

## CITY 3

YOGI: CONG CAN'T DIGEST  
RISE OF POOR MAN'S SON

## OPINION 6

MYANMAR NIGHTMARE  
CONTINUES UNABATED

## WORLD 10

US CARRIES OUT  
AIRSTRIKES IN SYRIA

LUCKNOW, SATURDAY MARCH 25, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

'HARDIK SIMILAR  
TO DHONI AS  
CAPTAIN'  
12 SPORT

## Rahul disqualified from LS

Cong to launch nationwide strike,  
Opp rallies around Rahul, accuses  
BJP of doing 'vindictive politics'

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was on Friday disqualified from the Lok Sabha, nearly 24 hours after a Surat court convicted him in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his "all thieves have Modi as the common surname" remark.

The disqualification will bar the 52-year-old former Congress president, a four-time MP, from contesting elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction or lowers the sentence to below two years.

Soon after Rahul's disqualification, the Congress leadership got into a huddle at the party headquarters and deliberated on the way forward.

Late on Friday evening, the Congress announced a nationwide agitation against Rahul's disqualification, alleging that the Government has acted at lightning speed to "gag" him, and called for taking forward the efforts for the Opposition unity in a systematic manner.

Announcing Rahul's disqualification, the Lok Sabha

Secretariat in a notification said following his conviction by the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate, Surat, Rahul, Member of the Lok Sabha representing the Wayanad constituency of Kerala stands disqualified from the membership of the House from the date of his conviction i.e. March 23, 2023.

The Congress said it will fight the matter politically and legally. Hitting out at the Government, the Congress said it is "a black day for Indian democracy" and alleged that the action was driven by "political vendetta".

Hours before the notification was issued, Rahul attended the Lok Sabha proceedings in the morning session.

Before the proceedings commenced, he also participated in a meeting of party MPs in Parliament complex. Rahul said he is fighting for the voice of India and is ready to pay any price, hours after he was disqualified from the Lok Sabha.

Later, Rahul tweeted, "I am fighting for the voice of



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi leaves Parliament House complex in New Delhi on Friday

India. I am ready to pay every price."

However, the disqualification ostensibly has come as a blessing in disguise for the ragtag unity in Opposition, including TMC, AAP, SP, BRS which have been toeing a different line. On Friday, they echoed concern over the vindictive kind of politics and alleged that the Rahul was not given 30 days appeal space.

Some of them who had quit the Congress and are now part of other outfits too expressed their solidarity with Rahul.

Rahul is the second member of the Lok Sabha, after Lakshadweep MP PP Mohammed Faisal of the NCP, to have been disqualified in the recent past following conviction.

The Kavaratti sessions court in Lakshadweep had sentenced four persons, including Mohammed Faisal, to 10 years in jail after they were found guilty in an attempt-to-murder case. Following the conviction, Faisal was disqualified.

However, the Kerala High Court later suspended his conviction and sentence. According to the MP, the Lok Sabha Secretariat is yet to issue a notification revoking his disqualification.

Continued on Page 9

Lies, slander  
part of Rahul's  
politics: Nadda

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

BJP president JP Nadda on Friday claimed Rahul Gandhi has a habit of levelling fabricated allegations having no connection with facts while alleging the Congress leader has a "huge arrogance but little understanding".

In a series of tweets amid a political fight between the BJP and the Congress following Rahul's conviction in a defamation case, Nadda alleged that "lies, personal slander and negative politics is integral" to his politics.

People's "punishment" to him will be more severe in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls than in 2019 when he lost in Amethi and the Congress was routed nationally, the BJP leader said.

He said, "By comparing OBC communities to thieves, Rahul has shown a pathetic and casteist mindset. However, his latest tirade is not surprising. For the last many years, he has always reduced levels of political discourse."

Continued on Page 9

India's first ropeway  
transport: Modi sets  
project in motion'UP rising from hopelessness and  
moving towards hope, aspirations'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 'One World TB Summit' at Rudraksh Convention Centre, in Varanasi, on Friday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is also seen

PTI

PNS ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday gifted his parliamentary constituency, Varanasi, 28 projects — including the first of its kind 3.75-kilometre ropeway transport that will ease traffic congestion in the city.

He laid the foundation of Rs 645-crore ropeway project adding a new chapter in the history of public transport in India.

"The ropeway project will take the city's internal connectivity to a new level. It will further increase the economic opportunities as well as the stay of visitors and their spending here," Modi said while addressing a public meeting after laying the foundation stone of nine projects and inaugurating 19 development projects.

The ropeway will cover the distance between Varanasi Cantt Railway station and Kashi Vishwanath Dham in a few minutes. The ropeway system will have five stations and facilitate the ease of movement for tourists, pilgrims and residents.

The Prime Minister praised the the Yogi Adityanath Government for turning Uttar Pradesh from hopelessness towards a state of hope and aspiration. "Uttar Pradesh is rising from hopelessness and moving towards hope and aspirations. Where security and facilities are made available, prosperity is certain," Modi said, appreciating the efforts of Yogi who completes the first year in office in his second term on Saturday.

During a programme at the Sampurnanand Sanskrit University ground here, Modi termed himself a "sewak (servant)" and said, "The development of Kashi is being discussed all over the country and the world."

"Whoever is coming to Kashi is taking new energy from here. Nine years ago, people had apprehensions that there would be no change in Banaras, nothing would happen in Kashi. But the people of Kashi proved every apprehension wrong with their hard work," he said.

Continued on Page 9  
Also see Page 5, 8

## CAPSULE

K'TAKA ABOLISHES 4%  
QUOTA FOR MINORITIES

**Bengaluru:** The Karnataka Government on Friday announced its decision to scrap the four per cent quota for minorities and added it to the existing quota of two dominant communities of the poll-bound State.

HC SETS ASIDE DELHI  
BJP MLA'S HOUSE BAN

**New Delhi:** The Delhi High Court on Friday set aside the one-year suspension of BJP MLA Vijender Gupta from the Delhi Legislative Assembly and permitted him to attend the remaining Budget Session of the Assembly while directing him to maintain the dignity of the House.

COVID RELIEF OVER, NOW  
SURRENDER, ORDERS SC

**New Delhi:** The Supreme Court on Friday directed that all convicts and undertrial prisoners, who were released during the Covid-19 pandemic in a move to decongest jails, to surrender within 15 days.

TAXPAYERS WITH INCOME  
OVER ₹7L TO GET RELIEF

**New Delhi:** In a relief to taxpayers opting for new tax regime, individuals earning marginally higher income than no-tax ceiling of ₹7 lakh will pay tax only on the differential income after the Government amended the Finance Bill. The Finance Bill 2023, passed by the Lok Sabha on Friday, has proposed a marginal relief to taxpayers under new tax regime.

Mere membership of  
banned outfit makes  
persons criminal: SC

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

In a significant verdict having wider ramifications, the Supreme Court on Friday reversed its 12-year-old verdict of two-judge bench and said that mere membership of a banned organisation will make a person criminal and liable to be prosecuted under provisions of UAPA.

The top court said its three verdicts of 2011 pronounced by two-judge benches, which held that mere membership of a banned organisation will not incriminate a person unless he resorts to violence or incites people to violence and does an act intended to create disorder or disturbance of public peace by resorting to violence, "is not a good law".

It restored Section 3(5) of the Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act,

1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, 1967, which made the membership of a banned outfit an offence, liable to be punished with two years imprisonment along with fine.

A bench of Justice MR Shah, Justice CT Ravikumar and Justice Sanjay Karol allowed the petitions filed by the Centre and the Assam Government seeking a review of the three 2011 verdicts of the apex court on the ground that it will impact the sovereignty and integrity of the country.

"We hold that the view taken by this court in the cases of State of Kerala versus Raneef, Arup Bhuyan versus Union of India and Indra Das versus State of Assam (all 2011 verdicts) taking the view that under Section 3(5) of Terrorists and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act, 1987 and Section 10(a)(i) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967... and reading down the said provisions to mean that over and above the membership of a banned organisation there must be an overt act and/or further criminal activities and adding the element of mens rea are held to be not a good law," it said.

Continued on Page 9

Pak hecklers shown door  
at Kashmir event in USPNS/ AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/  
WASHINGTON

Scores of Pakistanis tried to disrupt a discussion on Kashmir in prestigious Washington DC National Press Club and some of them were later forcibly removed from the venue. The incident took place late on Thursday. The same day India slammed Pakistan for raising the issue of Kashmir in the United Human Rights Council (UNHCR).

Six separatist loyalists were forcibly removed from the National Press Club in Washington as Pakistanis tried to heckle and repeatedly interrupt the discussion in the Press club.

The panel discussion titled "Kashmir: From Turmoil to Transformation" was held on Thursday. It was moderated by columnist Se Hoon Kim and addressed by president of the

Jammu & Kashmir Workers Party Mir Junaid, and Touseef Raina, president of the Municipal Council of Baramulla.

"The whole audience has seen your real face today. What we have seen in Kashmir, we saw in Washington today, and thank you for showing the world how cruel, and indecent these people are. You have seen it all," Junaid said as the separatist sympathisers were taken out of the room.

They tried to disrupt the discussion while Junaid was responding to a question on the reasons why the Kashmiri Hurriyat leaders were in jail.

"They (Hurriyat leaders) are in jail because of their mistakes. They misled the people of Jammu & Kashmir for their vested interests and gains. They spoiled our ecosystem of education. They were the spoilers of our economy. They were

glorifying terrorism. They are in jail for their hate speech. They are in jail for their war crimes," Junaid said.

Referring to the disruption caused by the protesters, Raina said all these years this is what the separatists sponsored by Pakistan have been doing in Jammu & Kashmir.

"What these gentlemen did, the same thing they did in Kashmir. Whosoever was speaking, right, or for the people, was silenced by the gun," he said. "I wish I get a chance to visit Pakistan. I want to meet the policymakers to stop funding terrorism," said the Baramulla Municipal Council president.

45 Defence JVs with foreign firms  
OK'd for faster weapons productionPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■  
NEW DELHI

With the objective of faster development and production of weapons to maintain operational readiness of the armed forces, the Government has given approval to "45 companies/joint ventures" operating in the defence sector with foreign OEMs (original equipment manufacturers).

Minister of State for Defence Ajay Bhatt informed this to the Lok Sabha on Friday.

The Centre has taken several policy initiatives in the past few years and brought reforms to encourage indigenous design, development and manufacture of defence equipment in the country, thereby reducing dependency on imports in coming years, he said.

"These initiatives, inter

alia, include according priority to procurement of capital items from domestic sources under Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP)-2020; notification of three Positive Indigenisation Lists (PILs) by the Department of Defence Production (DDP), Ministry of Defence, with a timeline beyond which they will only be procured from the domestic industry," the Minister said.

## UK's security obligations not met: Jaishankar

We want action,  
not assurance:  
EAM; UK MPs  
slam Khalistanis  
for vandalismPIONEER NEWS  
SERVICE/AGENCIES ■  
NEW DELHI/LONDON

In the first high-level strong reaction by India to the attack on its High Commission in London by alleged Khalistan supporters, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday said it is the responsibility of that country to provide security and "these obligations were not met".

A day after UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly condemned vandalism AT the Indian High Commission in London, the issue was raised in UK Parliament with MPs demanding action against "Khalistani hooligans". They also called for safety of India's diplomatic staff.

Taking exception to the attack on the Indian High Commission, Jaishankar when asked about the security of

Indian Missions following vandalism in the UK said, "It is the obligation of the receiving country to provide security for a diplomat to do their work, to ensure embassy or High Commission's premises are respected. These obligations were not met. We have had conversations with the British Government on this."

Jaishankar also said, "Many countries have a different view of their own security and a different view of other people's security. We will not accept this differential status." He made these observations at an event in Bengaluru.

Echoing similar views, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Arindam Bagchi said here on Friday, "We hope host Governments provide full and adequate protection to

our Missions and to the personnel working there...We are not interested in just assurances, I think we would like to see action."

He also said "at least in London and San Francisco, we have strongly taken up the matter of vandalism. You would have also seen the statements that we have put out in this regard. We expect that host Governments will take action to identify and prosecute all those involved and also take necessary actions to prevent the recurrence of such incidents."

As regards the ongoing action to nab Amritpal Singh, Bagchi said "authorities in Punjab are undertaking operations to nab a fugitive. Information regarding that operation is being shared by authorities concerned in

Punjab on a regular basis. We would urge people abroad not to be taken in by inaccurate and motivated narratives that are being circulated by some elements on social media."

Meanwhile, the Indian High Commission in London has been working to counter disinformation being spread on social media alleging that the objects hurled during Wednesday's planned pro-Khalistan demonstration came from India House.

"Fact check: the truth is, a small minority of protesters threw water bottles, ink balloons, eggs and flares at the High Commission in London, some of which hit other protesters and the police."

"Nothing was thrown by mission staff at our own brethren. We have proof," the

High Commission tweeted. "Do not believe disinformation aimed to disrupt harmony. Indians will always respect the religious beliefs of all," it said, alongside videos showing water bottles and coloured flares being hurled by Khalistan flag-bearing protesters towards India House.

In the House of Commons, while Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman late Thursday called for a debate in Parliament to discuss steps to ban groups behind the violence, Opposition Labour Party MP Gareth Thomas asked the Leader of the House of Commons about the steps being taken to ensure there is "no repeat of such behaviour".

The Cabinet Minister addressing the Business of the House, Penny Mordaunt,

responded by reiterating Foreign Secretary James Cleverly earlier statement announcing a review of the protection measures around the Indian mission here.

"We strongly condemn the vandalism and violent acts that took place outside the Indian High Commission in London. It was a completely unacceptable action against the High Commission and its staff," Mordaunt told MPs.

"There is ongoing work with the Metropolitan Police to review the protection measures around the High Commission, and any changes will be made to ensure the safety and security of its staff so that they can go about their business, serving both this country and India," she said.

Continued on Page 9

J&K lithium to  
make India top  
in EV making,  
says Gadkari

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Union Minister Nitin Gadkari on Friday said that if India can use recently discovered reserve of lithium in Jammu & Kashmir, it can become world's number one automobile manufacturer in electric vehicle segment.

The road, transport and highway minister said there is a need to encourage public transport, and electric buses are the future. "Every year, we import 1,200 tonnes of lithium. Now, in J&K, we got lithium. (If) we can use this lithium ion, we will be the number one automobile manufacturing country in the world," he said.



# Yogi completes 6 yrs in office, becomes longest serving CM of UP

**BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■**  
LUCKNOW

In March 2017, when Bharatiya Janata Party won the elections in Uttar Pradesh with a landslide margin, Yogi Adityanath was picked as the new chief minister of the state. Eyebrows were raised as to how the Mahant of a temple with no administrative experience could effectively perform as the chief minister of this politically crucial state. Almost six years later, the same Mahant, clad in a saffron robe, created a record and became the longest-serving chief minister of Uttar Pradesh.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath completed five years and 347 days in the office on March 1 this year, and outlasted Dr Sampurnanand of the Congress, who had served the office for five years and 345 days from 1954 to 1960. Besides, Dr Sampurnanand, national president of Samajwadi Party, Akhilesh Yadav, too had completed a full term of five years and four days. Even Bahujan Samaj Party supreme Mayawati had

completed a full tenure as her regime lasted for four years and 307 days from 2007 to 2012.

However, Govind Ballabh Pant, the first chief minister of Uttar Pradesh, held the post for the longest period of time without any interruption -- seven years and nine months. But in his first term from April 1, 1946, to January 23, 1950, he served as the chief minister of the United Provinces. When UP came into existence on January 24, 1950, he became the chief minister again and continued from January 24, 1950 to December 28, 1954 - a tenure of four years and 336 days.

In terms of cumulative tenure, Mayawati, who held the office of chief minister of Uttar Pradesh four times, is in the lead with a total run of more than seven years. During his three terms as chief minister, Mulayam Singh Yadav held office for little under seven years.

Yogi Adityanath completes six years in office on March 25 and if he completes the full second tenure, which will last till March 2027, he will become the longest-serving

## Yogi most favourite CM of people

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

As Yogi Adityanath completes the first year of his second term as the chief minister of Uttar Pradesh on Saturday, he has emerged as the most favourite chief minister of people across the states.

Chief Minister Yogi is popular not only within India but also has immense craze among Indians overseas. It became evident on Thursday when #IndiaKeFavouriteCM trended on the social networking site Twitter, with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath described as the "favorite chief minister of the country".

Yogi Adityanath was hailed as the best chief minister not just in Uttar Pradesh but also in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Delhi and



Uttarakhand. Additionally, Yogi has received praise for being the best chief minister from people in Spain and Germany.

Millions of users frequently discuss Chief Minister Yogi and the changing Uttar Pradesh under his leadership on social media.

In addition to the elimination of mafia and gunda raj from UP, the performance of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on the front of women's safety, education, crime, infrastructure, expressway, investment of Rs 35 lakh crore and employment have gained him immense popularity.

In addition, people are appreciating how Uttar Pradesh, under Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has defied decades of perception to reach new heights in the rating of Ease of Doing Business.

chief minister of Uttar Pradesh in all formats.

This achievement of Yogi Adityanath is unprecedented

as he has the image (construed by his rivals) of being as a Muslim hater. When the BJP named him as chief minister,

questions were raised and Muslims reacted sharply. They feared that Yogi had been selected to strengthen the

party's Hindutva Raj in Uttar Pradesh.

"The mantra of this government is sabka saath, sabka

vikas aur sabka vishwas and we are sticking to it. There is no differentiation between Hindus and Muslims. The government is working for the welfare of all sections of society. When rations were distributed among people during the pandemic, was there any partiality? Did you receive a complaint that Hindus got ration and Muslims were denied it," Yogi Adityanath told this reporter recently.

In the last six years, Yogi Adityanath has been able to win the hearts of the people because of improvements in law and order and infrastructure facilities with the result that the state has become number one in programme implementation and is now the most sought-after destination of investors. This is evident when memorandums of understanding of projects worth Rs 33 lakh crore were signed during the recently held Global Investors Summit.

"Today we have managed to create an atmosphere of development, trust and good governance in the state. We have set new standards of development in every field. This has helped us to change

the perception of people towards UP," the chief minister said.

In his speeches now, the chief minister talks about the change in perception. This is justified because his government has implemented infrastructure development projects and has taken strict action against criminals to remove fear from the minds of the masses.

Doors of employment opportunities have been opened despite the novel coronavirus pandemic that has delayed many projects.

People talk about a changed UP because the government, with its zero tolerance policy towards crime and criminals, has realised the dream of 'apradh mukt Uttar Pradesh' in the last six years.

"Our government gives priority to development while there are others who delve in divisive politics and try to obstruct the development of the country. But we are committed to moving ahead so that we may fulfill the dreams of the youth," the chief minister said addressing a public meeting in Mahoba recently.

## CLASSIFIEDS

### सूचना

मेरा नाम गुप्ता पूनम के स्थान पर विवाहोपरांत पूनम केसरवानी हो गया है अब मुझे इसी नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाय। पूनम केसरवानी सी, 384 से0 बी0 महानगर, लखनऊ।

### सूचना

मेरा नाम पूनम गुप्ता के स्थान पर विवाहोपरांत पूनम केसरवानी हो गया है अब मुझे इसी नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाय। पूनम केसरवानी सी, 384 से0 बी0 महानगर, लखनऊ।

### NOTICE

I Sipahi Lal alias Sanjay Kumar S/o Udaynarayan R/o B-1633 Awas Vikas Hansapuram Kanpur Nagar inform that both Sipahi Lal and Sanjay Kumar are my names. Which would be justified to bring on record.

### NOTICE

Be it known to all that earlier my name was Lal Mani Dwivedi which is now changed to Lal Mani Dubey. In future I shall be known as Lal Mani Dubey. Lal Mani Dubey S/o Rudra Pratap Dubey 191D/19, Rajruppur, Prayagraj.

### NOTICE

My name is Sabeeha Afzal whereas earlier my name was Sabeeha, my name is Sabeeha Afzal across all my documents. Let me be known as Sabeeha Afzal. Sabeeha Afzal wife Afzal Ahmad Village Karmaini Post Raunapar Azamgarh.

