for the screening of the documentary and it would not be allowed. "It has come to the knowledge of the university administration that some students belonging to a political organisation have circulated a poster about screening of a controversial documentary film on the university campus today," it said in the

statement.

Earlier, the university had issued a memorandum/circular asserting that no meeting/gathering of students or screening of any film shall be allowed on the campus without permission from the competent authority. Strict disciplinary action shall be taken against organisers in case of any violation, it said.

"The university is taking all possible measures to prevent people/organisations having a vested interest to destroy the peaceful academic atmosphere of the university," the varsity further said in its statement. Jamia Millia Islamia Vice Chancellor Najma Akhtar on Wednesday called SFI "a small student group with no following" and accused it of disturbing peace on the campus as the group announced screening of a recent BBC documentary India: The Modi Question on 2002 Godhra riots on the campus. "We do not want any disturbance on the campus. We desire to keep the peace and harmony in the university where students are studying and giving exams," Akhtar said.

"A small group like Students' Federation of India (SFI), which has no following, is holding protests. We do not approve of this kind of behaviour. Their aim is to disturb peace and harmony on the campus. At no cost I will allow this kind of behaviour under my watch," she said. Asked whether any action will be taken against the protesting students, she said they will ask for a report and "take action against the students, if necessary."

EAM SLAMS POMPEO OVER SLIGHT TO SUSHMA

"On the Indian side, my original counterpart was not an important player on the Indian foreign policy team. Instead, I worked much more closely with National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, a close and trusted confidant of Prime Minister Narendra Modi," 59-year-old Pompeo writes in his book.

A confidant of then US president Donald Trump, Pompeo was the CIA Director in his administration from 2017 to 2018 and then served as the Secretary of State from 2018 to 2021.

"My second Indian counterpart was Subrahmanyam Jaishankar. In May 2019, we welcomed 'J' as India's new foreign minister. I could not have asked for a better counterpart. I love this guy. English is one of the seven languages he speaks, and his is somewhat better than mine," writes the former top American diplomat, who is now exploring the possibility of a 2024 presidential run.

"Professional, rational, and a fierce defender of his boss and his country," is how Pompeo described Jaishankar. "We hit it off immediately. In our first meeting, I was bemoaning, in a very diplomatic speech, that his predecessor had not been particularly helpful," he said.

"He (Jaishankar) said that he could see why I had trouble with his predecessor, a goofball and a heartland political hack. 'Careful, I'm a heartland political hack!' I replied in jest. He laughed, noting that if that were true, it would make me the first heartland political hack who had ever been an editor on the Harvard Law Review. Well played, J," Pompeo said. J here stands for Jaishankar.

In his book, Pompeo also says American neglect of India was a decades-long bipartisan failure. "We are natural allies, and we share a history of democracy, a common language, and ties of people and technology. India is also a market with enormous demand for American intellectual property and products. These factors, plus its strategic location in South Asia, made India the fulcrum of my diplomacy to counteract Chinese aggression," he writes. "In my mind, a counter-China bloc made up of the United States, India, Japan, Australia, South Korea, the United Kingdom, and the European Union would have an economic weight at least three times that of China. I chose to devote serious quantities of time and effort to help make India the next great American ally," Pompeo says.

'INDIA SEEN WITH NEW RESPECT ON GLOBAL STAGE'

"Our interventions in various world forums have started making a positive difference. The respect that India has earned on the world stage has resulted in new opportunities as well as responsibilities," she said.

President Murmu said, "Under India's leadership, I am sure,

G20 will be able to further enhance its efforts to build a more equitable and sustainable world order."

The President said G20 represents about two-thirds of the world population and around 85 per cent of the global GDP, and it is an ideal forum to discuss and find solutions for global challenges. She also welcomed the new National Education Policy (NEP) saying it makes "our civilisational lessons relevant for contemporary life", while also preparing learners for the 21st century challenges.

