

**CITY 3**  
YOGI GOVT HIKES GRANTS TO  
SMALL, MARGINAL FARMERS**OPINION 6**  
THE HULLABALOO OVER UK'S  
REFUGEE POLICY**WORLD 10**  
XI, PUTIN HOLD  
TALKS IN MOSCOW

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY MARCH 21, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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BARCA BEAT  
REAL MADRID  
IN EL CLASICO  
11 SPORT

# UK Govt, Indian diaspora slam Tricolour disrespect

**British MP  
rapped for  
batting for  
Amritpal****PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/  
AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/  
LONDON**

A day after alleged Khalistani supporters grabbed the Indian Tricolour atop the Indian High Commission, the United Kingdom Government on Monday termed the acts of vandalism as "disgraceful" and "completely unacceptable." Britain said it will take the security of the Indian High Commission in London "seriously." One person was arrested later in connection with the incident.

Meanwhile, officials from the Indian mission in London said the "attempted but failed" attack was foiled and the Tricolour was now flying "grander," with a larger tricolour now adorning the India House façade.

As regards the incident of vandalism, Scotland Yard said it was called to reports of disorder on Sunday afternoon and that a man has been arrested as its enquiries continue.

"There was no report of any injury, however windows were broken at the High Commission building," the Metropolitan Police statement said.

British Labour MP Tanmanjeet Singh Dhesi's tweet, expressing concern over the ongoing action to arrest Amritpal Singh and arrest of some alleged Khalistani elements, has received condemnation. Dhesi, an MP from Slough, tweeted, "Very worrying reports coming from #India, of the imposition of an internet blackout in the #Punjab state, with mass arrests and restrictions on gatherings. Praying that the tense situation is soon resolved and that human rights of all are



People from Sikh Community protest against vandalisation by Khalistani supporters at Indian High Commission in London, in New Delhi on Monday PTI

respected."

Taking exception to his message, Congress spokesperson and senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi criticised Dhesi for "nurturing Khalistani sentiments" in the United Kingdom and said his tweet will not fetch him new votes from Slough "which has a massive chunk of Pakistan supporting population."

Sharing the photograph in a Twitter post, the BJP's national spokesperson Jaiver Shergill said, "Jhanda Ooncha Rahe Hamara-UK Govt must act... Punjab and Punjabis have a glorious track record of serving/protecting the Nation. Handful of jumping jacks sitting in the UK do not represent Punjab."

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor termed the incident on Sunday at the Indian High Commission "utterly shocking" and a "major insult."

The British condemnation came after India on Sunday evening summoned the senior-most UK diplomat in New Delhi to convey its "strong protest" at the actions taken by separatist and extremist elements against the Indian High Commission in London.

British Deputy High Commissioner Christina Scott was summoned to the MEA in view of the incident as High

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**Entrance blocked, Indian envoy  
in Canada cancels visit to event****PNS ■ NEW DELHI/ BRITISH  
COLUMBIA (CANADA)**

In an apparent fall out of the ongoing operation to nab Amritpal Singh in India, its envoy to Canada had to cancel an event in British Columbia due to security concerns as alleged Khalistani supporters blocked the entrance to the venue there.

Some of the protesters were also reportedly wielding

swords. In another incident, a 21-year-old Sikh student was assaulted in British Columbia.

The incident related to the Indian envoy took place late on Sunday in front of the Taj Convention. High Commissioner to Canada Sanjay Kumar Verma was scheduled to attend a reception organised by the Friends of India and Canada Foundation in Surrey, British Columbia.

Continued on Page 9

## Consulate hit in US; India protests, summons envoy

**PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/  
WASHINGTON**

An incident of vandalism by alleged Khalistani supporters targeting the Indian consulate in San Francisco has taken place. The perpetrators installed so-called Khalistan flag on the consulate premises.

This was the second such incident involving the Indian

embassies with the first one in London on Sunday evening when the Indian tri-colour was grabbed by the protestors. India on Monday summoned the US envoy to register protest against attacks on its consulate in San Francisco.

As regards the attack in the US, raising pro-Khalistan slogans, the protestors on Sunday broke open the makeshift secu-

rity barriers raised by the city police and installed two so-called Khalistani flags inside the consulate premises. Two consulate personnel soon removed these flags.

Soon thereafter, a group of angry protesters entered the consulate premises and started hitting the door and windows with the rods.

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## NSA slapped on Amritpal's 5 aides; uncle surrenders

**Curbs on Internet  
services extended****PTI ■ CHANDIGARH**

The Punjab Police on Monday flagged a possible "ISI angle" as it invoked the stringent National Security Act against five men linked to radical preacher Amritpal Singh, whose uncle and driver surrendered amid a Statewide crackdown against his "Waris

Punjab De" group.

The pro-Khalistan supporter and radical preacher has allegedly been maintaining close links with drug peddlers and Pakistan's ISI to further his goal for a separate country for the Sikhs, officials said. While drug lords were allegedly helping the pro-Khalistan preacher financially, including gifting him a high-end Mercedes SUV, the ISI was helping him with arms, ammunition and other

Continued on Page 9

## Clear OROP arrears by Feb 28; no more sealed-cover note: SC

**PNS ■ NEW DELHI**

The Supreme Court on Monday refused to accept the sealed-cover note submitted by the Defence Ministry and fixed February 28, 2024, for disbursement of "One Rank, One Pension" (OROP) arrears. The Bench, headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud ordered that the Centre is duty-bound to comply with its 2022 judgment on the payment of pension arrears worth ₹28,000 crore for 2019-2022.

"Sealed covers in court are against transparency, we want to end it...Please share the

sealed cover with the opposite side or take him to the chamber. We want to put an end to the sealed cover business being followed by the SC since High

Courts also follow it," said the CJI when Attorney-General R

Venkataramani submitted the details in a sealed cover.

"This is about implementing the orders. What can be the secrecy here? You must give a copy to the other side. Sealed covers are completely against

settled judicial principles," said CJI when the A-G insisted on submitting it in a sealed cover.

"Sorry sorry we will not take this sealed cover. Please take it back or read it," said the CJI. The Bench noted that out of 25 lakh pensioners, four lakh did not qualify for the OROP scheme as they were getting enhanced pensions and the Centre proposed to pay the arrears by April 30, 2023.

Reducing the time limit to February 28 next year, the Bench gave the time schedule for payment of arrears to different groups of pensioners

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### CAPSULE

**PRESENTATION OF DELHI  
BUDGET PUT ON HOLD**

**New Delhi:** The presentation of the Delhi Government's budget for 2023-24, scheduled for Tuesday, has been put on hold, with the Arvind Kejriwal dispensation and the Central Government trading charges over allocations in various heads. But the MHA denied the report.

**ED GRILLS KAVITHA FOR  
10 HRS; QUIZ TODAY ALSO**

**New Delhi:** BRS leader K Kavitha was grilled by the Enforcement Directorate for more than 10 hours on Monday in a Delhi excise policy-linked money laundering case and has been called again on March 21, officials said.

# Modi's push to make India energy atmanirbhar by 2047: US report

**PTI ■ NEW DELHI**

India, the world's fifth largest economy, can achieve energy independence through clean technology by 2047, a report by a top US research institute said, highlighting Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Atmanirbhar Bharat push that spans from a massive renewable capacity addition to electric mobility, saving billions of dollars in imports.

Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, a US federally funded research and development centre, along with



The India Energy and Climate Center (IECC) located at UC Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy published a report, "Pathways to Atmanirbhar Bharat", that highlights the steps taken by India towards the adoption of clean energy.

India is 80-85 per cent dependent on imports to meet its oil and coal needs. The price and supply volatility in global energy markets, as witnessed in recent years, strain India's foreign exchange reserves, resulting in economy-wide inflation. However, recent dramatic declines in clean energy costs provide India an opportunity to lower energy imports through investment in renewable energy, battery storage, EVs, and green hydrogen, the report said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has already set a target to

install 500 GW (gigawatt) of renewable energy capacity by 2030. The government intends to grow EV sales in India to capture the markets of 30 per cent of private cars, 70 per cent of commercial vehicles and 80 per cent of two- and three-wheelers by 2030. Also, it is targeting production of 5 million tonnes of green hydrogen by splitting water using electricity from renewable sources.

Abundant solar energy and local technology will aid this and also reduce carbon emissions.

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## India, Japan to boost ties, free Indo-Pacific

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI**

India and Japan on Monday resolved to further deepen their strategic ties during talks here between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his counterpart Fumio Kishida. The two leaders also said their ties are important for a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific besides benefitting the two countries in diverse areas.

The two leaders also discussed the entire gamut of the ties covering trade and economics besides defence in the summit shortly after the Japanese Prime Minister arrived in the national Capital on Monday morning on a nearly 27-hour visit.

Kishida pledged \$75 billion plan to promote an open and free Indo-Pacific. The plan he announced is seen as Tokyo's bid to forge stronger ties with countries in South and Southeast Asia to counter China's growing assertiveness there. "We plan to expand the cooperation of the free and open Indo-Pacific framework," Kishida told the Indian Council of World Affairs.

The visit came amid the ongoing Ukraine conflict and its adverse impact on the global supply chains of energy and food. The visit also came in the backdrop of China's growing assertiveness in the strategically-crucial Indo-



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Japanese PM Fumio Kishida at Buddha Jayanti Park in New Delhi on Monday PTI

Pacific region.

In his media statement, Modi referred to India's presidency of the G20 and Japan chairing the G7 grouping, and said it is the best opportunity to work together on priorities of both sides for global good. Modi said he briefed Prime Minister Kishida extensively about priorities of the Indian presidency of G20.

The Prime Minister said

the India-Japan special strategic and global partnership is based on the democratic principles and respect for international rule of law and that it is important for the Indo-Pacific as well.

Modi said both sides also discussed the importance of reliable supply chains for semiconductors and other critical technologies.

Continued on Page 9

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## Driver found murdered inside truck’s cabin

**Lucknow (PNS):** A 60-year old truck driver was found murdered in PGI police station area late Sunday night. The blood-stained body was recovered from the truck’s cabin parked in the area. He was identified as Harpinder, who was a native Faridkot in Punjab. A forensic team and senior police officers inspected the scene but failed to get any clue about the motive for murder. The deceased worked with a company and had ferried goods to its warehouse in PGI police station area.

As per reports, Harpinder accompanied another truck driver, Onkar Singh of Rampur district, when they left Ghaziabad after loading the goods. Around 5:30 on March 15, both Onkar and Harpinder reached the company’s warehouse on Binjor road under PGI police station. They had to park

the truck on the roadside as the warehouse had no space for trucks. On March 16, another truck carrying the company’s goods reached the warehouse and its driver Arvind also parked the vehicle on the roadside. On March 19, Harpinder called two youths to work as conductors. Onkar said he was awake around 10 pm on Sunday and Harpinder was with the youths. “Arvind and I went to sleep in our respective trucks while Harpinder was with those youths,” Onkar stated in a complaint. He said he got a call from the truck owner and was told that Harpinder had parked the truck near a drain close to Mati Park. “I was asked to go and check the truck. I peeped inside the driver’s cabin and found Harpinder lying in a pool of blood. He appeared to have been murdered,” he alleged.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### NOTICE

I, Neha Bansal, have changed my daughter's name from Vaishnavi to Vaishnavi Agrawal Henceforth she should be known by this name only.

### NOTICE

I have changed my daughter name Palak Singhal to Fagunee Singhal her DOB 25/02/2012 residing at J-193 Avas Vikas Keshavpuram Kanpur will Known in future.

### NOTICE

Ashok Kumar S/o Late Kripa Shankar Add-2/169 Gandhi Nagar, Aheeran Khera Unnao. My daughter name is Arti Devi but in army record her name mention Arti. So I want change my daughter name from Arti to Arti devi.

### NOTICE

**NOTICE**  
I Ashish Srivastava S/o Satish Srivastava R/o Chawk Bazar Madhapur Gaureganj Amethi Sultanpur hereby informed that the original Allotment letter, Possession latter of my Flat no-403 Tulip Tower block No-C, Omexe Residence Lucknow have actually been lost. I am taking housing Loan from SBI Jankipuram branch if any one have objection or found my paper kindly contact to branch or this no- 8931817512.

### WANTED

**WANTED**  
**Sri Bachchu Ram Ram Swarup Singh M/V Adhau Dhatu Fatehpur (U.P.).** Lecturer/Teacher for Sanskrit, Hindi Litt, Aneient Indian History, Geography in P.G. Classes. Qualification & Payment as per U.G.C. Rules. Last Date - 05/04/2023  
**Manager**  
Mo. 9935406738, 9956054503, 735517079

### NOTICE

**NOTICE**  
I, PRABHA BETI (Existing Name of spouse as per change of next - of - kin POR/Service Document/Pension Certificate), spouse of RAM CHANDRA SAH (Name of Husband), resident of 105A, SADANAND NAGAR KANPUR Pin-208007 (Address) have changed my name from PRABHABETI (Existing Name, of spouse as per change of next-of-kin POR /Service Documents/PPO) to PRABHAVATI SAH (Proposed Adopted/Corrected New Name) and add my correct date of birth as 01-01-1957 (AADHAAR Card Pan Card) as per Affidavit Dated 18.03.2023.

### NOTICE

**NOTICE**  
I, Rashi Pareek W/o Deepak Pareek Dhannipur, Lohta, Varanasi. My original Chain Deed dated 16.03.2007, Bahi No I, Zild No. 1705, Pages 55/82, Document No 1357, while going to Lohta Bazar got misplaced/use of same will be illegal. Rashi Pareek. 9335891500

## Rains dent hopes of bumper mango harvest

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The unusual rains at this critical stage of late flowering and fruit set in Uttar Pradesh may have played a spoilsport for the mango crop, throwing the hopes of a bumper harvest due to conducive weather conditions haywire.

According to experts, thunderstorm, small fruits might have escaped the damage caused by rains and hailstorm which lashed the state on Sunday and Monday, but the panicle were damaged at some places. Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture director Dr T Damodaran said that increased soil moisture and humidity due to rains might increase the chances of anthracnose infection to flowers and fruitlets.

“At some places, mango flowers have crossed the stage of getting the powdery mildew, but chances are there in some areas. Due to rains, soil-pupat-

ing insects like thrips and midge immature stages have been killed and to some extent, their adults have been washed away from the trees. However, their damage in subsequent days on fruitlets cannot be ruled out,” he pointed out.

CISH ex-director Shailendra Rajan said new shoots were expected in some trees due to rains but the population of hoppers could increase. “The next 30-day weather forecast from the Indian Meteorological Department is not encouraging either, with the likelihood of alternate sunny and cloudy days, and thunderstorms. This may not be suitable for the development of fruits and may enhance the latent infection of anthracnose in developing fruits,” he added.

CISH generally does not recommend the use of fungicides during fruit development stages but under the present and predicted weather situa-



Commuters braving a strong spell of showers in Lucknow on Monday

Pioneer

tion, it may be necessary to take preventive measures to safeguard the crop.

Meanwhile, winters appeared to have made a U-

turn as rains brought down the maximum temperature (23.1 degree Celsius) by 10.2 degrees while the minimum temperature was recorded at 17.2

degree Celsius.

People woke up to overcast skies and thundering clouds as they were forced to take out wollens which they had packed

because of the hot weather conditions earlier. The Met department has forecast generally cloudy sky with light rains, thundershowers and lightning in some areas. The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be 24 degree Celsius and 17 degree Celsius, respectively.

Rains and thundershowers are likely at many places over the state. There is a warning of thunderstorm accompanied by lightning at isolated places over the state. Hailstorm is likely at isolated places over west UP. Gusty winds at 25-35 kmph are likely at a few places over the state.

Rains on Monday occurred due to western disturbance as a cyclonic circulation over Iran neighbourhood now lies over east Iran and adjoining Afghanistan, the cyclonic circulation over south Rajasthan and adjoining north Gujarat now lies over eastern Uttar Pradesh.

## Govt gives nod to 3 projects to promote tourism in Ballia

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Minister of State for Transport (Independent Charge) Dayashankar Singh the government has approved three important projects worth Rs 304 lakh for tourism development in Ballia. The minister said approval has been given for the construction of a martyrs’ memorial in the name of Veer Kunwar Singh in the Bansdih development block and for tourism development and beautification of Parashar Muni Ashram and Maharaj Baba’s place at Milkipur in Baira.

Besides giving administrative and financial approval for these projects, The UP State Tourism Development Corporation Ltd has also been designated as the executive body. Singh said that the provision of Rs 86.57 lakh had been

made for the martyrs’ memorial to be built for Veer Kunwar Singh in all the three works, and Rs 40 lakh had been released.

Apart from this, there is a budget of Rs 117.57 lakh for beautification and development of Parashar Muni Ashram, and Rs 50 lakh have been released. Similarly, there is a budget of Rs 99.57 lakh for the development of Maharaj Baba’s place, and Rs 50 lakh have been released.

Singh said financial provision had been made for all the three projects in the funds provided under the development of Chief Minister’s tourist places.

“It was my priority to build a grand memorial for Veer Kunwar Singh. Rejuvenation of Parashar Muni’s Ashram and Maharaj Baba’s place will give a big boost to tourism,” he added.

## Admn making arrangements for ‘devi jagran’ in temples

**Lucknow (PNS):** With Chaitra Navratri commencing on March 22, the district administration is making arrangements for ‘devi jagran’ and ‘gayan’ in temples and Ramayana ‘akhanda path’ on the occasion of Ram Navmi following the directions of the state government. A senior official from the Culture department said the administration has formed a committee headed by the regional tourism officer to look into the arrangements.

“The district administration will have a say in deciding where ‘devi jagrans’ are held. It will support the temple administration in organising these events. The main purpose is to facilitate the temple like in Kumbh Mela, so that there should be no complaints of mismanagement in any temple,” she said.

She further said that ‘devi jagrans’ would be held in seven temples — Badi Kaliji Ka Mandir in Chowk, Sadohan Mata Mandir at Chaupatiyan crossing, Sankata Mata Mandir in Bangla Bazaar, Anandi Mata Mandir on Khun Khunji road, Kalibadi temple in Hazratganj, Chandrika Mata temple in BKT and Chhoti Kaliji temple in Chowk.

## Mystery shrouds man’s death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Mystery shrouded the death of a 31-year-old man, whose body was recovered near railway tracks in PGI police station area on Monday.

Reports said commuters spotted the body alongside railway tracks at Dalauna bridge around noon and they flocked to the scene. A police team reached there and collected the evidence. Later, elder brother, Santosh of Kasmandi in PGI police station area, identified the deceased as Sonu. Santosh told the police that Sonu worked as a labourer and was returning from Rae Bareilly where he had gone for some work. In another incident, a 60-year-old man, identified as Shahabuddin of Nigoha, was killed in a road mishap in Mohanlalganj on Sunday night.

His brother identified the body. He said Shahabuddin’s bicycle was hit by some speeding vehicle.

Meanwhile, a woman was duped on the pretext of supply of granite marbles by uniden-

tified accused who placed the order with the victim’s firm, saying Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath would lay the foundation stone of the project in Mahanagar.

The victim, Farheen Husain of Kalpana Apartment in Mahanagar, owns a firm supplying marbles and organising government events. Around 1 pm on March 18, she got a call from an unknown number and the caller inquired about granite marbles required for a function in which the CM would lay the foundation stone. He told her that her firm had been selected for the work.

The caller, who did not tell his name, promised instant payment for the supply of marbles. He asked the woman to supply the goods to Mahanagar police station and her employees did the same. “On reaching the police station, we called him, and he told me to deposit Rs 86,000 as security money in the bank account of one Sachin. My employees later ferried the goods to the police station and I asked the man for payment.

He asked me to shell out Rs 1 lakh more or he would neither purchase the marbles nor return the money. This way, the fraudster duped me of Rs 86,000,” she said.

Meanwhile, the court of Lucknow police commissioner ordered attachment of property worth above Rs 3.11 crore of a seasoned criminal, Dheeraj Kumar Dev of Greenwood Apartment in Gomti Nagar Extension, on Monday.

A spokesman said Dev amassed huge wealth by fleecing businessmen in the name of facilitating tenders in different government departments and he was so dreadful that ordinary people did not dare go against him. Dev forayed into the crime world in 2018 and was named in two cases at Hazratganj police station.

Similarly, the CP’s court ordered attachment of property worth above Rs 22 lakh of infamous fraudster Ashish Rai of Azamgarh. He was named in cases for demanding commissions from contractors to whom he promised tenders.

## RLD slams BJP govt for ignoring woes of farmers

**Lucknow (PNS):** The Rashtriya Lok Dal, on Monday, lambasted the Bharatiya Janata Party governments at the Centre and in the state for ignoring the woes of the farmers. In a statement, RLD national spokesman Anil Dubey said the untimely hail storm, rain and storm had damaged the crops which were to be harvested.

“For the last few days, the social media is flooded with scenes of crop damages but the state government and the Union government are not bothered with these images and not even moved at the ruining of farmers’ future due to crop loss,” he said. Dubey took a dig at the government saying the double-engine BJP government had left the farmers in the lurch. Dubey demanded relief packages for farmers who lost their crops in the inclement weather condition. “The quality of wheat crop will be affected due to weather conditions and it also has harmed other crops,” he said.

## CITYBRIEFS



### HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP

The 80th All-India Railway Hockey Men’s Championship 2023 kicked off at Modern Rail Coach Factory on Monday in the presence of General Manager PK Mishra, who was the chief guest, Indian hockey player Padma Shri Rani Rampal who was the special guest and special sports officer Padam Shri Sudha Singh. Ten teams from different railway zones are participating in the championship. PK Mishra welcomed all the players and gave permission to start the championship while wishing all the players for better performance. The first match was played between the teams of East Coast Railway and Central Railway in which East Coast Railway won 3-2.

### DIVINE EDUCATION CONFERENCE

City Montessori School’s Mahanagar campus organised Divine Education Conference at CMS Gomti Nagar Campus II auditorium. It was jointly inaugurated by CMS founder-manager Dr Jagdish Gandhi and CMS founder-director Dr Bharti Gandhi by lighting the lamp. Dr Jagdish Gandhi said a positive change in society could be brought through education.

### FELICITATION FUNCTION

CMS Chowk campus organised a meritorious students felicitation function at CMS Kanpur Road auditorium on Monday. It was inaugurated by CMS founder Dr Jagdish Gandhi. He said students of today were the leaders of tomorrow and the future of the world. He stressed on imparting material, human and divine education to students for their bright future. On this occasion, the students from classes III to XI who had won prizes in various competitive examinations, cultural programmes, sports competitions and performed excellently in the annual examinations were awarded prizes.