### NOTICE

I Army No- 14647626W Hav. Dileep Kumar Unit-463 (FRI) Jalandhar Cantt declare that by mistake name of my son Bhanu Partap Singh Yadav is registered in my service records which is wrong his correct name is Bhanu Pratap Singh Yadav. He will be known as Bhanu Pratap Singh Yadav for all future purpose.

### NOTICE

I hereby declare that in High School Certificate of my daughter Amarjot Kaur father's name is wrongly registered as JASVINDER SINGH which is incorrect while in Aadhar Card and other documents father's name is registered as JASVINDER SINGH which is correct. Hence, from now the father's name of my daughter in all documents should be written and known as JASVINDER SINGH only. JASVINDER SINGH S/o SUKHWANT SINGH R/o Village Rauna, Post-Akhtiyarpur, Tehseel and District-Sitapur.

## Four heritage properties to be converted into hotels

**Lucknow (PNS):** Four Heritage properties of the city are likely to be converted into heritage hotels. The Tourism department has even engaged a consultant for the same.

"The process is on and we will like this project to come up on PPP model. A consultant has been engaged for this purpose," DG Tourism Mukesh Meshram said.

"Four monuments have been selected in Lucknow, including Chhattar Manzil, Roshan-ud-Daullah Kothi, Darshan Vilas and Kothi Gulistan-e-Eram," he added.

It may be noted that Chhattar Manzil is one of the most imposing buildings of the city and a few years back it housed the premier science institute CDRI.

It was vacated by the CDRI at the behest of the State Archaeology Department.

Standing on the banks of river Gomti, the building was built by Nawab Saadat Ali Khan and named after the umbrella at its dome.

It had a role to play in the First war of Independence and after 1857 was used as a club. There are

several rooms in Chhattar Manzil, and the building itself carries the feel of old world charm. It has a mix of Indo-European and Nawabi architecture.

Just adjacent to the Chhattar Manzil is the Kothi Farhat Baksh or the Martin Villa, which was the residence of Claude Martin.

It is said that the lower portion of the monument would be filled with water of the Gomti river, keeping it cool.

Roshan-ud-Daullah Kothi is perhaps the most beautiful kothi, which once served as the residence of the minister of Nawab Nazeer-ud Din Haider- Roshan-ud Daullah.

The kothi has massive balconies, archways, verandas, basements. Till recently it served as the office of the State Archaeology Department.

Both Darshan Vilas Kothi and Gulistan-e-Eram stand opposite to the Chhattar Manzil. Once formidable area of Nawabs called Kaiserbagh, now they form a part of the Health Directorate.

## CII North Region gets new chairman

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

Deepak Jain, Chairman and Managing Director of Lumax Industries Ltd., and Madhav Singhania, Deputy Managing Director and CEO of JK Cement Ltd have been elected as chairman and deputy chairman respectively of the Confederation of Indian Industry, Northern Region, for 2023-24. They were elected during the first meeting of the newly-elected regional council members.

Jain will head CII Northern Region which comprises seven States - Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, and three Union Territories - Chandigarh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh.

Elaborating on the priorities for 2023-24, Jain said, "The CII, through its programmes and interventions, will aim to foster the digital transformation of businesses that impact social and economic development by adopting innovative and sustainable practices. For this, the strategy for the year would be to build domestic competitiveness through a range of measures along with focused policy advocacy while working with different countries and regions to facilitate Indian business engagement."

## 2 extortionists held

**Lucknow (PNS):** Two persons were arrested for demanding Rs 30 lakh as extortion from the owner of a prestigious jewellery showroom in Chowk.

The extortionists were identified as Vivek Yadav (19) and Amit Yadav (21), both natives of Sultanpur district and presently living at Ghaziabad.

The police claimed that the case was worked out within 48 hours and the arrested extortionists had confessed to their crime. The police said that Vivek Yadav and Amit Yadav were members of a notorious gang, operating across the country and demanding heavy extortion from rich men, especially big jewellers.

An anonymous call was received on the mobile phone of the jewellery showroom

owner Utarsh Agrawal in the afternoon on March 21, demanding Rs 30 lakh as extortion. The caller had also warned Agrawal of dire consequences if he informed the police about the extortion call and the demand.

However, Agrawal informed the Chowk police about the extortion call and the cops swung into action. The police took the help of electronic surveillance, informers and CB-CID and located the location of the caller at Charbagh railway station. The cops then laid a trap to nab the extortionist.

The police nabbed Vivek and Amit as they were about to board a Varanasi-bound train. During interrogation, they confessed to their crime.

## 8-year-old boy found murdered in Bahraich

**PNS ■ LUCKNOW**

An eight-year-old boy was found brutally murdered in Bahraich. The motive behind the killing is yet to be confirmed by the family members.

The body was sent for post-mortem and further investigations are on.

Reports said that the blood-soaked body of a boy was recovered in the fields outside Nanpara Parsa on Thursday night. On getting information about the body, Superintendent of Police Prashant Verma reached the spot and carried out an investigation.

The assailant had slit the throat of the boy with a sharp-edged weapon and had also hit

him on the head with some blunt object.

With the help of the villagers, the cops identify the victim as Vivek of Nanpara Parsa area in Bahraich. His father Kishun, who identified the victim as his son Vivek, claimed that he too was searching for him after he disappeared under mysterious circumstances in the evening.

He also claimed that he had no dispute with anyone which could lead to the brutal killing of his son. The cops registered a case and claimed to be making efforts to identify the killers and arrest them.

Additional Superintendent of Police (Rural) Pavitra Mohan Tripathi said that a police force had been deployed in the village as a precaution-

ary measure as tension prevailed after the killing.

Meanwhile in Kotra Bahadurganj area of Unchahar in Rae Bareilly, a farmer, who was guarding his vegetable crop in Ganga Katri area, was shot dead.

According to reports, the victim, identified as Shambhu Maurya, takes care of his family by growing vegetables. On Thursday, he went to the fields at midnight when some shot him.

Local residents who found him lying in a pool of blood rushed him to the district hospital where the doctors pronounced him dead.

A case was registered and further investigations were on.

Meanwhile in Banda, a man killed his wife over a

minor dispute and later committed suicide.

According to the police, 24-year-old Rammilan Raidas of Banthari village had gone to his in-laws' place in Musia village to meet his 22-year-old wife Poonam and children on Thursday morning where he had an argument with his wife over some issue. After this, the man first strangled his wife with a rope and then hanged himself with the same rope to end his life.

According to the family members, a settlement was reached between the two through the court a few days ago but still the incident took place.

A case was registered and the bodies were sent for post-mortem.

## 31 LU students get placements

**Lucknow (PNS):** Thirty-one students of Lucknow University got placements in three companies -- IBM, Skillvertex and Learning Roots Pvt. Ltd. Dr Himanshu Pandey, placement incharge of the FoET, said that Chiranjeev Srivastava, a student of B.Tech (ECE) was selected in IBM as associate system engineer on a package of Rs 4.5 lakh per annum and Divyanshi, a student of B.Tech (CSE) got placement in learning routes as sales associate at a package of Rs 5.7 lakh per annum.

On the other hand 29 BTech students namely, Abhinav Aditya, Aditya Pandey, Amaan Ali, Ankith Singh, Jatin Kashyap, Kartikeya Kumar, Krishnakant Jha, Kshama Dubey, Neha Maurya, Nikhil Soni, Rajneesh Kumar, Shivangi Seth, Shivani Singh, Utkarsh Mehra, Ananya Yadav, Komal, Nisha Yadav, Pratiksha Bajpai, Priyanka Kushwaha, Sakshi Verma, Soumya, Varun Kumar, Mohd Saad, Raghuvansh Sharma, Shankar Kumar, Sonali Sharma, Zeba, Adarsh Kumar and Nitin Verma got placement in Skillvertex on the post of business development associate at a package of Rs 6.0 lakh per annum. LU Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai and Dean of Engineering Faculty, Prof AK Singh and Dr Himanshu Pandey congratulated the selected students.

**PARADIP PORT AUTHORITY**  
**e-TENDER CALL NOTICE**  
TD/TM/GEN-235(Vol-VII)/23/647,dtd.24.03.2023  
Name of the work: "Allotment of 03 (Three) nos. of Mechanical Iron Ore/Iron Ore Pellet plots at IOHP." License Fees: Rs. 2,89,51,890/- Wharfage Fees Rs. 16,93,300/- Last date & time of submission of bid: 13.04.2023 up to 15:00 hrs Date and time of opening (technical bid): 13.04.2023 up to 15:00 hrs Refer our website for details https://eprocure.gov.in/eprocure/app & http://paradipport.gov.in/.  
Sd/-Traffic Manager  
Paradip Port Authority  
PPA/PRI/236/2022-23 dtd.24.03.2023

### PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform General Public that Ram Kewal Gupta S/o Ori Lal Gupta, Smt. Asha Gupta W/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Harish Chandra Gupta S/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Sanjay Gupta S/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Dinesh Chandra Gupta S/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Smt. Suneeta Gupta W/o Harish Chandra Gupta, Smt. Shashi Gupta W/o Sanjay Gupta, Smt. Deepa Gupta W/o Dinesh Chandra Gupta, are joint owners of Part of Arazi no. 697 (Admeasuring Area- 334.44 Sq. Meter) and Part of Arazi No. 698 (Admeasuring Area- 148.64 Sq. Meter) total area 483.08 Sq. Meter, situated at Gram-Vinayakpur, Kanpur Nagar.

It has been informed to us that this property was purchased from Narendra Kumar Singh S/o Late Surya Kumar Singh, Sudeep Singh & Jaideep Singh both S/o Late Raj Kumar Singh as Self vide registered sale deed dated 30.07.2012 duly registered in the office of SubRegistrar Kanpur Nagar vide book No. 1, Volume no. 6939, Page No. 325 to 412 at serial No. 6272. And thereafter Smt. Asha Gupta on expired leaving behind Ram Kewal Gupta S/o Ori Lal Gupta, Harish Chandra Gupta S/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Sanjay Gupta S/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Dinesh Chandra Gupta S/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Smt. Suneeta Gupta W/o Harish Chandra Gupta, Smt. Shashi Gupta W/o Sanjay Gupta, Smt. Deepa Gupta W/o Dinesh Chandra Gupta, Anju Gupta D/o Ram Kewal Gupta, Manju Girjashankar D/o Ram Kewal Gupta as her only legal heirs.

IDFCFIRST BANK LTD. 16/80 D-2, Khemka House, Civil Lines, Kanpur Nagar. intend to grant loan. If any person have any objection or claim on the said property then please communicate within a period of 7 days from the date of publication to Shiva Kant Dixit (Advocate), Kanpur

Shiva Kant Dixit (Advocate) Ph.: 09415403399

Although every possible care and caution has been taken to avoid errors or omissions, this publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having authority of or binding in any way on the writers, editors, publishers, and printers and sellers who do not owe any responsibility for any damage or loss to any person, a purchaser of this publication or not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of competent court and forums in Lucknow only. Readers are advised and requested to verify and seek appropriate advice to satisfy themselves about the veracity of any kind of advertisement before responding to any contents published in this newspaper. The printer, publisher, editor and any employee of the Pioneer Group's will not be held responsible for any kind of claim made by the advertisers of the products & services and shall not be made responsible for any kind of loss, consequences and further product-related damages on such advertisements.



# Yogi: Cong can't digest rise of poor man's son

PNS ■ VARANASI

Congress and its leaders cannot digest the son of poor, Dalit, deprived, backward class reaching the highest position in the country, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said while welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi at a public meeting at Sampurnanand Sanskrit University Grounds here on Friday.

At the function, the prime minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stones of 28 projects worth Rs 1,780 crore. "Congress has always done the politics of dividing the country and has promoted Naxalism and terrorism for its political gains," the chief minister alleged.

Continuing his blistering attack, Yogi said that the nation had been witness to how former Congress president and MP Rahul Gandhi gave a statement against Dalits, poor, backward and underprivileged, throwing parliamentary decorum to the winds and stooped to the level of being in contempt of court.

He added that Congress must apologise to the country for insulting the poor, Dalits and backward people.

Yogi Adityanath said that India was presiding over the G-20, a group of 20 most powerful countries of the world, in the year of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, which was a proof of India's growing influence in the world.

"Whether it is to establish new paradigms of material development or to restore spiritual development, not only the country but the world is seeing the new power of India. Under the leadership of the prime minister, India has set a new example in front of the world. While on one hand the world is feeling proud of India's progress and is eager to adopt this model, on the other, there are some people who criticise UP outside despite having ruled the state for generations and even have no qualms in



putting India in the dock itself when they go abroad," Yogi remarked.

Targeting the Congress further, the chief minister said that the Congress today was even questioning the electronic voting machine (EVM) with which they got the privilege of forming the government in 2004 and 2009.

He said that the party was upset that India was developing.

"It is their habit to put barriers at every level in every campaign of the prime minister. Congress never thought about the development of the country. These people always tried to divide the country in the name of caste, religion and language. They compartmentalised development and set new records of corruption during their tenure. Today, when India is going to shine at the global level, these people are obstructing the progress of the country by defaming it," Yogi Adityanath pointed out.

The chief minister said that in contrast to the Congress, which was increasing disharmony among castes, the government of today was moving forward with the motto 'sabka saath, sabka vikas, sabka prayas' for the last nine years and was working for the progress of all sections of society without any discrimination.

"The government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi

is providing welfare, housing, toilets, ration, cooking gas, electricity connections to the poor. Whether it is the Ayushman Bharat scheme or other facilities of development, all these are reaching everyone equally without any discrimination," the chief minister said.

He added that the prime minister had come to Kashi on Friday to give it a new and grand look through projects. He said that the prime minister, who was a member of Parliament from Kashi, had special association with the place and every time he visited the city he brought some gift to the city.

"With the inauguration/stone laying of projects worth Rs 1,780 crore, Kashi has already become new and grand. Under the inspiration and guidance of the prime minister, not only Kashi, UP and the whole country has achieved new heights of development," Yogi said, adding that Kashi has got global recognition in the last nine years not only for its rich spiritual and cultural heritage, but also for the level of development taking place in the city.

He pointed out that in the last nine years, projects worth Rs 35,000 crore have either been completed or are about to be inaugurated in Kashi alone, which will be dedicated to the people of Kashi in the next visit of the prime minister.

RAHUL'S DISQUALIFICATION AS MP

## Congmen stage demonstration

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Several hundred Congress leaders, including Uttar Pradesh Congress president Brij Lal Khabri, were arrested by police on Friday as they marched towards Raj Bhawan to protest the disqualification of former party president Rahul Gandhi from Parliament.

Congressmen also torched effigies of the Prime Minister and raised slogans accusing the government of misusing the machinery to silence its opponents.

Wearing black armbands, hundreds of Congress leaders marched towards Raj Bhawan from the state office.

As the leaders approached Raj Bhawan, they were forcibly stopped by the police, leading to clashes and the arrest of several leaders, including Khabri.

After about an hour of political demonstration, Congress leaders were sent to Eco Garden.

In the meantime, dozens of Party leaders managed to reach GPO Park and sat on a dharna, raising slogans against the government before heavy police forces used batons to chase them away. Several leaders were also arrested from GPO.

Talking to mediapersons, Brijlal Khabri termed the decision to revoke Rahul Gandhi's



UP Congress leaders and workers protesting in Lucknow on Friday against disqualification of former party president Rahul Gandhi from Parliament

Pioneer

the hands of the BJP government and the Congress will not allow it at any cost and is ready to face any action," Khabri said.

Khabri also claimed that many of the party leaders were injured in the police action against them. In other areas of Lucknow as well, Congress leaders attempted to protest, but were sent back by policemen.

Lok Sabha membership wrong and said that they were on road to express their anger.

He claimed that the party leaders would not tolerate the

wrongdoings of the Modi-Yogi government and would continue to raise their voice for the truth. "Democracy is in danger in

## All citizens are equal before law: Maurya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said that Congress leader Rahul Gandhi was punished for his derogatory statement against the backward community and this verdict showed that the law of the country is supreme and all citizens are equal as far as law is concerned.

"The court order proves that no matter how big a person is, if he has committed a crime he will be punished," Maurya said while talking to reporters here on Friday.

"We had condemned the statement of Rahul Gandhi then and even today condemn his utterances against the members of the Backward community. This is



despicable that despite being sentenced by the court, Rahul Gandhi and Congress leaders are justifying those derogatory statements. This shows the mentality of Congress towards backwards," Deputy CM said.

"If Rahul Gandhi and Congress leaders believe that they can abuse the citizens of their own country, then the constitution of the country has given the OBC community the right to approach the court against them," he said.

"Rahul goes abroad and sows the seeds of hatred. He insulted the army, and made fun of the martyrs of the country. Even in the Rafale case, Rahul Gandhi questioned the court's decision and then offered apologies when he was grilled," he added.

Maurya said with a aim to continuously humiliate Modi ji, the Congress, including the Gandhi family, called Modi ji 'neechi', a 'thief', and a 'merchant of death'.

"Today the Court has shown these leaders the place to which they belong to," he concluded.

# Woman immolates self along with daughter

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A woman burnt herself along with her 12-year-old daughter over a petty dispute in Gorakhpur district while in Meerut, a woman killed her two children with the help of her paramour.

In Gorakhpur, the woman also tried to kill her two other children but they managed to escape out of the house to save their lives.

According to reports, Shrikant Singh, a resident of Mohiuddinpur in Gulriha area of Gorakhpur, was doing pipe fitting work in Saudi Arabia. He came home on January 8, 2023. Apart from Shrikant, the family included his wife Nirmala Devi (40), mother Phoolmati (70), elder daughter Arpita (17), younger daughter Saloni (12) and son Vivek Singh (8).

Shrikant Singh said that his wife Nirmala had breakfast with the whole family on Thursday morning. He said that his brother was looking for a suitable

match for his niece Sumitra and a youth was coming to see her at Moteshwar Shiva temple in Pipraich so he went there on Thursday afternoon. He claimed that his wife also wanted to accompany him but he asked her to remain at home with children which annoyed her.

Shrikant said that in the night, his wife poured petrol over her body and on all the three children and told them to get ready to die. He claimed that before Nirmala could bring a matchstick, his elder daughter Arpita and son Vivek rushed out of home screaming for help. In the meantime, Nirmala closed the door and set herself on fire and the fire caught Saloni as she tried to save her mother. Before the neighbours could break open the door, both mother-daughter were burnt alive. Shrikant said that his old age mother failed to do anything.

The local police registered a case and sent the bodies for autopsy.

In Meerut, a woman, along

with her lover, murdered her two kids to continue their illicit relations without any hindrance.

Reports said that one Nisha Baig, a resident of Sycamore Street in Khairnagar located in Delhi Gate police station area of Meerut was having an affair with a former corporator identified as Saud Faizi. Nisha's husband Shahid Baig works in a shoe shop in Lalkurti Baith area of Meerut.

They had two children -- 10-year-old son Merab and 6-year-old daughter Konen Baig. As Nisha was in relation with Faizi she faced a problem to go ahead with her affair as her two kids also remained in the house when her husband went for work.

On Wednesday night, Nisha informed her husband that both the children were missing from home since the evening. Shahid subsequently searched for the two and later informed the police. The cops also took help of CCTV footage but failed to find the children going anywhere. When the cops learnt of the affair of Nisha,

they went through her call details record and found that she had a long chat with Faizi. The cops also learnt through Shahid that when he called Nisha at 7:30 pm on the fateful day, both the children were present at home.

Suspecting some foul play, the cops grilled Nisha but she did not reveal anything. The cops also looked for Faizi but found him absconding.

On Thursday night, Faizi reached the police station and after being grilled, he confessed to killing both the kids.

Faizi revealed that before the murder, he had tied the hands and feet of both the children and put them in the box of the bed. After this, both were injected with drugs and then strangled to death. After committing the murder, Faizi put the dead bodies of both the children in his car and threw them in the canal located in Bhola Ki Jhal. The cops subsequently took both Faizi and Nisha in custody and efforts were made to trace out the bodies of the missing children.

## UPERC hearing for hike in power tariff from April

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Electricity regulator UP Electricity Regulatory Commission will commence the public hearing for a hike in power tariff from April.

