

CITY 3
CHIEF MINISTER YOGI FLAGS OFF
520 MOBILE VETERINARY UNITS**OPINION 6**
SARPANCHS NEED TO BE
ACCOUNTABLE**WORLD 10**
'RUSSIA WILL STATION
TACTICAL NUKES IN BELARUS'

LUCKNOW, MONDAY MARCH 27, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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Cong's 'satyagraha' protests against BJP

Party slams
Rahul Gandhi's
disqualification
from Lok Sabha

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Congress leaders and workers on Sunday observed "Sankalp Satyagraha" to protest against disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha, with party president Mallikarjun Kharge lashing out at the ruling BJP and asking why it is pained if fugitives such as Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi are criticised.

Top party leaders P Chidambaram, Jairam Ramesh, Salman Khursheed, Pramod Tiwari, Ajay Maken, Mukul Wasnik and Adhir Ranjan Chaudhary, were also seen at the protest.

Party workers in several states and UTs like Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Telangana, Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat took part in the satyagrah during which prominent party leaders addressed the protesters.

The police in Gujarat detained several party functionaries for holding the stir.



Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi speaks during the party's 'Satyagraha' against disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha, at Rajghat in New Delhi on Sunday

While addressing a gathering at Rajghat in New Delhi, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra on Sunday said a martyred Prime Minister's son who walked thousands of kilometres for national unity can never insult the country.

She said the time had come to raise a voice against an "arrogant government" as barring Rahul from contesting elections does not bode well for the country and its democracy.

Continued on Page 9

Delhi Police's 'no' to Rajghat event over law & order

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has denied permission to the Congress for holding 'satyagraha' at Rajghat to protest against Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha, officials said on Sunday.

In a letter, the Delhi Police said the request was rejected due to law and order and traffic reasons and prohibitory orders under Section 144 CrPC imposed in and around Rajghat.

Rassi jal gayi, bal nahi gaya: Nadda's dig at Rahul

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at Congress over its nationwide protest against the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi, BJP president JP Nadda on Sunday said the court asked Rahul to apologise but there's so much arrogance in him that he did not apologise.

"They give casteist slurs saying 'chor'. Court asked you (Rahul) to apologise but there's so much arrogance you don't apologise, membership goes, you're sentenced but 'rassi jal gayi, bal nahi gaya', Nadda said in Madhya Pradesh.

Continued on Page 9

India summons Canadian envoy over Khalistan stir

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Taking exception to protests in Canada outside its embassy and consulates by alleged Khalistan supporters, India has summoned High Commissioner of Canada to New Delhi to register its displeasure over security arrangements outside the diplomatic premises there.

"It is expected that the Canadian Government will take steps which are required to ensure safety of our diplomats and security of our diplomatic premises so that they are able to fulfil their normal diplomatic functions," a Ministry of External Affairs statement on Sunday said. High Commissioner Cameron MacKay was summoned on Saturday.

"India sought an explanation on how such elements were allowed, in the presence of police, to breach the security of our diplomatic Mission and Consulates," the statement said.

MacKay was summoned to the External Affairs Ministry.

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Khalistan supporters protest outside Indian Embassy in Washington

Indian scribe assaulted by Khalistani protesters in US

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/WASHINGTON

Days after vandalising the Indian consulate in San Francisco, alleged Khalistan supporters have attacked Indian journalist Lalit K Jha working for the Press Trust of India (PTI) in Washington.

He was covering a pro-Khalistan protest outside the Indian Embassy there on Saturday afternoon when the

incident took place. Local police saved him. The Indian Embassy has condemned the attack. Jha took to twitter on Sunday and thanked the US Secret Service and police for protecting him.

Reports said Jha was physically attacked and verbally abused by Khalistan supporters. Washington-based journalist said he was hit on his left ear with two sticks by the Khalistan supporters.

Continued on Page 9

Centre notifies raised NREGA wage rates

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has notified a hike in wage rates under the rural job guarantee programme for the 2023-24 financial year with Haryana having the highest daily wage at Rs 357 per day and Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh the lowest at Rs 221.

The Union Ministry of Rural Development issued a notification on the change in wage rates under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme on March 24. The notification was issued under Section 6 (1) of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), 2005, that says the Centre may, by notification, specify the wage rate for its beneficiaries. The wage hikes, which range from Rs 7 to Rs 26, will come into effect from April 1.

Compared to last year's rates, Rajasthan registered the highest percentage increase in wages. The revised wage for Rajasthan is Rs 255 per day, up from Rs 231 in 2022-23.

Continued on Page 9

ISIS's India focus: Forms 2 sub-groups

RAKESH K SINGH ■ NEW DELHI

In its apparent bid to further ramp up its activities in South India, international terror group Islamic State (ISIS) has launched two sub-groups for the region.

While one sub group will cover Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka, the other one will target the rest of southern States like Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

The ISIS has a significant footprint in South India as most of the cases linked to the group under investigation by the anti-terror probe body National Investigation Agency (NIA) are from these States.

A number of recruits from South India have also participated in so-called Hijra (migration) for ISIS to other countries.

The outfit has particularly been active in Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. The ISIS had even roped in the now banned Popular Front of India (PFI) recruitment, spreading the violent Islamist ideology, training and raising a militia of trained jihadist to execute terror attacks.