### PUBLIC NOTICE

I, Murlu Dhar Agarwal S/o Late Sh. Moti Lal Agarwal Resident of 7/55, Tilak Nagar Kanpur - 208002, during my life time, out of natural love and affection have gifted unlisted equity shares held in my name to my Grandson Sh. Prashant Agarwal S/o Sh. Vijay Kumar Agarwal on 3rd March 2023. The details as per given below:  

Name of the Company	No. of Shares
Sparsh Builders Pvt. Ltd.	446000
Sarvesh Polychem Pvt. Ltd.	35100
Anchal Polypack Pvt. Ltd.	3400



# Yogi govt hikes grants to small, marginal farmers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As part of its mission to improve the condition of farmers, especially marginal and small farmers, the Uttar Pradesh government has decided to increase the grant given to them under Har Khet Ko Pani scheme from Rs 75,000 to Rs 1.75 lakh for medium deep tube well boring.

“The government has made several amendments in the previous order related to medium deep tube wells and deep tube wells to provide water to every field under the Chief Minister Minor Irrigation Scheme (Mukhyamantri Laghu Sinchayee Yojana) and has also increased the grant for deep tube well boring from Rs 1 lakh to Rs 2.65 lakh,” a government spokesman said here on Monday.

The Har Khet Ko Pani scheme is a component of Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY).

The amendments introduced by the Yogi government are intended to provide relief to small and marginal farmers. Earlier Rs 10,000 was given for the water distribution system, which has now been raised to Rs 14,000. However, the fixed amount for separate electrification of tube wells will still remain at Rs 68,000.

Farmers in the general category will also receive Rs 2.57 lakh for the installation of tube wells, up from Rs 1.53 lakh previously.

Furthermore, the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe category farmers will receive a grant of Rs 3.85 lakhs for the mandatory installation of a solar-powered pump on their tube wells of 5 horse power capacity. Scheduled Caste category farmers will get a maximum grant of Rs 5.74 lakh on tube wells, up from Rs 4.70 lakh for medium deep tube well borings, the official said.

For general category farm-

## UP to construct 20 new high-tech jails

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Following reports that prisons in Uttar Pradesh are bursting at the seams, the Uttar Pradesh government has decided to construct 20 new, high-tech jails in the state, which will include 11 districts that do not have any prison at present.

“Apart from this, the process of construction of one central jail and other jails in nine districts has also started while the number of barracks is being increased in some of the jails,” a government spokesman said here on Monday, adding that budget had been released and the Prison department had been given the green signal to go ahead with the work. He said these jails would be high-tech keeping in view the present scenario. The government has set a target of two to five years to complete construction of the new jails.

Earlier, at a high-level meeting, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath was informed by the officials of the prison administration that at present the state’s central and district jails were overcrowded. They stressed the need for building new jails keeping in view the facilities provided by the jail manual and protection of the human rights of the prisoners.

Senior officials of the Prison Administration and

Reform Services told Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath that currently against the capacity to accommodate 13,669 prisoners, the seven central jails of UP had 15,201 inmates which was 111 per cent of the capacity. Similarly, 62 district jails with a capacity of 49,107 prisoners have 95,597 prisoners lodged in them, which is 194 per cent of the capacity. There are two sub-jails with a capacity of 306 prisoners in which 664 inmates are lodged -- 216 per cent of the capacity. Women’s central jail has a capacity of 120 prisoners, against which 148 prisoners are detained, which is 123 per cent of the capacity.

After this the chief minister instructed the prison administration to submit a proposal regarding construction of new jails. Subsequently, the Prisons department made a proposal for the construction of new jails in 11 districts of the state, which was later approved by the chief minister during another meeting.

After the government released the budget for the construction of new jails, the way was cleared for their construction, particularly in those districts of the state which do not have any jail.

“The construction has started in 11 districts, including prisons with a capacity of 990 inmates each in Amethi and Mahoba, of 1,000 inmate

capacity each in Kushinagar, Chandauli, Auraiya, Hapur, Sambhal, Amroha and Bhadohi, 1,026 capacity in Hathras and 2,000 capacity in Shamli.

“Similarly, the construction of a new central jail in Lalitpur with a capacity of 2,000 inmates has been expedited. At the same time, the process of construction of a second district jail of 1,000 inmate capacity has started in Lalitpur,” the official said.

Besides, funds have been approved for the repair and renovation of Bareilly’s old jail, which will have a capacity of 2,579 prisoners. Apart from this, the process of construction of prisons with a capacity of 3,000 each in Moradabad and Muzaffarnagar, 2,000 each in Shahjahanpur, Budaun and Varanasi, 1,000 each in Jaunpur and Rampur and 5,000 in Kanpur Nagar is underway. At the same time, by the end of March, the district jails with a capacity of 502 prisoners in Shravasti and 2,688 inmates in Prayagraj will be ready. Along with this, one barrack with capacity of 30 prisoners is being constructed in Gorakhpur district jail.

“With the construction of new jails, repair of existing jails and increases in the capacities of barracks in jails, more than 35,000 prisoners can be shifted there,” the official said.

purchase of solar pumps will be done through Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) and its registered vendors and through the Gem portal.

## CM: Village panchayats to get sports kits by next year



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath giving away sports kits at a function on Monday

Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Monday that the government would provide sports kits to every village panchayat by next year.

Speaking at the sports kits distribution ceremony, Yogi also appealed to Yuvak Mangal Dal and Mahila Mangal Dal to lead the mission to keep the villages clean and beautiful and develop them as centres of harmony and cohesion.

The chief minister also distributed sports kits to a dozen youth and women Mangal Dals from different districts of Lucknow division on the occasion.

He said that the opening of village secretariats would not only enable people to get caste, birth and other certificates, but also avail benefits of Ayushman Bharat scheme.

Chief Minister Yogi said that work was going on at a war footing to build playgrounds in 30,000 villages, along with separate open gyms for men and women, mini stadiums in

blocks and stadiums in districts. The chief minister urged members of Yuva Mangal Dal and Mahila Mangal Dal to take on the leadership role and organise contests in folk arts, music and sports for a healthy atmosphere in villages, devoid of animosity among people. Yogi remarked further that youth and women’s Mangal Dals were the basis of India’s prosperity, which could realise Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of self-reliant India.

“Our government is working towards building sports grounds in villages, mini stadiums at block level and stadiums at district level. Good coaches are being hired. International players are being given a monthly honorarium of Rs 1.5 lakh as coaches,” he said.

Advising Yuva and Mahila Mangal Dals, Yogi said that they should understand their responsibility in society and also report illegal activities going on in their surroundings to the police. He said they should also take care of schools and contribute to the smooth

functioning of the village secretariats. Chief Minister Yogi said that a society could not become self-reliant as long as its dependence on the government remained high. He added that when society leads and the government backs it, then it becomes self-reliant and moves towards prosperity.

Yogi said that youth and women’s Mangal Dal teams should form the basis of sports activities in their village. He said that the village had to be aware and for this, the youth and women’s Mangal Dals would have to come forward to lead. Chief Minister Yogi said that the purpose of giving sports kit was to promote a healthy competition. “We have to prepare our generation for sports in the times to come,” he added. Yogi said that Yuvak Mangal Dal was formed in 1956 and Mahila Mangal Dal in 1985-86 and they need to be expanded more rapidly. In the programme, Yogi also gave away appointment letters to six international players who got jobs as coaches on an honorarium of Rs 1.5 lakh per month.

## Two kids of a family killed as dumper rams into hut

Lucknow (PNS): Two children of a family were killed after being crushed by a dumper truck while they were sleeping inside a roadside hut in Unnao. The incident took place near the polytechnic on Sunday night, police said on Monday.

Sartaj (11) and one-and-a-half-year-old Ayaan died during treatment while Baby (55) and Islam (30) were undergoing treatment at a district hospital. Circle Officer (City) Ashutosh Kumar said that the family was sleeping in their hut on the side of the main road when a dumper coming from the wrong side crashed into it. The bodies were sent for post-mortem and further legal action was being taken, the CO said.

In a separate incident reported from Etah, three people were killed and two injured when a truck fell off a flyover early Monday. The truck was going towards Mainpuri when the driver lost control over the wheel, Station House Officer of Pilua police station, Dinesh Kumar, said.

The accident took place as the driver possibly dozed off at the wheel, he said. While a 25-year-old died on the spot, two others succumbed to injuries later. The injured persons were referred to the Saifai Medical College hospital in Etawah district. The deceased as well as the injured persons belong to Mainpuri district.

In Sultanpur, a 30-year-old man was killed and his younger brother was seriously injured when their motorcycle rammed into a stationary truck. The accident took place near Dhanpatganj market on Saturday night. Dhanpatganj SHO Shriram Pandey said the motorcycle crashed into the truck when Asgar (30) and his brother Muharram (16) were going towards Kurebhar. Asgar died on the spot while his brother was seriously injured, the SO said, adding that the body was sent for autopsy and the injured was hospitalised.

## Behave in a dignified way: DGP to cops

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Alarmed by the falling image of UP Police following incidents in which cops had arguments with ticket collectors over free traveling in trains, Director-General of Police DS Chauhan instructed the district police chiefs to instruct policemen of their respective jurisdiction and ask them to travel in trains as per rules. He advised action as per rule against errant cops.

In a letter sent to commissioners of police in Lucknow, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Kanpur Nagar, Varanasi, Prayagraj, Agra and Ghaziabad and all district police chiefs and the superintendent of police, railways, the DGP said several lakh passengers, including those hailing from other states in the country, and even foreigners travel by trains which passed UP.

“It has been seen in the past that if a policeman commits a wrong, the act is filmed and uploaded on social media and so it quickly reaches several lakh people and puts the UP Police in a poor light,” he said. The DGP cited an incident which took place in Amarnath Express train’s AC coach in which cops had a heated argument with a ticket collector when questioned for traveling free in the AC coach of the train. “A video of this incident went viral on

## NHRC notice to CS, DGP

Lucknow (PNS): The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has taken a suo motu cognisance of a media report that a 45-year-old man admitted to a drug rehabilitation centre died as he was allegedly beaten to death by the manager and his four accomplices in Ghaziabad district of Uttar Pradesh. The NHRC observed that the contents of the media report, if true, amount to a violation of the victim’s human rights.

Accordingly, it has issued notices to the chief secretary and the director general of police of Uttar Pradesh, calling for a detailed report in the matter. The report should also include the present status of the investigation of the case and compensation and relief, if any, provided to the next of

kin of the deceased person by the government authorities, the NHRC notice said.

“The government is also directed to issue necessary guidelines to the authorities concerned to collect data from all the districts of Uttar Pradesh regarding such rehabilitation centres and to take action against such facilities running in violation of law without obtaining requisite permission from the government agencies,” it said.

According to the media report, the centre has been running from a rented building for the last four months and eight persons are presently admitted in it. The police have reportedly not found any documents regarding permission for running such a centre in the said building.

social media and also the news related to it was published in newspapers,” he said. The UP Police chief said these incidents dented the image of the UP government and also of the UP Police which was one of the biggest forces and was known for its impeccable discipline and a glorious past.

He said that the Pratapgarh Government Railway Police registered a case in connection

with the thrashing of a TTE in Archana Express on March 14 while citing a few incidents of showdown between the TTEs and cops. The DGP said the state government provided traveling allowances to cops going for government work and it was the responsibility of the cops to behave in a dignified way. “The policemen should not act in a way which dented the image of police,” he concluded.



Commuters stuck in a massive traffic jam at Kaiserbagh crossing in Lucknow on

Pioneer

## Addl charge given to two IAS officers

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a minor reshuffle in bureaucracy, additional charge of chairman of New Okhla Industrial Development Authority (NOIDA) was given to Industrial Development Commissioner Manoj Singh.

Principal Secretary, Industry, Narendra Bhushan has been given additional charge of Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority and Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the aim to make Uttar Pradesh a textile hub, a mega textile park, to be known as Sant Kabir PM Mitra Textile and Apparel Park Limited, will be developed between Lucknow and Hardoi.

“The huge complex of textile park, to be built in Attari village of Mall block of Malihabad tehsil in Lucknow, will become the primary centre of all the activities of the textile industry running in 15 districts of the state,” a government spokesman said here on Monday. He said chikankari and zari-zardozi of Lucknow, handloom of Hardoi and Barabanki, carpet of Sitapur, zari-zardozi of Unnao, hosiery and textile of Kanpur, block printing and zari-zardozi of Farrukhabad, zari-zardozi of Shahjahanpur, handloom industry of Ambedkar Nagar, Azamgarh, Gorakhpur and Rampur, silk, handloom and textile clusters of Mau and Varanasi and apparel clusters of Gautam Buddha Nagar will be set up in a single complex.

The spokesman said the mega textile park would get the biggest benefit from the strengthened road, rail, air and water connectivity in UP.

“The Yogi Adityanath government has already got an assessment done regarding water and solid waste management in the mega textile park. As per the assessment, ground water is available below 40 feet in the area of textile park due to which there is sufficient availability of water. Apart from this, the aerial distance of Gomti river is also 10 km. A canal is also passing right next to the park. On the other hand, according to the assessment done for municipal and solid waste management, a waste to energy plant is located in Shivri village near Mohan road at a distance of 40 km. The presence of 33 kVA and 11 kVA lines is already available in this area for power supply. Along with this, a 400 kVA sub-station at Jhetha will also be very helpful for the mega textile park. There is no ecologically sensitive or protected area within 40 km radius of the park,” the official said.

## All HC takes serious note of strike by power employees

Prayagraj (PTI): Taking serious note of the strike by employees of the Uttar Pradesh electricity department, the Allahabad High Court on Monday said demands cannot be made at the cost of life of people and asked why the striking employees have not been arrested.

A two-judge bench comprising acting Chief Justice Pritinker Diwakar and Justice SD Singh also asked the Additional Advocate General about the action taken against erring employees. Terming the strike matter as serious, the court said demands cannot be made at the cost of life of people

and asked the state to apprise it about the monetary loss caused to it due to the strike. On March 17, a division bench comprising Justices Ashwani Kumar Mishra and Vinod Diwakar issued bailable warrants against the office bearers of the Vidyut Karmachari Sanyukt Sangarsh Samiti through its organiser Shailendra Dubey and several others asking them to appear before the court at 10 am on March 20.

The electricity department employees went on a three-day strike on Thursday night and ended it after several rounds of talks between their leaders and state energy minister AK

Sharma, saying the decision was taken to “respect the directions of the chief minister.” The protesting employees, who had started their strike at 10 pm on March 16, called it off at around 3 pm on Sunday. “Respecting the directions of Chief Minister (Yogi Adityanath), the positive dialogue with the energy minister, and respecting the high court, we have decided to call off our 72-hour symbolic protest one day in advance in view of massive public interest,” Shailendra Dubey, convener of Vidyut Karmacharis Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti, said while announcing the withdrawal of the strike.

## 5 inter-district dacoits held after encounter

Jalaun (PTI): Five inter-district dacoits were arrested here on Monday following an encounter with police, officials said. Two of the dacoits sustained bullet injuries in the exchange of fire that took place in Orai police station area, they said.

Some dacoits, who were planning a loot near the Kanmer overbridge, were sur-

rounded by a team of Special Operations Group and Uttar Pradesh Police. After the dacoits saw the police team surrounding them, they opened fire. The police team retaliated, said Superintendent



of Police Iraj Raja. Two dacoits, Salam Gurjar and Anwar, were injured in the exchange of fire and hospitalised. The other three dacoits, Shahzad (son of Kallu), Ikram and Shahzad (son of Riyaz), were also arrested, he added. Illegal arms and jewellery were recovered from the arrested dacoits, the police said.

## Woman raped in connivance with kin

PNS/PTI ■ LUCKNOW

A woman was allegedly raped by a man in the connivance with her father and stepmother in Saharanpur, police said on Monday. The accused father and his friend Rashid have been arrested while the stepmother is at large, they said.

The woman, in her complaint, alleged that her father called his friend to their home on March 13 and her stepmother locked her and Rashid inside a room and he raped her, SP (Rural) Sagar Jain told PTI. The victim, who is married, said her father and stepmother threatened to kill her if she told anyone about the incident, he said. The woman alleged that even before her marriage, Rashid had raped her several times in the knowledge of her parents, Jain said. An FIR has been registered and efforts are on to nab the absconding stepmother, the SP said.

Meanwhile, two men were killed and three injured when a speeding motorcy-

cle rammed into a roadside grocery shop in Amethi district’s Jagdishpur area, police said on Monday. The motorcycle rammed into the shop of 65-year-old Brijlal Yadav in Mohammadpur village, killing him and one Hira Maurya (25).

The injured trio, including a woman, was admitted to the community health centre in Jagdishpur from where one with critical injuries was referred to Lucknow, the police said. The bodies were sent for post-mortem and legal action was being taken, Jagdishpur police station SHO Rakesh Kumar said.

In another case, two history-sheeters were arrested following an encounter in Sultanpur and narcotics were seized from their possession, police said on Monday. The accused have been identified as Raman Singh and Rahul Dhuria, they said.

Superintendent of Police Somen Barma said that on Sunday night the duo were arrested and some narcotics were recovered from them. The police took the

duo to a place disclosed by them for further recovery of narcotics when the accused started firing at the policemen using their hidden weapons. Barma said that in retaliatory firing by the police, the accused sustained bullet injuries on their legs. The duo has been hospitalised for treatment, the officer said. The arrested criminals are history sheeters and members of an active gang, and cases of murder and loot are registered against them, the SP said.

Meanwhile in Unnao, a mentally challenged man allegedly hanged himself to death after killing his wife and their four-month-old daughter in a village here, police said on Monday. Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP) Shashi Shekhar Singh said Mohan Lal (36), a resident of Rudikhera village under Barasagvar police station limits, hacked to death his wife Seema (30) and their daughter with an axe late on Sunday night before hanging himself using a rope.



# Two children meet tragic end

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Two children were killed while a woman and her son seriously injured when a speeding dumper, after dismantling the road divider, rammed into their hut on Lucknow-Kanpur highway in front of the polytechnic under Dahi police station area of Unnao on Monday wee hours. Dumper driver escaped after leaving the vehicle on the spot. Police rushed to spot the and sent all the injured to the district hospital where Sartaj and Ayan were declared dead. Ismail and his mother Baby were undergoing treatment there. Police sent the bodies for an autopsy.

**ATTACKED:** Panic prevailed on the IIT Kanpur campus when three senior students attacked two of their colleagues deputed on security with knife during the pro-nite event of annual cultural festival Antaragni late ON Sunday night. On the complaint of victim students, Kalyanpur police have lodged a report and started a probe. During the pro-night programme was organised on the last day on Sunday, Aman Meena, BTech. (Electrical) third year student along with team members was deputed in the security of the event. It is alleged that when three fourth year students suddenly moved ahead by breaking the queue, Aman stopped them from doing so. At this,

they attacked him with the knife. Aman sustained serious wounds in his thumb while friend's arm was injured. Other students and faculty members controlled the situation and informed the police which rushed to spot and carried out investigation. Police have also lodged a case. ACP Kalyanpur Vikas Kumar Pandey said on the complaint of the victim student, FIR against three BTech (fourth year) students had been lodged, CCTV footages were being checked and eyewitness students are also being quizzed.

**STRANGLER:** A man, after dropping wife at her parents house, strangled his daughter, a student of class IX, with the cable in Rana Pratap Nagar under Rawatpur police area on Monday. His son was an eyewitness to the incident. Police arrested the guilty man and carried out investigation. A love affair of the deceased with a boy was stated to be the cause

## Physical verification of road conducted

PNS ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate S Rajalingam on Monday conducted a physical verification of a road and wall painting in Chandpur industrial estate and expressed deep annoyance over the poor quality of the painting and directed for its painting again. The DM conducted the physical verification of a 3525 m long road in Chandpur industrial estate which was constructed with a cost of ₹494.37 lakh. He also made physical verification of the tiles installed in nullah and wall painting in the industrial estate and expressed deep annoyance over the poor quality of the painting. He directed for re-painting of the wall. The DM made an inspection of the new building constructed in a composite school in Mahmooarganj under Smart City in which nine rooms including library and smart class have been constructed with a cost of ₹1.84 crore. The DM also inspected the solar plant installed in the premises of Jal Sansthan in Bhelupur. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid down the foundation for it on July 15, 2021. A total of 3705 solar panels have been fixed in this solar plant of 2000 kilowatt capacity installed with a cost of ₹1724.14 lakh. The solar plant has been connected with an STP of 250 MLD. The DM inspected the renovation work of WTP filter plant of 150 MLD in Jal Sansthan.

## GM inspects workshop in BLW

PNS ■ VARANASI

Newly-appointed General Manager (GM) Basudev Panda inspected the workshop areas in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Monday. After reaching the workshop, he visited various shops and observed the works related to locomotive production. The GM made a thorough inspection of the Loco Frame Shop, Pipe Shop, Loco Assembly Shop and Truck Machine Shop. During the inspection, Panda inspected the various activities of loco manufacturing and gave various suggestions to improve the quality of production. He also took information about assembly of electric locos and non-railway customer's diesel locos in Loco Assembly Shop. Principal Chief Electrical Engineer SK Srivastava, Principal Chief Engineer Praveen



GM Basudev Panda inspecting a workshop in BLW, Varanasi on Monday.

Khorana, Chief Design Engineer (Electrical Loco) PP Raju, Chief Mechanical Engineer (Production & Marketing) Suneel Kumar, Chief Electrical Engineer (Inspection) Manoj Kumar Singh, Chief Electrical Engineer (Loco) Arun Kumar Sharma, Senior Deputy General Manager Vijay and other officers of different departments were also present.

# Lecture on how to achieve happiness in life

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted psychiatrist and scientific Secretary of the Indian Medical Association-Kanpur, Dr Rohan Kumar while delivering his lecture on "How to achieve happiness in life" organised by the University School of Hotel Management, Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University on International Happiness Day on Monday expressed concern over allotting one day in a year for happiness. He said if one strictly adopted certain principles in one's life the one can certainly remain happy.

He said first and the foremost mantra to remain happy was that one needed to express thanks for all one had in life and added that it had been proved beyond doubt that people who frequently expressed gratitude were immensely happy. He said second most important factor was share happiness with every section of people in life. Dr



Deputy Coordinator National Service Scheme, CSJMU, Kanpur, Dr Praveen Katiyar, felicitates noted psychiatrist, Dr Rohan Kumar

Rohan said to remain happy it was highly essential to remain in the present as it had been proved that all such people who always remain in the present and work positively were mostly happy and satisfied. He said one need to shun negativity and share positive thoughts and happiness with all. He said criticism brought in negativity and thus it should be avoided. This was followed by a ques-

tion answer session where posers raised by students were answered by Dr Rohan. A student of BSC sought an answer to how to control anger. Dr Rohan said the famous maxim "control anger before it controls you" was highly essential. He said the goal of anger management was to reduce both one's emotional feelings and the physiological arousal that anger caused. He said one cannot get rid of or avoid, the things or the people that enraged one, nor can one change them, but one can learn to control one's reactions. Dr Praveen Katiyar, Dr Pushpa Mamaria, Dr Sneha Pandey, Dr Manas Upadhyaya, Ojasvi, Jayanti, Sanjana, Tanya, Komal, Tanisha and Aakriti were present.