The hearing will commence from Varanasi on April 10.

UP Power Corporation Limited, along with its five wholly owned subsidiaries, have filed ARR (annual revenue requirement) with the power regulator seeking hike in power tariff ranging from 18 per cent to 23 per cent for the next fiscal 2023-24 commencing from April 1.

The power regulator, during the public hearing, will record the views of the power consumers on the UPPCL seeking hike in power tariff.

The hearing for the ARR filed by the Purvanchal Power Distribution Corporation will begin from Varanasi on April 10. The hearing for Madhyanchal Power Distribution Corporation will be held at Lucknow on April 21. The hearing for Dakshinanchal Power Distribution Corporation and Kanpur Electricity Supply Company will be held at Agra on April 27 and for Paschimanchal Power Distribution Corporation at

## Power employees' protest on Mar 28

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The power employees have given a call for statewide protest on March 28.

The power employees are demanding that the government honour the promise of withdrawal of penal action like criminal cases lodged against the employees during the three-day token strike.

The power employees have threatened to intensify the agitation if their demands were not conceded.

The power employees' leaders said that 18 lakh employees of the state government, urban local bodies and public sector undertakings would also join the day-long statewide protest demonstrations.

The power employees went on a

72-hour token strike on March 17. The strike was withdrawn several hours before the end of the deadline on March 20 following the agreement reached with Energy Minister AK Sharma.

The power employees are demanding withdrawal of penal action against the employees and their leaders. The state government had declared the strike illegal under provisions of the Essential Services Maintenance Act (ESMA) and criminal cases were lodged against the employees and their leaders. Services of around 1,500 contractual employees were also terminated.

Energy Minister AK Sharma on March 20 had thanked the power employees joint action committee for calling off the strike.

Noida on April 28.

Meanwhile, Avadesh Verma, president of UP Power Consumer Forum which is opposing the proposal for the hike in power tariff, said the UPPCL should first refund the arrears to the power consumers. He said the propos-

al for the hike in power tariff filed before the power regulator by the UPCL was unconstitutional. He said before seeking a hike in the power tariff, the UPCL should either return Rs 25,133 crore to the consumers or adjust it in power bills.

# Yakub's properties worth Rs 9 cr attached

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Meerut police attached properties worth Rs 9 crore belonging to Bahujan Samaj Party leader and meat mafia Haji Yakub Qureshi and identified his properties worth over Rs 31 crore.

The action, which is part of the state government's ongoing action against meat mafias in Uttar Pradesh, was initiated on Thursday. Qureshi's other unlawful assets totalling over Rs 31 crore have also been identified.

On the other hand, on the third day of the Income Tax Department's raid on the residence of Aligarh meat businessman Haji Zaheer, property worth crores of rupees was found.

Speaking about the police action on the properties of Yakub Qureshi, Circle Officer of Kithore, Rupali Roy, said, "Two plots of lands of Haji Yakub Qureshi which have been attached today are in the name of Haji Yakub Qureshi's wife Sanjeeda Begum. These properties were purchased with money obtained through criminal activities."

Roy added that Yakub Qureshi's other illegal assets worth Rs 31 crore 77 lakh had also been marked and action would be initiated on these properties also.

A total of 26 properties, including both land and buildings, have been identified as belonging to Yakub Qureshi. There are 32 cars in all. There are more than 24 premium four-wheelers and some two-wheelers.

Haji Yakub Qureshi, a former minister in the BSP and Samajwadi Party governments, is currently held in Sonbhadra prison under the Gangsters Act

and the Anti-social Activities (Prevention) Act. Imran and Firoz, two of his sons, are presently out on bail.

Seven luxurious houses are among the 26 sites that have been designated as land and buildings. These mansions are located at various locations in Meerut. Yakub Qureshi's school, hospital, meat factory, land, two homes in Sarai Bahlim, and other unlawful properties have been identified by the police on Hapur Road.

Yakub Qureshi owns properties in 10 villages. Some construction work has also been done at these places. Two bungalows in Sarai Bahlim Kotwali area were bought in the name of Sanjeeda Begum. In Zahidpur, a bungalow and six buildings have been identified. Registered in the names of Yakub Qureshi and his sons Imran and Firoz, luxury and expensive vehicles such as Mercedes, Jaguar, and Range Rover have also been found. There are 23 vehicles registered in the name of Al Faheem Meatez Company, including Innova, Pajero, Balero, and five Scorpios.

Former minister Haji Yaqoob Qureshi owned and ran Al Fahim Meatez Private Limited. This meat factory is situated in village Alipur Jijmana Dhikauli under Kharkhoda police station area. Illegal business of meat packaging and processing was going on in the factory. Police charged 18 people, including Yakub Qureshi, his wife Sanjeeda and sons Firoz and Imran, after recovering meat from the spot. Meat worth Rs 5 crore was caught in the factory.

Meanwhile, Youtubers associated with the 'Bhojpuri Disco' channel have been arrested on

charges of robbing people in Gorakhpur. The police have recovered a motorcycle that was allegedly used during the robbery, a 32-bore revolver and empty cartridges. However, the mastermind behind the crime has yet to be apprehended.

As per the reports, the popularity of social media lured some young individuals into illegal activity. The 'Bhojpuri Disco' channel, which featured Bhojpuri songs and dance performances, gained significant traction, attracting over 8,00,000 followers. As a monetised channel, revenue started to flow in. But after the channel's creators failed to comply with YouTube's policies, the channel was penalised and its earnings stopped. After the channel failed to earn decent revenue, a group of young men associated with it started robbing people. They would book camera operators online and then target them.

In the first incident, they targeted a camera operator in Deoria, while the second victim was from Varanasi. The incident took place on March 21. The accused stole cameras and lenses worth Rs 6-7 lakh after threatening him.

On the basis of the complaint registered by the victims, a case was registered against the people running the YouTube channel, said Gorakhpur's Senior Superintendent of Police Gaurav Grover.

"With the help of Khorabar police surveillance, five people have been arrested. However, their mastermind is still out of reach," he said.

Grover said, "The police have recovered all the looted items. Along with the motorcycle used during the robbery, a 32 bore revolver and empty cartridges have also been recovered."

## SSB steps up vigil along Nepal border

**Bahraich (PTI):** The Sashastra Seema Bal has issued an alert and put up posters bearing pictures of Amritpal Singh and his aides along the border with Nepal to avert the possibility of the radical preacher fleeing the country via Uttar Pradesh.

The Punjab Police launched a crackdown against Amritpal and elements of his "Waris Punjab De" outfit last week.

Amritpal, however, gave the police a slip and escaped their dragnet when his cavalcade was intercepted in the Jalandhar district. Following his escape, Amritpal changed his appearance, wore sunglasses and western attire and has been using different modes of transport.

"Based on inputs from intelligence agencies that Amritpal can enter Nepal, we have issued an alert on the border. Posters with their pictures have also been put up on the border in Rupaiddiha. We are closely monitoring the movement of people along the border," SSB commandant Tapan Das, said on Friday.

**PUBLIC NOTICE**  
**G.A. No. 554 of 2020**  
**E.C. NO. 636 OF 2015**  
**IN THE HIGH COURT AT CALCUTTA**  
**ORDINARY ORIGINAL CIVIL JURISDICTION**

**Kotak Mahindra Bank Limited**  
**Devendra Kumar & Anr.**  
**To**  
**1.Devendra Kumar S/o, Om Prakash**  
**Gunja, Kaitha, Kanpur, Pin code- 209 206.**  
**2.Menaka Singh W/o Devendra Kumar**  
**Gunja, Kaitha, Kanpur, Pin code- 209 206.**

**Petitioner/Award Holder**  
**-Versus-**  
**Respondents/Judgement Debtors**

This is to put to your notice that an Execution application has been filed against the above named Addressees, wherein the award holder has sought for execution of the arbitral award dated 25th February 2015. By an order dated 9th July, 2015, the Hon'ble Justice Soumen Sen has directed the judgement-debtors to file their Affidavits of Assets, the said affidavit of assets have not been filed till date . In view of the same an application has been filed for the issuance of warrant against you which is made returnable on 12th May 2023.

You should be present in Court or be duly represented by your respective advocates.

**SINHA AND COMPANY**  
**ADVOCATES**  
**5, KIRAN SHANKAR ROY ROAD**  
**KOLKATA – 700001.**  
**Contact: +9133-2210-1617/1625**



s/d

Date: 22.03.2023	AUTHORISED OFFICER
Place: BAREILLY	INDIABULLS HOUSING FINANCE LTD.

Yuvam Pandey and Chhav Singh welcomed the gathering and emphasised the mission and vision of the school to empower students with an education which would enable them to reach their full potential. The programme began with Saraswati Vandana. Later prizes and certificates for both academic and co-curricular activities were awarded to the meritorious students for their commendable performance during the academic year 2022-23. The awards and certificates were presented to the students by Bandana Misra and Rachna Mohotra. The various categories in which prizes were awarded were Award for Application, All Rounder, Consistency, General Improvement, Full Attendance and Subject Toppers. The students were also felicitated for their achievement in co-curricular activities like sports, art, music and dance.

ing these days the girls were worshipped. She said that fifteen girls had proved their mettle in education and to motivate them further for higher studies this special function had been arranged by the Uttar Pradesh government.

She said the Uttar Pradesh government will make every effort so that girls

of the state did not lag behind in higher studies and served the state and the country as well. Shukla then felicitated the girls who had stood on the merit list. She then also distributed laptop to the outstanding girls. The minister then took part in the 'Godh Bharai' of pregnant women followed by 'annaprasan' and provided aid to malnourished children.

**REMEMBERED:** Socialist thinker Dr Ram Manohar Lohia was remembered on his birth anniversary on Thursday. A programme was organised to mark the day at the office of Samajwadi Party in which speakers threw light over thoughts of socialist leader.

work being done by the Stores department for the use and dissemination of official language in Hindi. In it an elegant presentation of the work being done by the Stores department in Hindi was done. General Manager Satish Kumar inaugurated the exhibition by lighting the lamp. The GM said that our railway is completely in Hindi speaking area and Hindi is the mother tongue of all of us, so we should use it more and more in our official work without full sense of duty and commitment. The GM appreciated the excellent work being done by the Stores department in official language Hindi and announced a reward of ₹15,000 for the officers and employees who performed this work. In this sequence, according to the items related to the inspection of the Parliamentary Official Language Committee, the work done in Hindi by the Stores department was

joint replacement was mainly confined to hip and knee and later it evolved for other painful joints like shoulder, ankle, elbow etc. However, with the advancement in medical science, reverse shoulder replacement has proved to be a boon for patients. Reverse shoulder replacement has emerged as the preferred technique for dealing with long-standing cases of arthritis/ tendon damage/ fractures or complications arising out of previous treatments or neglect or tumours. Reverse shoulder replacement can be used in patients who have weak or paralysed muscles around the shoulder too. One such shoulder replacement surgery benefited patient in the city was Sukhjinder Singh who suffered a major injury to his right shoulder in a road accident. His shoulder bone was broken into multiple pieces that it was difficult to repair and the shoulder joint was dislocated. After getting initial first aid, he was advised for reverse shoulder replacement. This surgery was painless and fast with rapid recovery protocol being followed. He is now able to do all his daily activities including lifting weights and driving a two-wheeler.



# India has become capable in every field under Modi’s leadership: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that India has emerged strong and become capable in every field under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. “In the last six years, under the guidance of Modi, all the schemes have been implemented with priority in UP,” he said while speaking at the inaugural function of three-day international seminar ‘One World TB Summit’ organised at Rudraksh Convention Centre on the occasion of World TB Day in the presence of PM Narendra Modi, Governor Anandi Ben Patel and Union Health Minister Mansukh Bhai Mandaviya. The function was also attended by Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Executive Director of Stop TB Partnership Dr Lucica Ditiu apart from the health delegates from the country and the world. “In UP, the work of adoption of 2.7 lakh TB patients at the government level has been done, out of which 70 per cent patients are living a healthy life today after being disease-free. Besides, Rs 422 crore has so far been paid through DBT by the state government for nutritional assistance to



CM Yogi Adityanath addressing the One World TB Summit at Rudraksh, Varanasi on Friday.

the TB patients of the state,” he said, adding that we are committed to keep-

ing the 25 crore population of UP healthy. Welcoming all the guests in this holy land of Baba Vishwanath, known as the world’s most ancient and spiritual and cultural city, and PM’s Karmasadhan place, Yogi said India is in the first year of its Amrit Kaal and in such a situation, under the chairmanship of PM Modi, India has got the leadership of G-20. “The country is moving at a fast pace towards fulfilling the PM’s vision of a TB-free India by 2025. India’s largest state by population, UP, once had 21 per cent of the country’s TB patients. In the last five years, a payment of ₹ 422 crore has been made available to 16.90 lakh TB patients in Uttar Pradesh through DBT through nutritional assistance. So far, more than 2.25 lakh TB patients have been adopted, who have been provided nutritional materials. As a result, we have been able to cure 70 per cent of these TB patients. Special attention is being given to TB investigation at PM Ayushman Wellness

Centres,” he said, adding that the process of distributing more than 80,000 kits on a war footing is going on in different districts across the state. He said under the leadership and guidance of PM Modi, every scheme has been implemented with full commitment in UP in the last six years which has been done with the aim of keeping the 25 crore population of UP healthy. “Success has been achieved in eradicating communicable diseases, Japanese and acute encephalitis syndrome up to 96 percent in UP,” he said, adding that India has presented a model of management to the world in the Covid era apart from inventing and making indigenous vaccines. “This is proof of India’s susceptibility to diseases. In UP, 40 crore doses of Covid were given through free vaccines. In UP, where earlier the maternal mortality rate was 285 per lakh, today it has been brought down to 167 per lakh. Apart from this, earlier the infant mortality rate was 57 per thousand, which we have succeeded in bringing down to the level of 38 per thousand. UP is working with full commitment against TB and I am sure TB will be defeated and India will win,” he said.

## Modi urged to inspire world leaders in fight against TB

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Executive Director of Stop TB Partnership Campaign Dr Lucica Ditiu urged the Prime Minister Narendra Modi to lead and inspire other world leaders in this fight against TB. She was addressing the inaugural function of One World TB Summit which was inaugurated at Rudraksh Convention Centre here by the PM Narendra Modi on the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day here on Friday. This three-day summit is being organised by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) and the Stop TB Partnership. Founded in 2001, the Stop TB Partnership is an organisation hosted by the United Nations that amplifies the voices of the people, communities, and countries affected by TB. Speaking on the occasion in presence of Modi, she also informed about the UN high-level meeting on TB on September 22 during the



ED of Stop TB Partnership Dr Lucica Ditiu addressing a function on World TB Day at Rudraksh in Varanasi on Friday.

UN General Assembly in New York and also requested the prime minister’s presence in it. “The summit is taking place in one of the oldest cities in the world, Varanasi to discuss a thousand-year-old disease in the world that is Tuberculosis or TB,” she said, adding that India has a very high burden of TB but with the best plan, ambition and great implementation of activities. She also underlined the global welfare embrace of India’s G-20 Presidency and explained the importance of the

theme - One World One Health. “India is on the road to ending TB by 2025 under the leadership of the Prime Minister (Narendra Modi),” she said, adding that due to the efforts of countries like India, the number of people who are not getting diagnosis and treatment for TB has gone below three million for the first time in history. She praised India’s scale in tackling TB and the TB Free India initiative and expressed the belief that India will end TB by 2025 with India’s support.

## Dept of Posts playing important role in TB eradication

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Department of Posts is also playing an important role in the eradication of TB disease along with the Health department. “The sputum samples of TB patients are rapidly reaching the Health department’s lab through the postman which has also accelerated the identification of patients and their quick treatment. Apart from this, ₹500

per month is also being paid to all identified and treated tuberculosis patients through DBT in their India Post Payments Bank accounts,” said Postmaster General (PMG), Varanasi Region, Krishna Kumar Yadav, while speaking on the occasion of World Tuberculosis Day here on Friday.

He said that under the joint initiative of the departments of Posts and Medical and Health (UP) for eliminat-

ing TB from the root, the sputum and other samples of TB patients packed from the Designated Microscopy Centre (DMC) is being sent to the respective CBNAAT (Cartridge Based Nucleic Acid Amplification Test) Lab / Culture and DST (Drug Sensitivity Testing) Lab of the district through the post offices. “Samples from remote community and primary health centres are collected and delivered to the labo-

ratory by postmen within 24 to 48 hours, so that their purity is maintained,” said the PMG, adding that 13,390 samples have been collected and sent to testing lab by the Postmen in Varanasi Region so far. Under Varanasi Region, there are 21 post offices in Varanasi, two in Bhadohi, eight in Chandauli, 25 in Jaunpur, 24 in Ghazipur and 24 in Ballia district have been authorised for booking.

## Nikshay Diwas organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Department of Political Science, Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith (MGKV) on Friday organised Nikshay Diwas under the National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme. Prof Suryabhan Prasad, Head of Department of Political Science emphasised on generating consciousness among people about tuberculosis and said that this disease is now not incurable and can be cured. The UNO has set a target to eliminate the tuberculosis by 2030 but India has set a target to eliminate this disease by 2025, he added. Dr Vijay Kumar, Dr Ravi Prakash Singh, Dr Piyush Mani Tripathi, Dr Jaidev Pandey, Dr Jyoti Singh and others were present on the occasion. The Economics department of the university also organised an awareness programme on tuberculosis. The head of department Prof Rajiv Kumar said tuberculosis is a serious disease which should be eradicated. The transmission of tuberculosis could be stopped only by generating awareness among people, he added. Dr Paras Nath Maurya said tuberculosis is such a disease which affects the social, economical and mental status of the society and so the people should be made aware about it. This disease could be stopped from spreading by creating a clean atmosphere, having a healthy diet and following a normal lifestyle, he said and appealed to people to remain away from all addictions. Dr Rakesh Kumar Tiwari conducted the awareness programme.

Prof Hansa Jain outlined the objective of the programme while Dr Gangadhar proposed the vote of thanks.

### SEMESTER EXAMINATION

The examination of first and third semester of post graduation of the Mahatma Gandhi Kashi Vidyapith will commence from March 27 and will be conducted in two shifts. A total of 67,968 students will appear in the examination. As per the schedule, the MGKV will conduct the examination of first and third semester of the post graduation from March 27 to April 15 in two shifts from 8.30 to 11.30 am and from 1.30 to 4.30 pm. The examination duration will be of three hours. A total of 67,968 students will appear in both semester examinations and to ensure its smooth conuct as many as 52 examination centres have been made in five districts, including Varanasi. To monitor the examination, the control room will be opened in the psychology department situated in the varsity premises. The varsity administration has sought IP address from all the affiliated colleges. The examination will be conducted under the vigil of CCTV cameras to ensure its free and fair conduct. The annual examination of the final year of graduation is scheduled to be conducted from April 13. This will be the last batch of annual examination and thereafter the semester examination will also be conducted at graduate level under the new National Education Policy (NEP).

## Three unique genus of fungi discovered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In a major breakthrough, the researchers at the (CAS) Botany, Banaras Hindu University (Botany, BHU), have discovered three unique genus of fungi named as Neoacervuloseptoria, Neo Cercosporella and Neoramulariopsis that can be very important from a taxonomic point of view. This research work was published on March 16, 2023, in Mycological Progress, a very prestigious journal of the German Mycological Society, Germany. The research team led by Senior Assistant Professor Dr Raghvendra Singh of Department of Botany, BHU comprising Sanjeet Kumar Verma, Sanjay Yadav and Gargi Singh of Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Gorakhpur University and Assistant Professor Dr Prakash Kushwaha of Madhav Rao Sapre Government College, Patharia, Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, has got this success.