The PFI was initially raised in Kerala but subsequently shifted its headquarters to Shaheen Bagh in the national Capital.



Earlier, the ISIS had formed groups like ISIS JK for Jammu & Kashmir, ISIS Deccan for South India, and ISIS Hind for the hinterland, experts tracking the group said.

"Investigations in the case had revealed that the accused had been conspiring to drive a wedge between different communities and groups living in India, spread the concept of violent extremism and jihad in India with the objective of dismembering the country and taking it over by establishing Islamic rule in India by 2047," the NIA has been on record stating this.

Continued on Page 9

Nikhat bags 2nd world title; Lovlina breaks bronze jinx with gold



A combination of pictures shows India's Lovlina Borgohain (L) and Nikhat Zareen posing with their medals during award ceremony, at the 2023 IBA Women's Boxing World Championships, in New Delhi on Sunday

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Nikhat Zareen continued to grow in stature as she added a second world title to her swelling trophy cabinet while Lovlina Borgohain broke her 'bronze jinx' to claim her maiden gold medal at the marquee event here on Sunday.

Nikhat upstaged two-time Asian champion Nguyen Thi Tam of Vietnam by a 5-0 verdict to take the light flyweight title in front of a packed home crowd at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall.

Two-time bronze medallist Lovlina, on the other hand, defeated two-time Commonwealth Games medal-

list Caitlin Parker of Australia 5-2 to win her maiden world title.

With the win, Nikhat becomes only the second Indian after the legendary MC Mary Kom to win the title of the prestigious tournament twice.

"I am very happy that I have become a world champion for the second time, especially in an Olympic category," Nikhat, who won the 52kg title last year, said after her bout.

The first bout of the day between the two Asians was an exciting affair that went down to the wire.

Continued on Page 9

PM bats for organ gift, hails women for spreading wings

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the increasing presence of women in different fields, and said "woman power" is playing a big role in India's growing strength. Also, he appealed to people to opt for organ donation, and said his Government is working on a uniform policy that will make the process easy and encourage people to adopt the life-saving exercise.

He mentioned several examples, including that of Surekha Yadav becoming the first woman loco pilot in Asia. Producer Guneet Monga and director Kartiki Gonsalves brought laurels to the country by winning an Oscar for their documentary 'The Elephant Whisperers', he said and also lauded women's role in the NDRF's relief and rescue work in Turkey.

Modi said, "India has also deployed a Women-only Platoon in the Peacekeeping Force under the UN Mission."

Urging people to embrace organ donation, Modi said those who donate their organs after death are "godlike" to recipients, he said in his monthly 'Mann ki Baat' radio broadcast, adding that people's preference for it can save and make many lives.

"It is a matter of satisfaction that the awareness about organ donation is rising in the country," Modi said, noting that the condition of being a state domicile for receiving organs has been removed to allow the needy to register themselves anywhere in the country.

A decision to remove the age criteria of being less than 65 years for donating organs has also been taken, he added.

From less than 5,000 cases of organ donations in 2013, the number has grown

to over 15,000 in 2022, he said.

Organ donation from one deceased person can help eight to nine persons, he noted. The Prime Minister also spoke to family members of those whose organs were donated after death. This included an Amritsar-based couple who decided to donate the organs of their daughter who passed away 39 days after being born with a fatal condition. Modi effusively praised the families for opting to donate the organs of their deceased members.

He said, "Great donors like them make us understand the importance of life. A large number of needy people are waiting for an organ donor in the hope of a healthy life. It is a matter of utmost satisfaction for me that, to make organ donation easy and to encourage it, work is being done on a uniform policy in the whole country."

Continued on Page 9

Those who weaken democracy cannot hold Satyagraha: CM

Lucknow (PNS): Taking a jibe at the 'Sankalp Satyagraha' held by the Congress, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, said that those who weaken democracy cannot observe 'Satyagraha'.

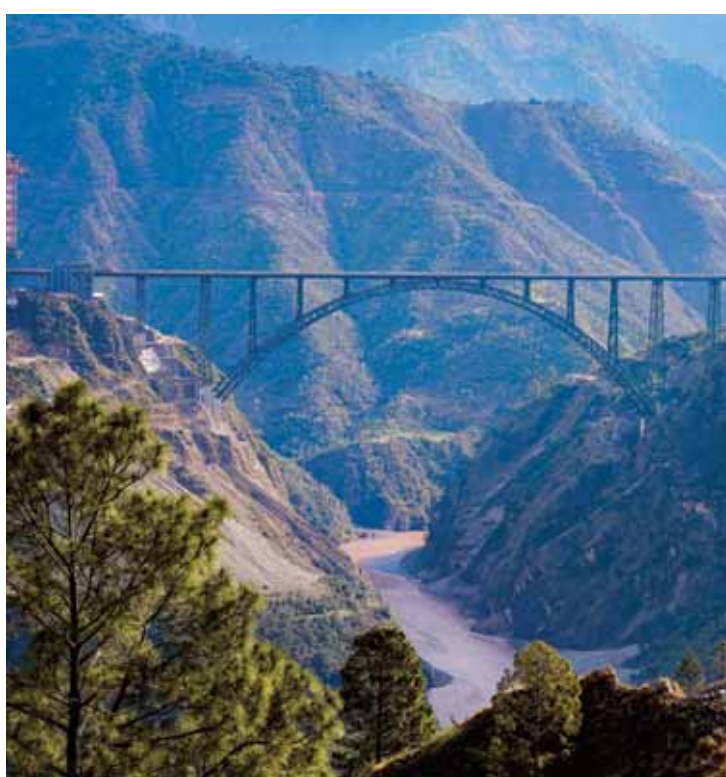
"Even those who divide the country on the lines of language and regionalism cannot practice Satyagraha. Nobody has the right to hold Satyagraha if one does not have compassion for people," the chief minister observed.