"With the economy on a sound footing, we have been able to begin and carry forward a series of praiseworthy initiatives. The ultimate goal is to create an environment in which all citizens can, individually and collectively, realise their true potential and prosper. As education builds the right foundation for this purpose, the National Education Policy has introduced ambitious changes," she said.

She said the founding document is inspired by the humanistic philosophy of the oldest living civilisation in the world as well as new ideas that emerged in more recent history.

"The nation will always remain grateful to Dr B R Ambedkar, who headed the Drafting Committee of the Constitution, and thus had a critical part in giving it the final shape. On this day, we should also remember the role of jurist BN Rau, who had prepared the initial draft, and other experts and officers who helped in making of the Constitution," she said.

The President said such a vast and diverse multitude of people coming together as one nation remains unprecedented.

"We did so with a belief that we are, after all, one; that we are all Indians. We have succeeded as a democratic republic because so many creeds and so many languages have not divided us, they have only united us. That is the essence of India," she said.

Murmu said the essence was at the heart of the Constitution, which has withstood the test of time.

"The Constitution that started governing the life of the Republic was the outcome of the Freedom Struggle. The national movement, led by Mahatma Gandhi, was as much about winning Independence as about rediscovering our own ideals," she said. Those decades of struggle and sacrifice "helped us win freedom" not only from colonial rule but also from the imposed values and narrow world-views, she said.

"Revolutionaries and reformers joined hands with visionaries and idealists to help us learn about our age-old values of peace, brotherhood and equality.

"Those who shaped the modern Indian mind also welcomed progressive ideas from abroad, following the Vedic advice... Let noble thoughts come to us from all directions'. A long and profound thought process culminated in our Constitution," she said.

"To my mind, global warming and climate change are the most pressing among them. Global temperatures are rising and incidents of extreme weather are increasing... Unfortunately, the poor bear the brunt of global warming more than others," she said. The President said India is faced with the dilemma of lifting more and more people out of poverty which is possible through economic growth but that also comes from fossil fuels.

She said one of the solutions to the conundrum is promoting the use of alternative energy sources.

"India has taken a commendable lead in this direction by giving a policy push to solar energy and electric vehicles. At the global level, however, emerging economies need a helping hand from advanced nations in the form of technology transfer and financial support," Murmu said. Murmu, the first President from the tribal community, said to balance development and the environment, we have to look at the ancient traditions with a new perspective. "We need to reconsider our basic priorities. The scientific aspects of traditional life-values have to be understood. We must, once again, rekindle that respect for nature and humility before the vast universe," she said.

The President said Mahatma Gandhi was a true prophet of our times, as he foresaw the calamities of indiscriminate industrialisation and cautioned the world to mend its ways.

Reminding that the United Nations have accepted India's call for declaring 2023 as an International year of millets, Murmu said "we used to take millets earlier" which we are using again. She said the millet grain is "good for health and good for environment" as it can be grown with the minimum water.

On the Covid-19, she said India dealt with the virus very competently but it "comes back in different forms".

The President said during Covid-19 the Government ensure

"food security" for 81 crore people. She said in 2023 also free monthly ration is assured to the poor of the country.

The President assured that people need not worry if Covid raises its head again as the country has an able and efficient administrator to nail it down. She, though, advocated that people continue to adopt caution.

Murmu paid tribute to the "brave soldiers" and said they sacrificed their lives to make the country's border safe. "I bow before them", she said.

PADMA VIBHUSHAN FOR MSY, SM KRISHNA, ZAKIR HUSSAIN

As many as 91 people were given Padma Shri this time including stock market guru late Rakesh Jhunjhunwala, musician Keeravaani, actress Raveen Tandon. Delhi based physician Dr. Ishwar Chandeer Verma, Gurcharan Singh (sports) Dr. Nalini Parthasarathi (medicine) are also featured in the Padma Shri awardees list.

Among the Padma awarded 19 are women and two are from non-resident Indians and seven were awarded posthumously. Sukama Acharya, Jodhaiyabai Baiga, Premijit Baria, Usha Barle, Hemant Chauhan, Bhanubhai Chitara, Hemoprova Chitiasubhadra Devi, Hem Chandra Goswami, Pritikana Goswami Ahmed Hussai, Mohammed Hussai, Dilshad Hussain (all in art category) were awarded Padma Shri.