These fungi were obtained as parasites from the forests of Madhya Pradesh in December 2019 from a plant named Peristrophe bicalyculata. These fungi have been identified as a new genus. After a thorough study of this fungus in the laboratory, complete information about this new genus was gathered. This discovery has been done by using modern molecular biology and electron micro-

scopic techniques, which are considered to be the most suitable and important criteria for identifying microorganisms. According to researchers, the whole world is currently battling climate change and as per the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) Living Planet Report (LPR) 2022, between 1970 and 2018, 69 per cent of the monitored wildlife population around the world has been a steep decline. This discovery of BHU is considered helpful in the conservation of diverse species. This discovery is important for the whole world because hyaline fungi of this group have been found to have the ability to produce rubellin metabolites (a drug for heart disease) on which research work is going on which indicates that this research work can play a very important role for scientists working in the field of biotechnology and pharmaceutical industries.

According to Dr Raghvendra Singh, “It is time to include fungi in global conservation goals.” Global climate change is seriously affecting biodiversity around the world. According to scientific research, if dedicated efforts are not made for the identification and protection of biodiversity, then such a situation may also arise in front of mankind, where all types of species and species of organisms may become anonymous and extinct forever, he added.

## Guv launches nutritional programme for children



Governor Anandiben Patel launching a nutritional programme in Varanasi on Thursday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Governor Anandiben Patel launched a big nutritional programme for children with multi-millet nutri-bar distribution at the modernised aanganwadi centre ‘Nand Ghar’ in Kashi Vidyapith block here on Thursday. Chairperson of Hindustan Zinc Ltd and Non-Executive Director, Vedanta Ltd, Priya Agarwal Hebbar, District Magistrate S Rajalingam and Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal were also present. Under this pilot launch, Anil Agarwal Foundation (AAF) will distribute the nutri-bar targeting almost 50,000 children daily across 1,400 Aanganwadi centres, including Nand Ghars across three focus blocks of Varanasi-Sevapuri, Arajaline and Kashi Vidyapith. With this, AAF aims to bring a positive nutrition impact by addressing malnutrition concerns among children aged three-six years in UP. As a part of its thematic intervention on right nourishment, Nand Ghar, the flagship social impact project of AAF working towards child and women development, collaborated with Indian Institute of Millet Research (Nutri-hub, IIMR) through Troo Good. Speaking about this unique initiative, the Governor said, “As Prime Minister Narendra Modi has declared 2023 as International Year of Millets, our government’s efforts have been to signify the importance of millet in developing nutritional healthy diet for every growing child and women. Such initiatives will not only address the importance of millet, but also help to cure several malnutrition related diseases, thus

creating a positive impact on the community. It’s good to see cause-oriented organisations such as Vedanta and AAF aid holistic nourishment of children by including millets. I also appreciate the efforts of Varanasi administration for smooth execution of this intervention.” Priya Agarwal Hebbar said, “Vedanta’s vision to achieve zero hunger aligns with Government’s Poshan Abhiyan towards eliminating hunger and malnutrition from our country. Through this unique initiative, we aim to address the nutritional concerns among children, especially in the rural parts of India. These protein-dense millet bars are thoughtfully curated for children keeping in mind their nutritional needs, palate and preferences. We are thankful to IIMR and Government of Uttar Pradesh in helping us commence this initiative as a small step towards creating a national movement.”

The recent Union Budget designated IIMR as a Centre of Excellence for sharing millet-related best practices and technologies globally and the nutrition intervention has been supported by the premier institute. Dr B Dayakar Rao, Principal Scientist, Indian Institute of Millets Research (IIMR) commented, “It gives me immense pride to be on board for community initiatives like this that makes a difference at the grassroots levels. Millet as a smart food must be introduced to the rural landscape about its nutritional value and health benefits, including information on calorific content. I believe, millets are an important solution in the collective march towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).”

## Devotees throng Saubhagya Gauri temple

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Hundreds of devotees thronged Saubhagya Gauri temple at Satyanarayan temple near Gyanvapi mosque on the third day of Vasantik Navratri here on Friday. Besides, a rush of devotees was also seen at Chandraghanta Devi temple in Chowk. Besides, a rush of devotees was seen at Durga Mandir (Durgakund) as usual. As per tradition, the rush should be at Saubhagya Gauri temple but



Devotees offered prayers at Chandraghanta Devi on the third day of Vasantik Navratri in Varanasi on Friday.

thousands of devotees also reached Chandraghanta and Durgakund temples to offer prayers.

Meanwhile, a good number of people also went to Vindhyachal in Mirzapur district, about 65 kilometres from here, to offer prayers at Maa Vindhyavasini Devi, using Roadways buses and rush was also seen at the old Durga Mandir at Ramnagar and Sheelta Mata temple at Adalpur.

## Diseases related to eyes discussed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Varanasi optometry conference was organised at Jeevandeep Paramedical College in Bada Lalpur here by the Centre for Sight in association with the Optometry Department of the college on the occasion of World Optometry Day on Thursday. The chief guest and senior eye surgeon Dr Anil Tiwari threw light on the role of optometrists in the society and appealed to the people to immediately consult the eye specialist if they face any problem in eyes and do not avoid it otherwise it could be serious. An eye specialist in Pt



Deen Dayal Upadhyay Government Hospital, Pandeypur, Dr Sunil Pandey discussed the diseases related to eyes and preventive measurements to avoid them. The manager of Jeevandeep Paramedical College, Dr Ashok

Kumar Singh, also spoke on the occasion.

The organising secretary of Varanasi Optometry Conference Dr Nitesh Upadhyay discussed the objective of the conference and rising role of optometrists in the society. Ex-Additional Director, Health, Dr Anshu Singh, talked about the role of optometrists in hospitals of both public and private sectors. Principal of the college Dr OP Singh proposed the vote of thanks and distributed certificates to the participants. Anurag Pandey of Centre for Sight, Abhishek Kumar, Dr (Major) Santosh Verma, Dr Sameer Kumar and others were present on the occasion.

## Seminar on diversity, pluralism & education in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To mark its golden jubilee year, the Education Department of Vasanta College for Women (VCW), affiliated to the Banaras Hindu University (BHU), in association with Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) organising a two-day national seminar on “Diversity, Pluralism and Education in India: Continuity, Challenges and the Road Ahead” under the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav which was inaugurated on Friday. Prof AK Singh of the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) while speaking as chief guest said that it is education which has kept the humanity living.

Prof PN Singh of BHU while speaking as the guest of honor, drew attention towards the high values of Indian culture and emphasised on their inclusion in education for strengthening the unity in Indian society. In his presidential speech, Dr Banwari Lal Natia from Northern Regional Committee of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) outlined the actual nature of education and said that education could unite the diversified Indian



Guests releasing souvenir of the national seminar being organised by Education Department of VCW.

society by awakening the self-respect of teachers.

Principal of VCW Prof Alka Singh welcomed the guests and threw light on the educational and social relevance of the subject of the seminar. The seminar convener Dr Amrita Katayiani outlined the subject of the seminar.

The souvenir of the seminar was also released by the guests on the occasion. Organising secretary Prof Meenakshi Biswal conducted the inaugural session and head of the host department Prof Sujata Saha proposed the vote of thanks. Among those pre-

sented on the occasion were Prof SC Rai, Prof Arti Srivastava, Prof Ashish Srivastava and Prof Sunil Kumar Singh.

### REPORT SUBMITTED

Varanasi suffered approximately 33 per cent crop loss due to heavy rainfall and hailstorm as per a report submitted by teams of SDMs constituted by District Magistrate S Rajalingam. The maximum loss was reported in Pindra Tehsil of the district. Meanwhile, the former state minister and president of Prayagraj Kshetra of Congress

Party Ajay Rai said that the party will oppose the assessment of the loss if it was made without visiting the fields and demanded adequate compensation to the affected farmers. District Magistrate Rajalingam had constituted three teams under the leadership of sub-divisional magistrates (SDMs) to make assessment of crop losses in their respective tehsil due to untimely heavy rainfall and hailstorm. The teams submitted their report to the DM.

As per report, the teams made assessment of about 33 per cent crop losses in all three

tehsils but the heavy rainfall and hailstorm which had struck the district on March 19, affected the most in Pindra tehsil where the crop loss was assessed in 4697.72 hectare lands and a total of 23,372 farmers were affected.

Similarly, the teams reported the crop loss in 4235.20 hectare land in Rajatalab tehsil where a total of 21,176 farmers were affected while a total of 13,845 farmers were affected in Sadar tehsil under which the crop loss was assessed in 4179.11 hectare land due to untimely heavy rainfall and hailstorm. The district administration will forward the report to the state government so that the compensation could be given to the affected farmers for their crop losses. Meanwhile president of Prayagraj Kshetra of Congress Ajay Rai claimed that he along with party men visited the fields of farmers in Pindra tehsil where farmers had suffered huge loss and demanded an adequate compensation to the farmers for their crop loss due to heavy rainfall and hailstorm. If it came to knowledge that the assessment of crop losses was made without visiting the fields and holding talks to the affected farmers, it will be opposed, he threatened.



www.dailypioneer.com

facebook.com/dailypioneer | @TheDailyPioneer | instagram.com/dailypioneer/

PAPER WITH PASSION

## Inconsistent

ONDC is making a foray into the city transport sector but its very existence is problematic

Open Network Digital Commerce (ONDC) has entered the city transport sector by tying up with a Bengaluru-based ride-hailing company. The objective is to check the market dominance of aggregators like Uber and Ola. ONDC, a Government-run protocol on the lines of UPI, is also reportedly negotiating with more companies in the sector in several other cities. While well-intended, there are fundamental flaws in the idea of ONDC. When it was launched in September last year, it was claimed that it would check the monopoly of global e-commerce giants like Amazon and Walmart. "After UPI, another game changing idea to democratise commerce - ONDC soft launch today to select consumers, sellers and logistics providers. Get ready for a world of choice, convenience and transparency," Commerce & Industry Piyush Goyal tweeted the day ONDC was launched. But isn't checking monopolistic practices the duty of the Competition



Commission of India (CCI)? The Competition Act, 2002, was passed by Parliament in 2002, to which the President accorded assent in January 2003. It was subsequently amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007. In accordance with the provisions of the Amendment Act, the Competition Commission of India and the Competition Appellate Tribunal were established. The CCI is now fully functional with a Chairperson and six members, according to the CCI's website. The provisions of the Competition Act relating to anti-competitive agreements and abuse of dominant position were notified on May 20, 2009.

"It is the statutory duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effect on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade carried on by other participants, in markets in India as provided in the Preamble as well as Section 18 of the Act," says the CCI website. The commission is also mandated to give its opinion on competition issues to government or statutory authority and to undertake competition advocacy for creating awareness of competition law, it adds. Against this backdrop, the very idea of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry setting up a body for the same purpose is duplication of work. Besides, it also militates against the principle Prime Minister Narendra Modi has stated more than once: the government has no business to be in business. It is in pursuance of this principle that the Government has been privatising public sector undertakings. But, by launching ONDC, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry will be ensuring government interference in the economy — something that is not in tune with the Modi Government reformist agenda. On the face of it, ONDC's new forays may seem impressive but in reality these don't appear to be consistent with the newly emerging policy framework. Instead of zealously promoting ONDC, the Ministry of Commerce & Industry should focus on boosting manufacturing.

### PICTALK



Women in traditional dresses celebrate Zangtri as part of three-day Navreh (Kashmiri New Year) festival

PTI

## Are you contributing to electronic waste?

E-waste is a growing concern not only in India but also globally. With the launch of newer devices, our greed leads us to buy the latest ones

Christian Lous Lange says "technology is an effective servant but a dangerous master". There is no denying everyone is addicted to technology in some way or another. Everyone has seen the transition from a wired telephone to the first cell phones followed by the latest, lighter and better version of cell phones. However, have we ever thought that today's technology will be obsolete someday? Today, technology has affected almost every aspect from advancements in education, medicine or transport to easy access to socialization, food, healthcare and productivity.

Every year, big tech companies come up with new versions of their devices. This leads to the market to shift to its updated version. As a result, many individuals replace their phones or gadgets with new ones, causing a lot of E-waste. Today, almost 10 billion people have smartphones, and in 3-4 years without access to repair these devices will add to an enormous amount of e-waste that already exists.

Though buying latest gadgets keeps an individual



updated, in the long run their constant use will affect our planet's health severely. According to a research, India is the 3rd largest E-waste producer after China and the USA. E-waste or electronic waste is the fastest growing waste stream in the world. It includes discarded electronic devices such as mobile phones, tablets, notepads, computers, radios and televisions. Computer devices account for nearly 70% of e-waste, followed by the telecom sector, medical equipment and electrical equipment.

Unfortunately, these devices end up in landfills, where they release hazardous gases into the atmosphere. The toxic components so released affect human health in terms of skin irritation, lung infections, kidney problems, nausea and others. They also contribute to soil contamination, polluting the envi-

ronment and most importantly harm and threat to wildlife. According to a recent study, E-waste has reached alarming levels with 5.3 billion phones thrown away every year. Since the last 5 years, waste has grown by 21% and is expected to reach 74.2 MT by 2030. If not recycled or disposed of properly, heavy metals in e-waste emit toxic substances causing serious environmental concern.

At the individual level, there are several solutions that can help reduce e-waste such as considering repairing a smartphone instead of buying a new one or preferring to donate old devices such as laptops, computers or notepads to schools or charitable organisations that can find a use for the product. Educating high-school students about e-waste's harmful effects has a greater impact on stopping its spread. Adopting changes in technology such as cloud computing and the internet of things can even help with dematerialization. In India, many e-waste recycling startups such as Cashify, Attero recycling, Namu E-waste, Binbag and many more have come up

with the objective of conserving resources by adopting economical and responsible disposal techniques of e-waste.

These startups are working day and night to create opportunities to transfer waste into socially and industrially beneficial raw materials such as valuable metals, plastics and glass. They are using simple, cost-efficient and environmentally friendly technologies suitable for Indian conditions. As climate change effects grow, it becomes the responsibility of its citizens to help the planet and prevent e-waste issues. Also, with the 5G revolution, it is imperative to recycle old smartphones. It is important to understand that a difference can only be made at the individual level.

E-waste is a growing concern not only in India but also globally, as the moment electronic devices get introduced, an individual's greed leads them to buy the latest one while the old ones take space in the cupboard drawers. We need a safe channel for recycling obsolete equipment.

(The writer is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)



SAKSHI SETHI

# Myanmar nightmare continues unabated

It's been more than two years since the coup, yet the low-intensity civil war raging on in our neighbouring country is set to last for a long time

More than two years have passed since the coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, which prevented the elected members of the National League for Democracy, which had won 396 seats out of 476 in the Lower House of Parliament in the country's November 2020 elections, from assuming office. The junta that perpetrated the coup arrested Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, NLD leader and iconic symbol of the country's struggle for democracy, and leaders of her party. It unleashed a vicious repression campaign.

The Government continues to face growing countrywide resistance with murderous violence. Volker Türk, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the 52nd session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 6, 2023, that, overall, the military's airstrikes against civilian locations increased by 141 per cent in the second year of its takeover, and its shelling of communities, including hospitals schools and places of worship, by over 100 per cent. During the same period, incidents in which homes and neighbourhoods were set on fire rose by 380 per cent. This led to an estimated 1,200 per cent increase in the number of homes destroyed. He further stated that reports continued to be received daily, particularly from the Sagaing







# Rahul's case echoes in UN



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/UNITED NATIONS

A verdict sentencing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to jail for two years echoed in the United Nations (UN) and it said the international body was aware of it.

When asked whether UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres was "worried about democracy" in India, Farhan Haq, deputy spokesperson for Secretary General, said late on Thursday, "I can say we're aware of the reports regarding

the case of Rahul Gandhi. We understand that his party does plan to appeal the decision. That's as much as I can say on that at this stage."

Rahul was sentenced to two years in jail on Thursday by a Surat court in a 2019 criminal defamation case over his "Modi surname" remark.

He took to Twitter to give his initial reaction by quoting Mahatma Gandhi in Hindi. "My religion is based on truth and non-violence. Truth is my God, non-violence, the means to get it. — Mahatma Gandhi," he tweeted.

# String of initiatives launched to eliminate TB by 2025 in India

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/VARANASI

Asserting that "it's difficult to accomplish new outcomes with old approaches," Prime Minister Narendra Modi on World TB Day on Friday launched a string of innovative initiatives like TB-Mukt Panchayat, official pan-India rollout of a shorter TB Preventive Treatment and Family-centric care model for TB.

He said this would help India achieve TB elimination target by 2025, five years ahead of the global stipulated time.

The Prime Minister said the new initiatives to fight against the bacterial infection is in addition to a multi-pronged approach being already followed, including measures to enhance nutrition, increase people's participation, treatment innovation, integration of technologies and disease prevention through programmes like Fit India, Yoga and Khelo India.

"These could become the



global model for ending TB..." he said.

Under 'TB Mukta Panchayat Abhiyan' members of the local bodies are sensitised and trained about the disease, with them aiding the government's implementation of the programme and achieving TB free status while the nation-wide rollout of a 3-month preventive treatment for those at risk of developing TB aims to reduce the course of treatment from the previous six months and replace the daily pills with a once-a-week medicine regimen.

Stating that 80 per cent of TB medicines are made in India, Modi lauded the role

played by the pharma industry and said it is a big strength to the world's fight against TB. "I wish that fruits of each and every endeavour of India, campaign of India, innovation of India reach to the whole world...as we are committed towards the Global Good!" he said at an event organised by the Union Health Ministry along with the Stop TB Partnership organisation..

The Prime Minister credited people's participation for the great work that India has done in the fight against Tuberculosis. After the government's appeal, about 10 lakh TB patients were adopted across

the country by people, including children of 10 to 12 years of age. Financial help to a TB patient under the programme has reached up to one thousand crore rupees.

"This addresses the challenge of nutrition for TB patients along with the government's direct benefit transfer scheme started for TB patients in 2018. Approximately Rs 2,000 crore have been directly transferred into their bank accounts for their treatment, with 75 lakh TB patients benefiting from this. "Ni-kshay Mitras have now become a new source of energy for all TB patients," he said.

The Prime Minister also drew the world's attention to the integration of technology in the programme, with the Ni-kshay portal that can track all those with an active infection. He also said that ICMR has developed a new method for sub-national disease surveillance that has made India, apart from the WHO, the only country to have this kind of model.

# Houses adjourned again amid uproar



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The deadlock to the Parliament's second-leg of the Budget session is unlikely to be found before the end of the second-leg of the Budget session on April 6 as both the Houses were again adjourned for the day amidst heavy uproar even while the Lok Sabha managed to pass the Finance Bill with the Opposition members trooping into the well and shouting slogans "Modi-Adani Bhai Bhai".

The battle-lines have turned sharper as the Congress member from Waynad, Kerala, Rahul Gandhi has been disqualified from his Lok Sabha member-

ship following his conviction by a Surat court.

Slogans like "Modi-Adani Bhai Bhai" and "We want JPC" raised by the opposition when the house resumed its proceedings at 1200 after being adjourned in the morning.

The Finance Bill, 2023 'tabled by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Lok Sabha saw its passage amid heavy noise by Opposition MPs demanding a JPC inquiry into the Adani Group issue. The ruling party members too sought apology from Rahul for his comments against the Indian democracy

# Delhi Police registers case in violence at Indian High Commission in London

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking note of the incidents of violence targeting the Indian High Commission in London on Sunday last, the Delhi Police has registered a case in connection with the protest.

The case was registered by the special cell under the Indian Penal Code, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act as it involves unlawful activities carried out by certain people holding Indian nationality abroad, a senior police officer said here on Friday.

It was done after the Ministry of Home Affairs directed the Delhi Police to take appropriate legal action on the receipt of a report from the Ministry of External Affairs over the incident at the Indian High Commission March 19.



Last Sunday, the tricolour flying atop the Indian High Commission in London was grabbed at by a group of protesters waving separatist Khalistani flags and chanting pro-Khalistani slogans, leading to an arrest related to the violent disorder.

Officials from the mission said "attempted but failed" attack had been foiled and that the tricolour was now flying "grander". The Metropolitan Police said two members of security staff sustained minor

injuries which did not require hospital treatment. An investigation has been launched.

India on last Sunday night summoned the British deputy high commissioner and demanded an explanation over the complete "absence of security". In a strongly-worded statement, the Ministry of External Affairs said India finds "unacceptable" the indifference of the UK government to the security of Indian diplomatic premises and personnel in the UK.