Addressing a programme, Chief Minister Yogi said that Gandhiji had always given place to truth and non-violence in his life. He had a request for this and his request was called 'Satyagraha'.

The chief minister said that many people had the chance to lead the nation but how could those who had no sympathy for people observe Satyagraha. "One who follows the path of untruth cannot talk of Satyagraha. Satyagraha cannot be practised by those who are deeply corrupt," he said.

Explaining the Satyagraha of Mahatma Gandhi, Chief Minister Yogi said that Satyagraha was based on mind, words and deeds.

He remarked that someone whose conduct and behaviour, thoughts, words and deeds, diverge from one another cannot practice Satyagraha.



Chenab Rail Bridge, world's highest railway bridge, over the Chenab river in Reasi district. The bridge is part of Indian railways' Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla Railway Link (USBRL) project

UP police take Atiq to Prayagraj from Gujarat

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

A police team from Uttar Pradesh came to the Sabarmati central jail in Ahmedabad on Sunday and took gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed to Prayagraj, where he will be produced before a court on March 28 when it passes an order in a kidnapping case in which he is accused, officials disclosed.

The UP Police team reached the Sabarmati jail in the morning and left the premises amid tight security with Atiq Ahmed in a police van around 6 pm after completing the necessary formalities, they said.

Atiq Ahmed, a former Samajwadi Party MP, has been lodged in the Sabarmati central jail since June 2019. He was shifted there from his home state as per the Supreme Court's order.

"A court in Prayagraj has set March 28 as the date to pass its order in a kidnapping case in which Ahmed is an accused," Prayagraj Police Commissioner Ramit Sharma said in the Uttar Pradesh city. He said a team of the Prayagraj police was sent to Ahmedabad to bring Atiq Ahmed for his court appearance on the given date.

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Retired manager of HAL duped of ₹7.80 lakh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A retired senior manager of HAL was duped of over Rs 7.80 lakh after being lured with a share in the unclaimed money of a deceased Indonesian king by an Indonesian woman, an advocate and a local man working for the accused.

In his complaint, Krishna Kumar Verma of Indira Nagar said a woman, who introduced herself as Thuma Rini Vidodo of Indonesia, sent him an email and wrote that she wanted to get the unclaimed money (Rs 152 crore) left behind by a deceased premier.

"She asked me to help her financially and offered me a share in the money. She kept sending me emails while demanding help. I initially ignored her mails but later I inquired about the same from the bank, in which the said money was deposited. The bank asked me to take the help of an Indonesian advocate, Harlem Napitul. I contacted the advocate and paid him his fee. This way, they took over Rs 7.80 lakh from me and then stopped replying to my emails," he stated in the complaint.

THE ELDERLY MAN WAS OFFERED A SHARE IN THE UNCLAIMED MONEY OF A DECEASED INDONESIAN KING BY AN INDONESIAN WOMAN, AN ADVOCATE AND A LOCAL MAN WORKING FOR THE ACCUSED

"I had retired in 2010 and I am 74 years old now. I am not physically fit either and my wife is bed-ridden," he stated in the complaint. He said he later came to know that it was a gang defrauding gullible people like him. "Their accomplice and local link Akash Mitra, to whose bank account I transferred the money, withdrew it immediately," he said. Police registered a case in this connection.

In another incident, a man was duped of Rs 20,000 in Ghazipur police station area. The incident took place on March 9 but a case was registered in this regard on March 25. The victim, Mohammed Parvez of Indira Nagar, was

taken for a ride by a man who had been making calls to him for the last few days.

"He had been requesting me to increase the credit card limit. On the fateful day, he sent me a link which I downloaded and filled in the details. Immediately after that, Rs 15,000 and Rs 5,000 were debited from my account," he said. He added that he had lodged a complaint with the cyber cell but did not get any help, and therefore, he lodged a complaint with police.

Meanwhile, a man was duped of Rs 99,999 while tracing his courier online in Ashiyana on Saturday. The complainant, Pradeep Srivastava of Eldeco Colony in Bangla Bazaar, said he was tracing a courier online when he got a call from a man and was asked to pay Rs 2 for processing the delivery request around 2 pm. "He told me that I would get the delivery by 6 pm after I paid Rs 2 online. By 6:30 pm, I got a number of OTPs and messages. It appeared that my phone had been hacked as I had no control on it. I then got a call from the bank and was told about the transaction," he said.

NEET aspirant stalked, threatened by youth

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A youth allegedly stalked a NEET aspirant by constantly hanging out around the building she resides in Mahanagar. The girl's father lodged a complaint against the accused. He also claimed that no help came his daughter's way even though he dialled 1090.

The complainant said his daughter is preparing for the competitive exam from an institute in the area. "The accused, Dharmendra Sahu, developed a fancy for her and proposed to her. He used to force her for marriage despite having been confronted by her on a number of occasions in the past," the complainant alleged.