The Government has awarded Padma Shri to many unsung heroes working in social service. They are Ratan Chandra Kar, a doctor working with Jarwa tribes of Andaman Islands; Hirabai Lobi, working for the welfare of Siddi Tribes; Dr. Munishwar Chander Dagar, working in Jabalpur for poor patients. Ramkuiwange Newme, engaged in primary education from Nagaland, noted Gandhian Appukkuttan Poduval from Kerala; S Chandra Sekhar, working for uplift and child education of the poor in Andhra Pradesh; snake experts from Tamil Nadu Vadivel Gopal; and Masi Sadaaiyan, Nrkram Sharma from organic farming.

COMPLETE LIST: (PADMA VIBHUSHAN) Mulayam Singh Yadav (Posthumous), Balkrishna Doshi (Posthumous), Zakir Hussain, SM Krishna, Dilip Mahalanabis (Posthumous), Srinivas Varadhan

(PADMA BHUSHAN) SL Bhyrappa, Kumar Mangalam Birla, Deepak Dhar, Vani Jairam, Swami Chinna Jeeyar, Suman Kalyanpur, Kapil Kapoor, Sudha Murty, Kamlesh D Patel **(PADMA SHRI)** Sukama Acharya, Jodhaiyabai Baiga, Premijit Baria, Usha Barle, Munishwar Chandandawar, Hemant Chauhan, Bhanubhai Chitara, Hemoprova Chutia, Narendra Chandra Debbarna (Posthumous), Subhadra Devi, Khadar Valli Dudekula, Hem Chandra Goswami, Pritikana Goswami, Radha Charan Gupta, Modadugu Vijay Gupta, Ahmed Hussain & Mohd Hussain (Duo), Dilshad Hussain, Bhiku Ramji Idate, CI Issac, Rattan Singh Jaggi, Bikram Bahadur Jamatia, Ramkuiwange Jene, Rakesh Radheshyam Jhunjhunwala (Posthumous), Ratan Chandra Kar, Mahipat Kavi, M Keeravaani, Areez Khambatta (Posthumous), Parshuram Komaji Khune, Ganesh Nagappa Krishnarajanagara, aguni Charan Kuanr, Anand Kumar, Arvind Kumar, Domar Singh Kunwar, Risingbor Kurkalang, Hirabai Lobi, Moolchand Lodha, Rani Machaiah, Ajay Kumar Mandavi, Prabhakar Bhanudas Mande, Gajanan Jagannath Mane, Antaryami Mishra Nadoja Pindipapanahalli Munivenkappa Prof. (Dr.) Mahendra Pal Uma Shankar Pandey Ramesh Parmar & Shanti Parmar (Duo) Nalini Parthasarathi Hanumantha Rao Pasupuleti Ramesh Patange Krishna Patel K Kalyanasundaram Pillai VP Appukkuttan Poduval Kapil Dev Prasad S R D Prasad Shah Rasheed Ahmed Quadri C V Raju Bakshi Ram Cheruvayal K Raman Sujatha Ramdorai Abbareddy Nageswara Rao Pareshbhai Rathwa B Ramakrishna Reddy Mangala Kanti Roy K C Ruremsangi Vadivel Gopal & Masi Sadaaiyan (Duo) Manoranjan Sahu Patayat Sahu Ritwik Sanyal Kota Satchidananda Sastry Sankurathri Chandra Sekhar K Shanathoiba Sharma Nekram Sharma Gurcharan Singh Laxman Singh Mohan Singh Thounaojam Chaoba Singh Prakash Chandra Sood Neihunuo Sorhie Dr. Janum Singh Soy Kushok Thiksey Nawang Chamba Stanzin S Subbaraman Moa Subong Palam Kalyana Sundaram Raveena Ravi Tandon Vishwanath Prasad Tiwari Dhaniram Tota Tula Ram Upreti Gopalsamy Veluchamy Ishwar Chander Verma Coomi Nariman Wadia Karma Wangchu (Posthumous) Ghulam Muhammad Zaz.