# 'Financial help being provided to States, UTs for promotion of film tourism'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Tourism issued guidelines in 2012 for extending financial support to state governments and Union territory administrations for promotion of film tourism, and a financial assistance of up to Rs 2 lakh per film is provided under it, the government has informed a parliamentary panel.

This was mentioned in a report on "Action Taken by the Government on the Recommendations/Observations of the Committee contained in its Three Hundred Twenty Sixth Report on the subject 'Role of Indian Missions Globally for the growth of Tourism in India' tabled in Lok Sabha on Friday.

The committee in its report has also said that it had observed that many of the tourist spots and places of religious importance are located near the national highways

yet the state of the last-mile connectivity from the national highways to the tourist spot "leaves much to be desired".

"The Committee feels that good quality last-mile connectivity is important to ensure a positive experience for tourists visiting a tourist destination in the country, which in turn, helps attract more tourists through word-of-mouth publicity.

"The Committee therefore recommends that the ministry may examine the state/quality of last mile connectivity roads at all such tourist spots near the National Highways at the earliest and ensure their construction and maintenance with the concerned Ministries/agencies to make the tourist places more accessible to tourists, both domestic and international, which will invariably increase the number of tourists visiting such places," the panel had observed.

# Rahul may have to vacate bungalow unless higher court stays conviction, say experts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday stood disqualified from contesting Lok Sabha and Assembly elections for eight years unless a higher court stays his conviction, an expert on electoral laws said.

Now following his disqualification as an MP, Rahul Gandhi may have to vacate his official bungalow in Lutyens' Delhi within a month if he does not get relief from a higher court in the criminal defamation case, an official said on Friday. Rahul Gandhi was allotted the 12, Tughlaq Lane bungalow after his election as a Lok Sabha MP in 2004.

"As he has been disqualified from Lok Sabha, he is not entitled to a government accommodation. According to rules, he will have to vacate his official bungalow within a month since the date of dis-



qualification order," an official of the Union Housing and Urban Affairs Ministry said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra had to vacate her official Lodhi Estate bungalow in July 2020 as she was no longer eligible for it after her security cover had been downgraded.

This was Rahul Gandhi's fourth Lok Sabha term. First elected to Lok Sabha in 2004 from Amethi, he represented that constituency for two more terms. In 2019, he lost the Amethi seat to Smriti Irani but managed to win from Wayanad.

Incidentally, the Congress-led UPA government, in 2013, had attempted to circumvent a Supreme Court ruling to set aside an RP Act provision under which a person sentenced to imprisonment of two years or more shall be disqualified "from the date of such conviction" and remain disqualified for another six years after serving time. Rahul Gandhi himself had opposed the ordinance at that time and tore the ordinance in a press conference as a token of protest.

Rahul Gandhi is the second member of Lok Sabha, after Lakshadweep MP P P Mohammed Faisal of the Nationalist Congress Party, to have been disqualified in the recent past following conviction. The Kavaratti sessions court in Lakshadweep had sentenced four persons, including Mohammed Faizal to 10 years in jail after they were found guilty in an attempt-to-murder case.

# Def Min signs contract with BEL for 'Project Himshakti'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

In a boost to indigenous production of weapon systems, Ministry of Defence on Friday signed a contract with Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL), Hyderabad for procurement of two Integrated Electronic Warfare Systems 'Project Himshakti' at an overall cost of approximately Rs 3,000 crore.

Giving details of the contract, officials said here the project is under the Buy (Indian - IDMM (Indigenously Designed Developed and

Manufactured)) category comprising contemporary and niche technologies.

'Project Himshakti' will encourage participation of Indian electronics and associated industries, including MSMEs, which are sub vendors of the BEL. It will generate employment of approximately three lakh man-days over a period of two years. The project is a significant leap forward in developing indigenous capabilities making the country 'Aatmanirbhar', in consonance with the Make-in-India initiative of the government.

# SC directs convicts released during Covid emergency to surrender in 15 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday directed that all convicts and undertrial prisoners, who were released during the COVID-19 pandemic in a move to decongest jails, to surrender within 15 days. A bench of Justices MR Shah and C J Ravikumar said undertrial prisoners, who were released on emergency bail during the pandemic, can move for regular bail before competent courts after their surrender.

# US pick for WB, Banga, cancels India meetings after Covid+ test

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Indian origin US nominee for World Bank president Ajay Banga, scheduled to meet Prime Minister Narendra Modi, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman here has tested positive for Covid-19. Hence, his meetings to take place on March 23 and 24 were cancelled.

According to a Finance Ministry statement, Banga's meeting with Nirmala Sitharaman would not happen as he is in quarantine.

"During routine testing, Ajay Banga tested positive for COVID-19 but remains asym-



ptomatic. In adherence with local guidelines, he is quarantining in isolation," the statement said.

Besides meeting with the Union finance minister, Banga was scheduled to meet Prime Minister Modi and External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and top officials during his two-day visit.

Banga's New Delhi visit is the final stop on his three-week

global tour that began in Africa before progressing to Europe, Latin America, and Asia to drum up support for his candidature for the World Bank's top position.

In a statement on Wednesday, the US Treasury Department had said, "While in India, Banga will meet with Prime Minister Narendra Modi as well as the Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman and the Minister of External Affairs S Jaishankar.

"These discussions will focus on India's development priorities, the World Bank, and global economic development challenges," it said.

Banga's New Delhi visit was the final stop on his three-week

global tour that began in Africa before progressing to Europe, Latin America, and Asia to drum up support for his candidature for the World Bank's top position.

India endorsed Banga's candidacy soon after his nomination was announced in February. Since then, a diverse coalition of governments has expressed their support for Banga, including Bangladesh, Côte d'Ivoire, Colombia, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, the Republic of Korea, and the United Kingdom.

During his global listening tour, Banga met with senior government officials, stakeholders, business leaders, entre-

preneurs, and civil society.

Along the way, he built continuous momentum for his candidacy, gaining the support of advocates, academics, development experts, executives, Nobel Laureates, and former government officials.

If elected to serve, Banga will draw from his experience living and working in emerging markets and his expertise in forging public-private partnerships to mobilise investments and action to confront long standing challenges.

That includes his efforts at Mastercard to successfully bring 500 million previously unbanked people into the digital economy, as well as its support for 50 million small businesses.

# NIA chargesheets gangsters, criminals linked with pro-Khalistani terror outfits

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday filed a chargesheet against notorious gangsters/criminals, Lawrence Bishnoi and Goldy Brar, along with 12 others having links with the proscribed Babbar Khalsa International (BKI) and several other pro-Khalistani terrorist outfits, in the second of the three terror-gangster nexus cases it is investigating. The latest action takes the total number of accused chargesheeted by the NIA so far in these cases to 26.

The chargesheet has exposed the linkages between members of criminal syndicates and drug smugglers with BKI and pro-Khalistani outfits.

Lawrence Bishnoi, in custody since 2015, has been operating his terror-crime syndicate from jails in different States, along with Canada-based Goldy Brar, who is an accused in the killing of Pradeep Kumar, a Dera Sacha Sauda follower, in Faridkot in November 2022.



The Lawrence Bishnoi terror-crime-extortion syndicate was also responsible for providing killers for the RPG attack case on Punjab State Intelligence HQs (headquarters) at Mohali, which was carried out on directions of Harwinder Singh alia Rinda, a Pakistan-based BKI terrorist, NIA investigations have revealed, the NIA alleged.

Goldy Brar was found to have direct links with Lakhbir Singh alias Landa, another BKI operative working closely with Rinda, as revealed in NIA investigations so far, it said.

Lakhbir Singh is also an accused in the Mohali RPG attack, as well as the December 2022 RPG (rocket propelled grenade) rocket on Police Station Sirhali in Tarn Taran, Punjab.

Investigations against Landa and three others are continuing. "All the 14 accused have been charged with criminal conspiracy to unleash a wave of terror and carry out targeted killings of well-known social and religious leaders, movie stars, singers and businessmen," the NIA said in a statement.

Besides having links with conspirators in Pakistan, the accused were also in contact with pro-Khalistani elements based in Canada, Nepal and other countries, NIA investigations have further revealed.

NIA has seized a huge cache of nine illegal and sophisticated weapons, 14 magazines, 298 rounds of ammunition and 183 digital devices and other incriminating material in raids across 74 locations in Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Chandigarh and Delhi in the case.

# ED attaches ₹252.17 cr property in PMLA case

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has attached immovable property in the form of commercial asset Ambience Tower at Shalimar Bagh locality here worth Rs 252.17 crore belonging to Ambience Towers Pvt. Ltd, a company of Ambience Group, promoted by Raj Singh Gehlot in connection with a money laundering investigation.

The ED initiated investigation on the basis of an FIR and subsequent chargesheet filed by Anti-Corruption Bureau, Jammu and Kashmir under the Provisions of Ranbir Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption Samvat Act.

PMLA investigation revealed that Aman Hospitality Pvt. Ltd through its promoter director Raj Singh Gehlot was sanctioned a term loan facility of Rs 810



crore by a consortium of Banks led by J&K Bank to part finance its hotel project in Shahdara, Delhi.

The loan amount later turned into a non-performing asset (NPA).

"During investigation, it was revealed that Raj Singh Gehlot had diverted loan funds and layered the same through a web of bank accounts belonging to his relatives and Ambience Group companies. In addition to

diversion of funds, it was also found that Raj Singh Gehlot had diverted materials to the other project sites of Ambience Group," the ED said in a statement.

In line with the probe findings, Gehlot was arrested on July 28, 2021. His wife, Sheela Gehlot and other directors of Ambience Group Companies, Amit Gehlot, Shamsher Singh and Pawan Singh were arraigned as accused in the Prosecution Complaints (chargesheets in police parlance) filed by the ED.

The ED has already filed Prosecution Complaints dated September 24, 2021 and November 17, 2022 in the present case before the PMLA Court, Patiala House Courts here for commission of money laundering offences.

The PMLA court took cognizance through its order dated September 27, 2021 and November 30, 2022.

# Ayush Min, Def Min ink pact to integrate Ayurveda in ECHS Polyclinics



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Union Ministry of Ayush and Department of ex-servicemen Welfare/ECHS under Union Ministry of Defence on Friday inked a pact to integrate Ayurveda in ECHS Polyclinics as an OPD service for five years period. These will be established at 10 polyclinics based at Ambala, Mysore, Ranchi, Nagpur, Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Chennai, Meerut, Danapur, and Alleppey (Alappuzha).

Ayurveda centres are already in place in 37 cantonment Hospitals, 12 military hospitals of AFMC and Ayurveda OPD in AH R&R,

AF Hospital Hindan and five ECHS polyclinics. The MoU was signed by Dr Manoj Nesari, Adviser (Ayurveda) on behalf of the Ayush Ministry and Maj Gen NR Indurkar, Ex-servicemen Contributory Health Scheme on behalf of the Defence Ministry.

According to this MoU, Ayush Ministry will provide technical guidance from time to time and will empanel Ayurveda doctors and pharmacists for their engagement and provide list of essential Ayurveda medicines and any other technical support as may be required while the Defence Ministry will provide logistic and locations in the respective polyclinics.



# AFSPA extended in parts of Arunachal, Nagaland

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Home Ministry on Friday extended for six months the “disturbed area” status in parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

According to two separate notifications, the decisions have been taken after review of the law-and-order situation in both the states. The AFSPA gives armed forces personnel, operating in disturbed areas, sweeping powers to search, arrest, and to open fire if they deem it necessary for “maintenance of public order”.

The home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai and Mahadevpur police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam, are declared as ‘disturbed area’ under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 for a period of six months with effect from April 1, 2023, unless withdrawn earlier,” one of the notifications said.

One more police station



area has been brought under the ambit of the AFSPA through the fresh notification.

“And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Arunachal Pradesh has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts in Arunachal Pradesh and the areas falling within the jurisdiction of Namsai, Mahadevpur and Chowkham police stations in Namsai district of Arunachal Pradesh, bordering the state of Assam, are declared as ‘disturbed area’ under Section 3 of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 for a period of six months with effect from April 1, 2023, unless withdrawn earlier,” one of the notifications said.

In the other notification, the home ministry said the central government in exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3 of the AFSPA, 1958 (28 of 1958) had declared nine districts and 16 police stations in four other districts of Nagaland as ‘disturbed area’ for a period of six months with effect from October 1, 2022. It said, now, the disturbed area status will be applicable in eight districts and 21 police stations areas falling under five other districts.

“And whereas a further review of the law and order situation in the state of Nagaland has been undertaken. Now, therefore, Dimapur, Nuland, Chumoukedima, Mon, Kiphire, Noklak, Phek and Peren districts in Nagaland and the areas in Nagaland falling within the jurisdiction of i) Khuzama, Kohima North, Kohima South, Zubza and Kezocha police stations in Kohima District; ii) Mangkolemba, Mokokchung-I, Longtho, Tuli, Longchem and Anaki ‘C’ police stations in Mokokchung District... are declared as ‘disturbed area,’ the notification said.

## RAHUL’S DISQUALIFICATION FROM LS Opp leaders main target in Modi’s new India: Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Days after calling Rahul Gandhi the “biggest asset” and “biggest TRP” of the BJP, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Friday took a u-turn this time slamming the Narendra Modi Government for getting the tallest Congress leader disqualified from the Lok Sabha in a defamation case.

Moments after Gandhi’s disqualification from the House, Banerjee said the Opposition leaders were the main target of in the new India led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

While Bengal Opposition parties—save the BJP—would not exhibit much of enthusiasm over Banerjee’s statement saying she was more concerned about the rising popularity of “Under PM Modi’s New India, Opposition leaders have become the prime target of BJP”, Banerjee who is also the president of Trinamool Congress wrote in her Twitter post. Condemning the kind of treatment meted out to the Congress leader she said



West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee speaks during a meeting, in Kolkata, on Friday PTI Photo

“Today, we have witnessed a new low for our constitutional democracy.” Attacking the BJP government for pursuing double standards she said while on one side saffron leaders with criminal records were made ministers and on the other leaders of the opposition parties were made victims of political speeches. She said, “While BJP leaders with criminal antecedents are inducted into the cabinet, Opposition leaders are disqualified for their speeches.”

Her nephew and TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee wrote that “Democracy” in today’s India sounded oxymoronic. Though

he would not refer to the Rahul Gandhi issue he wrote, “Democratic India is an oxymoron now.” TMC MP Shantanu Sen called it a “black day” wondering whether BR Ambedkar would have relished such a huge drop in Indian democratic standards today.

“This is a Black day for the Indian democracy. Had the father of our Constitution BR Ambedkar been alive he would have literally cried,” Sen said wondering “how a ruling party with such a brute majority in Parliament can stoop such low to script such a dirty game.” Gandhi was disqualified from being a Member of Lok Sabha hours after he was sentenced to two years of imprisonment by a Surat court in a caste defamation case.

The Left too, hit out at BJP government for its “vindictive attitude” saying “plot to disqualify Gandhi was hatched divert attention from burning issues like corruption, unemployment” etc. Reacting sharply on issue senior counsel and CPI(M) MP Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya said.

## Cambodia mountain to be home to Indian tigers

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI



A technical committee comprising officials from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) is on the job to advise their counterparts in Cambodia to help them execute dreams of bringing Indian big cats in their land under the world’s first ambitious translational tiger programme conceived last year.

On its part, Cambodia has already identified 90 acres of forest land at its Tatai wildlife sanctuary in the Cardamom Mountain to be the home to the Indian tigers whenever they arrive.

SP Yadav, Head of the NTCA told *The Pioneer*, “We have constituted a technical support group which is advising Cambodia to achieve certain levels of standards with respect to staffing, prey base, habitat and protection. Once these are achieved, further action will be taken.”

He said hence it is too early to talk about the numbers of big cats proposed to be shifted to Cambodia. No tiger has been spotted in Cambodian forests for the last 15 years. The

last picture of a tiger was taken in the eastern highlands of Cambodia in 2007. The country is now committed to have the tigers, which is included in the IUCN Red List of Endangered Species, back to its forests.

Though Yadav was non-committal when the translocation will happen, Cambodia is pinning hopes that the tigers may arrive by the year-end, as has also been stated by Suwanna Gauntlett, founder and CEO of Wildlife Alliance, as per reports.

Officials in the Union Environment Ministry said that before the Indian big cats lands on the foreign land, it is necessary that ground and field works be done to ensure they are safe and get the conducive environment to settle down properly to make the translocation successful in the long term.

## 4 yrs ordeal of 5 Indian sailors jailed in Iran ends

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In an emotional homcoming, five Indian sailors—who had been arrested, jailed, acquitted and grounded after they were stranded in Iran in June 2019, returned home on Friday after suffering four years of ordeal.

The five sailors—Aniket S. Yenpure (31), Mandar M. Worlikar (28), both of whom are from Mumbai, Pranav A. Tiwari (23) from Patna, Naveen M. Singh (30) from New Delhi and Thamizh R. Selvan (33) from

Chennai—appeared overwhelmed as they bowed and touched the Indian soil after they arrived at the city airport from Iran by an Iran Air Tehran-Mumbai flight this afternoon.

The sailors were accorded a moving reception by their relatives and friends, who cheered vociferously, hugged and lifted them in the air and celebrated the quintet who shed tears of happiness. “We have never been so happy as we are today. Nearly 45 months of nightmare has

ended today. We underwent lots of hardships like being arrested, thrown into jails there, fighting legal battles, getting acquitted and obtaining necessary permissions to fly back to India.

Finally we are back in a country to which we belong,” Aniket Yenpure said. “For the next one month, we will rest and be with our families,” Yenpure said. Naveen (New Delhi), Tiwari (Bihar) and Selvan (Tamil Nadu) will stay with Mumbai-based Yenpure and Worlikar for the next few days,

before returning to their home cities. Aniket thanked the Indian Embassy in Tehran which arranged for the emergency travel papers and air tickets for him and his fellow sailors and also a few Iranian lawyers who fought their case for more than six months and got them released from the jail and ensured their return to India. “The authorities in Iran seized our passports and Continuous Discharge Certificate (CDC)-cum-Seafarer’s Identity document.

## Water warriors to be honoured

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

At least 50 water warriors from across the States and various walks of life will be felicitated on March 29 at an event here for their works in water conservation, harvesting, rejuvenation, restoration of water bodies and water crisis management among others aimed to save the precious item.

At the Jal Prahar Samman Samaroh 2023, one water saviour each from states like Delhi,

Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu, Jharkhand, Punjab, Tripura, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Telangana etc. and two water saviour each from Haryana, Karnataka, Uttarakhand have been selected for the honour, said a statement here.

Union Jal Shakti Minister, Gajendra Singh, Union Minister of state for Jal Shakti, Prahlad Patel and MPs Manoj Tiwari and Unmesh Patil will be present as chief guests on the

occasion.

Along with them ambassadors of many countries including Netherlands, Finland, Malta, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan will be present to grace the occasion.

Convenor of the ceremony, Anil Singh said that the National Water Mission, UNOPS, CWC are the participants of the programme and Jal Praharis include many schools, colleges, universities, district officials, non govt organisations and private institutions.

The ceremony is being held under the joint aegis of Jal Shakti Ministry, Jal Jeevan Mission, Chief Operating officer of the programme, Ameya Sathe said, adding that 11 water conservationist from Uttar Pradesh, 8 from Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and 10 water conservationist from Maharashtra will be honoured.

India has 18 per cent of the world’s population, but only 4 percent of its water resources, making it among the most water-stressed in the world.

### FROM PAGE 1

## RAHUL DISQUALIFIED FROM LS

Priyanka Gandhi said her brother, the son of a martyred Prime Minister, was called “Mir Jafar” and insults were hurled at his family but he would not bow down as he belongs to a family whose members have nurtured democracy by its blood.

“Insulting the whole family and the Kashmiri Pandit community, you asked in Parliament why we don’t keep the name Nehru. But no judge gave you a sentence of two years. Did not disqualify you from the Parliament,” she said.

Congress’ top brass, including party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and former AICC chief Sonia Gandhi, met late evening to deliberate on the party’s strategy going forward after their former chief’s disqualification from Lok Sabha.