It was also alleged that Dharmendra forcibly secured the girl's contact number and those of her family members. He used to call the girl and hurled expletives. The complainant alleged that the accused threatened to spoil her career and kill her. "He used to hang around our building and would boast of his links. He had also threatened to kill my daughter if she complained to police," the complainant alleged. He said Dharmendra had a criminal bent of mind and he might harm his daughter. "We

lodged a complaint through 1090 but no action was taken against the accused," he said.

DRUG ADDICT ENDS LIFE

A 26-year-old drug addict ended his life following withdrawal symptoms at his house in Para. The youth, identified as Sonu Verma of Kumarapuram, was found hanging on Sunday. His sister Neetu Verma said Sonu was a drug addict. "He was injuring himself and hitting his head against the wall under the influence of drugs on Sunday. Our parents turned him out of the house. He went to the verandah where he hanged himself," she told police.

Meanwhile, thieves made off with cash and ornaments from two houses in Manak Nagar and Ashiyana. The incidents came to light on Sunday. In Ashiyana, the thieves made off with Rs 50,000 in cash and ornaments worth several lakh from the house of Vinod Dwivedi of Jalvayu Vihar. He and his family had gone to their native house in Kannauj and given the keys of the house to his maid. In Manak Nagar, the thieves made off with household goods, cash and ornaments from the house of Shweta Chaudhary of RDSO.



The anti-encroachment squad of Lucknow Development Authority sealed the Allaya Apartment building in Dalibagh due to violation of the blueprint. The 7-storeyed semi-finished housing complex was sealed by the LDA squad, accompanied by armed police.

Pioneer



Devotees throng a temple in Shastri Nagar on the occasion of Navratri on Sunday

Pioneer

KSSSCI to have more facilities for patients

Lucknow (PNS): The paediatric oncology department of Kalyan Singh Super Speciality Cancer Institute (KSSSCI) has made a proposal to the state government regarding patient facilities — a blood bank, an ICU and recruitment of a surgeon. Dr Gitika Pant said they have proposed these facilities so that they could have more patients in the upcoming institute.

Dr Pant pointed out that the most common cancer among children is blood cancer, but the reason is difficult to explain. "It could be because children get exposed to radiation or because of environmental factors — the mutations are idiopathic and can happen anytime. It could also happen in those suffering from syndrome problems, but nobody can assign the cause of cancer in a patient which leads to mutations," she said.

Dr Pant said they are getting all kinds of cancers amongst children, included blood cancer, bone cancer, eye cancer, muscle cancer, liver cancer, and brain cancer.

"We deal with children, from infants to 14 years. It is challenging dealing with paediatric cancer patients. The

moment when you disclose to parents about their children suffering from cancer is horrifying. The best thing about cancer in kids is that it is curable, though the common perception is that it is a life-threatening disease," she said.

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Thermal ablation machine installed at Lok Bandhu Hospital

Lucknow (PNS): Cervical cancer is spreading rapidly in the country, and it is the second largest cancer in women, due to which about 60,000 of them die. Medical superintendent of Lok Bandhu Hospital Dr Ajay Shankar Tripathi said that a state-of-the-art thermal ablation machine had been installed in the hospital and would be operational soon.

He pointed out that the World Health Organization had launched a worldwide campaign under which cervical cancer should be detected early and eliminated. The women will be screened and those in early stage of cancer will be treated at the same time with this machine in 20 to 45 seconds. With this technique, the wound is burnt at 100 degree centigrade and it does not cause pain to the patient.

A faculty member said that women who have cervical cancer in advanced stage would be sent to bigger facilities for treatment. Director Dr Deepa Tyagi said that Dr Sandhya Singh and Dr Shalini Katiyar from gynaecology department have received training in operation and treatment method of this machine. Pap smear and FNAC facility have been started for the benefit of the public.

'Important to pay attention to kids, give them time'

Lucknow (PNS): A one-day state-level conference on the status and functioning of statutory bodies under the Juvenile Justice Act, 2015 and way forward with special focus on children in need of care and protection was inaugurated by Justice Pritinker Diwaker, Chief Justice designate of Allahabad High Court, at the Judicial Training and Research Institute in Lucknow.

The conference was organised under the aegis of the Juvenile Justice Committee, Allahabad High Court. While inaugurating the conference virtually, Justice Diwaker appealed to the stakeholders to pay special attention to children and give them time while dealing with their matters.

"The statute has entrusted us to guide and shape the future of children and we need to change our behaviour towards them. It is important to provide open spaces for them to play and channelise their energies in a positive manner," Justice Diwaker said. He also shared his experiences while working with SLA, Chhattisgarh and UP, and said that he observed lack of love towards children. "Children are vulnerable, therefore, there must be a check over their access to mobiles and the

internet," he added.

The guest of honour was Chairman, Committee for JTRI, Justice Devendra Kumar Upadhyay, who said: "Two phrases that come to my mind while dealing with children in need of care and protection are empathy and their best interest that should be taken care of."

Member of High Court Juvenile Justice Committee Justice Abdul Moin said: "As policy-makers and implementers, it is our collective responsibility to provide an environment where children feel nurtured and secure."

Justice Subhash Vidhyarthi emphasised on the sensitivity of matters related to children. He said that many a times, the voice of children is suppressed in the due course of procedures given under the law.