PTI man held for public censuring of Pak Govt

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistani authorities on Wednesday arrested Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party senior leader Fawad Chaudhry, hours after he publicly censured the government for scheming to arrest party chairman Imran Khan.

Fawad, a close aide of ousted prime minister Khan, was taken into custody from his residence in Lahore after a case was registered against him at Kohsar Police Station on the complaint of the Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP).

"This imported government has gone berserk," PTI leader Farrukh Habib tweeted. An official PTI Twitter account also posted videos, showing a convoy of police vehicles which the party



claimed was carrying Chaudhry after his arrest.

The arrest of Fawad, 52, came amidst rumours that the government may arrest PTI chief and former premier Khan.

Fawad's arrest comes after he, along with scores of party workers, gathered outside Khan's Zaman Park residence in Lahore, claiming to avert the government's alleged plan to arrest the party chief.

The arrest of Fawad further

deepens political fault lines in Pakistan where the Khan-led opposition is demanding snap polls.

General elections in Pakistan are due after August. However, Khan is demanding snap polls.

"He (Chaudhry) was taken away from outside his house at 5:30 am in four cars that did not have any number plates," Faisal Chaudhry, the PTI leader's brother, was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper

UK Home Secy mulls cut in post-study student visa stay

PTI ■ LONDON

British Home Secretary Suella Braverman is said to be on a collision course with the country's education department over plans to cut the period of stay allowed for overseas students under a post-study visa route, according to a UK media report on Wednesday.

The new Graduate Visa route, which allows foreign graduates - including Indians - the chance to stay on to job hunt and gain work experience for up to two years without the requirement of a specific job offer, is expected to be cut under Braverman's proposed review.

According to 'The Times', the Indian-origin home secretary has drawn up a plan to "reform" the Graduate Visa route requiring students to obtain a work visa by getting a



skilled job or leave the UK after six months. The newspaper refers to leaked advice to say that the UK Department for Education (DfE) is attempting to block the changes as they fear it would harm the UK's attractiveness to international students.

A government source who backs Braverman's plan said the Graduate Visa was being increasingly used by students

on short courses at "less respectable universities".

"It's being used as a backdoor immigration route," the newspaper quoted the source as saying.

The DfE, however, argues that the two-year Graduate Visa, often referred to as the UK's post-study offer, was aligned with most of Britain's main competitors, with only the US offering a one-year visa.

UN official: Aid groups press Taliban on ban on women's jobs

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Heads of major aid groups are pressing the Taliban to reverse their decision to ban Afghan women from working for national and international nongovernmental groups, the UN humanitarian chief said on Wednesday.

The Taliban move last month to bar women from NGO work prompted major international aid agencies to suspend operations in Afghanistan, though some have since resumed their work in parts of the country.

It also raised fears that millions will be deprived of critical services — some 28 million Afghans, or over half of the country's population, need urgent humanitarian assistance.

The UN humanitarian chief, Martin Griffiths, and the heads of Care International, Save the Children US and UNICEF programs are in Afghanistan this week, following a visit by a senior UN delegation last week that sought to persuade the Taliban to end their crackdown on women and girls, including its ban on Afghan women working for national and global humanitarian organisations.



South Korea, Japan grapple with heavy snow chaos, delays



PTI ■ SEOUL

Frigid winter weather gripped East Asia for the second straight day on Wednesday, causing several deaths and multiple injuries in Japan and a scramble for flights out of South Korea's resort island of Jeju following delays by snowstorms.

Heavy snow and record cold temperatures brought widespread disruptions in Japan.

South Korea's Ministry of the Interior and Safety didn't

immediately report any major damage or injuries from sub-zero temperatures and icy conditions that have affected most of the country since Tuesday.

But at least eight roads and 10 sea routes remained closed as of Wednesday afternoon. About 140 homes in capital Seoul and nearby regions reported busted water pressure pumps or pipes as temperatures

dipped to around minus 15 to minus 20 degrees Celsius (5 degrees to minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit) across the mainland.