Congress general secretaries Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, KC Venugopal, Jairam Ramesh, Rajiv Shukla and Tariq Anwar, senior leaders P Chidambaram, Anand Sharma, Ambika Soni, Mukul Wasnik, Salman Khurshid and Pawan Kumar Bansal, among others, were also present at the meeting. Sources said agitations were top of the agenda at the meeting.

West Bengal Chief Minister and Trinamool Congress (TMC) chairperson Mamata Banerjee said Opposition leaders have become the “prime target of BJP” and Delhi CM and AAP convener Arvind Kejriwal described Rahul’s disqualification as shocking.

“The expulsion of Rahul from the Lok Sabha is shocking. The country is passing through very difficult times. They have kept the whole country scared. 130 crore people will have to unite against their arrogant power,” Kejriwal said.

BRS party National president and Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao said the disqualification of Rahul was a “black day” in the history of Indian democracy and shows the height of Modi’s “arrogance and dictatorship.” “It’s time all the opposition parties, keeping aside their differences, condemn this undemocratic and un-parliamentary measure,” Rao who has been talking for a non-BJP, non-Congress political front for 2024 Lok Sabha elections said.

Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren said the disqualification of Rahul is a “vendetta battle” and exposed how opposition leaders are living in a state of Emergency while BJP leaders are living in “Amrit Kaal.” Besides Congress leaders and their Chief Ministers, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan termed Rahul’s disqualification as a “violent attack on democracy” by the Sangh Parivar. Vijayan said the “hasty” disqualification of Gandhi was the “latest chapter” of the Sangh Parivar assault on democracy. “Suppressing dissent by force is a fascist method,” Vijayan said in a statement.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray questioned the state of democracy in the country while CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury said, “It’s condemnable that the BJP is now using the criminal defamation route to target opposition leaders and disqualify them as done with Rahul now.”

Alleging that Rahul’s disqualification is

the official announcement of the “death of democracy”, RJD leader and a Rajya Sabha member Manoj Jha said there is no doubt blot on parliamentary democracy in history than this.

Samajwadi Party and BSP too termed Rahul’s disqualification unfortunate, and said if MPs were to lose their membership on such matters of defamation, then 70 per cent of parliamentarians will lose their membership.

Former Congress leaders and Ministers in the UPA, Kapil Sibal and Ashwani Kumar, said action against Rahul raises the larger question of whether the right to represent people can be taken away upon first conviction without even a single appeal in a higher court.

## MERE MEMBERSHIP OF BANNED OUTFIT MAKES PERSON CRIMINAL: SC

The bench held that “when an association is declared unlawful by notification issued under Section 3 which has become effective of sub-section 3 of that Section, a person who is and continues to be a member of such association is liable to be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, and shall also be liable to fine under Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, 1967”.

The top court said any other decisions of the High Court taking a contrary view are held to be “not a good law” and are specifically overruled by this judgment. “Consequently, the review applications filed by the Union of India and the State of Assam are hereby allowed,” it said, and directed that the main appeals be placed before the concerned bench for taking of such matters after obtaining the appropriate order from the Chief Justice.

The three-judge bench answered the reference made to it on August 26, 2014 by a two-judge bench while noting the submissions of the Centre that in the Arup Bhuyan case, this court has read down the provision to the detriment of the interest of the Union of India, when it was not party before it.

The top court on February 3, 2011, had acquitted suspected ULFA member Bhuyan, who was held guilty by a TADA court on the basis of his alleged confessional statement before the superintendent of police, and said mere membership of a banned organisation will not make a person a criminal unless he resorts to violence or incites people to violence or creates public disorder by violence or incitement to violence.

Similar views were taken by the apex court in two other verdicts of 2011 in Indra Das versus State of Assam and state of Kerala versus Raneef, where the bench relied upon the three US Supreme Court decisions which rejected the doctrine of ‘guilt by association’.

The bench said as far as the reading down of Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA by this Court in the case of Arup Bhuyan is concerned, at the outset it is required to be noted that such reading down of the provision of a statute could not have been made without hearing or giving an opportunity to the Centre.

“When any provision of Parliamentary legislation is read down in the absence of the Union of India, it is likely to cause enormous

harm to the interest of the State. If the opportunity would have been given to the Union of India to put forward its case on the provisions of Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, 1967, the Union of India would have made submissions in favour of Section 10(a)(i) of the UAPA, including the object and purpose for enactment of such a provision and even the object and purpose of UAPA,” it said. The bench said it is true that it is ultimately for the court to interpret the law and/or particular statute, but the question is whether it can be done without hearing the Union of India. Referring to the 2011 verdicts, the bench said the court was only dealing with bail applications and the court should not have ventured to read down provisions under law, which was not challenged.

## UK’S SECURITY OBLIGATIONS NOT MET: JAISHANKAR

Blackman pointed out that the attack on Sunday was the sixth time in as many years that the Indian High Commission has been attacked in a similar way. “The hoologianism of Khalistani hooligans outside the Indian High Commission on Sunday is a disgrace to this country,” he said.

“Khalistani militants are operating across the world; Canada, the US and Australia saw similar attacks over the weekend. We are harbouring Khalistani terrorists in this country right now. Can we have a debate in Government time on what action we can take to ensure that these terrorists are held to account and banned in this country,” he said.

Earlier on Thursday, Blackman - as chair of the India (Trade and Investment) All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) - raised the UK-India Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in the Commons and sought an update from the Business and Trade Minister Nigel Huddleston, who confirmed that the eighth round of FTA negotiations are currently underway.

“Both nations have committed to and are working together for a mutually ambitious deal. We are working through substantive issues such as goods, market access, services and investment,” said Huddleston.

Asked if the FTA is likely to be concluded by Diwali this year, having missed the Diwali 2022 deadline, the Minister stressed that “it is about the deal, not the date.” “We will not tie our hands by setting an arbitrary deadline,” he said.

The UK Government has condemned the attacks as “unacceptable” and committed to “robustly respond” to such incidents of violence.

## LIES, SLANDER PART OF RAHUL’S POLITICS: NADDA

Nadha said he repeatedly ignored suggestions from the court and the community to tender an apology for his comments. The entire Other Backward Classes will avenge this insult in a democratic manner, the BJP president said. “He repeatedly hurt the sentiments of the OBCs. The Surat court has convicted him for his objectionable comments against

the community. But Rahul Gandhi and the Congress stuck to those remarks due to their arrogance,” Nadha said. As the “newly minted” Congress president, Rahul’s core issue for the 2019 Lok Sabha polls was the “cooked-up Rafale scam”, he said.

“His negative politics and cooked-up Rafale scam faced a setback in the court of law. Our highest court of the land, the Honourable Supreme Court gave a very clear verdict on the Rafale issue and did not believe the corruption bogey Rahul raised,” he added.

Targeting the Congress leader, he said Rahul was also pulled up by the Supreme Court for his misleading claims on the Rafale issue and had to tender an unconditional apology for his fabricated allegations. Rahul also resorted to raising the “chowkidar chor hai” slogan despite objections from senior leaders within his party, the BJP president said citing media reports. He went on ranting against PM Narendra Modi even if it meant he was defeated in his own seat (Amethi) and his party got wiped out nationally, the BJP president said.

“Now, Rahul calls the entire OBC community thieves. He gets flak in the courts but he refuses to apologise thus showing how deep-rooted his hatred for OBCs is. The people of India did not forgive him in 2019. In 2024 the punishment will be more severe,” he said.

## INDIA’S FIRST ROPEWAY TRANSPORT: MODI SETS PROJECT IN MOTION

“Today, in Kashi, both the old and the new forms are simultaneously seen,” he said.

Modi added that people in India and abroad appreciated the development of the Kashi Vishwanath temple corridor and the Ganga ghat.

In the past one year, over seven crore tourists visited Varanasi and brought employment opportunities for the local residents, Modi said.

He also announced that a big campaign to promote natural farming would start on both sides of the Ganga. “A big campaign is going to start on both sides of the Ganga river. Natural farming will be encouraged on 5km on both sides. Arrangements have been made in the Budget for this,” he said.

Modi also laid the foundation stone of a 55 MLD (million litres per day) sewage treatment plant at Bhagwanpur under the Namami Gange scheme. The project will be built at an estimated cost of ₹300 crore.

Under the Khelo India scheme, Modi laid the foundation stone of the Phase 2 and Phase 3 redevelopment work of Sriga Stadium.

He also dedicated 19 drinking water schemes that will benefit over three lakh people in 63 panchayats under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

Earlier, while addressing the “One World TB Summit” on World TB Day, Modi said India’s ideology of “Vasudev Kutumbakam” is giving the modern world an integrated vision and solutions.

Launching a series of initiatives to eliminate tuberculosis in India, Modi said the country is working to eliminate the disease by 2025 against the global target of 2030.

## Corrupt Cong wants to make K’taka its ATM, fill coffers: Shah

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the Congress is degenerating across the country, and has now set its eyes on Karnataka to make the state its ATM and fill its coffers at the national level.

Speaking in the poll-bound State, he appealed to people of Karnataka not to give a “half and incomplete government”, and to form a BJP government with full majority and thereby strengthen the hands of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai.

“Congress party is degenerating across the country, the Congress people don’t have any state with them that can fill the Congress’ central treasury, they want an ATM.... They want Karnataka to become Congress’ ATM, and the corrupt Congress’ eyes are now set on Karnataka,” Shah said. Addressing a beneficiaries’ meet organised by Karnataka Cooperative department and other departments, he asked people whether they will form a BJP government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s leadership in Karnataka or a Congress govern-

ment with Rahul Gandhi at the helm. “Wherever the Congress has formed the government, their history is corruption, humiliation of Dalits, OBCs and Adivasis, and strengthening anti-national forces,” he alleged. Bommai, veteran BJP leader B S Yediyurappa, Karnataka Co-Operation Minister S T Somashekar among others were present at the event.

Highlighting that the Modi government banned Popular Font of India (PFI), Shah said, “Siddaramaiah’s Congress government (earlier), used to withdraw cases against PFI, but Narendra Modi government by banning PFI has secured the entire South India, and also the entire country.” Claiming credit for the construction of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, he said, the Congress party was “delaying, obstructing and misleading” for 70 years, but Modi has laid the foundation for the temple and it will be ready very soon.

He also said that PM Modi, by abrogating Article 370, has put a bridle on terrorism in the entire country. “Modi’s mission is to make the entire country prosperous, take forward every state including Karnataka.”

## SC to hear Opp parties plea over misuse of CBI, ED

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to list for hearing on April 5 a plea by 14 opposition parties, led by the Congress, alleging arbitrary use of central probe agencies against political opponents.

A bench headed by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud took note of the submissions of senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the Opposition parties, and said the plea would be taken up for hearing on April 5.

“I am asking for the guidelines for the future. This is a remarkable convergence of 14 parties against the misuse of the agencies, both CBI and ED,” Singhvi said, and claimed that 95 per cent cases of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED) are against the leaders of opposition.

The senior lawyer referred to the rise in the number of cases filed by the CBI and ED after the NDA government came to power in 2014. “Second statistics, pre-2014 and post-2014. There is a humongous jump in cases. The rate of conviction is four to five per cent. We are asking for pre-arrest guidelines and post-arrest bail guidelines,” Singhvi said. Sources close to the deliberations which led to the filing of the common plea by 14 political parties said Delhi Chief Minister and AAP chief Arvind Kejriwal played an important role in persuading other opposition leaders for moving the top court jointly.

The plea alleged there is an alarming rise in the use of coercive criminal processes against opposition political leaders and other citizens exercising their fundamental right to dissent.



# Russian strikes in Ukraine kill 10 civilians | N Korea tests radioactive tsunami weapon at sea

AP ■ KYIV

Russian long-range strikes killed at least 10 civilians and wounded 20 others in several areas of Ukraine on Friday, Ukraine's presidential office said, as a senior Moscow official warned that the Kremlin's forces were prepared for an expected Ukrainian counteroffensive in the coming weeks.

Five people died in Kostiantynivka, a town in eastern Ukraine's Donetsk province, when a Russian missile hit an aid station. Ukrainian authorities last year established hundreds of so-called "points of invincibility", where residents hard-pressed by the war could warm up, charge their cellphones and get snacks.

Local prosecutors said the Russians attacked Kostyantynivka with S-300 anti-aircraft missiles. The civilians who died were refugees, according to Donetsk Gov. Pavlo Kyrylenko. As the mostly artillery war of the recent winter months stretched into its second spring, Russian forces also used air-launched missiles, exploding drones and gliding bombs in their attacks on several regions early on Friday, Ukrainian air force spokesman Yuriy Ihnat said.

Two civilians were killed and



nine were wounded in the Sumy province town of Bilopillia by a night-time rocket and artillery barrage and air strikes, the administration of the northeast region said. In the southern Kherson region, which Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy visited on Thursday, Russian shelling killed one person in the main city, also called Kherson, and killed another person and wounded four others in the town of Bilozerk.

On Wednesday, a Russian drone attack struck a high school and dormitories south of Kyiv, killing at least nine people. Kyiv's forces are poised to use the improved spring weather and the arrival of modern weapons supplied by

its Western allies, including tanks, to launch a counteroffensive aimed at dislodging Russian troops from occupied areas of Ukraine.

But Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's former president and now the deputy head of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, said the Russian military was ready to repel a counterattack. "Our General Staff is assessing all that," Medvedev said. He also said that a Ukrainian attempt to seize Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, could trigger a nuclear response from Moscow. "An attempt to split part of the state away means an encroachment at the very existence of the state," he said.

## UN decries killing of Russian POWs and Ukrainians

Kyiv (AP): UN human rights monitors have documented dozens of summary killings of Ukrainian and Russian prisoners of war, as well as the use of torture, human shields and other abuses against POWs since Russia invaded its neighbour that could amount to war crimes, according to a report released Friday.

The first full look by the U.N. human rights office's mission in Ukraine at the treatment of POWs was released along with an update of human rights violations overall from a six-month period that ran through January. The report was based on interviews with about 400 POWs, half of them Ukrainians who were released and the other half Russians held captive in Ukraine.

The team said it had no access to POWs held in Russia or Russia-occupied parts of Ukraine where it identified 48 internment sites.

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korea claimed on Friday to have tested a nuclear-capable underwater drone designed to generate a gigantic "radioactive tsunami" that would destroy naval strike groups and ports. Analysts were skeptical that the device presents a major new threat, but the test underlines the North's commitment to raising nuclear threats. The test this week came as the United States reportedly planned to deploy aircraft carrier strike groups and other advanced assets to waters off the Korean Peninsula.

Military tensions are at a high point as the pace of both North Korean weapons tests and US-South Korea joint military exercises has accelerated in the past year in a cycle of tit-for-tat responses.

Pyeongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said the new weapon, which can be deployed from the coast



or towed by surface ships, is built to "stealthily infiltrate into operational waters and make a super-scale radioactive tsunami through an underwater explosion" to destroy enemy naval strike groups and ports.

The report came hours before South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol pledged to make North Korea pay for its "reckless provocations" as he attended a remembrance service honouring 55 South Korean troops

killed during major clashes with the North near their western sea border in past years.

The testing of the purported "nuclear underwater attack drone" was part of a three-day exercise that simulated nuclear attacks on unspecified South Korean targets, which also included cruise missile launches on Wednesday.

KCNA said the North's latest tests were aimed at alerting the United States and South Korea of a brewing "nuclear crisis" as they continue with their "intentional, persistent and provocative war drills." It said the tests were supervised by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who vowed to make his rivals "plunge into despair." The US and South Korea completed an 11-day exercise on Thursday that included their biggest field training in years, and are preparing another round of joint naval drills that will reportedly involve a US aircraft carrier.

# US carries out airstrikes in Syria

AP ■ BEIRUT

A strike on Thursday by a suspected Iranian-made drone killed a US contractor and wounded five American troops and another contractor in northeast Syria, the Pentagon said. American forces said they retaliated soon after with "precision airstrikes" in Syria targeting facilities used by groups affiliated with Iran's Revolutionary Guard, with activist groups saying the US bombing killed at least four people. The attack and the US response threaten to upend recent efforts to deescalate tensions across the wider Middle East, whose rival powers have made steps toward détente in recent days after years of turmoil.

US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement

that the American intelligence community had determined the drone was of Iranian origin, but offered no other immediate evidence to support the claim. "The airstrikes were conducted in response to today's attack as well as a series of recent attacks against coalition forces in Syria" by groups affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard, Austin said. Iran relies on a network of proxy forces through the Mideast to counter the US and Israel, its arch regional enemy.

The Pentagon said two of the wounded service members were treated on-site, while three others and the injured contractor were transported to medical facilities in Iraq.

Overnight, videos on social media purported to show explosions in Syria's Deir el-Zour, a strategic province that

borders Iraq and contains oil fields. Iran-backed militia groups and Syrian forces control the area, which also has seen suspected airstrikes by Israel in recent months allegedly targeting Iranian supply routes. Iran and Syria did not immediately acknowledge the strikes, nor did their officials at the United Nations in New York respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press. The activist group Deir Ezzor 24 put the death toll from the American strikes at four people. Deir Ezzor 24, which covers news in Deir el-Zour province, said the strikes hit the city of Deir el-Zour as well as militiamen posts near Mayadeen and Boukamal. It said the strikes also wounded people, including Iraqis.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposi-

tion war monitor, reported that the American strikes killed six Iranian-backed fighters at an arms depot in the Harabesh neighbourhood in the city of Deir el-Zour. The Observatory, which relies on a network of local contacts in Syria, said US bombing at a post near the town of Mayadeen killed two fighters.

A separate American strike hit a military post near the town of Boukamal along the border with Iraq, killing another three fighters, the Observatory said. The AP could not immediately independently confirm the activist reports. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard, which answers only to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, has been suspected of carrying out attacks with bomb-carrying drones across the wider Middle East. In recent months, Russia

# Demonstrators protest Netanyahu's visit to UK

AP ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak welcomed Benjamin Netanyahu at his official residence in London on Friday as protesters shouting "Shame!" In Hebrew demonstrated against the Israeli leader's right-wing policies and his plans to overhaul the country's judiciary.

Netanyahu had to pass by hundreds of protesters waving Israeli flags and waving signs calling for the defense of Israeli democracy as he arrived for talks that are expected to focus on concerns about Iran's nuclear programme.

"We are Israelis and Jews living in the UK demonstrating against Prime Minister Netanyahu, who is leading a judicial coup turning Israel into a dictatorship," one placard read.

Netanyahu arrived in London as protesters in Israel blocked roads and clashed with police over his right-wing government's plans to overhaul the judicial system.

The proposals have ignited the biggest protests in the country's history amid rare

## 'Israel PM broke law on conflict of interest'

Jerusalem (AP): Israel's attorney general on Friday warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he has violated the Supreme Court's conflict of interest ruling, which barred him from direct involvement in his government's divisive plans for a judicial overhaul. Netanyahu's far-right government has barreled ahead with plans to weaken the Supreme Court and grant politicians less judicial oversight in their policymaking despite massive protests from across Israeli society — including an uproar among business leaders, top legal officials and military

reservists. On Thursday, just hours after his coalition passed a law that would protect the Israeli leader from being deemed unfit to rule because of his corruption trial and claims of a conflict of interest, Netanyahu defiantly pledged to proceed with the overhaul. Netanyahu contended that stripping the attorney general of the power to remove him from office was necessary to clear the way for him to participate in the negotiations on the judicial overhaul in spite of her instructions, and try to "mend the rift" in the polarised nation.

dissent from people throughout Israeli society, including military reservists, navy veterans, high-tech businesspeople and former officials. Netanyahu's proposals would give his government more control over judicial appointments, weaken the Supreme Court by limiting judicial review of legislation and allow Parliament to over-

turn court decisions with a simple majority vote.

The Israeli government has also been criticised for its hard-line policy toward Palestinians, including recent comments by a government minister who denied the existence of the Palestinian people and their right to self-determination.

## Large asteroid coming close, but zero chance of hitting earth

Cape Canaveral: An asteroid big enough to wipe out a city will zip harmlessly between Earth and the moon's orbit this weekend, missing both celestial bodies. Saturday's close encounter will offer astronomers the chance to study a space rock from just over 100,000 miles (168,000 kilometers) away. That's less than half the distance from here to the moon, making it visible through binoculars and small telescopes.