**SEMINAR:** Principal and Organising Secretary, Shri Shakti Degree College, Dr Prabhakant Mishra while inaugurating the two-day national seminar on development of rural areas with the help of basic science

Education said science and technology had been regarded to be significant aspects for rural areas as they were connected with development. He said it had a past record of bringing about development in the lifestyle, health conditions, income generation and enhancement of productivity in the lives of the rural people. He said rural development was the process of improving the quality of life and economic well-being of people living in rural areas, often relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. He said rural development had traditionally centered on the exploitation of land-intensive natural resources such as agriculture and forest. He added science and technology can play a major role in bringing about social and economic transformation in the country, especially in the rural areas. He said it was recognised worldwide that science and technology were among the most powerful motive forces to bring about dynamic changes in the society.

# Advocates stage dharna

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The lawyers under the banner of The Lawyers Association (TLA) and Kanpur Bar Association struck work in protest against the 'behaviour' of the district judge and to press for the settlement of their 13-point charter of demands on Monday. Meanwhile, KBA president Naresh Chandra Tripathi along with vice-president Anoop Shukla, general secretary Anurag Srivastava and dozens of their colleagues staged a dharna in front of the district judge's court. A group of lawyers led by TLA President Pt Ravindra Sharma and general secretary Sharad Kumar Shukla took a round of collectorate premises and pressed

people for boycotting the work in all courts. They struck the entire judicial work and issued strict directives to typists and stamp vendors for not doing any typing work and selling non-judicial stamp papers. Due to boycott of judicial work, victims were compelled to return after getting hearing of their cases fixed for another date.

**MAURYA VISITS TSH:** Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, who visited 'The Sportz Hub' (TSH) on Sunday, tried his hand at billiards and also played basketball. He also tried shooting. During his visit Maurya praised TSH and said that this type of sports complex should be there in every district of the state. He also praised Praneet Agarwal,

Director of MHPL, and said that he did a commendable job by completing the 18 months project of TSH in just 14 months. Maurya was all praise for Audi Stadia, the operating company of TSH. Seeing the better upkeep and facilities, Maurya informed Director (Operations) PK Srivastava that next time he would prefer to stay at TSH instead of Circuit House during his city tour. Maurya collected information about 160 EWS selected players. He was accompanied by MLAs Surendra Maithani, Mahesh Trivedi and Abhijit Singh Sanga. Maurya praised Kanpur Smart City Limited and Divisional Commissioner Dr Rajasekhar for their idea of this project.

# Rly employees stage demonstration

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The railway employees associated with Northern Railway Men's Union, affiliated to All Indian Railway Men's Federation (AIRMF) on Monday staged a demonstration in protest against the exploitation of running staff and in favour of their demands.

Under the banner of Northern Railway Men's Union affiliated to AIRMF gathered at Cantt railway station and staged a demonstration to raise their protest against the exploitation of running staff by the Railway Ministry. They demanded the withdrawal of the order to the running staff to submit their mobiles in the running room and withdrawal of the order to the running staff not to come out from the running room. They also demanded railway administration to stop making of diagram of railway stations by loco pilot and assistant loco pilot, ensure the headquarter rest for 16+2 hours and running room rest for 8+2 hours, ensure the return of crew to headquarter

within 36 hours, improve the quality of subsidised food made available in running room, grade pay of Rs 2800, 4200, 4600, 4800 and 5400 to ALP, LPS, LPG, PPP and LPM respectively of running staff, risk allowance to assistant loco pilot, the weekly rest at least of 40 hours to running staff, etc. The RJ Kumar led the demonstration.

**DHARNA:** The Apna Dal (AD-Kamerawadi) on Monday staged a dharna demanding the caste census for the socio-economic development of the weaker section of the society.

The activists of AD-Kamerawadi gathered at Shastri Ghat here and staged a dharna to raise their protest against the state government, blaming that the BJP-led government in the state is not showing any interest in the caste census because it does not want the progress of the weaker section of the society. They demanded the caste census in the larger interest of the OBC, SC and ST and said that caste census would make clear the actual position of these classes.

## Liver transplant a life-saving treatment

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Noted hepatologist, Dr Vishal Kumar Chaurasia, Venketeshwar Hospital, New Delhi while addressing the CME organised by IMA-Kanpur said there was very poor awareness regarding liver transplant and also acute crisis of right donor and this was giving rise to high number of fatalities. He said major reasons for liver cirrhosis, were Hep-B and C, diabetes, obesity and alcohol addiction. He said liver transplant was a life-saving treatment with having a survival rate between 70 and 90 per cent and between one to five years at the most. He said the irony was that due to massive gap between demand and supply patients die during the wait for liver transplant. He said normothermic machine perfusion to optimise marginal grafts, a new national allocation system to maximise benefit from each organ and developments in patient 'prehabilitation' before listing were some features which will highly benefit the

suffering humanity. Dr Chaurasia said liver transplantation was the definitive therapy for end-stage liver disease of various etiologies as well as acute liver failure and early-stage hepatocellular carcinoma. He said the model for End-Stage Liver Disease (MELD) score was essential for organ allocation in addition of the serum sodium level to the MELD score which was recent development that helped prognosticate patients. He said liver transplantation was the definitive management for patients with end-stage liver disease. He said short-term outcomes following transplantation had improved immensely in company with advances in surgical practices and immunosuppressive agents and added liver was distinctively recognised as a tolerogenic organ translating to overall lower incidence and consequence of rejection, relative unimportance of human leukocyte antigen (HLA) incompatibility and the permission of lower doses of immunosuppression in transplantation, making it the ideal candidate in which to develop and optimise tolerogenic protocols.

## 3 BHU students to visit Japan

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Three BHU students have been selected for the Global Management Programme of the UNIQLO - Fast Retailing, Japan. The company is a leading Japanese retail group and the world's third largest apparel giant. Its Global Management Programme (GMP) is an annual five-day intensive programme in which selected students get an opportunity of having business sessions with global market specialists in order to know more about world industry and business. The five-day session will take place in Japan for which all expenses that include travel, lodging, boarding etc would be taken care of by UNIQLO. The student selection is based on their academic back-



ground, statement of purpose, and personal interaction with UNIQLO - Fast Retailing interview board. The selected students are Richik Mukherjee from Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development, and Ritu Kumar and Supriya Pandey from the Institute of Management. During the five-day programme in Japan, the students will be asked to tackle some global issues and find solutions towards it through collaborating with other students from different backgrounds and discussing with business specialists. Prof NV Chalapathi Rao, Coordinator, International Collaborations, BHU, informed that those students who perform exceedingly well in the GMP may also be considered for job opportunities.

# Sparrows play an important role in environment protection: Srivastava

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the occasion of World Sparrow Day, a talk show for public awareness was organised at Children Valley English School, Mahmooarganj under the aegis of Vikas Evan Shikshan Samiti (VESS India) here on Monday. This was under the 'Adopt a Sparrow' project of VESS India. Dr Rajesh Kumar Srivastava, environmentalist and former master trainer of Uttar Pradesh government's Gauraiya (Sparrow) Conservation Campaign in Varanasi, was the main speaker in this talk show. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Srivastava said that sparrows play an important role in environment protection as they feed their young with insects called alpha and cat worms, which are very dangerous for crops. "Apart from this, the sparrows also eat insects that appear during the monsoon season. In such a situation, along with keeping the environment balanced for the farmers and the general public, it also maintains cleanliness," Dr Srivastava said, adding that according to a survey conducted a few days ago by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, the number of other birds has increased in the last 40 years while the number of sparrows has decreased by 60 per cent. "In fact, in today's modern age,

instead of living with nature, man has become more involved in exploiting it. As a result of this, many animals have come on the verge of extinction and one of them is the sparrow, a lovely bird," he said, adding that in this era of



unbalanced development, the destruction of trees and plants and growing concrete forests have taken away the living space of sparrows. "This bird can make its home and the safe places for the sparrows in our homes are skylight sites or roofs. Apart from this, radiation emanating from mobile towers is also one of the main reasons for their extinction. These radiations affect the reproductive capacity of sparrows. Due to these various reasons, this little bird is now rarely seen in some places but it is a matter of happiness that now due to increasing social awareness, the number of sparrows has started increasing slowly," he said, appealing to all to provide spaces to the sparrows so that by making their nest there, they can easily give birth to eggs and children. Dr Srivastava donated some wood-based sparrow nests to the school family. Principal Hemraj Vishwakarma coordinated the programme, while the vote of thanks was proposed by Varsha Joshi. Rahul Sharma, Nidhi Singh, Varsha Singh and other teachers were also present.

## 'Brainiac, the Quiz' held for students

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Quiz enhances general knowledge and thinking power and provides an interactive platform for children. It gives them opportunities to excel beyond academics and helps them to imbibe the practice of innovative learning. To encourage and enlighten curious minds,



'Brainiac, the Quiz' activity was organised at the SPSEC school premises for play group students

'Brainiac, the Quiz' activity was organised on the SPSEC school premises for Play Group students. The programme commenced with the welcome song a melodious presentation by kids followed by competitive and exciting rounds of quizzes. The format of the quiz entailed three rounds comprising mixed bag questions and audio-visual round. Four different teams came up for each

round with six participants in each team giving a tough fight to their opponents. The questions put forth to the teams were intriguing and challenging. Around 100 per cent participation by all the students left the parents spellbound. They could not stop praising and cheering the little ones for their brilliant performance. The children of Root class set the stage on fire with the outstanding and colourful performance of Hip Hop dance and did not let the opportunity fly by. Parents admired the decor and efforts that went into making the event a grand success. The event was graced by the Principal Bhawna Gupta, Vice-Principal, Kavita Chadha, Headmistress, Vandana Trivedi and parents of the Root section. The event culminated with words of encouragement and appreciation from supervisor Komal Chhabra.

**ANNUAL DAY:** The Little Kingdom School celebrated its annual day recently. JS Ahlawat, HOP Auraiya and Saroj Ahlawat, president JMM graced the occasion. The programme began with Ganesh Vandana, followed by welcome speech of Saroj Ahlawat. The kids presented a cultural programme on the theme 'diversity of religion and culture'. Children presented 'bhanga', Rajasthani folk, old melodious song etc. Annual report was presented by Neetu Arora Secretary of Little Kingdom School. HOP praised the performance of little kids and school committee for organising such a marvelous programme.

कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम, मिलाई (छ.ग.)				
ई-प्रोक्वायरमेंट निविदा सूचना				
क्रमांक/लोक.वि./जोन-2/2023/1059/527			मिलाई दिनांक 16/03/2023	
इस कार्यालय द्वारा निम्नलिखित कार्य हेतु ई-टेंडर आमंत्रित की गई हैं, जिसका विस्तृत विवरण वेबसाइट <a href="http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in">http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in</a> पर देखा जा सकता है।				
क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	सिस्टम टेंडर क्र	अनुमानित लागत (लाख में)	निविदा वाचनलोक करने की अंतिम तिथि
1.	जोन क्र-02 वैशाली नगर अंतर्गत नाला सेनेलाइजेशन कार्य। (ksh call)	128027	1677.73	27.03.2023
(नोट :- ई टेंडर में ऑफलाईन सफा पत्र एवं EMD प्रस्तुत करना अनिवार्य होगा अन्यथा निविदा अमान्य किया जावेगा/दर को नहीं खोला जावेगा)				
उपरोक्त निविदा निर्माण कार्य सामान्य रात, घरोहर रात, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञप्ति, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी <a href="http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in">http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in</a> वेबसाईट पर देखी जा सकती है।				
हस्ता/-				
जोन आयुक्त (जोन-02)				
नगर पालिक निगम, मिलाई				

**कार्यालय नगर पालिक निगम मिलाई, जिला-दुर्ग**  
**जोन क्रमांक - 05**  
**E-mail :- [zonelivebhill@gmail.com](mailto:zonelivebhill@gmail.com)**

क्र/लोक.वि./जोन क्र. 5/2023/88/536
मिलाई, दिनांक 17/03/2023

**ई-निविदा आमंत्रण सूचना**

आयुक्त नगर पालिक निगम मिलाई द्वारा एकीकृत पंचोदय प्रणाली अंतर्गत सखम श्रेणी में पंचोदय केकरावे से निम्नलिखित निर्माण कार्य हेतु ई-निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है:-

क्र.	कार्य का विवरण	सिस्टम टेंडर क्र एवं जारी दिनांक	अनुमानित लागत (लाख में)	निविदा वाचनलोक करने की अंतिम तिथि
1.	वार्ड क्र. 57 (पूराना) सेक्टर 06 शिविक रोड में एल.डी.सी लाइट एवं हाई मास्ट लाइट लगाने का कार्य के स्थान पर 03 नग मेट-वे एवं पार्किंग रोड निर्माण कार्य। (प्रति निविदा)	128184 17.03.2023	147.36	27.03.2023

निविदा हेतु सफ़ष पत्र एवं घरोहर राति की एक.डी.आर स्पीड पोस्ट अथवा रजिस्टर्ड डाक से स्वीकार किये जावेगें। निविदा हेतु आवश्यक दस्तावेज तथा कार्य हेतु दी जाने वाली दर ऑनलाइन (Online) दी जावे। उपरोक्त निर्माण कार्यो की निविदा की सामान्य रात, घरोहर राति, विस्तृत निविदा विज्ञप्ति, निविदा दस्तावेज व अन्य जानकारी नगर पालिक निगम मिलाई की वेबसाईट [www.bhilaanagarinagam.com](http://www.bhilaanagarinagam.com) स्वावलम्बन की वेबसाईट [www.uae.cg.gov.in](http://www.uae.cg.gov.in) एवं पौध की वेबसाईट के वेबसाईट [eproc.cgstate.gov.in](http://eproc.cgstate.gov.in) से भी वाचनलोक की जा सकती है।

हस्ता/-  
जोन आयुक्त क्र-05 सेक्टर-06  
नगर पालिक निगम, मिलाई



# DM, CP inspect Modi's public meeting venue at SSU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Commissioner of Police (CP) Mutha Ashok Jain and District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam, along with the concerned administrative and police officials, inspected the preparations related to the public meeting of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University(SSU) campus here on Monday. During his visit to his parliamentary constituency on March 24, Modi will give a gift of Rs 1181.78 crore. The PM will lay the foundation stones of nine projects including a ropeway worth Rs 1592.49 and inaugurate 20 projects worth Rs 189.41 crore.

During their visit to the SSU by the CP and DM, a thorough discussion was held on the security arrangement of the venue apart from smooth traffic, parking and other arrangements. Necessary instructions were given to the contractors to deal with the bad weather conditions. For the last three days, there were rains in the city including heavy rains with thunderstorms and lightning on Sunday night. During the inspection, officers of various concerned departments including PWD were also present.

Regarding the PM's programme, preparations are underway for the inauguration



CP MA Jain and DM S Rajalingam inspecting SSU venue of PM in Varanasi on Monday.

Pioneer

and foundation stone laying ceremony in the grounds of the SSU. Three German hangar pandals are being installed. There will be seating arrangements for about 20,000 people. A strong platform is also being created for the PM's programme. More than 50 people can sit on the stage, but only a few prominent people including the Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and some union and state ministers are expected to take part on the dais. During the meeting, Modi will interact with 50 intellectuals of the city apart from some of the

best performing players in recent Khelo India contests.

Meanwhile, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has intensified its activities to make the SSU meeting a grand success as the party has planned to carry about 400 party workers from each of the 100 wards. In this direction, a meeting of the party was held at its city office at Gulab Bagh under the chairmanship of regional chief (Kashi) Mahesh Chand Srivastava. The meeting was also attended by party MP Subrat Pahak, outgoing Mayor Mridula Jaiswal, city party chief Vidya Sagar Rai, district

president Hansraj Vishwakarma, regional spokesman Navratna Rath and many others.

Meanwhile hectic preparations are going on at all the places where during his visit the PM will go apart from the routes from where his motorcade passes through. Besides, the Health department has also intensified its activities to make all the arrangements at Rudraksha Convention Centre where the PM will attend a programme to be held on World Tuberculosis (TB) Day which will also be attended by Union Health Minister and others.

# Modi to give gift to Purvanchal farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will give a big gift to the farmers of Purvanchal (eastern UP) during his proposed visit to his parliamentary constituency here on March 24 falling during the auspicious Vasantik Navratri. Modi will inaugurate the Integrated Pack House for food and vegetable export, during which Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will also remain present. All the equipment in the pack house are 'Make in India' and after its launch, Banarasi Langra mangoes can be directly exported to Australia, Japan, Korea, England and European countries. This pack house will be of great help in the efforts of the Modi-Yogi government to double the income of the farmers. The government of double engine is engaged in making exporters through FPOs directly from the farmers and agri-entrepreneurs by removing middlemen not only in Purvanchal but also in western Bihar. For this, Agricultural and Food Processed Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is making continuous efforts.

The pack house is built in 4,461 square feet at a cost of Rs 15.78 crore. Just a few days ago, the CM inspected this Integrated Pack House. The consignment of vegetables and fruits of Purvanchal will now be directly exported to foreign countries from the pack house of Varanasi. Perishable food products will be prepared according to international standards. The Integrated Pack House for food and vegetable



CM Yogi Adityanath inspecting Integrated Pack House in Varanasi recently. (File Photo)

export, located at Karkhinav, about 10 km from the airport, has been constructed by the Yogi government. There will also be single window clearance for exports from this pack house, which will make it easier to export. The pack house will be equipped with proper resources for export by water, land and air. Pack house has been completed. The farmer entrepreneurs will also be given training to prepare agricultural products according to the demand of the international market. After Saharanpur and Lucknow, this will be the third integrated pack house in UP and the first in Purvanchal.

The most important work of the pack house is to prepare

the product according to international standards. Different countries have different demands.

This pack house works to meet their demand. APEDA is active for export to double the income of farmers in Purvanchal. Dr CB Singh, Deputy General Manager, APEDA, said that to prepare the product of international standard, fruits and vegetables have to go through several processes in the Integrated Pack House, due to which their freshness, taste and other properties remain intact. Special care is taken that these products do not contain pests and any kind of disease. Banarasi Langra mangoes have to go

through vapor heat and hot water treatment process, then Langra mangoes can be exported to foreign countries.

He informed that the equipment used in the Integrated Pack House for food and vegetable export is completely an indigenous plant. This pack house has been equipped with Vapor Heat Treatment Unit (2500 kg/batch per four hours); Hot water treatment plant (500 kg / batch per one hour); Mango / fruit processing, grading and sorting line (2000 kg / hour); Vegetable Processing Line (1000 kg/hr); Cold Room (2 to 20 MT); Pre cold room (2 to 15 MT) and Ripening Room (1 to 10 MT).

# Call to make India global leader by 2047

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Scientific advisor of Defence Ministry Dr G Sathesh Reddy, while highlighting the technical achievements and challenges of the country, gave his call to make India technologically self-reliant and global leader by 2047, when India celebrates its anniversary of independence. He was speaking as the chief guest in the inaugural function of TIFAC conducted two-day national level brainstorming workshop to formulate the Technology Vision 2047 (TV-2047) in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Monday.

Dr Reddy who is also the former secretary of DRDO said that when in 1958 DRDO started, it was a testing and quality assurance facility, however, few of the visionaries like Dr Abdul Kalam has trans-

formed it. Similarly, visionaries like Dr Homi Bhabha, Dr Vikram Sarabhai, Dr Satish Dhawan, Dr Visveswaraya etc contributed immensely in the technological advancement of India. He narrated that at the time of independence, there were very few research institutions in the country, which has increased tremendously now.

"Opening the education to the private sector has also improved the overall educational enrolment. However, the problem of quality education and innovation still persist in the country, and this is the reason why India is still a follower in the global technology sphere and waste huge foreign exchange in importing it." He said, adding that if India has to become a global technology leader, our researchers and youth have to

leave the fear of failure and will have to work on crazy and disruptive ideas.

He also presented technological achievements of India, which are manifesting in the form of Make in India, Start-Up India, Skill India etc. He asserted that we have to aggressively work on the technology related to the advanced materials, energy, communication, manufacturing, software development etc to make India a global technology leader.

The function was coordinated by Dr Geeta Rai, Department of Molecular and Human Genetics, BHU. The workshop is aimed to discuss and design futuristic technology under the umbrella of TIFAC. On the first day, Prof Pradeep Srivastava, Executive Director, TIFAC described the aims of Technology

Vision-2047. Prof Anil Tripathi, Director, Institute of Science, and Dean, Dr M Agarwal, BHU, suggested the various technologies developed.

Apart from Dr Reddy several other speakers such as Dr RS Verma, Director MNNIT, Allahabad; Dr TN Singh, Director IIT Patna; Dr HB Srivastava, Director General, TMD, DRDO; Dr Manmohan Parida, Director, DRDE; Dr Tusar Kanti Behera, Director IIVR; Dr Rajesh Kumar, Principal Scientist, IIVR; Dr LC Rai, Botany, BHU; Dr BK Singh, Dept of Physics, BHU; Dr Shantanu Pande, SGPGL, Dr DC Rai, Department of Dairy Science and Food Technology; Dr Abhishek, IIT Kanpur; Dr Suchi Yadav from JNU and Dr Uma Kanga, AIIMS, New Delhi and many others were also present.

# Umesh Pal murder case: Shooter Ghulam's house demolished

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The house of Mohammad Ghulam, the shooter of Umesh Pal murder case, was demolished with bulldozers on Monday. His 10-room lodge adjacent to the house was also demolished.

Mohammad Ghulam is carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh on his head. He is absconding since 25 days. Ghulam was standing in the shop wearing a cap on his head at the time of the incident related to Umesh Pal shootout.

After leaving the shop, he fired another shot at Umesh. The first fire was made by Vijay Chowdhary alias Usman.

During the bulldozer operation, Ghulam's mother Khushnuda said, "The one whom he (Ghulam) killed was also someone's son. If the police encounter my son, I will not come to take his body. I am very sorry that my son's name has figured in the Umesh Pal murder case."

The Prayagraj Development Authority (PDA) has so far razed the houses of three accused in the Umesh Pal shootout. Among the three accused whose houses have been bulldozed, the house in Chakia is also included in which Atiq Ahmed's wife Shaista Parveen used to live

with her family. This house in Chakia was demolished by the PDA on March 1.

The house was in the name of Zafar Ahmed, which was projected as 'benami' property of Atiq Ahmed.

The second action taken by the PDA was on March 2, in which the house of Safdar, considered very close to Atiq Ahmed and who opened a gun shop was involved.