Israeli troops kill Palestinian after attempted stabbing

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli troops shot and killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, Palestinian officials said, the latest death in a surge of violence. The Israeli military said the Palestinian tried to stab a soldier.

The violence comes amid tensions over Israel's new government, it's most right-wing ever. On Wednesday, ultranationalist Cabinet minister Itamar Ben-Gvir promised to continue visits to a flashpoint Jerusalem holy site, despite pleas from neighbouring Jordan that Israel maintain a delicate status quo at the site.

The Palestinian Health Ministry identified the man shot as Aref Abdel Nasser Lahlouh, 20. The Israeli military said the man was carry-



ing a knife and was shot after he attempted to attack a soldier at a military post. Video on social media showed a man running toward soldiers and then falling to the ground.

Tensions have been high for months as Israel has been conducting nightly arrest raids in the West Bank, which were prompted by a spate of Palestinian attacks against Israelis last spring. Some 30 people were killed in Israel by Palestinians in 2022.

US reroutes \$72M in aid for wages for Lebanese army, police

AP ■ BEIRUT

The United States is rerouting USD 72 million of America's assistance to Lebanon to help the country's cash-strapped government boost wages of its soldiers and police officers, the US ambassador said Wednesday.

Washington is a key donor of the Lebanese Army and its 80,000 members, providing over USD 3 billion in military aid since 2006. The announcement Wednesday is the first time the US is allocating funds for wages of security personnel in Lebanon.

Lebanon, a tiny Mediterranean country of 6 million people, is struggling with an unprecedented economic crisis, one that the World Bank says is among the worst worldwide since the 1850s.

New Zealander killed in Ukraine helped hundreds, parents say

AP ■ WELLINGTON

The parents of a New Zealand scientist who was killed in Ukraine said Wednesday he helped save hundreds of people while volunteering in the dangerous Donbas region.

Andrew Bagshaw, 47, a dual New Zealand and British citizen, was killed along with British colleague Chris Parry, 28, while attempting to rescue an elderly woman from the town of Soledar when their car was hit by an artillery shell, according to Bagshaw's parents, Dame Sue and Phil Bagshaw.

The Bagshaws said the deaths, which occurred some time this month, had only just been confirmed to them.

They said their son worked independently and wasn't affiliated with an aid agency. They said he helped evacuate people from dangerous areas and bring food, water and medicine to



others in need. They said he even fed abandoned pets.

Soledar has seen intense military action and Russia this month claimed it had retaken the salt-mining town in a rare recent victory in the 11-month conflict.

Bagshaw's parents said Ukrainian authorities were

working with officials in New Zealand and Britain, but it could take some time to get their son's body returned from where it was being held at a children's hospital mortuary in the capital, Kyiv.

New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said he'd yet to be officially briefed about the death but had received some preliminary information. "I just want to extend my condolences to the Bagshaw family," Hipkins said. "I haven't had an opportunity to convey that to them personally yet. It's obviously a very tragic situation for them."

Hipkins said that there was very limited consular support available in Ukraine.

Andrew Bagshaw's parents told reporters their son was a humanitarian who had travelled to Ukraine in April with little more than a backpack and a travel guide.

In reversal, US poised to approve M1 Abrams tanks for Ukraine

AP ■ WASHINGTON

In what would be a reversal, the Biden administration is poised to approve sending M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine, U.S. Officials said Tuesday, as international reluctance to send tanks to the battlefield against the Russians begins to erode.

A decision to send a bit more than 30 tanks could be announced as soon as Wednesday, though it could take months for the tanks to be delivered.

U.S. Officials said details are still being worked out.

One official said the tanks would be bought under an upcoming Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative package, which provides longer-range funding for weapons and equipment to be purchased from commercial vendors.

The U.S. Announcement is expected in coordination with an announcement by Germany that it will approve Poland's request to transfer German-made Leopard 2 tanks to Ukraine, according to one official.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because the decision has not yet been made public.