Secretary, department of Women and Child Development, Anamika Singh spoke about the endeavours being made by the government for children in need of care and protection. She also mentioned data regarding beneficiaries of the 'Mukhya Mantri Bal Sewa Yojana' and others. She mentioned that Mukhya Mantri Sumangala Yojana covered around 4.8 lakh beneficiaries in UP.

Vulture conservation, breeding centre to come up in Gkp

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Action (vulture) conservation and breeding centre, the first of its kind in the state of Uttar Pradesh, will be inaugurated shortly in Gorakhpur.

Gorakhpur's Divisional Forest Officer Vikas Yadav, while giving the details, said that the centre would breed only the red-headed vulture which have both mythological significance and current relevance. The Jatayu in the Ramayana who fought with

Ravana to save Sita was a red-headed vulture, that shows the mythological significance, and the current relevance is that the species is endangered because of the extensive use of diclofenac.

The DFO said that the centre was spread in an area of one hectare in Maharajganj area of Gorakhpur district and was situated on the Gorakhpur-Sonali Highway. "The work was started in 2021 and the infrastructure consists of 12 huge cages to keep the vultures

in captivity. The construction did not require the permission of the Central Zoo Authority because there is no display of the bird. It is meant strictly for scientific research," he said.

Yadav said that Gorakhpur was chosen because there was no vulture conservation centre in eastern Uttar Pradesh. "It was also chosen because the terai region was once known for the large number of vultures but these vultures declined rapidly. Maharajganj was selected so that the vultures could be con-

served in their natural habitat in the environment," he said.

The DFO said that currently there were four vultures at the centre which had been caught in Chitrakoot. "There are vulture conservation and breeding centres in Panchkula, Bhopal and West Bengal but there is no conservation and breeding centre for the red headed vultures and hence it will be the first of its kind where the red headed vultures will be kept in captivity," he said. The DFO said that the staff consisted of eight peo-

ple and the forest staff.

Giving an example of successful breeding, Yadav said that Buxar was a case in point where they had only 2-3 vultures left. "After 10 years, we will be releasing the vultures in the wild. The purpose of the centre is to breed the population and to sustain it also," he said. He said that most of the work had been completed and only a little was remaining and the inauguration would be formally done by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.



NOTICE

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NOTICE

Name mentioned in graduation mark sheets Abhay Tiwari and on Aadhar Abhay Kumar Tiwari is of same person who is S/o Alok Tiwari and residence is 117/O/165 Geeta Nagar Kanpur-208025

NOTICE

I, Mukesh Kumar Bharti H.N. 647 B/1-P073, Janakipuram Garden, Lucknow, my daughter's name is Shreya Bharti but in Adhaar Card No. 662452666938 by mistake her name has been entered as Shubhi Bharti. In future she should be known as Shreya Bharti.

Audience wants variety: Devgn

Lucknow (PNS): Bollywood star Ajay Devgn said the audience has evolved to a great extent and now wants a variety. In Lucknow for the promotion of his film 'Bhola' on Saturday, Devgn said all kinds of films work. "The films doing well today are basically masala films like Amitabh Bachchan's movies of the 70's and 80's. The audience has evolved in a big way and they want something on a large scale. They want it in a different way and in a different sensibility. It has always been the case. It is not as if only romance works, we have been doing a lot of action films since the beginning," he said.

On his role as a director, Devgn said he simply guides the actors and motivates them for a good performance.

"When you have good actors, you do not have to control them; you simply have to guide them to extract a good performance. When you treat them well, everything falls in place. Sanjay Mishra, who is a great actor, can perform well, be it a serious or comic role. When you are clear-headed director,



everything becomes easy," he said. The actor also had a word of praise for the director of RRR for bringing the Oscar to India for the second time. Commenting on the success of southern films, he said: "There is misinformation about the issue. Good and bad films are being made here in Bollywood and there in south too. We have had our flops like our southern counterparts. Ten out of hundred become a hit here as in south. However, everyone has information about the flop films in the north, but not in south." He said it was a great experience in Kashi with his son. "One feels a great sense of inner change the moment one enters and leaves the temple," he added.

LDA plans new transport city

Lucknow (PNS): The Lucknow Development Authority (LDA) has chalked out a massive logistic plan to regulate traffic flow in Mohanlalganj and will build a new transport city on Deva road soon. It was disclosed by LDA Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi here on Sunday while chairing a meeting on traffic management.

Officials of police, traffic police, Nagar Nigam, revenue and transport departments besides representatives of Trade Tax department and Urban Mass Transport Corporation (UMTC) attended the meeting. However, the

district magistrate and municipal commissioner did not attend the meeting and they were represented by senior officers. Tripathi said traffic flow could be regulated in the city with better management on the outskirts. He pointed out that the biggest problem was the movement of trucks and buses. The VC has chalked out both the plans in consultation with UMTC personnel and the same were approved by the chief town planner.

Though Deva road is in Barabanki district, it has come under the jurisdiction of LDA. The VC assured representatives of the Trade Tax depart-

ment that they have made arrangement to set up their office in Transport Nagar on Lucknow-Kanpur highway in order to prevent the entry of heavy vehicles.

LDA has made provisions for parking of heavy vehicles in the open space in Ashiyana for smooth flow of traffic as long queues are seen on both sides of the highway, which could lead to congestion and mishaps. The new transport city will come up on a 100-acre land on Deva road. The VC said all the mandis of the city would be shifted either to the outer Ring Road or Shaheed Path.