This luxurious house located on 60 feet Road, Kareli was demolished by using Pokeland and bulldozers. The market value of this house has been estimated at around Rs 3 crore.

The third crackdown was carried out on March 3, involving the house of village head Maskuddin, a close aide of Atiq, located near Manauri on the Kanpur road. Maskuddin was said to be the financier of Atiq.

After the demolition of three consecutive houses in three days, the PDA's action was stopped for the time being which has started again on Monday.

Umesh was the prime witness in the former MLA Raju Pal murder case. Umesh Pal's wife Jaya Pal along with Atiq Ahmed filed a case against Ashraf, wife Shaista Parveen, his two sons and others. Police have so far detained about

eight suspects.

Meanwhile another CCTV footage has come to the fore in the Umesh Pal murder case. According to it there had been a delay of six seconds, another innocent life would have been lost. She was none other than Umesh's relative who narrowly survived the bomb attack. This has been revealed in another CCTV footage that surfaced 25 days after the incident.

A perusal of the 58-second CCTV footage shows that Umesh's relative, a teenager, had a narrow escape during the bomb and bullet attack. According to it the incident took place on February 24 at 4:56 pm.

The video footage starts at 4:56:44 seconds in which a teenager is seen running inside the house.

Exactly six seconds later i.e. at 4:56:50, the video shows Umesh Pal's gunner Raghavendra who comes running inside the house. Before he could enter the house at the 51st second, a bomb is hit from behind and Raghavendra falls to the ground in a pool of blood. After this smoke spreads all around and then nothing is visible.

After five seconds, at 4:56:56 when the smoke comes out, Raghavendra is

seen lying on the ground in agony.

Meanwhile, some people living next to Umesh's house come out and then pick up the injured Raghavendra and take him inside the room. One more thing has come to light from the CCTV footage that Umesh Pal's gunner Raghavendra was not directly hit by the bomb otherwise he would have been blown to pieces.

On Monday, another CCTV footage related to the Umesh murder case surfaced. In it Pal's niece, who ran away from the barrage of bullets, is seen coming back into the street after the bomb blast. Jaya Pal, who was preparing to go to her relative's engagement ceremony, reached there through a cloud of smoke where Umesh was lying on the sofa in a pool of blood.

There the mother was looking for bullet marks on the body. Mother Shanti Devi told the police that after being shot, he (Umesh) came running to the room and hugged her and just said that "Ammma, those people will kill me". Then Umesh was not in a position to speak. Jaya held his hand and kept shouting that do not leave her and go, but by the time he reached the Narayani hospital, his breath had stopped.

# STF looking for history-sheeter Mundi Pasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

STF is also looking for a female history-sheeter Mundi Pasi in Umesh Pal murder case apart from Shaista Parveen wife of Atiq Ahmad. Shaista Parveen is also carrying a reward of Rs 25,000, while the police is planning to announce a reward of Mundi Pasi, a close friend of Shaista Parveen.

STF has come to know about the role of these two women in the Umesh Pal murder case.

STF is looking for female history-sheeter Mundi Pasi of Dhoomanganj police sta-

tion as a helper of Atiq Ahmed's wife Shaista Parveen.

Mundi Pasi is also absconding for a long time and the police is on the lookout for her. It is now learned that before Pal's murder, Mundi Pasi has been roaming freely with Shaista.

She has been seen several times with Shaista after she was declared the BSP's mayoral candidate. Now along with absconding Shaista, sharpshooter Mundi Pasi is also on the lookout for STF and Crime Branch. It is being said that Mundi Pasi may also have a hand in Shaista's

escape.

Mundi Pasi, who has been identified as Lady Don in the world of crime, has been a history sheeter of Dhoomanganj police station. Now Mundi Pasi's role in the Umesh Pal murder case is coming to the fore.

During the mayoral election campaign, Bali Pandit has also been seen along with Shaista, Atiq's wife, along with Sabir carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh.

Based on the CCTV footage Sabir has been identified as the person who opened fire with a rifle.

More than a dozen cases

have been registered against Mundi Pasi at Dhoomanganj police station under several serious sections including murder, extortion. She has been collecting extortion in cases of selling someone's house, buying land.

Crime Branch and STF teams are raiding her hideouts to nab Mundi Pasi. Mundi Pasi has also been close to dreaded criminal Moolchand Pasi. His name has also been associated with the Bacha Sagar gang, the special shooter of the Chhota Rajan gang. Mundi Pasi and her shooters are absconding since the Umesh Pal murder case.

# Man killed in road mishap

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A man was killed when the bike on which he was traveling was hit by a speeding dumper last night on Meja Road. As a result there was a massive jam of vehicles. On being informed by the passers-by the police reached the spot, identified the body and informed the family members about it. The police got the jam lifted.

Sunil Nishad (32), a resident of Kharka of Kheri police station area, was returning home from Prayagraj city on a bike at night. He had just reached Meja Road when the dumper coming from the front at a high speed went out of controlled and hit him hard, he came under it and died on the spot.

On the information of passers-by, Meja SHO Gyaneshwar Mishra, Meja Road Chowki incharge Ram Bhawan Verma reached the spot along with the police force.

After identifying the deceased, the police informed the family members about the incident. The police took the body into possession and

sent it to the city for the postmortem examination.

Meja Kotwal said strict action will be taken against the dumper driver by filing FIR on the written complaint given by the relatives of the deceased.

**PLAN PREPARED:** A detailed and concrete action plan has been prepared to reach the branches of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh by 2024 in all mandals and localities of Prayag division.

On Monday the detailed action plan was finalised at Madhav Gyan Kendra Inter College in Naini in the presence of office-bearers from block to province level and state campaigner of Vichar Pariwar, Ramesh, in a day-long meeting.

The meeting was called for the implementation of the resolution and action plan passed in the Akhil Bharatiya Pratidinhi Sabha. In the inaugural session, Prant Pracharak Ramesh threw light on the points of the action plan. There are 196 mandals and 373 settlements in all the five districts of Prayagraj department.

Addressing the workers, he said all workers should organise social harmony meetings in their units and start working at the grassroots level for a harmonious and strong society so that the dream of a glorious strong nation can come true. For this, the plan to send full-time pracharak concerned at the divisional level was also finalised.

In the meeting, the workers were told to engage in constructive work on a war footing as per the prepared strategy.

District-wise meeting was organised in the second session. The concluding session was addressed by Dr Raj Bihari.

**SPL ARRANGEMENTS BEING MADE FOR TREATMENT OF PASSENGERS:** Special arrangements are being made for the treatment of passengers who have health related emergency while traveling in trains or at railway stations. Doctors will now be available 24 hours at railway stations for the treatment of passengers.

Preparations are being done by NCR (North Central

Railway). First doctors will be deployed at Prayagraj, Kanpur and Aligarh railway stations. Till now if the passenger's health deteriorated while traveling in the train, doctors or medicines are made available to him/her through the Rail Madad app. But the lives of serious patients can also be saved if doctors are available 24 hours.

Pregnant women often deliver in trains. For this, doctors are called in a hurry. There is also a delay in this process. Sometimes this increases the difficulties of passengers. But now pregnant women as well as other passengers will get relief if doctors are available 24 hours at stations.

These doctors will do duty for eight hours each in different shifts. First of all this preparation is being done at the big and crowded stations of NCR. The list of doctors is being prepared. There is a railway hospital near Prayagraj Junction, due to which passengers here are already very comfortable. Patients in more serious condition can be admitted to railway hospital.

# Blood donation camp organised

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

President, Rotary Club Mirzapur Gaurav, Ravi Katara said it was a matter of pride for all donors that they are contributing to the humanity by donating the blood under the banner of Rotary Club. These views were expressed by him while welcoming the guests in a blood donation camp organised on Sunday. He said though only 14 donors could pass the medical test to donate blood but on the call of Rotary International blood donation will continue throughout the year. Proposing the vote of thanks, convener of the camp Dr CB Jaiswal praised

the spirit of donors. Dr Mridula Jaiswal, Dr Sunil Singh, Dr JK Jaiswal, Deepak Kushwaha and Ashutosh Chaubey were present. Besides, another blood donation camp was organised at Dhundi Katra under the joint venture of Vindhya Foundation Trust and Rotary Club Vindhya in which PRO divisional hospital blood bank Ram Kumar Gupta was present along with blood collection and transport van. On the occasion 35 units of blood was collected under the supervision of Dr Anoop Gupta. Santosh Goyal, Swaroop Gupta, Gaurav Mishra, Aditya Singh, Shiv Shukla and Krishnanand Haihayvanshi worked hard for

the success of the camp.

**MASS MARRIAGE:** A mass marriage programme organised under the aegis of Tailik Sahu Samaj on Sunday. Blessing the newly-married couples former principal Dr RH Gupta appealed to the gathering to give emphasis on the education of children. Proposing the vote of thanks the convener of the programme Chandra Lochan Gupta praised the spirit of the community and the beneficiaries. Under the programme artistes presented ceremonial songs, Barat procession was accorded a warm reception. The programme was jointly conducted by Uday Chand Gupta and

Rama Shankar Sahu District president Rajesh Gupta presented the welcome speech. Former chairman NPP Manoj Jaiswal, veteran leader BJP Manoj Srivastava, Amresh Mishra and Nitin Awasthi were among those who blessed the newly-married couples.

**CONGRATULATED:** Under the cooperative elections Ashutosh Tripathi has been elected unopposed as chairman of Sadhan Sahkari Samiti Ghurahoopatti on Sunday. BJP district president Brij Bhushan Singh, Arvind Tiwari, Anshumali Mishra, Akash Gupta, Atul Gupta and others congratulated Tripathi for his victory.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

## Asian alliance

Japanese PM Kishida's visit to New Delhi has the potential to open new vistas in bilateral ties

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's visit to New Delhi Monday is important not just from the perspective of bilateral relations covering a gamut of spheres but also a critical signal it sends to the big bullies in the international arena: democracies are joining hands like never before. The two nations are discussing a raft of issues, ranging from defence and security to trade, investment, and technology. Committing themselves to a peaceful, stable and prosperous Indo-Pacific, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kishida vowed to expand the India-Japan global strategic partnership. This century has seen the deepening and broadening of the bilateral ties, which became 'Global Partnership' in 2000, 'Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2006, and 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership' in 2014. This is of great importance against the backdrop of China's bellicosity in the region. It is serendipitous that India's presidency of G20 coincides with Japan's presidency of the G7. It needs to be mentioned here that Kishida has been striving to bring the rich and poor nations of the world together. In his address to the Japanese Parliament earlier this year, he revived the term Global South. This was a favorite of the votaries of non-alignment, used to depict and highlight the North-South conflicts. But the Japanese Prime Minister resuscitated just the term, not the idea that it connoted to the pinkish non-alignment enthusiasts. He doesn't seem to be an admirer of Nehruvian principles in international matters; he would not like to act as the trade union leader of poor nations and fight against rich countries; indeed he comes from a rich country. He



wants to unite all countries, rich as well as poor, for a rules-based international order.

Kishida is following the late prime minister Shinzo Abe's foreign policy, which has been called "panoramic diplomacy." It has been officially described as a "diplomacy that takes a panoramic perspective of the terrestrial globe." Gone are the days of Tokyo's pacifism. A quarter of a century ago, when India carried out nuclear explosions, Tokyo condemned New Delhi. Today, however, Japan sees an ally in India in the eventuality of a conflict with China; it is arming itself. Japan's role in strengthening the Quad is critical. It is a measure of growing proximity between the two nations that Modi and Kishida met three times in 2022. Along with defence and security cooperation between the two Asian democracies, trade is also growing. Last year, the bilateral trade was \$20.75 billion, the largest ever. The two countries signed a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement or CEPA in 2011. Now both sides emphasise reliable supply chains for semiconductors and other critical technologies. A year ago, Kishida had promised a Rs 320,000-crore investment target in India in five years. This may be the time to redeem the old promise — and make new ones. The same is true for India.

### PICTALK



A boy plays with snow on a tree in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir

PTI

## Memories rush back as the mangoes bloom

Being in the midst of nature is unmatched. To be one with nature is to live a pristine life in tune with the moment

In spring, trees bloom, turning the world into a colourful garden. One bloom that stands out is the bloom of mango trees. The trees bloom and the air is filled with a sweet scent that attracts bees, birds, and people. For me, as a child, the season of spring, which starts in February in north India and spills into the month of March, was a season of extremes. The first few days were spent studying for final exams, and the last few days were spent jovially and academically free. We played hide and seek or explored the jungle trails during the balmy, pleasant weather filled with colors and fragrances of spring. Occasionally, we sneaked into a friend's ox driven 'Belna' (country made sugarcane juice machine) where freshly prepared jaggery coming from a huge boiler, treated our taste buds.

As the weather gets warmer, the bloom starts maturing and with the onset of monsoons, the fruit is ripe and ready. During school days, the ripening of mangoes coincided with the two-



month long monsoon break and there are so many memories associated with those mango-savouring holidays. Every tree had a folklore and history associated with it—some were planted by a revered ancestor and some took to roots by accident, some had divine powers and some were the abode of ghosts, some bore fruits

every year and some never. The rain soaked days, paddy fields and trees blanketed in green, mango trees loaded with fruits, the streams filled with fresh water meandering leisurely downhill, the early morning calls of 'koel' (Cuckoo) and the company of friends made those times truly memorable ones. It was like reliving all

those past moments when I was at home at the beginning of the mango bloom. A whiff of fresh fragrance from our courtyard blooming mango tree transported me back in time. I savoured every day trying to hold on to those smells, sights and flavours and enjoyed every moment of spring at home. The sun rises woke me up early to witness the most spectacular sights of nature and the sunsets took me to the highest hilltop in the village, the flowing streams led me on paths less taken, the forests took me in a search of wild, I sat under trees and felt the morning breeze touching my cheeks, I roamed in wheat fields and saw the fresh dew drops kissing the tender plants, I heard the birds chirping in the silence of mornings, I sat on the bank of the rivers to feel the stillness and solitude, I met old friends and we talked late into the nights, like good old times and doing all this I understood the true meaning of living in moments. (The writer pens down stories of human interest and his travels. He also likes to click portraits)



AMIT KANWAR

# The hullabaloo over UK's refugee policy

There's been a sharp increase in the number of asylum seekers to Britain. PM Rishi Sunak is trying to put a timely end to the impending danger



SARADINDU MUKHERJI

The outcry over the latest Refugee/Asylum Bill in Britain was not unexpected. The Indian media has not remained unaffected. Incidentally, even a fraction of this "concern" is seldom seen in the latter's coverage of genuine refugees fleeing to India — victims of religious persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan!

The website of the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) indicates that it "is profoundly concerned by the asylum Bill introduced by the UK Government in the House of Commons". It further stated, "The legislation, if passed, would amount to an asylum ban-extinguishing the right to seek refugee protection in the U.K. for those who arrive irregularly, no matter how genuine or compelling their claims may be". It further urged, "the Government, to all MPs and Peers to reconsider the Bill and instead pursue a more humane and practical policy solution".

Be that as it may, the ground reality is that there has been a sharp increase in the number of small boat arrivals on British shores in recent times. All of them have sought asylum in the country. In the year ending September 2022, the UK received 72,027 asylum applications. This is double the number of applicants received in 2019. Add to this the number of unresolved cases. In the critical backdrop of the UK's declining Christian population and a sudden upsurge in the Muslim population, it assumes a serious complexion. These are the real causes of concern.

Since the 1950s, there have been many legal and illegal immigrants who have settled down in English and have done well. Most of them have complied with the norms of the host community. As against them, there have been a growing number of Islamic terrorist activities, targeting the sons of the soil and their civilizational values. One would do well to recall, among many, the activities of the ISIS bride Shamima Begum, who had been stripped of her British citizenship and the forceful cam-



paigned in her favour by numerous Britishers including the B.B.C. There are areas in London and the midlands, which make one feel as if they have been transported to a strange, unfamiliar territory, resembling more of a Pakistani and Bangladeshi ghetto.

In the early 1990s, a "Muslim Parliament" had been set up in Britain and had been clamouring for absurd favours including the introduction of Sharia! This writer pointed out this emerging threat thirty years ago. ("Muslim Parliament in Secular Britain", The Pioneer, 7 Feb 1992; "Islamic Assertion in Britain", The Pioneer, 30 June 1995)

They carry with them the medieval religious-social-political norms of their original homeland that were notorious for inhumane treatment of religious minorities. Then, there are the crimes committed by the Muslim grooming gangs who have played systematic havoc with the British white girls besides many Hindu/ Sikh girls, unfortunately abetted by the British society on the pretext of multiculturalism that has generally failed. Integration of such a sizable and viciously



MANY OF THESE IMMIGRANTS CARRY THE MEDIEVAL RELIGIOUS-SOCIAL-POLITICAL NORMS OF THEIR ORIGINAL HOMELANDS, WHICH ARE INFAMOUS FOR THEIR INHUMAN TREATMENT OF RELIGIOUS MINORITIES

ungrateful segment of the population into the mainstream was a non-starter to begin with.

After all, the UK, is a sovereign nation and its political culture is shaped by the ideas of Hobbes— who had enunciated the concept of untrammelled sovereignty (Leviathan, 1561) which came to be tempered by the liberal ideas of John Lock and the subsequent political revolutions and remedial parliamentary legislations. While its claim to "civilizing mission" in its erstwhile colonies, when the Sun had not yet set on the British Empire, need not be taken seriously, it is absurd to demand that every refugee/asylum seeker entering Britain by hook or crook is entitled to stay back and enjoy all the benefits of a welfare state free of cost. Those who find this Nazi like may have to revise their knowledge of some rudimentary history!

Rishi Sunak, and his Conservative Party may have correctly sensed the nature of the impending danger, and are now trying to put a timely end to it. Surely, the number of their sympathisers in Britain and elsewhere in the civilised world would

increase. Sunak belongs to a Hindu family that once lived in a part of undivided India which is now in Pakistan. Unlike many of India's political classes, he must be aware of the disastrous consequences of a changing religious demographic. There is still a solution to the problem in Whitehall even without Palmerston and Disraeli.

Following the mass expulsion of Asians by Idi Amin from Kenya, their rehabilitation in Britain was both legal and justified, and so is the status of the asylum seekers from Hong Kong, which had been a Crown colony till it was returned to China, and inhabitants of the Falkland islands for which the "Iron Lady" had fought with Argentina.

It is high time that the UNHCR and its parent bodies extinguish the very roots of this malady in the countries of origin — the persecution of religious minorities and their flight across boundaries. Why should they not begin with India's neighborhood? That should be a top priority for any non-political and impartial humanitarian agency.

(The author is a Member of the ICHR)

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### NO RELAXATION FOR EWS MEMBERS

Sir — The rationale behind the reservation of seats in Government employment and education is often asserted to be the inadequate representation of various social groups. Due to poor implementation of government policies, sometimes even by the Government itself, the purpose of reservation in favour of reserved categories, be it OBC, SC, ST, or the newly introduced EWS, often gets defeated in other dimensions. I recently observed that the application fee for various government examinations such as Provincial Civil Service (PCS) in states like Uttar Pradesh for EWS candidates is exactly the same as for the unreserved (General) candidates. This is ironic because the very purpose behind the EWS quota is to uplift economically weaker sections as is evident from the very definition of EWS. Thus, it defeats the very purpose of reservation. This is because EWS candidates may find it difficult to fill out the forms for those exams where the application fees are very high.

Shivanshu K Srivastava | Lucknow

### NATIONALIST MUSLIMS

Sir — According to a certain prominent leader of a poll-bound state, his party definitely needs the support of "nationalist Muslims"! However there has been no mention of asking for support from "nationalist Hindus"! Surely in his dictionary, the entire Hindu community is "nationalist" by default! After all no Hindu can afford to terrorise or work against the nation, such is their "sanskar"! Disgusting, but hardly surprising given his party's "glorious tradition" of flexing rabid religious muscle mixed with invocations of barbaric Islamophobia!

Also thanks to him, we can arrive at the conclusion that loudspeakers "screaming" azan (which get performed few times a day for just a few minutes) disturb the neighborhood students and patients; but his silence upon the day/days long screams (shlokas, bhajans, mantras, drums, conch, bells) coming from loudspeakers of temples during various festivals throughout the

## Millets: Superfood against hunger



the global good, highlighting India's increasing responsibility for the global good. It is a matter of great honor for India that after its proposal and efforts, the United Nations declared 2023 the International Year of Millets.

Millets have been a staple in India for centuries, mentioned in some of the oldest Yajurveda texts. However, with the Green Revolution in the 1960s, millets were replaced by rice and wheat, which were considered more profitable. But now, with the promotion of millets as a superfood, their popularity is once again on the rise. The International Year of Millets is an opportunity to promote millets as a superfood and raise awareness of their benefits. The Indian government's Millet Mission is an example of the importance placed on promoting millets and their potential to fight hunger, malnutrition, and poverty.

Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

year prove that if sound emanates from temples, it acts as balm or honey upon ears without causing minimum disturbance to the neighbourhood students and patients! What better can be expected from such a force which treats electoral wins of their own as "Victory of democracy" but the Opposition wins are "triumph of dynasts"! What a blatant example of hypocrisy!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

### CLOSING OF MADRASAS IN ASSAM

Sir — Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's decision to shut down all madrasas is a foolish decision. It is nothing but a move to suppress the Muslim community. By closing all madrasas in the State and saying that there is a threat to our culture and tradition is against our constitution. This is because it is against the right to practice and learn his own religion. Instead of converting Madrasas into other schools why don't the Assam Government construct new modern schools? Government funding should only be stopped if they believe the Quran is being taught in madrasas. Who are

these people to decide what to study and what not to study? If madrasas are closed, there will be mass dropout of female students. Is this *Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*? In any madrasa, besides Islamic studies and languages such as Arabic and Urdu, general subjects and other modern Indian languages are taught to all students. Many parents who prefer their daughters to get Islamic education along with regular subjects will pull them out of schools.

The Assam Government has forgotten that notable personalities such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Munshi Prem Chand, Dr. Rajendra Prasad, and Dr. Zakir Hussain studied in madrasas. Previously the Government cited that madrasas are funded by terror activities. However, the Government could find nothing like that in the madrasas. The Assam Government should know that these madrasas were set up to fulfill a religious need rather than promote enmity with any community.

Zakir Hussain | Kazipet


Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

LIFE INSURANCE UNDER THE NEW I-T SCHEME

What to do with the insurance policies already taken, is the big question



S KALYANASUNDARAM

The Union Budget presented for the next fiscal year has provided the necessary incentive for taxpayers to switch to a new income tax scheme. Individual taxpayers are free to choose the old scheme or the updated scheme as per his/her convenience. Under the old scheme, tax payers were claiming deductions based on different savings, expenses and loan repayments as per provisions of the IT Act. The revised scheme does not allow any such deductions and immediately provides a higher exemption limit. Therefore, individuals opting for the new scheme need not continue with their savings.