While asteroid flybys are common, NASA said it's rare for one so big to come so close about once a decade. Scientists estimate its size somewhere between 130 feet and 300 feet (40 meters and 90 meters).

Discovered a month ago, the asteroid known as 2023 DZ2 will pass within 320,000 miles (515,000 kilometers) of the moon on Saturday and, several hours later, buzz the Indian Ocean at about 17,500 mph (28,000 kph). AP

## China warns of consequences over US warship's actions

AP ■ BANGKOK

China threatened "serious consequences" Friday after the US Navy sailed a destroyer around the disputed Parcel Islands in the South China Sea for the second day in a row, in a move Beijing claimed was a violation of its sovereignty and security. The warning comes amid growing tensions between China and the United States in the region, as Washington pushes back at Beijing's growingly assertive posture in the South China Sea, a strategic waterway it claims virtually in its entirety. On Thursday, after the U.S. sailed the USS Millius guided-missile destroyer near the Parcel Islands, China said its navy and air force had forced the American vessel away, a claim the U.S. military denied. The U.S. on Friday sailed the ship again in the vicinity of the islands, which are occupied by China but also claimed by Taiwan and Vietnam, as part of what it called a "freedom of navigation operation" challenging requirements from all three nations

requiring either advance notification or permission before a military vessel sails by.

"Unlawful and sweeping maritime claims in the South China Sea pose a serious threat to the freedom of the seas, including the freedoms of navigation and overflight, free trade and unimpeded commerce, and freedom of economic opportunity for South China Sea littoral nations," said U.S. 7th Fleet spokesman Lt. j.g. Luka Bakic in an emailed statement. "The United States challenges excessive maritime claims around the world regardless of the identity of the claimant," Bakic added. China's Ministry of National Defense responded by accusing the U.S. of "undermining the peace and stability of the South China Sea" with its actions.

"The act of the U.S. military seriously violated China's sovereignty and security, severely breached international laws, and is more ironclad evidence of the U.S. pursuing navigation hegemony and militarising the South China Sea," ministry spokesman Tan Kefei said.

# Protests continue as Paris reels under violence

AP ■ PARIS

Protesters angry at French President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms continued with scattered actions on Friday amid slowed train traffic, rows of trucks blocking access to Marseille's commercial port and debris still littering the Paris streets following the previous day's mass demonstrations. Over 450 protesters were arrested in Paris and beyond on Thursday as some 300 demonstrations drew more than a million people nationwide to protest against unpopular pension reforms.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said Friday that some 441 police and gendarmes were injured as violence marred some marches. He added that 1,000 trash bins were set on fire in the French capital during the previous day's action. Amid a weeks-long refuse collectors strike, trash bins have become a symbol of the protest.

Polls say most French oppose Macron's bill to increase the retirement age from 62 to 64, which he says is necessary to keep the system afloat. The supply of fuel to Paris by the



large Gonfreville-L'Orcher refinery in Normandy resumed on Friday after police intervened, according to Energy Transition Minister Agnès Pannier-Runacher. At the Fos-sur-mer oil terminal near Marseille, however, protesters were meeting to plan future oil refinery blockades.

Fearing disruptions in coming days as actions contin-

ue, France's Civil Aviation Authority has requested that a third of flights be cancelled on Sunday at Paris' second airport, Orly, with 20 per cent to be cancelled on Monday. Unions have called for new protests and strikes on Tuesday, when Britain's King Charles III is scheduled to visit Bordeaux on the second day of his trip to France.

## British King's visit postponed

Paris (AP): Protesters angry at French President Emmanuel Macron's pension reforms continued with scattered actions on Friday, as the unrest across the country led officials to postpone a planned state visit by Britain's King Charles III.

Although no major protests were planned on Friday, train traffic was slowed, rows of trucks blocked access to Marseille's commercial port and debris still littered the Paris streets following the previous day's mass demonstrations.

Over 450 protesters were arrested in Paris and beyond

The heavy wooden door of the elegant Bordeaux City Hall was destroyed by fire Thursday night by people taking part in an unauthorised demonstration.

The mayor of Bordeaux, Pierre Hurmic, said Friday he had "difficulty understanding the interest of such acts of vandalism." Hurmic said that he hopes Charles' visit to his city

on Thursday as some 300 demonstrations drew more than a million people nationwide to protest against unpopular pension reforms.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said on Friday that some 441 police and gendarmes were injured as violence marred some marches.

He added that 1,000 trash bins were set on fire in the French capital during the previous day's action. Amid a weeks-long refuse collectors strike, trash bins have become a symbol of the protest. Macron's office announced that a state visit by the British king was postponed.

next week will not be cancelled. "I hope that we do not give this gift to the thugs," he said, although he acknowledged that a tram ride with the king may now be off the cards.

The protests have drawn support from beyond France's borders. In Greece, hundreds of protesters gathered outside the French Embassy in Athens on Thursday to show solidarity.

## Anticipatory bail to Imran Khan in terror cases

LAHORE: A top Pakistani court on Friday extended till March 27 the protective bail granted to former prime minister Imran Khan in five cases related to terrorism after he appeared before a two-member bench here. The Lahore High Court (LHC) granted the extension of anticipatory bail to Khan after the 70-year-old chief of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) appeared before it amidst tight security. Last week, Khan was granted anticipatory bail in these five cases till March 24.

Of the five cases, one is related to the alleged attack on the judicial complex in Islamabad in which the government law officer objected that Khan should secure protective bail from Islamabad court. Khan told the LHC that last week on his appearance before a court in Islamabad police and FC personnel fired teargas shells at his car and a clash took place between the PTI workers and police. PTI

## Report on Leicester clashes warns of ethnic enclaves

AP ■ LONDON

A fact-finding report into the violent clashes between groups of men on the streets of Leicester following an India-Pakistan Asia Cup cricket match in Dubai last year has warned of ethnic enclaves or ghettos of migrants in the eastern England city as a key factor behind communal tension.

The Delhi-based Centre for Democracy, Pluralism and Human Rights (CDPHR) think tank, which launched its report at a Committee Room in the House of Commons on Thursday, sheds light on the events that took place in August-September last year and their human rights implications. In its 'Fact-finding report on Leicester Violence 2022 - The rise of territorial majoritarianism and Hinduphobia', the think tank calls for immediate action to address the underlying issues that led to the Leicester vio-

lence such as the rise of extremism and hate speech.

"There were two kinds of stories circulating around the violence that occurred, which is the motivation behind this fact-finding report," explained Rashmi Samant of the ATMAH non-profit organisation and one of the co-authors of the report. "What we found was that different religious groups in east Leicester, ground zero of the unrest, are living in ethnic enclaves - with some ethnicities clubbed up in some spaces more than others. This phenomenon is not common in the United Kingdom but we found it continues to happen in Leicester because of the spillover effect involving migrants from countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh," she said.

The report claims that the presence of these ethnic enclaves gave rise to territorial tensions and localised majoritarianism.

## Jamaican cleric gets 18-year sentence in NY terrorism case

New York: A cleric arrested in his native Jamaica and extradited to New York to face state terrorism charges on accusations of recruiting support for the Islamic State group was sentenced on Thursday to 18 years in prison.

Abdullah el-Faisal was convicted in January in state Supreme Court in Manhattan on counts including soliciting or providing support for an act of terrorism. The state law he was prosecuted under was put in place after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, and prosecutors said his case was the first state-level trial on terrorism charges.

El-Faisal was extradited to New York City in 2020 after being arrested in Jamaica in 2017. Beginning in 2016, authorities said an undercover officer in New York City posed as a would-be jihadist and started communicating with the cleric.

The cleric was accused of giving out information to help the officer ultimately connect with the Islamic State group, as well as trying to do things like act as a conduit for a marriage between the officer and a member of the militant group.

Prosecutors said el-Faisal had supported the Islamic State organization for several years. AP

## Saudi Arabia, Syria may restore ties

AP ■ BEIRUT

Saudi Arabia is in talks with Syria to reopen its embassy in the war-torn nation for the first time in a decade, state television in the kingdom reported late Thursday, the latest diplomatic reshuffling in the region. The announcement on state TV comes after Chinese-mediated talks in Beijing saw Saudi Arabia and Iran agree to reopen embassies in each others' nations after years of tensions. Syrian President Bashar Assad has maintained his grip on power in the Mediterranean nation rocked by the 2011 Arab Spring only with the help of Iran and Russia, which made a historic call earlier in the day to Oman.

Saudi Arabian state television aired a report late Thursday, quoting an anonymous official in the country's Foreign Ministry, acknowledging the talks between the kingdom and Damascus.

"A source in the Ministry of

Foreign Affairs revealed to Al-Ekhabariyah that ongoing discussions have begun with the Syrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, commenting on what was circulated by some international media," an anchor said on air.

"Discussions are underway between officials in the kingdom and their counterparts in Syria about resuming the provision of consular services." Arabic-language media had been reporting the possible détente in recent days ahead of the Saudi state TV announcement. The Wall Street Journal, quoting anonymous Saudi and Syrian officials, attributed the talks to reopen the countries' embassies to Russian mediation.

Syrian state media did not immediately acknowledge the talks. Officials in both Saudi Arabia and Syria did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press early Friday.

## Bolsonaro hands undeclared jewels to authorities

AP ■ BRASILIA

A representative of Brazil's former President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday handed a set of diamond jewellery he had received from Saudi Arabia to a state bank, as he was ordered to do by a government watchdog.

The state bank Caixa Economica Federal received the box of precious stones at one of its branches in the capital Brasilia, the bank's press office told The Associated Press. A federal watchdog on Wednesday gave Bolsonaro five days to hand over the precious stones that he had received while presiding.

Authorities are investigating whether the goods were a public gift that Bolsonaro improperly tried to prevent from being incorporated into the presidency's public collection, or a private gift that Bolsonaro tried to sneak into Brazil without paying taxes.

Brazilian media started reporting on the jewels earlier this month, along with another set that was seized at the international airport in Sao Paulo. The seized set is estimated to be worth several million dollars. Neither set was declared to tax authorities.

Bolsonaro, who denies any wrongdoing with the jewellery, has been in the United States since late-December, just days before the end of his presidential term.



# Sindhu exits, Satwik-Chirag duo enters quarters of Swiss Open



PTI ■ BASEL

Double Olympic medallist PV Sindhu failed to defend her Swiss Open Super 300 badminton title as she was shocked by unseeded Putri Kusuma Wardani of Indonesia in a thrilling three-game women's singles second round match here.

World no.9 Sindhu, seeded fourth here, was stunned 15-21 21-12 18-21 by the 38th ranked Wardani in their first-ever face-off at the international level on

Thursday night.

But second-seeded men's pairing of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty kept India's flag flying by entering the quarterfinals with a hard-fought 12-21 21-17 28-26 win over Taiwanese pair of Fang-Chih Lee and Fang-Jen Lee.

The world No. 6 Indian duo will next face Danish pair of Jeppe Bay and Lasse Molhede later on Friday.

Earlier on Thursday, world No. 9 and fifth seed H S Prannoy

made a shock second-round exit after losing in straight games against unseeded Christo Popov of France.

Prannoy, favourite coming into the contest, looked a pale shadow of himself in front of world No. 40 Popov as he failed to give any fight, losing 8-21 8-21 to bow out of the men's singles event.

But it was Kidambi Srikanth, who was the first to crash out on Thursday, losing to Hong Kong's Cheuk Yiu Lee.

Going by rankings, there was hardly anything to separate the two as Srikanth is placed 20th in the world as against his rival's 19th position.

It was a hard-fought match, but Lee kept his composure to emerge 22-20 21-17 winner in the singles pre-quarterfinal contest.

National champion Mithun Manjunath also bowed out in the second round, losing 19-21 10-21 to Chia Hao Lee of Chinese Taipei.

# Aman Raj stays at third, Aryan Roopa Anand is 7th at Challenge Tour event

PTI ■ BENGALURU

India's Aman Raj shot a solid four-under 68 to lie tied third after the second round of the Duncan Taylor Black Bull Challenge golf here on Friday.

At 9-under for 36 holes, Aman was two shots behind the leader, Manuel Elvira of Spain (63-70), who is 11-under and two shots ahead of the field.

Sweden's Rikard Karlberg (68-66), who has two wins in India, was lying second at 10-under, while Aman shared the third place alongside three others — Oliver Farr (64-71), Ashley Chesters (67-68) and Stefano Mazzoli (67-68), who were all at 9-under.

Just one shot behind them in tied seventh was local lad, Aryan Roopa Anand, a rookie pro. Aryan (68-68) is now 8-under and shares the seventh place with five others.

Two more Indians, Om Prakash Chouhan (70-67) and Mari Muthu (68-69) were tied 13th at 7-under. Chouhan made a fine move up by 30 places as he added 67 to his first 70.

The tournament has so far looked good for Indians, who are getting to play a European Challenge Tour event in India after a gap of 10 years. A win here could open the doors to the Challenge Tour, from where they can aspire for the main DP World Tour.

As many as 14 Indians made the cut, which fell at 3-under with 69 players making it through to the weekend, including amateurs Arron Edwards-Hill and Robert Moran who received invitations through Sir Nick Faldo's Elite Tour.

Aman, who is on a come-



back trail following a fine win on the domestic Tata Steel PGTI Tour, had a fine start with birdies on second and fourth, but back-to-back bogeys on sixth and seventh meant he was back to even par.

The 27-year-old Patna golfer, fought back superbly around the turn with four birdies in a span of five holes. He birdied ninth, 10th, 11th and 13th and then closed with five pars to stay at tied third, where he began the second day.

Aman will go out in the lead

group with Elvira and Karlberg at 9:30am. Aryan, starting from the back nine, birdied 10th and 11th and dropped a shot on 12th. He got back that shot with a birdie on 17th and turned in 2-under. On the front nine of the KGA Course, Aryan birdied four times on first, second, fifth and eighth but also dropped a double bogey on Par-3 fourth for a second straight 68.

Chouhan had six birdies against one bogey in his 67 and Muthu had five birdies and a double in his 69.



# Chikka tied sixth in Hong Kong as debutant Kho takes lead

PTI ■ HONG KONG

India's S Chikkarangappa carded a fine one-under 69 but slipped from tied fourth place to tied sixth place at the halfway stage of the USD 1 million World City Championship here on Friday.

As many as eight of the nine Indians made the cut.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Kho took the second round lead with 64 and he is now 12-under and two shots ahead. Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

Chikka, who had a Top-10 finish last week at the DGC open, shot a second straight under par round at the par-70 Hong Kong Golf Club to move to 5-under for 36 holes.

Overnight leader Miguel Tabuena, winner in India last week, shot three-under 67 to get to 10-under, but he was overtaken by Hong Kong's debutant Taichi Kho, who is playing on his home course.

# Rudrankksh wins bronze as China extend golden run

PTI ■ BHOPAL

Reigning world champion Rudranksh Patil won bronze in the men's 10m air rifle, his second of the tournament, even as China extended their golden run at the ISSF World Cup by winning both gold medals on offer for the second consecutive day here.

Tokyo Olympics silver medallist Sheng Lihao of China won gold in the men's 10m air rifle while compatriot Huang Yuting, a double gold medallist at the Cairo World Championships last year, won the women's event.

China maintained their top position on the medal tally at the end of competition day three with five gold, one silver and two bronze in their kitty. India lay second with three bronze medals to go with a gold and silver each.

Playing back-to-back matches can never be easy, especially in a home World Cup, but the champion shooter that he is, Rudranksh delivered yet again, clinching bronze from what at one point seemed a lost cause.

He shot a solid 631.0 in qualification to finish fourth after leading in the initial



stages. In the 25-shot top eight ranking round, he was well outside the medal positions till the third five-shot series, before a fantastic fourth series, where he shot the highest score of 53.5, brought him back into contention.

Meanwhile the three Chinese qualifiers — Sheng (who led throughout the ranking round), silver medallist Du Linshu and Yu Haonan -- were on course to make it a Chinese 1-2-3 till the

20th shot. Rudranksh went into the fifth series 0.8 behind Yu. He then shot a strong 52.6 in the series as Yu faltered, posting 51.5 to finish fourth, as the Indian confirmed his second medal in two days and his fourth ISSF World Cup podium overall.

He finished with a score of 262.3 as Sheng and Du moved into the gold medal match with scores of 264.2 and 263.3 respectively.

The all-China gold medal contest was also a close one with Sheng prevailing 17-13 in the end.

## RAMITA FINISHES FOURTH

India had only one top eight finisher in Ramita in the women's 10m air rifle as she shot 632.3 to finish second among the medal contenders in the 52-strong field. The top eight had two Chinese, two Americans and one shooter each from Romania, Israel and Kazakhstan, besides hosts India.

China's Huang Yuting was in ominous form, topping the qualifications with a score of 632.8, while Tokyo Olympics silver medallist in the mixed team air rifle, Mary Tucker of the USA, also made it through in seventh place.

In the top eights, Huang was a cut above the rest, finishing on top again with a score of 265.7 as Mary shot 261.2 for a shot at gold.

Kazakhstan's Alexandra Le pipped India's Ramita to bronze, shooting 261.2 to the Indian's 260.5. Huang then maintained her form on the day to defeat Mary 16-4 for China's fifth gold of the competition.

# Olympian Bhavani Devi in action on first day of fencing nationals

PTI ■ PUNE

The 33rd Senior National Fencing Championship, which include the likes of Olympian Bhavani Devi, will start here from Saturday with participants from 30 teams vying for top honours. The Fencing Association of India along with Maharashtra Fencing Association and DY Patil International University is hosting the championship, which will conclude on March 28, at the Shiv Chhatrapati Sports Complex in Mahalunge-Balewadi.

The championship will be played in three disciplines — foil, epee and sabre — for both men and women — in two categories — individual and team.

On Saturday, all eyes will be on Bhavani, who is the first Indian fencer to qualify for the Olympics. She will take part in



women's individual sabre event.

Apart from Bhavani, the other noted players include Karan Gujjar (Rajasthan), Girish Jakate, Dnyaneshwari Shinde, Kashish Bharat (all Maharashtra). Maharashtra Fencing Association secretary Uday Dongre said around 600 fencers from across the country, of which 100 fencers have taken part in international events, will participate in the championship.

"Players representing 30 teams including one from the Services Sports Control Board (SSCB) will participate in the event.

# Sasikumar enters semis



Lucknow (PNS): India number two Sasikumar Mukund defeated second seed Oliver Crawford to book a berth in the semi-finals of the ITF \$25K Men's International Tournament. Mukund is the lone Indian to make it to the last four at the Ekana International Stadium. Mukund got past Crawford 7-6, 6-2 in the quarterfinals. He will now face third seed Evgeny Donskoy of Russia, who dis-

played his experience and consistency to edge past 19-year-old Karan Singh 7-5, 6-2.

Meanwhile, 21-year-old Eric Vanshelboim of Ukraine beat his countrymate Vladyslav Orlov in an intense battle 6-4, 6-2. Eric will now play top-seed and former Wimbledon Junior Doubles Champion Nam Hoang Ly of Vietnam, who beat Siddharth Vishwakarma 7-6, 6-3.

# NCA has shared workload monitoring report of India players: DC CEO

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI and the Indian team management are keeping a tab on workload management of national team players but there has been no specific directive for the IPL franchises as yet, said Delhi Capitals CEO Dheeraj Malhotra on Friday.

Malhotra, who has worked as a general manager with the BCCI, said that the National Cricket Academy (NCA) has

shared a detailed workload monitoring report of all the Indian players associated with respective franchises, which obviously helps the IPL team's medical unit to work in cohesion with the parent body.

Asked if there is a specific directive on workload management of World Cup prospects, Malhotra told PTI: "Not yet. What NCA has done is, it sent a report on all the contracted players

# Scotland extends coach Clarke's contract to 2026 World Cup

AP ■ GLASGOW

Steve Clarke extended his contract Friday with Scotland's national soccer team through the 2026 World Cup, which would make him the Tartan Army's longest-serving coach in more than 20 years.

The Scottish Football Association announced the deal ahead of European Championship qualifying games against Cyprus and Spain.