Books on Lord Ram keep readers hooked

Lucknow (PNS): Books on Lord Ram are selling well at the Lucknow Book Fair, currently underway at the Ravindralaya Lawns in Charbagh. The incharge of Sasta Sahitya Prakashan stall pointed out that it's mostly readers above the age of 40 years who are picking up these books.

He said that one of the books is 'Ramayana Ek Purnayatra' by Radha Vallabh

Tripathi, who is a great Sanskrit, English and Hindi writer. "He has chosen those incidents or 'prasangs' in the book on which questions are raised and which have been controversial. He has done intellectual analysis to make these incidents relevant. He has tried to see these incidents and investigate them through women's, Dalit's and patriarchal society's angles," he said.

The incharge said another book getting popular is 'Apne Apne Ram', written by Bhagwan Singh, who is an author, critic and poet.

"Yet another book is 'Dashrath Nandan Sri Ram', written by Chakraborty Rajgopalacharya. While the readers are familiar with Ramayana by authors from the north, they are not familiar of the books by authors

down south, though they are partly familiar with the Ramayana written by poet Kamban.

"Kamban's Ramayana is almost similar to that of Tulsidas and Valmiki, yet some descriptions are different. The author has tried to study the Ramayana of Tulsidas, Valmiki and Kamban and provide the comparison," he explained.

He further pointed out

that the book has been translated from Tamil to Hindi by Laxmi Devdas Gandhi, who is the daughter of the author. "Though her mother language was Tamil, she had full command over Hindi language," the incharge said.

"Another book titled 'Tulsi Ram Katha' is written by Vishwambharsahai. The book has been divided into four parts," he added.

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‘LHDC scheme ushers in a new era in livestock sector’

Chief Minister Yogi flags off 520 mobile veterinary units

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a bid to help the farmers involved in animal husbandry in the state, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday flagged off 520 mobile veterinary units.

Speaking on the occasion, the chief minister said the Livestock Health and Disease Control Scheme was the beginning of a new era in the livestock sector. He said people involved in animal husbandry in Uttar Pradesh would now get better accessibility to veterinary healthcare services at their doorstep through mobile units.

He said that from Sunday, 520 mobile veterinary vans would be available to cattle rearers across all state districts. "We used to see that if an animal became ill, it could not receive timely treatment. If a cow got into an accident, it could not get a doctor fast enough. Those animals will be able to be treated as a result of this. This scheme marks the start of a new chapter in Uttar Pradesh's livestock protection and promotion," he said.

Chief Minister Yogi stated that with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's inspiration, his government has made numerous efforts in the last six years to conserve and promote cattle.

"Many programmes were started by the state's Animal Husbandry department to bring change in the lives of 'annadata' farmers and increase their income as well as protect the farmers' crops," he said.

Yogi stated that the UP government is carrying out a large campaign for animal breed improvement in collaboration with the Government of India, and added, "More than 6,600 shelters have been established in the state for the protection of destitute cattle."

There are a total of 12 lakh cattle in the state out of which the state government is responsible for protection of 11 lakh, for which the government is giving Rs 900 per cattle, he added.

He went on to say that his government is running three types of schemes for cattle protection. "Under the first



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagging off 520 mobile veterinary units in Lucknow on Sunday

Pioneer

scheme, approximately 10 lakh cattle are served in destitute cow shelters. The second programme is the Mukhyamantri Sahbhagita Yojana under which any farmer can keep up to four cows in his house and the government pays him Rs 900 per cow per month through direct benefit transfer (DBT). We are providing cattle to malnourished families as part of the third scheme," the chief minister said.

Yogi went on to say that milk produced by cattle rearers in the country previously was not sold in the global market because milk samples collected from sick animals failed in tests. "This is the first time that efforts are being made to protect these animals by eliminating diseases such as foot and mouth disease," he said.

He added: "Our livestock farmers' income is greatly increased by making their products available in the global market. Gobardhan Yojana has become a source of additional income for the farmers. Today, cow dung is used to make paint. The state govern-

ment is launching a new programme to boost this."

Stating that the government was promoting cow-based natural and organic farming in 27 districts on the banks of the river Ganga in the state, Yogi said, "Under this, we are taking forward the action of farming on 1.25 lakh hectares of land. It is our goal to increase this and we have included all seven districts of Bundelkhand in this effort."

Meanwhile, Union Minister for Animal Husbandry, Fisheries, and Dairy Parshottam Rupala stated that the mobile veterinary unit established for animal health is an important decision taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "Because Uttar Pradesh is the world leader in milk production, India is the world leader in milk production," he said.

He stated that the way UP has worked to control lumpy skin disease inspires other states in the country. The Yogi government in Uttar Pradesh defeated the rapidly spreading lumpy virus, he added.

SP to support anti-BJP alliance, says Akhilesh

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Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said here on Sunday that Samajwadi Party would extend its support to the alliance forged to defeat the Bharatiya Janata Party in 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

"Samajwadi Party is not involved in the process of forging a new alliance, our duty is to extend the alliance which takes shape to defeat the BJP," Akhilesh Yadav said in a press conference here on Sunday.