The situation provides an opportunity for individuals to continue or discontinue endowment policies (and also similar life cover instruments like Money back policies, ULIP etc.). Though ideally term insurance will be the best option for life coverage, many have contracted for endowment policies on the perception that it is also a saving instrument. If they have taken the insurance only as a saving measure, they now have the option to discontinue it. The following options are available when choosing a new tax scheme for endowment policies (and similar policies).

**Surrender the policy**

It is possible to surrender the insurance policy to the issuer. This means no more premium is payable on this and the life cover will also lapse. The insurance company will return what is called the surrender value. Surrender value is the amount the policyholder will get from the life insurance company if he decides to exit the policy before maturity. Surrender value varies from policy to policy and it is printed on the policy itself.

**Do not surrender but stop paying premium**

This would not be the only option available. One need not surrender the policy but simply stop paying further premiums. When one continues with the policy without paying any further premium, the policy will have what is called "Paid up Value". In other words, the paid up value is the value payable at maturity of the discontinued policy (of premium payment).

Generally, a life insurance policy with an investment value earns some paid up value after at least 3 years in force (5 years for ULIPs). This means that policies like money-back endowment will have paid-up value after 3 years and ULIP will have market value after 5 years. To calculate the paid up value, multiply the number of premiums paid by the sum assured by the total number of premiums. This method will offer continuing life coverage at a reduced amount (paid up value) and maturing.

**Allow it to lapse**

By not paying premiums further, one can allow the policy to lapse if it has no surrender value. The premium paid will be a loss. But cash outflows for many more years in the future will be a big saving.

**Taxation**

The surrender value of a life policy is allowed as a tax-free benefit only if it fulfils some conditions with regard to the number of years premium paid. But as the surrender value eligibility matches this, the surrender value will be tax free. (Only if the policy was issued between 1st April 2003 and 31st March 2012, there are additional conditions). There is no change in the deductions allowed in earlier years on account of premium payment. For paid up value, the amount received on maturity will be tax free.

**Takeaway**

The revised income tax regime allows the discontinuation of insurance policies taken with intent to save. This should not be confused with the necessity of life insurance. One may need life insurance protection, and it may be appropriate to have term insurance for the amount of coverage required. The decision of surrendering, continuing the policy without further premiums, or letting it lapse depends on the individual's determination of opportunity cost.

(The writer is a retired banker)

# Inflation management needs salutary changes



SUMEET BHASIN

The Reserve Bank of India's MPC will meet in the first week of April. The stakeholders are concerned if it will emerge wiser from recent global experiences



Vietnam became the first country to break ranks with the global community to cut the policy rates. The Central bank of Vietnam surprised the global economists to cut the benchmark interest rate. The East Asian nation was wary of the fact that the blind-walking alongside the US Federal Reserve to keep raising the interest rates would have surely taken its economy into fast downturn.

Europe remains hawkish with rate hikes, increasing the policy rate by 50 basis points last week. Jerome Powell, the head of the US Federal Reserve, has come under intense fire within his country. He is being accused of walking the US economy to the doorsteps of a deep recession. He has been dogged in pursuit of higher interest rates despite fellow members cautioning him of risks associated with hawkish measures.

Within a span of a few days, three banks in the US have come to their knees, with one collapsing in 48 hours. The US and Europe are now battling the worst fears of economists of banks failing the high interest regime. The monetary policy meeting (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India will meet in the first week of April. The concerned stakeholders are watching out with intense curiosity to see if the MPC of the RBI will be wiser from the immediate global experiences of following a hawkish path.

Inflation indeed is a cause of concern. The poor suffers the most from an uncontrolled inflation. Therefore, there is an unequivocal understanding that inflation must be tamed with all the policy might available at the RBI and the government.

But it must not be ignored that high interest rates may be suicidal for the economy, as a number of factors make it less effective at controlling inflation, while harmful economic growth more. High interest rates drive away capital, which may exacerbate inflation further, while harming emerging economies more by putting pressure on their currencies.

Several studies and reports have taken note of the creditstress, harming small businesses and low-income households, who are most sensitive to changes in interest rates, while being at loan repayments risks when rates are high. Also, economic growth naturally takes the blows of high interest rate regime, as private investment and private consumption take backseat in the economy.

Furthermore, increasing interest rates may not address the underlying causes of inflation, which can be caused by a range of factors, including rise in the money supply, high production costs, or changes in consumer demand. For instance high cereal costs in India is driving inflation high. Indeed, core inflation is also staying above six per cent. But cereal and fruits are making the management of inflation a daunting task. India indeed needs to take steps to work on post-harvest management with the participation of the private capital to ensure that the cereals, fruits and vegetables don't march on high price trajectory to give fresh legs to inflation.

Thus, it's incumbent upon the policymakers to consider targeted interventions to address specific drivers of inflation. The government has done well by proactively asking the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to auction the public wheat stock in the open market. The four rounds of the auctions of the wheat stocks have shown sobering impact on the wheat prices, which have significantly cooled down in the last few days.

Similar interventions are needed to cool down the prices of the specific drivers stepping up the inflation. The price stabilization fund, which is a mechanism created by the Centre, to deal with the volatility in the prices of food items needs effective utilization. This has to be done by the state governments with effective utilization of the market intelligence architecture. It will be worthwhile to explore if there could be a mechanism to incentivize the states for better performances on the price stabilization front.

Failures among banks, including Silicon Valley Bank (SVB), have been attributed to a variety of factors, with high-interest rates bring the principal culprit, which has proven to be unsustainable and even disastrous. Banks resort to offer high-interest rates to attract depositors in pursuit of rapid growth. But the banks tend to gain customers who are primarily interested in the rate, leading to a higher concentration of risky or unstable deposits. This makes banks becoming host to hot money, which can make a sudden flight from the first sign of stress, as had been the case with Silicon Valley Bank and other regional banks in the US.

By all accounts the RBI will not be able to meet the projected inflation rate of 5.7 per cent for this fiscal. This will be possible only if inflation crashes by over 230 points in the last month of the financial year. This will call for the RBI to explain why it failed in the inflation management as mandated by Parliament. We already know that couple of the members of the MPC had opposed the Repo Rate hike in the last meeting. Therefore, it will be desired that the RBI embraces a course correction in the light of the fresh developments globally.

Pausing the rate hike trend will be most desired by the stakeholders. Cut in the rate hikes will, however, be the demand of the prevailing situations. Also, the fact that India had not resorted to printing of currencies to deal with the situations arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic may be factored in since the market is not flush with cash that requires to be sucked out. Indeed, the US and the European nations had excessively printed their currencies to deal with the economic crises due to the pandemic. They may require flushing out the excess cash from the system to control the inflation. This is surely not the case in India.

But it must not be forgotten that India has paid a heavy price for such quick-fix approach of the government to deal with the situations arising out of the economic crisis. The UPA government led by Manmohan Singh, former prime minister, had done exactly the same thing, of giving cash in the hands of the people in its bid to find an easy way out of the economic crisis, which India faced in the wake of the 2008 global crisis. This had led India to double-digit food inflation for the remainder of the term of the UPA government.

It was only when Narendra Modi took charge of the country as the prime minister that the Central government could tame the runaway food inflation with agile policy making.

The weather scientists have warned that India may have to face El Nino this year. There may be a risk of weather pattern disruptions, which could also have bearing on prices of several items, which constitute the retail inflation basket. This also calls for the RBI to elicit wider participation in the process of the inflation management, since some of the solutions may lie in the domains of the Centre and the state governments.

It must be understood that working in silos is an ailment that made India suffer the most. The RBI must make sure that it's not working from silos.

Reforming Parliament: Charity begins at home

It is high time that parliamentary reforms are undertaken to make the House more effective and in sync with the changing times



KALYANI SHANKAR

Just as we need reforms in many other areas, Parliament needs reforms urgently. Right now, both Houses remain paralysed. The Opposition is looking for public and media attention to embarrass the Government, while the Government is also in an aggressive mood.

The BJP opposed the earlier Congress Governments precisely as the Congress is following now, everything which could attract the public and media attention. The direct TV telecast also makes members play to the gallery.

The face-off between the adamant Treasury Benches and the belligerent Opposition continues over two controversial issues. The first concerns Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's recent alleged defamatory comments about the Modi government in the U.K. Strangely, the treasury benches are demanding, "Rahul Gandhi *sadan mein aao, sadan mein aakar maafi mango* (Rahul Gandhi come to the House and apologise)".

The second comes from the Opposition, which demands a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the Adani-Hindenburg issue. The Adoni issue had been simmering for some time, but the Government has been unwilling to discuss it in the House.

The second half of the budget session opened on March 13. The row has become intense now, with the Opposition taking to the streets. The Congress also gave a privilege notice against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Lok Sabha.

Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal said, "A member of this House (meaning Rahul Gandhi) went abroad and made defamatory comments. He has to tender an apology. And how these people (some Opposition MPs) who are protesting and carrying placards in the House should be acted against; in my opinion, they should be suspended."

This brings us to the larger question of Parliament's functioning. There are enough checks and balances. Parliament's liberal framework provides many opportunities for vigorous debate, discussion, and dissent. Political parties must replace disorder, disruption and delay in legislation with debate, discussion, and decision in a democracy. The adage is while the Opposition should have its say, the Government should have its way.

Historically, there was a degree of homogeneity in both Houses in the fifties and sixties. Many members like Piloo Modii enlivened the House with their repartees, humour, and healthy debates while maintaining the dignity and decorum of the House.

Congress shrank since the eighties while others, including regional parties, grew, leading to coalition politics.

Another area for improvement is the duration of sittings. Most state legislatures sit for barely 30 days a year. In some, like Haryana and Punjab, the average is about a fortnight. The Parliament spends less time on legislative business resulting in lawmakers spending less time on law-making.

The first three Lok Sabhas sat for an average of 120 DAYS a year. The Lok Sabha spent less than 10 minutes to pass a law, and the Rajya Sabha less than half an hour.

The National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution recommended that Lok Sabha should have at least 120 and Rajya Sabha 100 sittings. A single minute in Parliament leads to an expenditure of Rs. 2.5 lakhs approx to the exchequer.

The former chief justice N.V. Ramana recently lamented how Parliament passed laws without deliberation and debate. The judiciary interprets the law and always looks for the discussion before passing the law. The presiding officers of both Houses have time and again urged the members to maintain the dignity of the House in mind.

There should be a complete revamp of the rules to make clearing legislation and discussion on issues open, transparent, and outcome-oriented. Secondly, political parties should choose eminent men and women as members.

Thirdly, new members should be given adequate time to participate in the proceedings.

Fourthly, the party leaders should focus more on Parliament's functioning as they are also stakeholders.

Fifthly, Question Hour should not be disturbed as that is when Government answers many questions. The cancellation of Zero Hour and Question Hour indicates that parliamentary reforms are urgently needed.

Sixthly, presiding officers should be given more teeth.

Seventhly, accommodation and negotiations should be part of the conduct of the House.

Eighthly, new members should be trained to understand the House's rules and regulations.

The parliamentary committees have gradually decreased their number of sittings. The Government also only refers some pieces of legislation to the committee.

A healthy democracy needs a fit functioning Parliament. Indian democracy has matured over the years, and it is time to make some necessary corrective issues.



# India vital for stability in Indo-Pacific: Kishida



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Monday said India is indispensable for peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific and no country should use force or coercion in trying to drive their territorial claims, after unveiling his plan for the region. These observations were in apparent reference to Russia and China.

Delivering the 41st Sapru House lecture, Kishida also strongly condemned Russia's aggression against Ukraine and said global principles of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity must be adhered to in every corner of the world.

On the Ukraine conflict, Kishida also noted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

message to Russian President Vladimir Putin that 'today's era is not of war'.

The Japanese prime minister delivered the lecture in the presence of a gathering of top diplomats, envoys and strategic affairs experts, hours after holding wide-ranging talks with Prime Minister Modi on further strengthening the India-Japan 'Special Strategic and Global Partnership'. 'India is indispensable,' Kishida said while elaborating on his vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific. The Japanese prime minister also said Tokyo will collaborate closely with New Delhi in contributing to stability in the South Asian region.

"Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) is a vision gaining traction. The FOIP is a visionary concept. It is to

defend rule of law and freedom," he said.

Kishida said countries must follow the United Nations principles of respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity and peaceful resolution of disputes.

"Peace is paramount. The principles such as respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and opposition to unilateral changes to status quo by force must be followed. The principles should be adhered to in every corner of the world," Kishida said.

His comments came amid increasing global concerns over the Russian invasion of Ukraine and China's military muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific. Kishida said states should not use force or coercion in trying to drive their claims at sea.

# Stalemate over Adani, Rahul continues in Parl

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Parliament was adjourned for the day on Monday without transacting any business as the deadlock continued between the ruling and the opposition parties over Rahul Gandhi's alleged 'anti-India' remark in Loonon and a demand for a Joint-Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probe into the charges of share manipulation against the Adani business Group.

Both the houses of Parliament have not conducted any business since the start of the second-leg of the budget session on March 13.

In a repeat of scenes of the earlier days, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla again asked agitating members to come to his chamber to discuss issues and find a way out.

"You come, sit and discuss. Both the ruling side and opposition come to the chamber and discuss. We will find a solution and run the House. We will discuss your topics and issues also," he said after the house resumed proceedings for the day and members of the treasury benches raised the issue of Rahul's remarks.

Countering the treasury benches, opposition members, including those from the Congress, also shouted slogans demanding a JPC probe into alleged stock manipulation by the Adani Group.

"Sit down. Let the Question Hour continue....Nation wants to watch the House proceedings. This House belongs to you," Speaker Birla said in an



effort to bring the House in order. He also assured the members that they will get adequate opportunity to speak as per rules after the Question Hour. The Speaker also objected to Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) member Harsimrat Kaur Badal showing a placard from her seat, saying it was not allowed in the House.

"Please allow Parliament function" was written on one side of the SAD member's placard while "save democracy" was written on the other side.

As the members refused to relent, the Speaker adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm. It was adjourned for the day after it resumed in the afternoon.

Rajya Saba too was adjourned for the day in the afternoon after its proceedings remained derailed in the morning session.

As soon as the Upper House reassembled for the afternoon session, after being adjourned in the morning session, Deputy Chairman Hariwansh asked Sujet Kumar (BJD) to raise a discussion on the working of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship amid sloga-

neering by the treasury bench and the opposition members.

Even as Kumar tried to speak, the slogan shouting continued, forcing the deputy chairman to adjourn the House for the day.

Earlier, as the House assembled for the day, the ruling and opposition parties traded barbs over Rahul's remark in London and the demand for the probe into allegations against the Adani Group.

During the morning session, as the ruling BJP and the opposition parties kept shouting slogans, Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar had adjourned the proceedings till 2 pm.

Dhankhar said he had received notices under rule 267-9 from Congress members, including Pramod Tiwari, Rajneet Ranjan, Kumar Ketkar, Syed Nasir Hussain, Ameer Yajnik, Akhilesh Prasad Singh, Neeraj Dangi and Mukul Wasnik, to discuss the failure of the government to constitute a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) to look into allegations of accounting fraud and stock market manipulation against the Adani Group.

# Opp accuses Govt of stalling Parliament, diverting attention from demand for JPC on Adani group



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several opposition parties on Monday accused the government of stalling Parliament and finding ways to divert attention from the opposition demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe (JPC) into the Adani issue.

Leaders of opposition parties, including those from the Congress, DMK, RJD, CPI-M, CPI, NCP, JDU, AAP, and Shiv Sena, met in the chamber of Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge in Parliament House complex and coordinated their strategy on the demand for a JPC into the Adani issue.

Speaking to reporter outside Parliament House, Congress deputy leader in Rajya Sabha Pramod Tiwari claimed nothing happens in the

BJP without the directions of the prime minister. Despite several attempts our demand for a JPC is not being accepted, he said.

"Why is the government shying away from JPC...The BJP is running away from JPC and is finding ways to divert attention and is not allowing Parliament to function. We have pledged that till the time JPC is not constituted, we will not budge and continue with our struggle. This is not for leaders, but for the people," Tiwari said.

"You may carry on with 'police Raj', it is indicative of dictatorship. This seems just a trailer of dictatorship and the real dictatorship is yet to come," he charged.

Ram Gopal Yadav of the Samajwadi Party said if a JPC probe is held then the real culprits will come out and the BJP will stand "exposed".

# Platform screens at Patna rly stn show porn clip, ad agency contract cancelled



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/PATNA

A day after TV screens installed at platform number 10 at Patna railway station played a porn clip, the Railways on Monday said it has cancelled the contract of the agency responsible for relaying advertisements on the screens.

Passengers at the Patna Junction railway station were in for a shock on Sunday when TV screens installed at the platforms displayed a porn video clip. Confirming the incident, a railway official said on Monday the private operator who was given the contract has been "blacklisted" and booked in FIRs lodged separately by the RPF and GRP.

In a statement, Virendra Kumar, Chief Public Relations Officer, East Central Railway (ECR), said that two FIRs have been registered against the agency, one each by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) and the Government Railway Police (GRP).

"A serious note was taken of the lapse when the matter was reported. The tender awarded to the operator concerned has been terminated forthwith and he is being blacklisted for any future contracts", said Virendra Kumar, chief public relations officer of East Central Railway zone.

"All TV screens installed by the operator have been disconnected. The RPF and GRP have registered separate FIRs in connection with the embarrassing incident. Investigations into it are on", he added.

# MHA for CBI inquiry against Aman Biradari for FCRA violations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has recommended a CBI inquiry against activist Harsh Mander's NGO 'Aman Biradari'. MHA officials on Monday said a CBI inquiry has been recommended against the NGO for violation of various provisions of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act. Mander, who was a member of the Sonia Gandhi-led National Advisory Council during the erstwhile UPA Government, founded Aman Biradari -- "a people's campaign for a secular, peaceful, just and humane world".

All NGOs receiving foreign funding have to mandatorily register with the Home Ministry under the FCRA. According to Mander's website (https://harshmander.in), he is the 'founder of Aman Biradari, a people's campaign for a sec-



ular, peaceful, just and humane world, established after the Gujarat communal carnage of 2002".

"Aman Biradari works closely with other people's organisations and groups for the defence of secularism; for public compassion; and for promoting the values of the constitution," it states. In October 2022, the MHA had cancelled the FCRA registration of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation (RGF) and the Rajiv Gandhi Charitable Trust (RGCT) -- two NGOs headed by Congress leader Sonia Gandhi -- for alleged violation of laws.

# Rahul writes to LS Speaker, seeks permission to speak over London democracy remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the ruling party continuously mounting pressure, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday wrote to Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to allow him to speak in the Lok Sabha over his democracy remarks made in London. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said time has been sought for Rahul Gandhi to speak in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday and he will make his statement if allowed. He has not made any public statement about his London remarks yet.

Kharge also slammed the Modi government over the Delhi Police team reaching Rahul Gandhi's residence on Sunday to inquire about his "women are still being sexually assaulted" statement made during the Bharat Jodo Yatra. "This is an attempt to target and harass. They want to weaken us by intimidation, but we will not get scared or be weakened,"



Kharge said.

Party general secretary Priyanka Gandhi too attacked the Centre over the Delhi Police's notice to her brother Rahul Gandhi and said the people of the country are watching all the exploits of "the corrupt BJP government" and will reply when the time comes.

BJP has launched a major offensive against him and has been stalling both houses of Parliament while demanding an apology from him. The ruling party has accused the Congress leader of seeking foreign intervention as "democracy in India is under threat". The former Congress chief has

however defended his statement at a meeting of the Parliamentary Consultative Committee for External Affairs and has claimed that he has never insulted the country.

Rahul Gandhi had met Birla last week after his return from the UK and on the same day told the Press that he

requested the Lok Sabha presiding officer to allow him to speak in the House. Congress leaders said that Rahul Gandhi wants to speak in the Lok Sabha to clarify his remarks made in London, over which the BJP is demanding an apology from him after accusing him of insulting the country and its institutions on foreign soil.

In a tweet message Priyanka Gandhi said, "Notice is being given to Mr Rahul Gandhi as to why did you raise the voice of women, dalits, tribals, poor, farmers and youth who were suffering from atrocities?" "PM's friend Gautam Adani accused of having business relations with 38 shell companies abroad, no notice. Infiltration of fake company in defense sector through Adani, no notice. The government itself is accused of changing the rules to benefit Adani, not even discussed in the Parliament," the Congress general secretary said.

# SC directs all HCs to set up RTI portals within 3 months

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday directed all High Courts to set up RTI portals within three months. The apex court also asked High Courts to implement RTI portals in district judiciary also. The bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud said the apex court had also set up a portal for filing RTI applications to help people access information about the top court. The bench, also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala, was apprised that the High Courts of Delhi, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha have already set up web portals for the purpose, while in Karnataka the High Court is using the website which is being set up by the State Government.

"We are of the view that such an exercise be carried out by all the High Courts in the country no later than within a period of three months from the date of this order," the bench said. The apex court was hearing a plea seeking direction to the registrar general of all high courts to establish and operationalise online RTI portal, both for the high courts as well as the district judiciary.

# India records 1,50,000 road accidents deaths annually

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

While the West has seen steady fall in incidence of road traffic accidents, India continues to record higher injuries with nearly 1,50,000 deaths annually of which 25 per cent is contributed by two wheeler road mishaps, doctors flagged concerns on World Head Injuries Awareness Day on Monday.

Among children particularly under 12, prominent reasons for death are a fall from a height, usually a balcony, they said. As per the Government 2020 data, 328 people died every day due to road traffic accidents.

Dr Deepak Gupta, Professor of Neurosurgery at AIIMS, pointed out that helmets reduce risk of death and head injury by 50-60 per cent. "Two times higher deaths have been



in non-helmeted riders, the majority of whom are women compared to helmeted riders. No doubt, helmets reduce risk of death by 50 per cent.

"With helmets, hospital deaths are reduced by 16 per cent, cervical spine injuries are lesser and facial injuries are also lesser by 12-60 per cent. New road safety rules should be followed (Six airbags in LMVs, mandatory seat belt

usage for back seat riders, helmets for pillion riders) introduced by the Government," he added.

Now the doctors have launched two campaigns, 'SAHE' that aims to create awareness about safety gears like seat belts, airbags, helmets and road etiquettes while another is about 'safe balcony' as a disturbing chunk of accidents is due to fall from the balcony.

Well known neurologist Dr AK Mahapatra pointed out that high falls contributes to 5-7% of TBI, a unique injury pattern reported from India. "Many of these are potentially preventable if one targets improved balcony/barricading/ check on new home/work place building norms," he said.