Clarke led Scotland to Euro 2020 for its first major tournament since the 1998 World Cup.

After Scotland lost to Ukraine in the playoffs for last year's World Cup, the team won a Nations League group to advance to



the top tier for the first time.

Clarke, a former Chelsea defender, was hired in 2019 and is set to have the longest spell in the Scotland job since Craig Brown left in 2002 after nine years.

"Steve has united the nation behind a successful men's national team," SFA chief executive Ian Maxwell said in a statement.

Scotland's Euro 2024 qualifying group also includes Norway and Georgia.

The top two teams in the group will advance to Euro 2024 in Germany. Scotland also has a guaranteed second path through the playoffs because of its Nations League group win. The 2026 World Cup in the United States, Canada and Mexico will be the first 48-team edition.

# Euro 2024 host Germany looks to rebuild after World Cup

AP ■ DUSSELDORF (GERMANY)

Another World Cup failure, another rebuild for Germany. This time there's even more at stake. Germany will host next year's European Championship and is desperate to avoid another debacle at home.

The Germans once took pride in having a "tournament team," one that could put distractions aside to perform when it mattered. Following group-stage exits at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups and a round-of-16 loss at the last European Championship, however, Germany has not won a knock-out game since the now-defunct Confederations Cup in 2017.

The current rebuild — with Germany able to skip qualifying as Euro 2024 host — starts with friendlies against Peru on Saturday and Belgium on Tuesday. Germany coach Hansi Flick's squad is a mix of regulars like Emre Can, Timo Werner and Joshua Kimmich, and some more experimental picks. The six players getting their first call-ups include two right backs, Joshua Vagnoman and Marius Wolf. There is also AC Milan defender Malick Thiaw and 21-year-old winger Kevin Schade, who is a bench player for Brentford in the Premier League.

Just like predecessor Joachim Löw after the 2018 World Cup, Flick has left out Bayern



Munich forward Thomas Müller. The 33-year-old Müller signaled his international career might be over in an emotional interview at the World Cup in Qatar, but then changed tack to say he was still available for selection.

Müller has been here before. After Löw dropped him in 2018,

he ended up being recalled in 2021 in the aftermath of a 6-0 loss to Spain.

"We appreciate each other and will continue to be in good contact," Müller posted on Instagram last week after it was confirmed Flick would not select him. Some other big names are out of the squad temporarily, whether because of injury (goalkeeper Manuel Neuer broke his leg while skiing) or personal reasons (midfielder Ilkay Gündogan became a father last week). The reasons for dropping Real Madrid defender Antonio Rüdiger and Bayern forward Leroy Sané are less clear-cut, but seem to be part of Flick's experiments in the rebuild.



# MATCHDAY: Spain hosts Norway; Wales at Croatia in qualifiers

AP ■ WASHINGTON

A look at what's happening in European Championship qualifying on Saturday: **GROUP A**

Luis de la Fuente takes charge of his first game as Spain coach in a potentially tricky match against Norway but he won't have to worry about Erling Haaland. The record-breaking Manchester City striker is out of the Norwegian squad after feeling pain from a groin injury.

Scotland plays Cyprus in the other game in the group after extending coach Steve Clarke's contract through to the 2026 World Cup. **GROUP D**

With long-time star Gareth Bale having recently retired, Wales will start a new era in its match at Croatia. Bale was Wales' most-capped men's player with 111 appearances and carried the team in recent years, including to the nation's first appearance at a World Cup in 64 years. However, Croatia star Luka Modric is still going. The 37-year-old Modric has said he will continue playing for his national team at least until the Nations League finals in June so should add to his record 162

appearances for Croatia against Wales in Split. Turkey visits Armenia in the other game.

## GROUP I

Switzerland's previous game was a 6-1 loss to Portugal in front of a crowd of 83,000 at the World Cup in Qatar. The Swiss return in an empty stadium facing Belarus in neutral Serbia.

Though Russia was kicked out of Euro 2024 by UEFA, its military ally Belarus was allowed to keep playing on condition of hosting its games in neutral countries with no fans allowed. Belarus chose Novi Sad in Serbia, which won't be an option when it "hosts" Kosovo in June.

Kosovo starts at Israel on Saturday and Romania is at Andorra. Switzerland is the only Group I team in the top 50 of FIFA's rankings, at No. 12. Romania is next best at No. 52.

## FRIENDLIES

Germany is starting a rebuild after its second World Cup group-stage exit in a row. Midfielder Joshua Kimmich takes the captain's armband instead of the injured Manuel Neuer in a much-changed squad to face Peru.

Germany isn't playing qualifiers because it's the host of the European Championship.



# WPL GAME EQUILISER: BARCLAY

There is no reason for men and women’s game to be viewed as different, says ICC chairman

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Women's cricket has distinguished itself with the introduction of the WPL and it should not be viewed differently from the men's game anymore, says ICC chairman Greg Barclay.

He said the league will help uplift the women's game, thanks to the professionalism and money involved.

The first edition of the tournament will conclude here on Sunday.

"... As I say, I think it will be a great uplift for the women's game and I am looking forward to see how this tournament plays out," Barclay told the BCCI.

"Now, there is no reason for the two parts of the game, men and women, to be viewed as different. This is people playing cricket and they should be treated equally.

"Secondly, the professionalism and the remuneration that is afforded the players I think that's something that's going to be really important, again, for the women's game," he added.



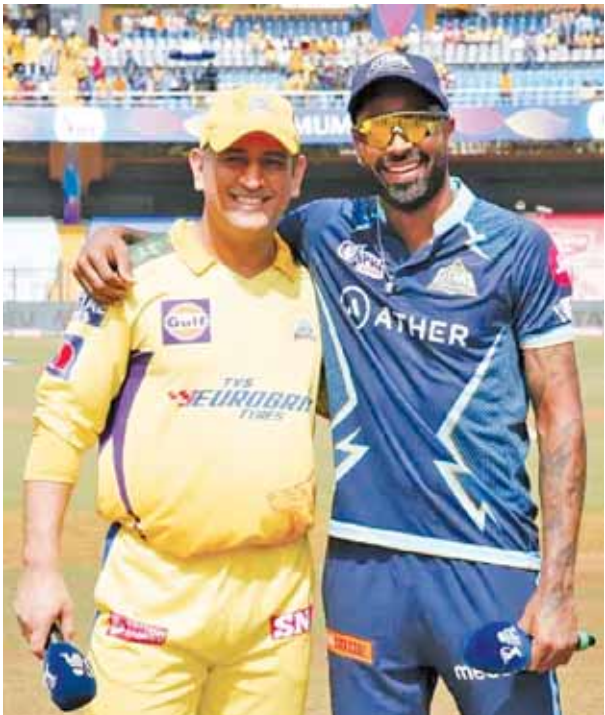
The Women's Premier League, which was a long time coming, finally began on March 4 this year amid much fanfare.

"I think if you recognise the powerhouse that India is in terms of cricket, it's appropriate that they have launched the Women's Premier League. I know that Jay Shah (BCCI president) and his board and his team are really committed to making this one one of the biggest and best tournaments that it can possibly be.

"I am sure that they will be successful in that respect. I am really pleased and very appreciate that this has happened," Barclay said.

"I take my hat off to Jay and his team at the BCCI for the way they have approached this. That is exactly what I would have expected out of an Indian run competition, it's absolutely amazing. "Jay and his team are doing a wonderful job in leading the way in terms of getting the women's game to where it needs to be," he signed off.

Barclay is serving his second term as the chair of the game's apex body.



## ‘Hardik similar to Dhoni as captain’

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Having watched both of them from close quarters, Gujarat Titans spinner R Sai Kishore feels that his franchise skipper Hardik Pandya is very similar to legendary MS Dhoni in terms of leadership traits.

Sai Kishore, before joining Gujarat Titans, was with CSK for a couple of years.

"Hardik and Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni) are pretty similar in the way they handle things, they both are pretty calm," Sai Kishore told the media during a virtual interaction session on Friday.

"One thing that I really admire about Hardik is his ability to handle success and failure equally - that is something very unique about him. He is a level-headed guy and that works (for him)," he added.

The 28-year-old said Gujarat Titans, who won the IPL last year in their debut season, will have to replicate their performances from last season in order to be successful.

"The tag of being defending champions is up to us whether to take it or not. We played well last year and that is why we won. I think if we can do that (then) the tag won't matter much," he said. Sai Kishore said the new rule of having an 'Impact Player' in IPL will make it more manageable than what it was in domestic circuit.

"It is more like the super-sub rule where we can either use a

bowler or a batsman. It is basically like playing with 12 people. We have already played with this (rule) in domestic (cricket). The only change is that we can use it till the 20th over, in domestic it was restricted to the 14th over. In 20 overs, it should be a lot easier to handle," he said.

The Tamil Nadu left-arm spinner said he is eyeing a place in the Indian side via strong performances in the IPL.

"Yes, there are a lot of left-arm spinners in India and this (IPL) is a very good opportunity but I would like to be here now in the present and play well for Gujarat. In the last five years, my skill-set has gone up and I want to keep improving. If it happens that I do very well in the IPL, I am going to play for India," he said.

However, Sai Kishore admitted that he has to improve his batting to come into national reckoning.

"It is a work in progress. I have done well in domestic (cricket) also. I know the areas where I am good at and areas where I need to work on. I am trying to put in hours into my batting and fielding," he said.

"In the IPL and higher you go, you want to bat at the top. In Tamil Nadu, I have had the luxury of batting at the top in a few games. The death overs batting needs more work and attention. Finding a pattern or formula to score quick runs is what I am working on," Sai Kishore concluded.

## Wong hat-trick fires Mumbai Indians into final

PTI ■ NAVI MUMBAI

Isabelle Wong (4/15) recorded the first hat-trick of the Women's Premier League after Nat Sciver-Brunst's brutal 38-ball 72 as Mumbai Indians stormed into the final with a 72-run drubbing of UP Warriorz in the Eliminator here on Friday.

The final of the inaugural WPL will be played between the two best sides that occupied the top two spots of the points table with 12 points each, Delhi Capitals and Mumbai Indians, on Sunday at the Brabourne Stadium.

Having set a daunting 183-run target, Mumbai Indians blew away what had been a resolute top and middle-order of the UP Warriorz, with Wong producing a superb hat-trick in the 13th over to seal the outcome in favour of her side.

After removing the dangerous Alyssa Healy (11) early and getting rid of an on-song Kiran Navgire (43), Wong cleaned up Simran Sheikh (0) and Sophie Ecclestone (0) to take a wicket each on the second, third and the fourth deliveries of her third over to produce a match-winning spell.

UP Warriorz were shot out for a mere 110 in 17.4 overs.

Navgire waged a lone battle for UP Warriorz with an entertaining 27-ball 43 with four fours and three sixes, but none of the other batters troubled the scorers in what turned out to be a one-sided contest.

UP Warriorz were off to a disastrous start, losing openers Healy and Shweta Sehrawat (1) inside the first three overs.

While Saika Ishaque (24-1-24-2) produced a wicket- maiden second over that included the scalp of Sehrawat, Wong got Healy caught by her counterpart Harmanpreet Kaur at mid-off in the third.

Mumbai dealt another severe blow on the UP Warriorz when batting mainstay Tahlia McGrath (7) was run out in the fifth over while trying to steal a single from a packed off-side field.

With their backs pressed firmly against the wall, Navgire took the attack to Mumbai with two fours and a six off Ishaque and Grace Harris also

got a four. The sixth over yielded 20 runs for UP Warriorz, who were 46/3 at the end of the powerplay.

Navgire also got a lifeline when she tried to clear the ropes again, off Amelia Kerr, with Hayley Matthews (1/13) spilling a regulation chance.

Navgire and Harris' fourth-wicket stand for 35 runs was eventually broken in the eighth over when Sciver-Brunst claimed her first wicket, getting the latter caught by Wong for 14. At the halfway stage, UP Warriorz were 63/4.

Navgire then smacked two sixes off Kerr and Deepti Sharma (16) got a four to collect 19 runs from the 12th over, but Mumbai Indians broke their stand soon.

Navgire perished after playing one straight to deep midwicket, after a quickfire 43, off Wong. The English bowler struck on the next delivery to clean up Sheikh and had Ecclestone chop one on to her wickets to complete her hat-trick.

Earlier in the first innings, Sciver-Brunst's blistering unbeaten 72 powered Mumbai Indians to a daunting total.

Sciver-Brunst was at her brutal best with the bat, clobbering nine fours and two sixes to make an unbeaten 72 and certainly made the most of an early lifeline when she was on six, with Sophie Ecclestone (2/39) dropping a regulation catch off Rajeshwari Gayakwad at mid-off.

UP Warriorz controlled the first half of the knockout clash largely through their spin bowlers, not allowing Mumbai batters to get away or notch up any big individual totals, barring Sciver-Brunst, who seemed unstoppable. The right-handed Sciver-Brunst provided much-needed impetus late for Mumbai Indians in the company of Kerr (29 off 19 balls, 5x4s), adding 60 runs for the fourth wicket. Having added 78 runs from overs 5-15, Mumbai Indians smashed 66 runs in the last five overs to put up a stiff total. The likes of Yastika Bhatia (21), Matthews (26) and Kaur (14) got starts but UP Warriorz kept control for the large part of the game after an erratic start.

## 13 suspicious cricket matches were played across globe last year: Sportradar report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

There were 13 competitive cricket matches that came under the cloud of suspicion in 2022, according to a review report published by Sportradar Integrity Services.

Sportradar Integrity Services unit is an international team of qualified integrity experts who deliver analysis on irregular betting, match-fixing and other forms of corruption in sports.

The 28-page report titled 'Betting, Corruption and Match-Fixing' states that in calendar year 2022, an unprecedented "1212 suspicious matches" were detected across 12 sporting disciplines in 92 countries.

The company uses an application Universal Fraud Detection System (UFDS) to detect suspicious activity during matches.

While football accounted for 775 matches, which possibly could have been corrupted, basketball is second in the list with 220 such games, and lawn tennis is third with 75 questionable games.

Interestingly, among 12 sports, cricket only has 13 allegedly corrupt games and is sixth in the list. The report claims that 13 corrupt games could still be the highest for the sport in a single year.

"Although a number of sports contin-



ue to display relatively low numbers of suspicious matches, 13 suspicious cricket matches is still the highest annual figure recorded by Sportradar Integrity Services, and handball and futsal also recorded their highest ever number of suspicious matches," the report stated.

The PTI had sent a questionnaire to Sportradar to understand which format has been corrupted the most and whether it is international games or matches in the T20

leagues. However, a look at the report states that the company is not referring to any matches played in India as per the graphics depicted in the report.

Therefore, one could ascertain that none of the 13 corrupt matches mentioned in the report has been played in India.

Sportradar, in fact, had partnered with the BCCI's anti-corruption unit in 2020 to detect betting irregularities during IPL matches.

## Myanmar face stiff challenge against Kyrgyz in Tri-Nation football trophy

PTI ■ IMPHAL

Myanmar will square off against the Kyrgyz Republic in their second match of the Tri-Nation International Football Tournament at the Khuman Lampak Stadium here on Saturday.

The tournament sees international football being featured in the football-crazy state for the first time, as India play host to Myanmar and Kyrgyz Republic.

The two outstation teams have already been in Imphal over the past week, where they have been training in preparation for the tournament. Myanmar had faced India in the opening match, which the hosts won 1-0.

Myanmar head coach Michael Feichtenbeiner looked to ease the pressure off from his players' shoulders, as he chose to



focus on performance, rather than results.

"Our target is to improve our performance first, and then to improve as a team. Only then can we reach something in terms of results. Of course, we want to get better results, that's the main target overall," said Feichtenbeiner in a release.

Feichtenbeiner showed a lot of respect for the opposition team when asked about the Kyrgyz Republic.

"They have a strong line-up that will come to their advantage tomorrow. The last few matches were not as successful for us, but we want to change that and try our best," he said.

## Kimmich praises Nagelsmann amid reports Bayern coach out



AP ■ FRANKFURT

Bayern Munich midfielder Joshua Kimmich praised Julian Nagelsmann as an "outstanding" coach Friday amid reports that the 35-year-old manager is set to be fired and replaced by Thomas Tuchel.

Both Kicker magazine and German tabloid Bild reported Thursday that Bayern was ending Nagelsmann's spell in charge following the team's 2-1 loss at Bayer Leverkusen in the Bundesliga on Sunday.

"I can only say that Julian Nagelsmann is an outstanding coach. Really, I've had a lot of coaches and a lot of top coaches and despite that

I'd say he's easily in the top three of my best coaches," Kimmich told reporters Friday as he prepares to captain Germany in a friendly against Peru on Saturday.

"As things stand at the moment, you can surely understand that I can't say anything" about the reports, he added.

Germany coach Hansi Flick, who was Nagelsmann's predecessor at Bayern, said he was "very surprised" to see reports saying Nagelsmann would be removed.

Bayern's defeat to Leverkusen dropped Bayern to second place in the Bundesliga, one point behind Borussia Dortmund before the teams clash in Munich in the "Klassiker" on April 1.

The Associated Press has asked Bayern for comment but the club has yet to make a statement about the situation.

Kicker reported that Bayern is in touch with Tuchel and that the German coach is expected to join Friday or Saturday. Tuchel led Chelsea to the Champions League title in 2021 and previously coached Paris Saint-Germain — losing the 2020 Champions League final to Bayern — and Dortmund.

Bayern faces Manchester City in the Champions League quarterfinals on April 11.

## Warner will have point to prove in IPL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Former Australia all-rounder and assistant coach of Delhi Capitals Shane Watson says the team's new captain David Warner will have a "point to prove" in the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League, starting on March 31.

Warner, who joined Delhi Capitals ahead of the 2022 season, has been named captain for IPL 2023 due to Rishabh Pant being ruled out following a horrific car accident in December

last year.

Warner has captained Delhi franchise in the past, the then Delhi Daredevils, and has had a successful run as a skipper in IPL with the Sunrisers Hyderabad, leading them to their only title win in the 2016 edition.

Warner had an overall successful stint with SRH, but his poor form with the bat and his subsequent fallout with the team management was followed by an undignified exit in the 2021 season.

PTI ■ JAMMU

Back and calf issues have forced defending champion Achantha Sharath Kamal to pull out of the men's singles event of the 84th UTT Inter-State Senior National Table Tennis Championships beginning here on Saturday.

The last-minute pullout because of the recurring back and calf spasms that Sharath has suffered in the past two months have dealt a blow to the organisers and the local spectators.

But his absence would help former national champion G. Sathiyana's cause as he eyes his second title. Sharath, a 10-time national champion, said he has to be cautious and continue the rehab programmes devised before the World Championships in Durban in May.

"The Worlds in May last

week is my focus, and I want to prepare well for the big event. Most importantly, I don't want to aggravate the situation. I am going straight to rehab and concentrate just on the Durban Worlds," he said in a release.

The PSPB paddler indulged in extra stretching before the quarters and semi-finals of the team championships to keep fit. He was in discomfort, but his commitment to the team's cause kept him going as he competed and won the matches without letting the cat out of the bag.

As for the matches on the fifth day of the championships, the top 16 seeded players in the men's section and eight in the women's category will get into action from Saturday when the second stage draw, the knockout, begins. The women will play three rounds, while the men will play two. With the group top-



emerging as the qualifier for the knockout round, there will be a tough fight among the players in 78 groups (women) and 96 in men's singles, respectively.

Meanwhile, the 16 men and eight women players will have a good day's rest before the battle for the title and the prize purse of Rs. 16 lakh gets hot.

The top-ranked players in both sections are:

**Men:** G. Sathiyana, Manush Shah, Harmeet Desai, Manav Thakkar, Sanil Shetty, Anirban Ghosh, Sudhanshu Grover, Jeet Chandra, SFR Snehit, Soumyajit Ghosh, Anthony Amalraj, Ronit Bhanja, Payas Jain, Deepit R. Patil, Yashansh Malik and Subh Goel.

**Women:** Manika Batra, Sreeja Akula, Reeth Rishya, Diya Chitale, Sutirtha Mukherjee, Anusha Kutumbale, Swastika Ghosh and Pra