He added, "I appeal to the Congress to support the regional parties in states that are fighting the BJP." Asked whether he has sympathy for the Congress, the SP chief said, "We cannot give our sympathy to any political party."

"Congress should consider the present political context. Congress should forget that the regional parties damaged the national party in the past. In fact, it is the national parties which have inflicted damage on the regional parties and even today the leaders of regional parties like Lalu Prasad Yadav, his son and Deputy Chief Minister of Bihar Tejashwi Yadav, Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao and Stalin are being hounded by the Central agencies like the Income Tax Department, Enforcement Directorate and the Central Bureau of Investigation," he said.

The Samajwadi Party chief said that earlier Mulayam Singh Yadav and former chief minister of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalitha, were targeted by the central agencies.

Akhilesh Yadav maintained that regional parties pose no threat to the Congress. "In fact, the regional parties will fight the other national party -- Bharatiya Janata Party," he said.

He questioned the claims of development made by Chief Minister

... flays notice to man who rescued Sarus

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Leader of opposition in UP assembly, Akhilesh Yadav, slammed Chief Minister Yogi Minister for the legal proceedings under Wildlife Protection Act against Arif Khan Gurjar who protected an injured crane.

The Samajwadi Party chief said Arif's video with the crane went viral on social media and this irked the chief minister leading the action against him.

"Arif can vote for me, but Sarus cannot vote. Arif is being victimised by the UP government because I met him and put the video of the bird on social media platform and it went viral. The chief minister was unhappy with the popularity of the video as his videos on social media get poor attention," Akhilesh Yadav said.

The UP wildlife authorities shifted the crane from Arif's house in Amethi to a Rae Bareilly sanctuary earlier this week. They then shifted the Sarus to the Kanpur Zoo on Saturday after realising that wildlife was no place for a creature now used to domestic comforts.

Arif was booked under the Wildlife Protection Act on March 9.

Yogi Adityanath who completed one year in office on Saturday.

"Yogi Adityanath is only selling dreams to the people while there is no change at the ground level. The government claims on development are based on forged data. The chief minister should look at the report of the NITI Aayog, which has ranked Uttar Pradesh at 22nd spot in the human development index," said the SP chief who is also the leader of opposition in the UP assembly.



On Saturday, the Forest department issued a notice to Arif and asked him to appear at the office of the Gauriganj divisional forest officer on April 4 to record his statement.

According to the notice issued by Assistant Divisional Forest Officer (Gauriganj) Ranvir Singh, Arif has been booked under relevant sections of the Wildlife Protection Act.

Akhilesh invited Arif to the SP headquarters in Lucknow and addressed a press conference on Sunday.

Arif said he found the male crane with a broken leg in a field. "I brought it home and started caring for it. I put turmeric and mustard oil paste on its wound and tied a stick

to the leg to give it support. We do the same for our hens," said the farmer who has a dozen hens, a dog, cows and goats.

Arif insists he never kept the crane captive. "Within weeks, the bird started recovering, and soon it started flying too. It stayed in the courtyard outside the house. But it never returned to the wild for good."

Arif said the Sarus would follow him around when he went on motorcycle rides in the village. "It would stay in the jungle when it wanted. Then, in the evenings it would come to my house and eat with me. I never held it captive," he said.

The Sarus crane, usually found in wetlands, is the state bird of Uttar Pradesh and protected under Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. They are the world's tallest flying birds, standing around 150 cm tall.

Responding to Yadav's allegations, Divisional Forest Officer DN Singh had said, "Whatever action has been taken is with Arif's (Gurjar) consent."

The official said these birds always live in pairs and since this one was living alone, there was some apprehension about its well-being.

lege in each of 75 districts of the state while the fact was that the faculty positions in most of the medical colleges were vacant.

Questioning the claim of the UP government of setting up a robotic plant in the state, Akhilesh Yadav said, "When the Yogi Adityanath government cannot handle the stray cattle and bulls on the streets leading to serious road accidents and loss of lives, how can one rely on the government's claim on robotic plant?"

15 IPS officers promoted

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government, on Sunday, promoted 15 IPS officers and also gave new postings to about half a dozen of them.

According to an official communiqué released on Sunday evening, N Ravinder has been posted as Additional Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh Police Headquarters, Lucknow.

Amit Chandra, ADG/IG PAC West Zone Moradabad has been given a new assignment as ADG, PTC Moradabad.

Ramkarn Verma has been posted as IG, EOW, Western Uttar Pradesh. He was posted as IG/DIG, PAC West Zone, Moradabad.

IPS officer Anil Kumar, currently posted as IG/DIG PAC Section Ayodhya has been posted as IG, PAC East Zone Prayagraj.

Ramakrishna Bhardwaj has been promoted to IG rank on his present posting as DIG of Basti Range, while J Ravinder Goud has been promoted to IG rank on his present assignment as DIG of Gorakhpur Range.

Subhash Chandra Dubey has been posted as IG, Traffic and Security; Akhilesh Kumar has been given the responsibility of IG, Azamgarh Range; Keshav Kumar Chaudhary has been posted as Additional Commissioner of Police in Agra; Anees Ahmed Ansari has been posted as DIG, UP Police Headquarters.

Shiva Simple Chinappa has been posted as ACP in Varanasi. He was posted as DCP in Lucknow. Dinesh Kumar P has been posted as ACP in Ghaziabad; Bablu Kumar has been posted as DIG, Anti-Corruption Organisation in Lucknow. Brijesh Kumar Mishra has been posted as Superintendent of Police, PTS Sultanpur, and Ashutosh Shukla has been posted as SP, Railway at Moradabad.