Similarly, over speeding and drowsy driving continues to be the greatest killer on new highways. Dr Gupta also

underscored the fact that investment in precautionary measures was meager when compared to the cost incurred on treatment post TBI.

To draw home his point, he said that helmets cost Rs 2500, seat belts cost Rs 1000 and expenditure incurred on car airbags is a few thousand rupees and in fact they are pre-fitted in your vehicle. But if severely injured, costs incurred can run more than Rs 10-50 lakhs in private set ups and months of stays in public hospitals. Needless to say, pain, agony and loss of bread earners of the family are priceless, he added.

Dr Deepak Jha, Neurosurgeon from AIIMS, Jodhpur talked about the government's role in enforcing the law such as mandatory seat belts for both front and rear passengers in the cars and headgears for men and women on two-wheelers.

# ED grills Kavitha in excise policy case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Monday grilled BRS leader K Kavitha for over 10 hours after she appeared before the agency for a second round of questioning in the money laundering probe linked to the Delhi excise policy 'scam'.

Kavitha entered the ED headquarters here at 10:30 AM and after making formalities like marking attendance, her questioning and recording of statement under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act began at about 11 AM and continued till about 9:30 PM, officials said.

The 44-year-old Bharat



Rashtra Samithi MLC daughter of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao has been asked to appear again on Tuesday, they said.

She was first questioned in the case on March 11 for around nine hours following which she was summoned again on March 16. Kavitha had skipped the deposition last week citing her pending plea before the Supreme Court

for relief against the ED action in the case.

The agency, however, rejected her claims and asked her to depose on March 20. The apex court has fixed the hearing on her petition on March 24.

On March 11, Kavitha was confronted with the statements made by Hyderabad-based businessman Arun Ramchandran Pillai, an arrested accused in the case who allegedly shares close ties with her, apart from some other suspects in the case.

During Monday's session, Kavitha is said to have been physically confronted with Pillai and her former auditor Butchibabu Gorantla, officials

said. The ED has been on record stating that Pillai "represented the South Group", an alleged liquor cartel linked to Kavitha and others, that paid kickbacks amounting to about Rs 100 crore to the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) to gain a larger share of the market in the national capital under the now-scraped Delhi excise policy for 2020-21.

The "South Group" comprises Sarath Reddy (promoter of Aurobindo Pharma), Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (YSR Congress MP from Ongole Lok Sabha seat in Andhra Pradesh), his son Raghav Magunta, Kavitha and others, according to the ED.

# Pets may pass multi-drug resistant organisms to sick owners: Research

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Healthy dogs and cats could be passing on multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs; bacteria that resist treatment with more than one antibiotic) to their hospitalized owners, and vice versa, according to new research being presented at this year's European Congress of Clinical Microbiology & Infectious Diseases (ECCMID) in Copenhagen, Denmark to be held next month. However, the researchers have also clarified that "we identified only a handful of cases suggesting



that neither cat nor dog ownership is an important risk factor for multidrug-resistant organism colonization in hospital patients."

The study of over 2,800 hospital patients and their companion animals is by Dr. Carolin Hackmann from Charité University Hospital Berlin, Germany, and col-

leagues. "Our findings verify that the sharing of multidrug-resistant organisms between companion animals and their owners is possible," said Dr. Hackmann.

The role of pets as potential reservoirs of MDROs is a growing concern worldwide. Antimicrobial resistance happens when infection-causing microbes (such as bacteria, viruses or fungi) evolve to become resistant to the drug designed to kill them. Estimates suggest that antimicrobial resistant infections caused almost 1.3 million deaths and were associated with nearly 5 million

deaths around the world in 2019.

In this case control study, researchers wanted to find out whether pets (ie, cats and dogs) play a role in the infection of hospital patients with MDROs.

They focused on the most common superbugs in hospital patients—methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE), 3rd generation cephalosporin-resistant Enterobacteriales (3GCRE) and carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriales (CRE), which are resistant to multiple antibiotics including penicillin and cephalosporins.



# ‘Only Lord Krishna can crack layers of Bengal job scam’

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Only Lord Krishna can crack the multi-departmental and multi-layered recruitment scandals.” That was how an advocate representing the Enforcement Directorate on Monday put his case before a designated court in Kolkata while demanding custody of Ayan Sil a builder and a latest fish netted by the Agency presently investigating the multi-crore school level recruitment scam in Bengal.

The arrest of Sil a close aide of jailed Trinamool Congress leader Shantanu Banerjee has opened a new dimension in the recruitment scandal, ED told the court adding his arrest has unveiled a parallel scam in the municipal department.

A 38-hour raid in Sil’s house has yielded incriminating documents and hard discs which are a “data mine,” and have brought to the surface illegal appointment of at least 5,000 civic employees in 60 municipalities out of which seven are in North 24 Parganas

bordering Kolkata only, the ED told the court.

For the first time the Agency has stumbled upon a detailed “rate chart” for jobs at Sil’s residence. According to this rate chart Group D employees including the sweepers, drivers etc were charged Rs 4 lakh per job while for Group C jobs including assistant teachers and typist an aspirant had to cough up Rs 7 lakh, the ED referring to the hard discs and documents said.

The Agency has also recovered several hundred original OMR sheets apparently referring to the 2012 Teachers’ Eligibility Test (TET) exams, sources said. Besides, like Shantanu Banerjee and Anubrata Mondal, the senior TMC leader of cattle smuggling fame, Sil too had taken recourse to at least 50 fake accounts to chanelise his black money, sources said.

Earlier after arresting Banerjee, a TMC leader from Hooghly district the ED had told the court that they had struck a “gold mine” adding

how the CDR or call data recorder of his two mobile phones had yielded the names of some topmost politicians of the State.

“The names cannot be revealed in the open court considering its political sensitivity and hence they have been listed in the case diary,” the ED officials said leading the Opposition parties to immediately demand interrogation of such “senior most” leaders based in South Kolkata.

In Sil’s case too, the ED said the CDR has revealed the names of 4-5 “influential persons,” who played an important role in money transaction and functioning of the multi-departmental and multi-layered job racket, sources said.

The ED officials pointed out that apart from SSC and municipal job scam, the “data mine” recovered from Sil’s residence could also lead to a parallel recruitment scandal in Fire Brigade department too, adding the data were being studied in that respect.

Reacting to the Monday’s arrest Bengal Opposition

Leader Suvendu Adhikari said he was contemplating a Public Interest Litigation seeking revelation of the educational certificates of the employees appointed in the past one decade.

“The TMC’s organized job syndicate has left no department untouched ... I want someone to file a PIL so that the certificates based on which these people have obtained their jobs ... most of these jobs were given to the close aides of the TMC leaders, MLAs, MPs, councilors etc,” he said.

When contacted, Bengal Municipal Affairs Minister Firhad Hakim said that he would soon order an internal inquiry to ascertain whether there were people who had obtained their jobs illegally.

Last eight months have seen recovery of cash and property worth several hundred crores and arrest of a number of senior ministers, MLAs, leaders, party strongmen and senior government functionaries including vice chancellors and secondary board chairmen.

# Cong sounds K’taka poll bugle

Gives 3 poll guarantees — 200 units of free power, ₹2,000 monthly assistance to Gruha Lakshmi, 10 kg rice free to every BPL family member

PTI ■ BELAGAVI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday called on party leaders in the state to fight the BJP with unity, as he exuded confidence of ‘sweeping’ the forthcoming Karnataka Assembly polls with absolute majority.

He also announced unemployment allowance for the youth, as the party’s fourth poll guarantee, on coming to power. The Congress has already announced three poll ‘guarantees’ — 200 units of free power to all households (Gruha Jyoti), Rs 2,000 monthly assistance to the woman head of every family (Gruha Lakshmi), and 10 kg of rice free to every member of a BPL household (Anna Bhagya).

Addressing a public rally at Belagavi in northern Karnataka, Gandhi hit out at the BJP-led Central government, saying “this country belongs to everyone, does not belong to two to three selected, it is not Adani’s”. “Select people, who are BJP’s friends, are getting all the benefits. It is



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge with party leader Rahul Gandhi and others during the ‘Yuva Kranti Samavesh’, in Belagavi, on Monday PTI Photo

leading to corruption,” the Wayanad MP alleged. Gandhi and AICC President M Mallikarjun Kharge, who hails from the state, said an unemployment allowance of Rs 3,000 per month would be given for graduates and Rs 1,500 for diploma holders for two years in the event of the party gaining power in the State, where Assembly elections are due by May. Gandhi attacked the Basavaraj Bommai government

in Karnataka, dubbing it as the “most corrupt government”. “It is a 40 per cent commission government,” he claimed. The Congress, on coming to power, will fill up all the government job vacancies in Karnataka, he asserted. Exuding confidence in the party winning the Assembly election, Gandhi said: “All Congress leaders will fight the Karnataka Assembly election united, Congress will sweep this election.”

## I cannot be intimidated by police, cases: Rahul Gandhi

PTI ■ WAYANAD (KERALA)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said he cannot be intimidated by the repeated political attacks on him, police being sent to his house numerous times or the many cases lodged against him as he believes in the truth and always stood with it.

Gandhi’s remarks came in the wake of a Delhi police team reaching his residence on Sunday to inquire about his “women are still being sexually assaulted” statement made during the nationwide Bharat Jodo Yatra.

“Many people may be scared of the Prime Minister, BJP, RSS and the police, but I am not. I am not scared of them in the least and that is their problem.

# Mamata on alliance hunt; to meet Naveen

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

After holding talks with Samajwadi Party chieftain Akhilesh Yadav, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee is likely to visit Odisha later this week apparently to meet her counterpart Naveen Patnaik. Banerjee who will visit the Puri Jagannath Temple will also “call on Navin Babu” at Bhubaneswar, senior leaders in the Trinamool Congress said not ruling out political talks between the two leaders.

Banerjee — a devotee of Lord Jagannath — who seems to have been facing one of the worst crises of her political career in the wake of the multi-departmental recruitment scam exploding the her government’s face sending a number of her close aides including Partha Chattarjee and Anubrata Mondal to jail will offer special prayers at the Jagannath Temple, sources said.

Banerjee had performed a yagna or special prayers at her residence ahead of the 2021 Assembly elections that saw her coming out with flying colours



routing the BJP by many miles.

Though Banerjee is likely to raise a dialogue on a possible non-BJP, non-Congress alliance the Biju Janata Dal chief who too has maintained equi-distance from the two national parties is unlikely to join the alliance being contemplated by Banerjee, Yadav et al, sources said reminding Patnaik had hardly been in any political meeting which was staunchly anti-Narendra Modi.

Earlier this week like Banerjee, SP chief too had said that they were not contemplating any Congress-led alliance against the BJP adding however that they would definitely try to stitch together an alliance keeping the two bigger parties out.

# Omar says BJP not ready to face electors

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and National Conference vice-president Omar Abdullah on Monday observed that his party machinery was still intact and flourishing in the plain areas of Jammu region against all odds.

Sporting a white headgear Omar, in his inimical style, also lashed out at the ruling Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) for not showing raw courage to hold the much-awaited Assembly polls in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

Omar while addressing his first public meeting, after the Abrogation of Article 370, in Bajalta area of Jammu also charged that BJP was not ready to face electorate and that’s why they were running away on one pretext or the other from holding elections. First they said it is necessary to complete delimitation of Assembly constituencies then they said summary revision of electoral rolls should also be completed. Then they talked about weather not being conducive but now they have no justification to further delay the polls. Abdullah said the weather is getting pleasant, they have only two reasons for delaying the polls further, one could be the worsening security situation

which they claim has improved and the second being that they are afraid to face the voters.” If they had been brave, they would have gone for the elections.

After today’s public rally, some people (among the BJP) who were supportive of early elections will also feel jittery,” he said in an apparent reference to former legislator Devender Singh Rana who resigned from the post of NC provincial president and joined the BJP in October 2021.

Abdullah said the public meeting has proved beyond any doubt that the NC is alive both in Kashmir and the Jammu province. “People come and go but those who have love for the organisation and are not linked to any particular individual will stay back because they are with the party’s principles, flag and agenda,” he said. The NC will show its real strength during the assembly elections, Abdullah asserted. “They will try to polarise the situation as they are doing elsewhere in the country. We have to frustrate their attempts by standing united,” he said.

The former chief minister said for the first time he is witnessing a government which “feels happiness in inflicting difficulties on the people. It will be better to get rid of this government as soon as possible”.

“They are only engaged in propaganda, drama and showoff... Sometime back, we heard of an outside company making an investment in Srinagar but it proved much ado about nothing,” the NC leader said referring to the Emaar group of United Arab Emirates laying the foundation of a mega mall project worth Rs 500 crore on Sunday. He said his party was accused of being an obstacle in the path of development and job creation, and asked what happened over the past three years. “There is no new project, and recruitment for government jobs was cancelled owing to scams,” Abdullah said.

Those who celebrated the abrogation of Article 370 in Ladakh and Jammu are equally sad, he claimed. “We were angry from day one but there were some people who celebrated it with a hope of ‘New J&K’.

The people in Jammu suffered economically because of the stopping of the darbar move and anti-encroachment drive, while Leh people are openly expressing that they were happy to be part of J&K,” the NC leader said. Abdullah also took a dig at the administration over an alleged impostor, Kiran Patel, who was arrested in Srinagar early this

month and said “the deserving are not getting their rights but the frauds are getting benefited”.

“Instead of finding the reality of Patel before treating him as a VIP, they bowed before him. My colleagues who faced (terror) attacks were not given an escort, he (Patel) was given adequate security, five star accommodation and taken to LoC with many officers lined up to seek recommendations for transfer and promotions,” he said. He said nobody can deny the differences between Kashmir and Jammu as far as weather and culture is concerned but what “we witness today is that both the regions are having common sufferings, people are annoyed and gripped by despondency”.

Referring to anti-encroachment drives in the Union Territory, Abdullah said he was surprised to see the pictures when they took out a bulldozer rally in Kashmir to frighten the public. “When people protested and the situation became tense, the bulldozer drive was stopped at the behest of Delhi,” he claimed. He also talked about the imposition of property tax and said “they are saying only a handful of income will be generated but if that is the case, then what is the need for imposing the tax to harass the public

# SC clubs 3 FIRs against Pawan Khera

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday clubbed three FIRs lodged against Congress leader Pawan Khera for allegedly making objectionable remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and transferred them to the Hazratganj police station in Uttar Pradesh’s Lucknow.

Extending the interim bail till April 10, a bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices P S Narasimha and J B Pardiwala took note of the facts that three FIRs were lodged against Khera. Out of the three FIRs, two were lodged at the Cantonment police station in Varanasi and the Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. The third FIR was lodged in Assam.

The apex court bench directed that the three FIRs stand transferred to Hazratganj police station in Lucknow. Khera, whose interim bail was extended till April 10, will have to appear before the court of competent jurisdiction in Lucknow to



seek regular bail in the matter.

The apex court, from time to time, had been extending the interim bail of Khera who was arrested by the Assam Police on February 23 in connection with his alleged remarks against Modi made at a press conference in Mumbai on February 17.

The Congress spokesperson was arrested from the Delhi airport after he was de-boarded from a plane that was supposed to take him to Raipur. He obtained bail from a magisterial court here on February 23 after CJJ-led bench granted him interim bail during an urgent hearing earlier in day.

## FROM PAGE 1

## UK GOVT, INDIAN DIASPORA SLAM TRICOLOUR DISRESPECT

Commissioner Alex Ellis was out of Delhi, sources said.

Ellis described the incident as “disgraceful” and “totally unacceptable”.

“An explanation was demanded for the complete absence of the British security that allowed these elements to enter the High Commission premises. She was reminded in this regard of the basic obligations of the UK Government under the Vienna Convention,” the Ministry of External (MEA) statement said.

Foreign Office minister Lord Tariq Ahmad tweeted soon after the attack to say he was “appalled” and that the British government would always take security at the mission seriously.

Responding to the incident, London’s Mayor Sadiq Khan said he condemned “the violent disorder and vandalism that took place”. “There is no place in our city for this kind of behaviour,” he tweeted.

Diaspora groups also expressed their outrage at the incident, with several gurdwaras among those condemning the violence.

In a joint statement issued from across the UK, British Sikh community leaders said: “Everyone has the right for peaceful protest, but the use of violence or threats against Indian High Commission staff and forcefully trying to remove ‘Tiranga (Tricolour), the national flag of India, is not acceptable and we condemn these actions. Such actions cannot achieve anything apart from damaging UK and India ties and our community cohesion.”

Jaswinder Kumar, President of the Sri Guru Ravidass Sabha Bedford, and Gurmial Singh, vice-president of the Ramgarhia Sikh Society Bedford, were among those to issue similar condemnations.

## CONSULATE HIT IN US; INDIA PROTESTS, SUMMONS ENVOY

There was no immediate comment

from San Francisco police on the incident.

The incident drew sharp condemnation from Indian-Americans who demanded immediate action against those responsible for it.

“We are also appalled by the complete law and order failure in both in London as well as in SFO where a few radicalised separatists attacked India’s diplomatic missions,” Foundation for India and Indian Diaspora Studies (FIIDS) said.

Community leader Ajay Bhutoria strongly condemned the attack by pro-Khalistan protesters on the Consulate of India building in San Francisco. “This act of violence is not only a threat to the diplomatic relations between the United States and India but also an attack on the peace and harmony of our community,” he said.

In a statement, Bhutoria urged local authorities to take immediate action against those responsible for this attack and bring them to justice. “I also call on all members of our community to unite and promote peace and harmony,” he said.

The FIIDS said it is extremely concerning to see that the UK and the US have failed to fulfil the commitments as per Vienna Convention to protect diplomatic missions.

“We would urge law and order institutions like Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the FBI as well as the CIA to ensure that terrorism finds no place and support in the United States of America,” the FIIDS said.

It said Pakistan’s spy agency ISI is behind instigating and funding Sikh radicalisation with false propaganda. “We ask Indian Americans including Sikh-majority to rise against the extremism,” FIIDS said.

Expressing his “heartfelt solidarity” with the Government of India, Bhutoria said he stands with them during this difficult time. “Such heinous acts of violence have no place in our society, and we must all come together to condemn and resist them,” he said.

“Let us work together towards a world where all communities can live in peace and mutual respect. We must not let such incidents divide us or sow the seeds of hatred and violence. Our strength lies in

our unity, and together we can overcome any chal

## ENTRANCE BLOCKED, INDIAN ENVOY IN CANADA CANCELS VISIT TO EVENT

Reports said the local police was not able to control the mob which started gathering a couple of hours before the event was scheduled to begin. The police reportedly advised the High Commissioner against attending the function. Maninder Gill, president of the Foundation, said, “This is a shame if even the High Commissioner cannot be protected in this country.”

There were online threats to disrupt meetings and events being attended by Indian diplomats in the country, including that of the High Commissioner. The call to the protestors asked them to “Mask up” and to leave their IDs and cell phones at home. India’s High Commission in Ottawa had already sought upgraded security for its missions in the country for the foreseeable future.

The High Commission faced a protest by members of the Shiromani Akali Dal - Amritsar in Ottawa on Sunday afternoon, though that passed without incident unlike events in London, which saw the High Commission in the British capital vandalized.

Reports said Indian officials there have called for more security from the nodal law enforcement agency, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police or RCMP, on a continuing basis as more protests are expected. Request for security also pertains to the High Commission in the Canadian capital as well as the Consulates in Toronto and Vancouver.

## NSA SLAPPED ON AMRITPAL’S 5 AIDES; UNCLE SURRENDERS

logistics, they said.

Meanwhile, the Punjab Government extended the suspension of mobile internet services, this time up to Tuesday noon.

The Khalistan sympathiser’s uncle Harjit Singh and driver Harpreet Singh gave themselves up before police past Sunday midnight.

Harjit , who officials say helped his nephew gain control over the accounts of ‘Waris Punjab De’, is among the five slapped with the NSA, which allows the preventive detention of anyone who could threaten national security or public order.

Harjit will be shifted to the central jail in Assam’s Dibrugarh, where the other four were brought on Sunday. They are Daljit Singh Kalsi, Bhagwant Singh, Gurmeet Singh and ‘Pradhanmantri’ Bajeka.

Punjab Inspector General of Police (Headquarters) Sukhchain Singh Gill told reporters here that specialised units are involved in the efforts to nab the preacher - who gave police the slip during a car chase in Jalandhar district on Saturday.

Gill indicated that the preacher, who heads Waris Punjab De, could also be detained under the NSA.

## INDIA, JAPAN TO BOOST TIES, FREE INDO-PACIFIC

Modi said the two sides reviewed progress in bilateral relations especially in areas of defence, digital technology, trade and investment and health among others.

Kishida on Monday announced a new plan to promote an open and free Indo-Pacific, promising billions of dollars in investment to help economies across the region in everything from industry to disaster prevention. The plan he announced is seen as Tokyo’s bid to forge stronger ties with countries in South and Southeast Asia to counter China’s growing assertiveness there. Kishida said Tokyo’s economic cooperation with New Delhi continues to grow rapidly and it will not only support further development of India but create significant economic opportunities for Japan. The Japanese Prime Minister said he formally invited Modi for the G7 summit in May and that his Indian counterpart accepted the invite.

During his visit to India in March last year, Kishida announced an investment target of five trillion Yen (Rs 3,20,000 crore)

in India over the next five years.

India-Japan relations were elevated to ‘Global Partnership’ in 2000, ‘Strategic and Global Partnership’ in 2006, and ‘Special Strategic and Global Partnership’ in 2014. Regular annual summits have been held between the leaders of the two countries since 2006. Japan is a very close partner of India with which it has an annual summit and ‘2+2’ foreign and defence ministerial dialogues.

Last year, Modi and Kishida met three times. Kishida visited India for the 14th annual summit in March and Modi visited Tokyo in May for the Quad Summit and in September for the State funeral of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Defence and security cooperation has emerged as one of the most important pillars of the special strategic and global partnership and an important factor in ensuring peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

The bilateral trade between the two sides stood at \$20.75 billion last year, which was the largest ever. India and Japan have had a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) since 2011. The agreement covers not only trade in goods but also services, movement of natural persons, investments, intellectual property rights, custom procedures and other trade related issues.

Meanwhile, Modi gifted a sandalwood Buddha statue encased in a ‘kadamwood jali box’ to Kishida. The artwork is associated with the rich heritage of Karnataka.

## CLEAR OROP ARREARS BY FEB 28; NO MORE SEALED-COVER NOTE: SC

under the OROP scheme.

The Bench, also comprising Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala, directed that the six lakh family pensioners and gallantry award winners “shall be paid their OROP dues by April 30, 2023”. It said around four-five lakh retired servicemen aged 70 years and above shall be paid their OROP dues in one or more instalments by June 30.