By agreeing to send the



Abrams at an as-yet unspecified time under the assistance initiative, the administration is able to meet German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's demand for an American commitment without having to send the tanks immediately.

Much of the aid sent so far in the 11-month-old war has been through a separate program drawing on Pentagon stocks to get weapons more quickly to Ukraine. But even under that programme, it would take months to get tanks to Ukraine and to get Ukrainian forces trained on

them.

It wasn't clear Tuesday how soon the U.S. Will start training Ukrainian troops on the Abrams and roughly how soon they can get to the battlefield.

Until now, the U.S. Has resisted providing its own M1 Abrams tanks to Ukraine, citing extensive and complex maintenance and logistical challenges with the high-tech vehicles.

Washington believes it would be more productive to send German Leopards since many allies have them and Ukrainian troops would need

less training than on the more difficult Abrams.

Just last week, Under Secretary of Defence for Policy Colin Kahl told reporters that the Abrams is a complicated, expensive, difficult to maintain and hard to train on piece of equipment.

One thing Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has been very focused on, he said, "is that we should not be providing the Ukrainians systems they can't repair, they can't sustain, and that they, over the long term, can't afford, because it's not helpful."

A U.S. Official familiar with White House thinking said the administration's initial hesitancy was based on concerns about the requisite training and the sustainment of the tanks.

The official added that the administration believes that such plans are now in place, but it could take time to implement them. At the Pentagon, spokesman Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder said he had nothing to announce on any U.S. Decision regarding Abrams tanks.

But he said, "anytime that we've provided Ukraine with a type of system, we've provided the training and sustainment capabilities with that."

Germany unleashes Leopard tanks for Ukraine

AP ■ BERLIN

After weeks of hesitation that saw growing impatience among Germany's allies, Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced Wednesday that his government would provide Ukraine with Leopard 2 battle tanks and approve requests by other countries to do the same.

In a statement, the German government said it would initially provide Ukraine with one company of Leopard 2 A6 tanks, which comprises 14 vehicles, from its own stocks. The goal is for Germany and its allies to provide Ukraine with a total of two battalions, or 88 tanks.

"This decision follows our well-known line of supporting Ukraine to the best of our ability," Scholz said after a Cabinet meeting in Berlin.

Germany was "acting in close coordination" with its international allies, he added.

The long-awaited decision came after US officials said Tuesday that a preliminary agreement had been struck for the United States to send M1 Abrams tanks.

Ukraine corruption scandal claims several top officials

AP ■ KYIV

Several senior Ukrainian officials, including front-line governors, lost their jobs in a corruption scandal plaguing President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government as it grapples with the nearly 11-month-old Russian invasion.

Ukraine's biggest government shake-up since the war began came as U.S. Officials said Washington was poised to approve supplying Kyiv with M1 Abrams tanks, with international reluctance eroding toward sending tanks to the battlefield against the Russians. Zelenskyy was elected in 2019 on an anti-establishment and anti-corruption platform in a country long gripped by graft, and the new allegations come as Western allies are channeling billions of dollars to help Kyiv fight against Moscow.

Officials in several countries, including the United States, have demanded more accountability for the aid, given Ukraine's rampant corruption.

While Zelenskyy and his aides portray the resignations and firings as proof of their efforts to crack down, the wartime scandal could play into Moscow's political attacks



on the leadership in Kyiv.

On the capital's streets, Serhii Bochkarev, a 28-year-old translator, welcomed the moves. "Corruption during war is totally unacceptable because people are giving their lives to fight Russians and to defend the motherland," he said.

The shake-up even touched Zelenskyy's office.

Its deputy head, Kyrylo Tymoshenko, prominent for his frequent battlefield updates, quit as the president pledged to address allegations of graft - including some related to military spending - that embarrassed authorities and could slow Ukraine's efforts to join the European Union and NATO.

Tymoshenko asked to be relieved of his duties. He didn't cite a reason. Local media said Deputy

Defence Minister Viacheslav Shapovalov also resigned, in connection with a scandal involving the purchase of food for Ukraine's armed forces.

Deputy Prosecutor General Oleksiy Symonenko also quit. In all, four deputy ministers and five governors of front-line provinces were set to leave their posts, the country's cabinet secretary said on the Telegram messaging app. Authorities did not announce any criminal charges.

There was no immediate explanation.

The departures thinned government ranks already diminished by the deaths of the interior minister, who oversaw Ukraine's police and emergency services, and others in the ministry's leadership in a helicopter crash last week.

Ukraine forces pull back from Donbas town after onslaught

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian forces have conducted an organised retreat from a town in the eastern region of the Donbas, an official said on Wednesday, in what is a rare but modest battlefield triumph for the Kremlin after a series of setbacks in its invasion that began almost 11 months ago.

The Ukrainian army retreated from the salt-mining town of Soledar "to preserve the lives of the personnel", Serhii Cherevatyi, a spokesperson for Ukraine's forces in the east, told The Associated Press.

The soldiers pulled back to previously prepared defensive positions, he said.

Moscow has portrayed the battle for Soledar, which lies near the city

of Bakhmut, as key to capturing the entire Donbas.

The accomplishment takes the Russian forces a step closer to Bakhmut, but military analysts say capturing Soledar is more symbolic than strategic.

Ukraine's military, which has held out in Soledar against a month-long onslaught of superior Russian forces, has said its fierce defence of the eastern stronghold helped tie up Russian forces.

Russia claimed almost two weeks ago that it had taken Soledar, but Ukraine denied it.

Many of Russia's troops around Soledar belong to the private Russian military contractor Wagner Group, and the fighting reportedly has been bloody.

Since its invasion of Ukraine, Moscow has prioritised taking full

control of the Donbas - a region made up of the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, where it has backed a separatist insurgency since 2014.

Russia has seized most of Luhansk, but about half of Donetsk remains under Ukraine's control.

Taking control of the town would potentially allow Russian forces to cut supply lines to Ukrainian forces in Bakhmut, though the strength of Ukraine's new defensive positions was not known.

The Institute for the Study of War, a think tank in Washington, said earlier this month that the fall of Soledar wouldn't mark "an operationally significant development and is unlikely to presage an imminent Russian encirclement of Bakhmut".

The institute said Russian information operations have "overexaggerated the importance of Soledar,"



which is a small settlement. It also argued that the long and difficult battle has contributed to the exhaustion

of Russian forces.

Perhaps more worrying for Moscow, Western military help for

Ukraine is now being stepped up with the delivery of tanks.

Elsewhere, Russian forces have continued to pummel Ukrainian areas, especially in the south and east.

Russian strikes wounded 10 civilians in the eastern Donetsk province on Tuesday, Pavlo Kyrylenko, the provincial governor, said.

Five were wounded when Russian shells slammed into apartment blocks, he said.

The General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine said on Wednesday that over the previous 24 hours Russian forces had launched four missile strikes, 26 airstrikes and more than 100 attacks from rocket salvo systems.

Russian forces are concentrating their efforts on establishing control over Donetsk province, conducting

offensive operations around the embattled cities of Bakhmut, Lyman and Avdiivka, and the village of Novopavlivka, according to spokesperson Oleksandr Shtupun.

In addition to Donetsk, the Russian attacks struck settlements in the country's northeastern Kharkiv and Sumy, northern Chernihiv, easternmost Luhansk, southeastern Zaporizhzhia, and southern Kherson provinces.

Meanwhile, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukraine president who has gone from professional comedian to an internationally recognised wartime leader, turned 45 on Wednesday.

His wife, first lady Olena Zelenska, said that though he is the same person as when they met at 17, "Something has changed: You smile much less now."

SKY VOTED ICC MEN'S T20 CRICKETER OF YEAR

PTI ■ DUBAI

Swashbuckling Indian batter Suryakumar Yadav was on Wednesday named the ICC Men's T20 Cricketer of the Year for his ridiculously good run in the shortest format of the game. Surya had a stellar 2022, breaking an array of records and setting a benchmark in the format.