The OROP dues for 10-11 lakh remaining pensioners shall be paid in three

equal instalments by February 28 next year, the Bench said, making it clear that the payment of the dues “will not affect further equalisation of pension of ex-servicemen to be done in 2024”.

“The Union Government is duty-bound to comply with the judgment of this court in the terms of the OROP scheme,” said the Bench fixing specific timelines for the disbursement of OROP arrears.

The Bench was hearing the Indian Ex-Servicemen Movement’s (IESM) plea over payment of OROP dues. The top court, on March 13, came down heavily on the Government for “unilaterally” deciding to pay OROP dues in four installments. The Defence Ministry has recently filed an affidavit and a compliance note in the top court, giving the time schedule for payment of the arrears of Rs 28,000 crore to ex-servicemen for years 2019-22.

## MODI’S PUSH TO MAKE INDIA ENERGY ATMANIRBHAR BY 2047: US REPORT

All this towards a Atmanirbhar Bharat or a self-reliant India that does have to depend on imports for meeting its energy needs. Energy independence, the report said, involves investment in renewables, electric vehicles, and green hydrogen -- generating electricity from solar and wind energy -- and will help move away from coal-based generation while use of electricity-charged batteries till cutting dependence on liquid fuel like petrol and diesel. Zero-carbon hydrogen will decarbonise Indian industry, cutting emissions and lowering dependence on imported fuel.

“This would involve installing more than 500 GW of non-fossil electricity generation capacity by 2030, an 80 per cent clean grid by 2040 and 90 per cent by 2047,” it said. “Nearly 100 per cent of new vehicle sales could be electric by 2035. Heavy industrial production shifts primarily to green hydrogen and electrification: 90 per cent of iron and steel, 90 per cent of cement, and 100 per cent of fertilizers by 2047.”



# Xi, Putin hold talks in Moscow

China pushes plan to end Ukraine war

PTI ■ BEIJING/MOSCOW

Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart and ally Vladimir Putin held crucial talks in Moscow on Monday amid concerted efforts by China to push for a peace deal to end the Ukraine war, weeks after Beijing successfully brokered a pact between Iran and Saudi Arabia to end their bitter rivalry.

Xi and Putin, who met over 40 times in the last 10 years to forge close ties to oppose the US-dominated world order, held talks hours after the Chinese leader arrived in Moscow for a three-day state visit to a "grand welcome", official media on both sides reported. Kremlin aide Yuri Ushakov told the media that Presidents Xi and Putin will hold face-to-face talks followed by their delegations later. They will continue their talks on Tuesday too, according to Russian official media.

Ushakov said the visit would be strictly a business visit, "there will be no additional protocol stuff, the main thing is negotiations, negotiations and negotiations." In his arrival statement, Xi said, "Our two countries have consolidated and grown the bilateral relationship on the basis of no-alliance, no-con-



frontation and not targeting any third party, and set a fine example for developing a new model of major-country relations". He said China will continue to work with Russia to safeguard the international system with the UN at its core, the international order underpinned by international law, and the basic norms of international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

President Putin said that Moscow has studied Beijing's proposals for resolving the conflict in Ukraine and that he will discuss it at a meeting with President Xi, state-run Tass news agency reported.

"We have thoroughly studied your proposals for resolving the acute crisis in Ukraine", Putin said, addressing the Chinese leader at a meeting on Monday. "Of course, we will have an opportunity to discuss this," he stressed.

"We know that you proceed from the principles of justice and observance of the fundamental provisions of international law and indivisible security for all countries," Putin said, noting that China was taking a "fair and balanced position on most pressing international problems."

Putin stressed Russia's openness to negotiations. "Of course, we will discuss all these issues, including your initiatives, which

## US to send ammunition, tanker trucks to Ukraine

Washington (AP): The US is poised to announce that it will send Ukraine \$350 million in weapons and equipment, U.S. officials said Monday, as fierce battles with Russian forces continue for control of the city of Bakhmut, and troops prepare for an expected spring offensive.

The latest package of aid includes a large amount of various types of ammunition, such as rockets for the High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems, and an undisclosed number of fuel tanker trucks and riverine boats, according

to the officials. Officials said it will be announced later Monday. It comes as Chinese leader Xi Jinping arrived in Moscow on Monday, giving a political lift to Russian President Vladimir Putin against the West just days after an international arrest warrant was issued for the Kremlin leader on war crimes charges related to Ukraine. Officials said the American aid will be taken from Pentagon stocks through the presidential draw-down authority, so it will be able to be delivered quickly to the warfront.

we treat with respect, of course," he said.

Significantly, as Xi arrived in Moscow becoming the first world leader to meet Putin after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against the Russian leader accusing him of committing war crimes in Ukraine, Beijing strongly criticised the Court accusing it of double standards. The ICC should uphold an objective stance, respect the immunity of heads of state from jurisdiction under international law, exercise its functions and powers prudently in accordance with the law, and avoid politicisation and double standards, Chinese

Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told the media in Beijing.

While there is no imminent danger of Putin being arrested by the ICC, its warrant was seen as a serious image crisis for him as 123 countries are members of the Court.

Ahead of his crucial talks with Putin which were expected to focus on beefing up Beijing-Moscow close and strategic ties, Xi on Monday spoke of his peace plan to end the raging Ukraine war. Xi said his plan takes into account the "legitimate" concerns of all parties and reflects the broadest common understanding of the international community.

## Countries urged to rally behind court probes in Ukraine

London (AP): Ukraine's justice officials and the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court appealed Monday to countries around the world to boost funding and support for the global court's investigations into alleged war crimes in Ukraine to ensure Russia is held accountable.

Justice ministers from over 40 countries travelled to London for the war crimes conference, jointly hosted by Britain and the Netherlands, aimed at rallying extra support for the International Criminal Court's probes into atrocities allegedly committed by Russian forces in Ukraine.

The conference came days after the global court issued an arrest warrant for Russian President Vladimir Putin, accusing him of personal responsibility in the abduction of children from Ukraine.

Friday's move was the first time the court has issued a warrant against a leader of one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council. "We share the belief that President Putin and the wider leadership must be held to account," Britain's Justice Secretary Dominic Raab said as he opened the meeting. "Let's make sure that we back up our words with deeds, that we back up our moral support with practical means to effectively investigate these awful crimes."



Deana Uppal, a film-maker, philanthropist, entrepreneur and former Miss India UK, has been honoured with the prestigious Points of Light award by the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Rishi Sunak. The award recognises Uppal's exceptional work through her charity, the DKU Kindness Diaries Charitable Trust, in supporting poverty-stricken communities in Rajasthan, India. The Kindness Diaries Trust, founded by Uppal in 2015, has been working tirelessly to address poverty in India through a variety of initiatives. The trust provides food, clothing, and shelter to those in need, and also runs education and vocational training programs to help individuals become self-sufficient. Alongside the charity work, Deana produced and directed a documentary on the Nomadic community, Gaddia Lohars in Rajasthan: 'India's forgotten people', which can be seen on Netflix.

## NYCB to buy Signature Bank

New York (AP): New York Community Bank has agreed to buy a significant chunk of the failed Signature Bank in a USD 2.7 billion deal, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. said. The 40 branches of Signature Bank will become Flagstar Bank. Flagstar is one of New York Community Bank's subsidiaries. The deal will include the purchase of USD 38.4 billion in Signature Bank's assets, a little more than a third of Signature's total when the bank failed a week ago.

The FDIC said USD 60 billion in Signature Bank's loans will remain in receivership and are expected to be sold off in time.

Signature Bank was the second bank to fail in this banking crisis, roughly 48 hours after the collapse of Silicon Valley Bank.

## Donald Trump gets muted response to protest call

Washington (AP) Former President Donald Trump's calls for protests ahead of his anticipated indictment in New York have generated mostly muted reactions from supporters, with even some of his most ardent loyalists dismissing the idea as a waste of time or a law enforcement trap.

The ambivalence raises questions about whether Trump, though a leading Republican contender in the 2024 presidential race who retains a devoted following, still has the power to mobilize far-right supporters the way he did more than two years ago before the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol. It also suggests that the hundreds of arrests that followed the Capitol riot, not to mention the convictions and long prison sentences, may

have dampened the desire for repeat mass unrest. Still, law enforcement in New York is continuing to closely monitor online chatter warning of protests and violence if Trump is arrested, with threats varying in specificity and credibility, four officials told The Associated Press.

Mainly posted online and in chat groups, the messages have included calls for armed protesters to block law enforcement officers and attempt to stop any potential arrest, the officials said.

The New York Young Republicans Club has announced plans for a protest at an undisclosed location in Manhattan on Monday, and incendiary but isolated posts surfaced on fringe social media platforms from supporters.

# Nepal PM Prachanda wins vote of trust

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Monday secured a vote of confidence in parliament, winning the second floor test within three months, an outcome he said would provide stability to his government.

Prime Minister Prachanda secured 172 votes in the 275-member House of Representatives. Other 89 lawmakers voted against him whereas one abstained. A total of 262 members of the lower house were present in the house.

The 68-year-old Maoist leader needed at least 138 votes out of 275 lawmakers. Eleven political parties including Nepali Congress, CPN-Maoist Centre, Rastriya Swatantra Party, CPN-Unified Socialist, Janata Samajwadi Party Nepal, Lokatantrik Samajwadi Party, Nagarik Unmukti Party, Janamat Party among others voted in favour of Prachanda.

CPN-UML and Rastriya Prajatantra

Party voted against him. Nepal Workers and Peasants Party abstained. Speaking to the media after receiving the vote of confidence from the House, Prachanda said he would start discussions with the parties in the alliance. "The government will get full shape within two to four days," he said, adding that "Now the government will run smoothly."

Prachanda's victory paved the way for the expansion of the cabinet by inducting ministers from the ruling alliance including the largest party in the Parliament - the Nepali Congress, which has already announced plans to join the government.

The expansion of the cabinet is likely within the next two-three days to give a full shape to the government, according to party sources. Prachanda on Sunday exuded confidence that he will comfortably win a vote of confidence in the House of Representatives.

"Last time, I received support from 99 per cent members of the House of Representatives, and I hope, this time

## Ramsahay sworn in as Vice-President

Kathmandu (PTI): Ramsahaya Prasad Yadav, a senior Madhesi leader, was on Monday sworn in as Nepal's third Vice President, days after he comfortably defeated a candidate fielded by the CPN-UML. At a special ceremony at Sheetal Niwas, the President's Office, President of Nepal Ram Chandra Poudel administered the oath of office and secrecy to 52-year-old Yadav.

Yadav, a candidate from the Janata Samajbadi Party (JSP), defeated his nearest rival, Ashta Laxmi Shakya of the Communist Party of

Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist) [CPN-UML] led by former prime minister KP Sharma Oli, by a comfortable margin in the election for the post held on March 17. He becomes the Himalayan nation's third Vice President and the first from the Madhes region, bordering India. Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda', Speaker of the House of Representatives Devraj Ghimire, former prime ministers, ministers, and Members of Parliament were among the dignitaries present at the occasion.

I will get one hundred per cent votes," he said. Prachanda sought a vote of confidence as two parties in the seven-party alliance - Rastriya Prajatantra Party and CPN-UML - withdrew support to his government following his decision to support Nepali Congress candidate Ramchandra Paudel in the presidential

election. Prachanda, who was sworn in as the country's Prime Minister in December, comfortably passed the first floor test on January 10 with 268 votes after all parties except the Nepal Workers and Peasants Party and the Rastriya Janamorchha voted in favour of the government.

# Pak anti-graft body summons Imran's wife

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's anti-corruption watchdog on Monday summoned Imran Khan's third wife Bushra Bibi in a corruption case, a day after police registered a terrorism case against the ousted premier and over a dozen leaders of his party for indulging in vandalism and creating unrest outside the judicial complex here.

Clashes erupted outside the Islamabad Judicial Complex on Saturday when Khan, the chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party arrived in Islamabad from Lahore to attend a much-awaited hearing in the Toshakhana case. However, due to the violence outside the judicial complex, the judge allowed Khan to return home after signing a register.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) team arrived at Khan's Zaman Park residence in Lahore and issued notice to Bushra, according to The Express Tribune newspaper.

She was summoned on Tuesday, the report said.

Earlier, the NAB sum-



moned Khan and his wife to their Rawalpindi office on March 9 to question them on the Toshakhana case.

The hearing in the Toshakhana case was adjourned till March 30 as the judge observed that the situation was not conducive for holding the hearing.

Khan, 70, the former prime minister, has been in the crosshairs for buying gifts, including an expensive Graff wristwatch he had received as the premier at a discounted price from the state depository called Toshakhana, and sell-

ing them for profit.

He was disqualified by the Election Commission of Pakistan in October last year for not sharing details of the sales. The election body later filed a complaint with the district court to punish him, under criminal laws, for selling the gifts he had received as prime minister of the country. Khan has vehemently denied those charges.

Lahore Police on Sunday booked Khan and over 1,000 PTI workers under terrorism charges. Khan, the cricketer-turned-politician was ousted from power in April last year after losing a no-confidence vote, which he alleged was part of a US-led conspiracy targeting him because of his independent foreign policy decisions on Russia, China, and Afghanistan.

Since his ouster, he has been demanding early elections to remove what he termed an "imported government" led by prime minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Sharif has maintained that elections will be held later this year once the parliament completes its five-year tenure.

## French government facing two motions of no-confidence

Paris (AP): France's government is facing a critical, maybe fatal, moment Monday with no-confidence motions filed by lawmakers who are furious that President Emmanuel Macron ordered the use of special constitutional powers to force through an unpopular bill raising the retirement age from 62 to 64 without giving them a vote.

National Assembly lawmakers are set to vote in the afternoon on two no-confidence motions, one from the far-right National Rally and the other, more threatening one from a small group that has gathered support across the left. The Senate, dominated by conservatives who back the retirement plan, passed the legislation last week. The no-confidence motions each need the backing of 287 lawmakers in the National Assembly, the lower chamber, to pass. Although the motions appear unlikely to succeed, the climate of protest that Macron's pension reforms has sparked in parliament and on the streets means the outcome of voting in the National

Assembly is not guaranteed.

No such motion has succeeded since 1962. Macron's centrist alliance still has the most seats in the National Assembly. A minority of lawmakers from the Republicans party could stray from the party line, but it remains to be seen whether they're willing to bring down Macron's government. The tensions in the political arena are echoed on the streets, marked by intermittent protests and strikes in various sectors, from transport to energy and sanitation workers. Garbage in Paris is piling ever higher and reeking of rotting food on the 15th day of a strike by collectors. The three main incinerators serving the French capital have been mostly blocked, just like a garbage sorting centre northwest of Paris. "The goal is to support the workers on strike in Paris ... to put pressure on this government that wants to pass this unjust, brutal and useless and ineffective law," said Kamel Brahmli, of the leftist CGT union, speaking to workers with a bullhorn at the Romainville sorting plant.

# Officials abducted, jihadists repelled in Nigeria vote

AP ■ ABUJA

Security forces repelled an attack by Islamic extremists on a coalition center in northeastern Nigeria and several election officials elsewhere were kidnapped as results trickled in Sunday from the gubernatorial vote.

Meanwhile, the incumbent governor in the battleground state of Lagos appeared to have secured reelection, though results from more than two-thirds of the states were still

being counted. Festus Okoye, a spokesman for Nigeria's Independent National Electoral Commission, said Sunday it had received reports of violence and was reviewing them. Nigeria's election laws grant the electoral body the power to void the outcome of an election in certain circumstances.

"Some of our staff were abducted, some were harassed, some were intimidated, some were hospitalized and in one case killed," Okoye said.

Twenty-eight of Nigeria's 36

states held elections for new governors on Saturday while state lawmakers were also elected for nearly 1,000 constituencies. Nigeria's constitution grants governors both enormous powers and immunity from any form of prosecution while in office, making them very influential both in their states and at the federal level.

Saturday's elections were held as the political opposition continues to reject the recent victory of President-elect Bola Tinubu, who belongs to the rul-

ing All Progressives Congress party. In the northeastern Borno state, Islamic State-backed extremist rebels attempted to disrupt the collation of results on Sunday but were repelled by security forces who killed many of them, local officials and residents said.

Babangida Ajiri, head of a local security outfit collaborating with the military, said at least 40 of the rebels were killed with their arms recovered. "They wanted to surround the village, but the troops

engaged professionally and thwarted their mission," said Ajiri. "It was during the early morning search that we discovered most of the bodies of the killed terrorists."

The ruling All Progressives Congress' Babajide Sanwo-Olu had won 19 of the 20 council areas in Lagos state, defeating Gbadebo Rhodes-Vivour of the Labour Party. He immediately rejected the outcome, alleging that their supporters were intimidated and that the result was manipulated.



# Barca snatch Clasico win over Madrid

AP ■ BARCELONA

Barcelona snatched a 2-1 Clasico win over Real Madrid with Franck Kessie's late goal Sunday to move 12 points clear at the top of La Liga. The victory dents Madrid's ambitions of retaining the title and leaves the Catalans close to lifting the trophy for the first time since 2019.

Carlo Ancelotti's Real took the lead through a Ronald Araujo own goal but Barcelona pulled level when Sergi Roberto tucked home just before half-time. Both sides had chances to win the game and Marco Asensio struck for Madrid, but the goal was ruled offside by VAR, before Alejandro Balde set up Kessie in the 92nd minute.

"We came from a Marco Asensio goal that we didn't know was offside and from losing, we scored Franck's goal, and the truth is it tastes a bit better, winning like that in the last minute," Sergi Roberto told Movistar.

"There are a lot of games left and you can never give Madrid up for dead. 12 points is a tricky distance to have to go, but it's up to us, and that is good."

The build-up to the match was overshadowed by Barcelona's corruption charge in the "Caso Negreira" refereeing scandal.

Madrid joined Spanish prosecutors' complaint against Barcelona last week and their president Florentino Perez snubbed the game for the first time in over 20 years, amid rising tensions between the two Spanish giants.

That fed the match's intensity, both on and off the pitch, in Xavi's sixth Clasico as Barcelona coach but only his first at Camp Nou.

Xavi asked fans to make the stadium a pressure cooker and they responded, selling it out, whistling Madrid in possession and conjuring one of the best atmospheres of the season.

Madrid did not manage a single shot on target in their Copa del Rey semi-final first leg defeat by Barcelona earlier in March, but Karim Benzema



stung Marc-Andre ter Stegen's palms inside the first minute.

Robert Lewandowski responded at the other end by testing Thibaut Courtois as the veteran marksmen exchanged shots. When Barcelona conceded the opening goal of the game, it was friendly fire. Araujo deflected Vinicius' cross in at the near post, with Ter Stegen helpless.

Araujo, playing at right-back to counteract the Brazilian, has enjoyed his duels with Vinicius in the past but this time the winger triumphed, albeit fortuitously. Barcelona supporters became enraged by his emphatic celebration in

front of them. It was the first goal from open play Barcelona have conceded at Camp Nou in La Liga all season long, and only the second strike at home and ninth overall.

## COMEBACK CHARGE

Barcelona complained defender Nacho, already booked, should have been sent off for a hand-off on Raphinha.

The hosts did not get their wish, but were building up steam and found the breakthrough just before half-time, from an unlikely source.

Selected in place of injured mid-

fielder Pedri, Sergi Roberto was in the right place at the right time to control a loose ball in the box and arc it beyond Courtois.

Barcelona had significantly more possession than in their cup win over Madrid and significantly more chances.

Lewandowski sent a deflected piledriver narrowly wide as Madrid wobbled, prompting Carlo Ancelotti to roll the dice and bring on Rodrigo and Ferland Mendy.

It almost paid instant dividends as Madrid robbed Sergio Busquets and Rodrigo lashed inches over the bar.

Madrid substitute Asensio fired

home what might have been the winner but the goal was ruled out for offside after a nervy wait for VAR instruction.

Barcelona seemed content with the draw but Kessie's last-gasp strike sparked wild celebrations at Camp Nou.

Asked if Madrid's hopes of defending the title were over, Courtois told Movistar: "Yes, we have to be honest, we will keep fighting until the end but it's (12 points) now, we have the better head-to-head, but they have to lose four games and we have to win them all."

"Nothing is impossible but it's very difficult."



# Leverkusen shock Bayern to keep Dortmund top

AP ■ BERLIN

Argentina's World Cup winner Exequiel Palacios struck twice from the spot as Bayer Leverkusen blew the Bundesliga title race wide open with a shock 2-1 win over Bayern Munich on Sunday.

With a little help from VAR, Leverkusen came from behind to hand coach Xabi Alonso a famous win on his first reunion with former club Bayern and keep the champions from regaining top spot. "It's an unbelievable feeling. I'm so proud of the way we played today," said Alonso, who played for Bayern from 2014 to 2017.

Bayern are a point behind leaders Borussia Dortmund and the two sides set to meet in the next round of games on April 1.

"That is now a must-win game for us, because it will be very difficult to win the title otherwise," said Bayern coach Julian Nagelsmann.

"It was a deserved defeat today. Apart from the last 10 minutes, they were the better team," he added.

Bayern sporting director

Hasan Salihamidzic was scathing in his criticism of the performance.

"We let ourselves be overrun by a team who played in midweek. That's not what it means to be Bayern Munich," he said.

"VAR was a lifesaver today and it was a perfect example of how the system should work," said referee Tobias Stieler.

The win also kept Leverkusen afloat in the race for Europe, with Alonso's side now just three points adrift of sixth.

Elsewhere, Union Berlin gave their Champions League hopes a boost as a rare goal from Rani Khedira helped them to a 2-0 win over Bundesliga top-six rivals Eintracht Frankfurt.

Khedira — the brother of 2014 World Cup winner Sami — stabbed in the opener to score only his seventh goal in 194 Bundesliga appearances and lift Union back into third place.

"It's also my first goal for Union so I am very happy," Khedira told DAZN. "Today was much more about mentality than about tactics."



# Rennes cut PSG's lead in Ligue 1

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain's march towards another Ligue 1 title was slowed on Sunday as they went down 2-0 at home to Rennes, a result that allowed Marseille to close the gap on the leaders to seven points with 10 games remaining.

Kylian Mbappe had an effort disallowed for offside before Karl Toko-Ekambi put Rennes in front with a magnificent strike right on half-time.

Arnaud Kalimuendo made it 2-0 three minutes after the restart against his former club, as PSG — faced with a defensive injury crisis — slumped to a first home league defeat of the campaign.

It is the Parisians' fourth Ligue 1 loss this season, all of them in 2023, and the second time they have been beaten by Rennes. They also lost when the teams last met in Brittany in January. Marseille responded by winning 2-1 away to Reims later, with Alexis Sanchez scoring twice.

"A defeat is always upsetting. Obviously I can't be happy with the way the match went but in the context, with the number of

players we had out, we knew we were going to have difficult moments in defence," said PSG coach Christophe Galtier.