He beat the likes of Sam Curran, Pakistan wicketkeeper-batter Mohammad Rizwan and Zimbabwe's batting all-rounder Sikandar Raza for the top honour. India's newest fast-bowling star Renuka Singh become the recipient of ICC Emerging Women's Cricketer of the Year Award.

However, India vice-captain and last year's Cricketer of the Year Smriti Mandhana lost out to Australia's Tahlia McGrath in the women's T20 category.

Popularly known as 'SKY', the 32-year-old became just the second batter to make more than 1000 runs in a calendar year in T20s and ended the year as the highest run-getter, scoring 1164 runs at a strike-rate of 187.43.

Surya hit a stunning 68 sixes during the year, easily the



most recorded by anyone in a year in the format's history.

The Indian was the key batter for his team through the year, smashing two hundreds and nine half-centuries.

Surya was at his stupendous best during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2022 in Australia, recording three fifties in six innings and averaging nearly 60.

Notably, his strike-rate was yet again right up there at 189.68.

rounding Renuka, who burst into life in a busy 12 months for the Indian women's team.

The 26-year-old beat Australia's Darcie Brown, England's Alice Capsey and compatriot Yastika Bhatia to take home the emerging player award.

The right-arter claimed 40 wickets for her country in 2022 in just 29 matches across the two white-ball formats, filling the void left by the great Jhulan Goswami.

In the ODI game, Renuka was especially potent, taking 18 wickets at an average of just 14.88, of which eight came in two appearances against England and seven in India's series with Sri Lanka.

Renuka troubled the Australian line-up in the seven T20I meetings across the year, taking eight wickets, and her performances across the Commonwealth Games and Asia Cup also grabbed attention. She claimed 17 wickets in 11 matches, at an economy of just 5.21.

With an ability to swing the ball and get it to deviate off the surface, Renuka will likely be one of India's most dependable bowlers in the coming years.

Having already recorded a ton earlier in the year, Suryakumar continued his brilliant year after the multi-nation tournament, making his second hundred in T20s in the bilateral series in New Zealand.

Surya also became the top-ranked T20 player, achieving a career-high 890 rating points.

RENUKA WINS

There has been a buzz sur-

Siraj becomes world No.1 bowler in ODIs

PTI ■ DUBAI

India pacer Mohammed Siraj on Wednesday became number one bowler in the ICC rankings for ODI bowlers, a testament to his rapid rise in international cricket.

Siraj went past New Zealand's Trent Boult and Australia seamer Josh Hazlewood to become the top-ranked ODI bowler for the very first time.

Not only has Siraj's form over the last 12 months been imperious, but his effort in the ODI series at home earlier this month against Sri Lanka and New Zealand has shown just how much the right-arter has improved in recent times. India bowling coach Paras Mhambrey challenged Siraj to

work on certain aspects of his game last year and the extra training the energetic quick has put in has paid off.

Siraj took nine wickets against Sri Lanka to be the leading wicket-taker for the three-game series and backed that up by claiming a four-wicket haul in the opening match of the recently-completed series against New Zealand.

It means Siraj jumps to the top of the ODI bowler rankings with 729 rating points, albeit narrowly, with his lead at the top over Hazlewood just two rating points higher than the Australian.

Fellow India pacer Mohammed Shami has jumped 11 places to 32nd overall on the updated list for ODI bowlers, while there is plenty of movement at the top of the batter

rankings following the completion of India's home series against the Kiwis.

Pakistan skipper Babar Azam still enjoys a healthy lead at the top of the ODI batter rankings, but there is now a total of three India players inside the top 10 and chasing the highest accolade.

In-form opener Shubman Gill is the eye-catcher as the right-hander jumps a whopping 20 places to sixth overall following a brilliant double hundred and a century against New Zealand at home.

Gill rises in front of veteran Virat Kohli, who slipped to seventh following a quiet series against New Zealand, while Rohit jumped two places to equal eighth after his quickfire hundred against the Kiwis in Indore.

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