PSG only have a ninth Ligue 1 title in 11 seasons left to play for after being knocked out of the Champions League in the last 16 by Bayern Munich.

Galtier has insisted that the prospect of what would be a French record 11th top-flight title is sufficient motivation for his team, but their performance indicated otherwise.

"The objective is to win the league. Will this defeat mean the board will consider my future? Maybe. But everything needs to be put into context," Galtier added when asked about his position. "There are no excuses but there are reasons for it."

The result allowed Rennes to reclaim fifth place from Lille in the fight for European qualification.

"To beat Paris twice in the same season says something about us. If we are capable of taking six points out of six against such a team, it means we have progress to make so we can do that in 90 percent of our matches," said Rennes coach Bruno Genesio.

# LSG begin practice in Ekana

**Lucknow (PNS):** Lucknow Super Giants finally arrived in their home city and have started practicing at the Ekana International Stadium ground. This is a much-awaited moment for the team and their fans, who have been eagerly waiting to see their favorite players in action on their home turf.

The team will continue to practice till March 31, before taking on Delhi Capitals in their opening game on April 1. With a mix of experienced players and talented newcomers, the Lucknow Super Giants are all set to give their best performance in the upcoming season.

The LSG team is hoping to draw inspiration from the support and enthusiasm of a strong fan base. LSG players are determined to make a mark in the upcoming season and are ready to give their best in every game.

A majority of the players joined the net session on Monday, with the exception of skipper KL Rahul, who will be joining the team after Team India's last ODI against



Australia in Chennai. The team will definitely benefit from Rahul's leadership and experience. He also showed form in the first ODI at Wankhede in Mumbai.

The net session on Monday saw several key players in attendance, including Krunal

Pandya, K Gowtham, Deepak Hooda, Ravi Bishnoi, Daniel Sam, Amit Mishra, Manan Vohra and Ayush Badoni. Coach Vijay Dahiya was also present at the net session, closely monitoring the players and providing them with valuable feedback.

# Indian Oil win 'Babu' Hockey



ACS (sports) Navneet Sehgal giving away the winner's trophy to Indian Oil team

**Lucknow (PNS):** Indian Oil defeated PSB 3-0 to win the 40th All-India KD Singh 'Babu' Men's Invitation Prizemoney Hockey Tournament at Mohd Shahid Stadium on Monday.

In the 20th minute, Gurjinder Singh of Indian Oil scored a penalty corner to give his team a lead of 1-0.

In the 47th minute, Deepak Thakur scored a brilliant field goal and took his team's lead to 2-0. Although, the PSB team toiled hard to find the equaliser but failed to breach the strong defence of Indian Oil. In the 57th minute, VR Raghunath converted a penalty corner, making the score 3-0 in favor of Indian Oil.

Meanwhile, CRPF edged past Combined Hostel UP 1-0 to finish third.

The winning team Indian Oil was awarded Rs 2 lakh while PSB and CRPF teams walked away with cheques of Rs 1 lakh and Rs 50,000, respectively.

The best player of the competition, Rajveer Singh of PSB, got richer by Rs 20,000 while the best goalkeeper Piyush Sathakarni, best fullback Gurjinder Singh, best half Vishal Varma and best forward Wasim Ullah Khan were rewarded with Rs 10,000 each.

ACS (Sports) Navneet Sehgal gave away the prizes. Director (Sports) RP Singh,

RSO Ajay Sethi, JS Bhatia, Syed Ali were also present.

## YASH BEAT STEVENSON

India's Yash Chaurasia defeated second seed Canada's Kelsey Stevenson 6-1, 7-6(6) in straight sets in the second qualifying round of the ITF \$25,000 World Tour at Ekana Sports Stadium. Lohitaksha Badrinath made it to the final round by defeating top seed Jacob Bradshaw, who retired after the second set. Asian Games bronze medalist Vishnu Vardhan beat Chirag Duhan 6-4, 6-3 while Faisal Qamar sailed through easily with a 6-4, 6-2 win over Tommy Czaplinski of US.

# Alcaraz routs Medvedev for Indian Wells title

AP ■ INDIAN WELLS

Spain's Carlos Alcaraz swept past Daniil Medvedev 6-3, 6-2 on Sunday to win the Indian Wells ATP Masters 1000 and secure his return to number one in the world.

US Open champion Alcaraz ended Medvedev's 19-match winning streak, denying him a fourth title in as many tournaments to ensure he will supplant Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic atop the rankings.

"It feels amazing to lift the

trophy here, to recover the No. 1," Alcaraz said. "I would say this has been the perfect tournament."

Serbia's Djokovic, barred from entering the United States because he hasn't been vaccinated against Covid-19, sat out Indian Wells and will miss the Miami Open starting this week, where Alcaraz is the defending champion.

Alcaraz, 19, who became the youngest world number one ever after his triumph at Flushing Meadows last year, claimed his third Masters 1000 title and

joined compatriot Rafael Nadal as the only players to win at least three as a teenager. Nadal won six before turning 20.

He was unstoppable on Stadium Court, breaking through what he'd called the "wall" of Medvedev's formidable defenses.

Medvedev, coming off titles in Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai, could find no answer as Alcaraz fired winners from all over the court, defying the windy conditions.

"Daniil obviously didn't play at his best level, but I'm very

happy for my performance and how I played this tournament."

He said the big change in him since a semi-final defeat to Nadal last year at Indian Wells was his comfort level on the game's biggest stages.

"I think my tennis didn't improve so much since last year. What I improve a lot is to not take the pressure, just to play relaxed. That, for me, is the most important thing."

"That's why I show a great level, because I feel like I have no pressure. I enjoy."

Medvedev certainly wasn't

able to ratchet up the pressure on him.

A stinging backhand winner gave Alcaraz an early break in the opening set as he raced to a 3-0 lead.

He gave himself a set point with a sharply angled forehand volley and sealed it with an unreturnable serve, then won the first 10 points of the second set on the way to a 4-0 lead.

He didn't face a break point as he polished it off in one hour and 11 minutes, a diving volley winner giving him match point that he converted with another

service winner.

"I expected a tougher match," he said. "Against him is always a tactical match, and I did perfect today. That's why it looks easy — but it wasn't."

Alcaraz has returned to number one despite a late start to the year. Injury forced him to miss the Australian Open, where Djokovic claimed a record-equalling 22nd Grand Slam title.

Since launching his season in February Alcaraz has won a title in Buenos Aires and reached the final in Rio de Janeiro.

# Perez leads Red Bull sweep in Saudi Arabian GP

AP ■ JEDDAH

Red Bull's Sergio Perez flexed his street circuit muscles with dramatic effect on Sunday by storming to victory ahead of team-mate Max Verstappen at the Saudi Arabian Grand Prix.

While the top two were clear cut, the next two places remained in confusion long after the race had finished with Fernando Alonso first stripped of third place and then reinstated in the early hours of Monday morning.

Perez, a 33-year-old Mexican, came home 5.355 seconds clear of the defending double world champion as Red Bull reeled off a masterful one-two triumph, the Dutchman having stormed through the field from 15th on the grid.

Verstappen also clocked the fastest lap of the race on the final lap to retain his lead of the embryonic drivers'

championship, snatching it back from Perez as they duelled at high speed.

It was Perez's fifth career win having previously triumphed in Monte Carlo and Singapore to earn his reputation as a 'street fighter'.

"It turned out to be tougher than expected," he said. "The safety car tried to take the victory from us again here, but not this year! The team did a great job. Now we must keep pushing."

Verstappen was eliminated from qualifying after a drive-shaft failure. "It wasn't easy to get through the field," he said. "We settled for second so it's a good recovery in the end."

Two-time world champion Alonso finished a stirring third on track for Aston Martin to claim a 100th podium finish on his record-extending 357th start.

That place was initially taken from



him. He had received a five-second penalty for starting outside his grid position. When he tried to serve it during a pit stop, stewards ruled a jack had touched the car too soon and they hit Alonso with a 10-second penalty.

George Russell rose to third for Mercedes.

But Aston Martin requested a review and showed stewards videos of similar incidents that went unpunished. Stewards accepted that it was not clear the offence had broken Formula One rules and lifted the punishment.

Alonso was back to third followed by the two Mercedes cars of Russell and Lewis Hamilton.

Next were the Ferraris of Carlos Sainz and Charles Leclerc, who started 12th. Esteban Ocon and his Alpine team-mate Pierre Gasly occupied the next two places.

# Alcaraz reclaims world No 1 ranking, Nadal out of top 10

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz returned to the top of the ATP rankings on Monday after his Indian Wells triumph, while Rafael Nadal dropped out of the top 10 for the first time in 18 years.

Spanish teenager Alcaraz cruised past Russian Daniil Medvedev in Sunday's final to retake top spot from Novak Djokovic who was missing Indian Wells due to being unvaccinated against Covid.

American Taylor Fritz dropped five spots to world number 10 after his title defence ended in the quarter-finals.

Nadal, who has been out injured since a second-round exit



at the Australian Open, fell to 13th place. The 22-time Grand Slam champion had previously been inside the top 10 since April 2005.



# GRACE KNOCKS RCB, GG OUT OF WPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

UP Warroirz's Grace Harris (72 off 41 balls) once again set the stage on fire with her heavy-duty hitting, as the team defeated Gujarat Giants for the second consecutive time by three wickets with just one delivery to secure a place in the playoffs of the inaugural season here on Monday.

Following the win, Mumbai Indians, Delhi Capitals and UP Warriors have made the grade, while Gujarat Giants and Royal Challengers Bangalore have been eliminated from the tournament.

Grace smashed the Giants attack to smithereens, hitting seven fours and four maximums in the chase of the Giants' 178/6. When she departed at 172, caught by Kim Garth of Harleen Deol, there were still seven runs to be scored for victory.

There were a few nervous moments when Simran Shaikh departed and it became 177/7 for the Warroirz. Two runs off the last two deliveries can always be a tricky proposition, but Sophie Ecclestone swept a Sneh Rana delivery to the boundary to signal the win with just one ball to spare.

Grace was involved in two productive partnerships, with countrymate Tahlia McGrath (57) and Sophie Ecclestone (19 not out).

While Graces' stand with McGrath was worth 78 runs, with Sophie it fetched 42 runs and it ensured an easy passage into the knockouts with just one balls to spare.

The partnership between Grace and Tahlia had laid a solid foundation and the former con-

tinued even after her country-mate had departed at 117/4.

Grace, who had scored an unbeaten 59 the last time the teams had met at the DY Patil Stadium and ensured a thrilling victory for the Warroirz with just one ball to spare, played with such ferocity, it made the Giants bowlers look mere pedestrians.

All this despite the UP Warroirz being off to a rank bad start on a pitch that offered good bounce and carry. The team was down in the dumps at 3/39 before Grace and Tahlia came together to turn the tables on the Giants.

Skipper Alyssa Healy (12) went early after giving indication she meant business.

Young Giants medium-pacer Monica Patel took the prized scalp in just the second over of the innings after being dispatched for consecutive boundaries by the Australian.

Monika was given a pep talk by team-mates, and the result was the big wicket two deliveries later. The left-arm-er kept a back-of-length delivery on middle and leg stump that bounced a bit extra and Healy committed herself to a pull shot slightly early, getting an edge which flew to Harleen Deol at deep deep square leg.

The third over saw the Warroirz lose their second key batter in Kiran Navgire with Australian right-arm quick Kim Garth dismissing the quick for just four and reducing the Warriorz to 2/19.

To add to their woes, left-arm spinner Tanuja Kanwar got Devika Vaidya caught behind the stumps by Sushma Verma in the fifth over. Devika aimlessly raced down the track



to flick the ball only to get a feather touch which flew to the keeper.

Earlier, a brilliant 93-run partnership between Dayalan Hemalatha (57 off 33 balls) and the second costliest player Ashleigh Gardner (60 off 39 balls) helped Gujarat Giants post 178/6 in their do-or-die clash.

The authority and attacking ways with which the duo played indicated they were on a mission, given the do-or-die nature of the contest as the tournament enters its business end.

By the time the partnership ended, with Hemalatha dismissed by Parshavi Chopra in the 17th over with the team total on 143, the stand had put the team on course for a competitive total.

South African opener Laura Wolvaardt and Sophia Dunkley went about their task of scoring runs in powerplay with a lot of urgency. Runs flowed freely while the two batting stalwarts were at the crease, with Wolvaardt smacking a fine boundary off just the third ball of the opening over bowled by left-arm pacer Anjali Sarvani.

The 23-year-old used the width on offer to steer it past backward point, making her intentions clear. Just two overs into the match and Gujarat Giants were in overdrive, with the team having scored 26 runs.

The powerful six by the South African off a length delivery outside off stump from left-arm India spinner Rajeshwari Gayakwad in the second over had class and power written all over it.

Soon England batter Dunkley took charge, giving a further fillip to the scoring rate.

## Gujarat Giants gave bewildering reasoning for my omission: Dottin

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

West Indian Deandra Dottin has expressed disappointment at her exclusion from Women's Premier League franchise Gujarat Giants, terming it "bewildering".

The 31-year-old Caribbean all-rounder was signed for Rs 60 lakh by the Adani-owned side, but before the start of the tournament, she was excluded from the squad on medical grounds.

The Giants had stated that Dottin failed to get medical clearance by the deadline, which was the reason why they replaced her with Australia's Kim Garth. But Dottin refuted the claims made by the franchise.

"I wish to issue a brief statement in light of ongoing speculation surrounding my recent exclusion from the inaugural Women's Premier League that is currently taking place in India.

"I remain deeply disappointed by what can only, plausibly, be described as bewildering reasoning for my omission from the tournament," Dottin said in statement which she posted on Twitter.

"I was bought at the WPL auction by the Gujarat Giants, a franchise owned and operated by the Adani Group. At the commencement of the tournament, the franchise claimed that I was excluded from the team because I was apparently "recovering from a medical situation".

"This was followed by a

subsequent, clarifying statement that contended that I was, in fact "unable to obtain medical clearance" despite being granted as recently as February 20th," she said.

The veteran of 143 ODIs and 127 T20Is said that she was shocked by the decision taken by Giants' team management.

"I would like to make it clear that I had experienced minor abdominal pain and swelling for which I had sought treatment in December 2022. This was followed by two further referrals to specialists for second opinions in December and January 2023, respectively.

"Following testing and investigations by the specialists, I was asked to rest until February 13th and was cleared to resume fitness and playing activity from February 14th.

"Consequently, I recommenced my personal training and fitness regime according to the guided timelines and experienced some soreness on the first day of resumed training which was anticipated and reasonable, given that I had been asked to rest in the weeks preceding training." Dottin said her words were misinterpreted by the Giants.

"I was transparent about this in correspondence with the Gujarat Giants physiotherapist, however, this was misconstrued and later conveyed to members of the franchise's management team as me "experiencing abdominal pain post-session," which was not what I had indicated.



## New Zealand whitewash Sri Lanka

AP ■ WELLINGTON

Lanky fast bowler Blair Tuckner and spinner Michael Bracewell slogged all day in a Basin Reserve gale to bowl New Zealand to an innings and 58 run win over Sri Lanka in the second Test on Monday and a sweep of the two-match series.

The win was completed with only minutes remaining on the fourth day and capped New Zealand's extraordinary summer of home Test matches, which includes a one-run win over England at the Basin Reserve and a two-wicket win over Sri Lanka from the last ball of the first Test.

Once again New Zealand couldn't win without drama as it pursued Sri Lanka's last two wickets in fading light and a blustering wind on Monday. Had it not bowled out Sri Lanka, it would have had to have returned to try to do so on the final day, when rain was forecast

in Wellington.

Sri Lanka's last two pairs defied the New Zealand bowlers for almost two hours before the home team secured the wickets it needed for victory. New Zealand had to bowl 142 overs to dismiss Sri Lanka in the second innings, after bowling 67 in the first innings before enforcing the follow on.

Dhanahaya de Silva made 98 and Dinesh Chandimal 62 to help Sri Lanka bat throughout all but a few minutes of the final day. Kusal Rajitha then batted for 2-1/2 hours, Prabath Jayasuriya and Lahiru Kumara for an hour each as the Sri Lanka tail gallantly tried to force the match into the fifth day when weather might intervene. Southee took 3-21.

New Zealand claimed an extra half hour as the light faded and Rajitha's long vigil ended when he fell to Tim Southee for 20 as Sri Lanka was all out for 358.

"Losing the toss and being asked to bat and being able to put a score on the board was very pleasing to see, and set up the performance the bowlers produced over the last two days," New Zealand captain Tim Southee said.

"There are few weary bodies tonight so it's good to have that extra day off. We thought if we could put that one last push in tonight it was one less warm-up to do tomorrow."

Double centuries by Kane Williamson and Henry Nicholls allowed New Zealand to post 580-4 in its only innings before it bowled out Sri Lanka for 164 and enforced the follow with the tourists 416 behind.

New Zealand came into the fourth day in a commanding position: Sri Lanka was 113-2 when play began, still 303 runs behind, and New Zealand found itself in a race to complete the win against the possibility of a rained-out final day.

## Swiss Open: Title holder Sindhu eyes turnaround

PTI ■ BASEL

Enduring a wretched run of form, defending champion PV Sindhu will hope to get back to winning ways when she competes at the Swiss Open Super 300 tournament, beginning here on Tuesday.

World number 9 HS Prannoy, who had finished runners-up in the last edition, too will eye a better show after a second round exit in the All England Championships.

The fifth seeded Indian, however, will have a tough task at hand as he opens against 2018 world championships silver medallist China's Shi Yuqi, who finished second best in Birmingham last week.

While Prannoy has been the most consistent singles player from the country, Sindhu and Lakshya Sen have struggled this season, making early exits in a series of events.

Sindhu, who parted ways with Korean coach Park Tae-sang after failing to get results following a long injury



lay-off, made a first round exit last week after losing to Zhang Yi Man of China.

A double Olympic medallist, Sindhu will hope to regain her confidence as she returns to the \$210,000 event, opening her campaign against local player Jenjira Stadelmann.

Sen, who had made early exits from Malaysia and India Open, notched up an intense win over Chou Tien Chen last week but faltered against former world number 2 and two-time world championships medallist Anders Antonsen of Denmark.

## MI bags New York franchise in Major League Cricket

AP ■ NEW YORK

After Delhi Capitals and Chennai Super Kings, Mumbai Indians have now joined the US cricket revolution bandwagon as they acquired the New York franchise in the upcoming Major League Cricket (MLC), here on Monday.

"The team will participate in the inaugural edition of Major League Cricket (MLC) subject to completion of customary due diligence; negotiation, and execution of definitive binding agreements, and receipt of required corporate, regulatory and third-party approvals and compliances," a press release stated.

Earlier, GMR group, co-owners of Delhi Capitals, have invested alongside Microsoft CEO



Satya Nadella in Seattle Orcas, while Chennai Super Kings are part of the Texas team.

"I am thrilled to welcome our New York franchise to the growing MI Family! With our entry into the first cricket league in the US, I hope we are able to establish Mumbai Indians as a global brand of fearless and entertaining cricket! This is another new beginning for MI and I look forward to the exciting journey ahead," owner Nita Ambani said.

The MI New York will be the fifth franchise after Mumbai Indians (IPL), MI Cape Town (SA20), MI Emirates (ILT20), and Mumbai Indians (WPL), in three different continents, four different countries, and five different leagues.

## Hima Das, Ancy Sojan win gold in 200m and long jump in IGP

PTI ■ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Star sprinter Hima Das won the 200m race quite comfortably in 23.79 seconds while long jumper Ancy Sojan shared the limelight with a best effort of 6.49m in the Indian Grand Prix-1 athletics event here on Monday.

Assam's Hima beat Aishwarya Kailash Mishra (24.81) of Maharashtra and VK Vismaya (24.82) of Kerala to take the women's 200m gold at the Laxmibai National College of Physical Education here.

Sojan, meanwhile, produced a series of leaps beyond 6.00m and won with a best effort of 6.49m, just past the 6.45m mark laid down as the Asian Games qualifying standard.

The meet though received lukewarm response with very

few top athletes competing in it. Many events had just three athletes competing.

Women's high jump and men's triple jump saw just two competitors each, men's 400m hurdles four, women's 400m hurdles three — one disqualified later —, women's shot put three, 800m women three and women's 5000m three participants.

Haryana's Krishan Kumar stepped up the pace approaching the halfway mark and topped the men's 800m race, clocking 1:47.26, his second best time over the distance. The Army man went past the Asian Games qualifying standard of 1:49.05.

The men's 5000m race saw three Uttar Pradesh runners come home inside the Asian Games qualifying mark of 14:00.00.

## Lovlina, Sakshi advance to quarterfinals of Women's World C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tokyo Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain made a winning start to her campaign as she and Sakshi Chaudhary moved to the quarterfinals of the Women's World Championships with dominant victories here on Monday.

Both Sakshi (54kg) and Lovlina (75kg) notched identical 5-0 unanimous decision wins respectively.

While Lovlina out-punched Mexico's Vanessa Ortiz, Sakshi got the better of Zhazira Urakbayeva of Kazakhstan to progress to the last eight stage.

But the most electrifying Indian performance of the day was displayed by Preeti (54kg). The youngster though eventually lost her bout to last year's 52kg silver medallist Thailand's Jitpong Jutamas by a 4-3 verdict, the bout was so close that a review had to be taken.

Preeti entered the tournament on the back of a selection row, where her place in the side was questioned as she

didn't win the National Championships.

However, the 19-year-old justified her place in the Indian team with her fearless performance.

The tenacious Preeti showed aggression against a more experienced opponent to take the first round 4-1.

She fought toe to toe with Jutamas as both pugilists connected punches but the Thai was able to edge the Indian and took the remaining two rounds with the final result being decided by a bout review.

"I learned a lot from this bout, the competitor was also good. I need to work harder. I was aggressive in the first round and I should have continued that and I should have dominated the bout," Preeti said.

Competing in her new 75kg category, Lovlina, who received a first round bye, won her opening encounter to walk one step closer to a medal.

"It was my first bout, the boxer was shorter than me. I was not able to follow by strategy to the T. I am not



very happy with this performance, I could have done better. She was coming ahead so I was forced to move back," Lovlina said after her bout.

"It is my first World Championships in this weight category. It will be difficult as the other boxers are already competing in this weight class. We will have to see how to play with which opponent. I think I can do better."

Sakshi, the 2021 Asian Championship bronze medallist, utilised her height and long reach to her advantage. She would punch Urakbayeva and step back quickly, not letting her opponent counter-attack.

The Indian danced around the ring, playing with aggression and released a number of punches to emerge victorious.

"I played much better than I expected. She is a good boxer so I thought it would be a 19-20 fight but the strategy worked for me and I was able to dominate," Sakshi said after the bout.