6 more dists to have forensic science labs

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To further strengthen the Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) and completely eliminate the narco nexus in the state, the Uttar Pradesh government led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is working on a war footing to complete the construction of six new state-of-the-art forensic science labs in the state.

To combat drug traffickers, work on establishing cutting-edge forensic labs in six districts of the state is underway. The new labs are being built in Saharanpur, Ayodhya, Banda, Basti, Mirzapur and Azamgarh. In this way, the state will have a total of 18 forensic science labs. At present, 12 labs are functional in different districts.

According to DIG (ANTF) Abdul Hameed, it takes a long time to send the seized drugs to the forensic science lab for testing. At the same time, it takes more than 15 days to receive the test results of these samples.

"The new forensic lab will reduce the time it takes to deliver drugs for tests. In addition, the investigation report of these samples will be available within a week, which will help in putting drug dealers behind bars through effective court lobbying," he said.

On behalf of ADG, UP Police Headquarters, a proposal was made to the government to provide risk allowance to the ANTF personnel in the

same way that it is provided to officers and police personnel in UP, and discussions are going on at the government level.

Similarly, discussions are taking place at the government level regarding the division of jurisdiction of ANTF-operated police stations in Meerut, Barabanki, Gorakhpur, Ghazipur, Jhansi, and Saharanpur.

This may also receive approval soon. Besides, an amount of Rs 37.25 lakh will be released soon for the purchase of modern equipment for ANTF.

It may be mentioned here that in August 2022, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had announced the formation of ANTF to put a stop to illegal drug dealers.

In the last six months, a total of 16 actions were taken in 11 districts of the state by the ANTF.

DIG (ANTF) Abdul Hameed said that about 10 kg of illegal smack, 21.02 kg of illegal opium, 7.1 kg of illegal charas, and 966.498 kg of ganja had been seized from various districts, which are worth Rs 16.68 crore in the international market.

During these operations, the team arrested 36 illegal drug dealers while recovering 13 vehicles, one illegal .32 bore pistol, and nine live cartridges from the criminals. In light of these actions, the government is putting together an action plan to strengthen the ANTF further.

CPI-ML protest today in support of Rahul Gandhi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) will stage demonstrations all across Uttar Pradesh on Monday in protest against the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha.

CPI-ML state secretary Sudhakra Yadav, who is participating in the central committee meeting in Kolkata, said the action of the Central government on Rahul Gandhi was akin to surgical strike on democracy.

In a statement, the CPI-ML leader said the Surat court gave a 30-day grace period to Rahul Gandhi to appeal in higher court by staying the punishment for 30 days. "Despite this, the Lok Sabha membership of Rahul Gandhi was finished. The Union government's move was vindictive. This is an action to silence the opposition," he said.

He said there was an undeclared emergency in the country and it was high time for the opposition to unite and fight with the Bharatiya Janata Party to save democracy. He said the party workers and leaders would take out protest marches across the state. In Lucknow the party workers and leaders will take out the protest march from Pariwartin Chowk to the district magistrate's office while in other districts the protest will be held at tehsil and district headquarters.

Congress stages Satyagraha, attacks Modi government

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh Congress on Sunday staged a 'Sankalp Satyagraha' and termed the termination of the membership of former Congress president Rahul Gandhi as a conspiracy of the Narendra Modi government to end Indian democracy.

Leading the thousands of angry Congressmen who staged day-long Sankalp Satyagraha at the martyr's memorial on the bank of river Gomti on Sunday, UP Congress president Brijlal Khabri and Congress Legislature Party leader Aradhana Mishra raised anti-government slogans on the disqualification of Rahul Gandhi from Lok Sabha. They made scathing attacks on the government.

It may be mentioned that in support of Rahul Gandhi's



'Sankalp Satyagraha' going on at Rajghat in Delhi, the Congressmen in all the districts of Uttar Pradesh extended their support by staging protests and raising anti-government slogans.

While addressing the 'Sankalp Satyagraha' here on Sunday morning, Khabri made a scathing attack on the Modi government and said that today Rahul Gandhi had to pay the price for speaking the truth fearlessly and with facts and raising the voice of the people.

"The morale of Congressmen is not going to be dampened by this. The Congress party will always raise the anti-people issues of this corrupt government," he said.

He claimed that the UP Congress had geared up for a massive mass movement to expose each and every failure of

the Modi government. "No matter how much atrocities the government commits, neither are we afraid, nor will we have any fear of the misuse of government machinery to silence our voices," he asserted while attacking the BJP government over misuse of official machinery.

Addressing the Satyagraha, Aradhana Mishra said that none among Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi and Mehul Choksi belonged to the backward castes, still, by pretending to be backward, the Bharatiya Janata Party was trying to hide the nexus of these economic scammers with the Central government.

She alleged that the BJP could not tolerate exposure of their nexus with Adani, hence to silence Rahul Gandhi, they managed to get him disqualified from Parliament.

Five killed in separate road accidents

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three youths were killed after a speeding truck hit their motorcycle from behind near Chira village on Lalitpur-Jhansi highway in Lalitpur district on Sunday morning.

The truck driver also dragged one of the victims for over 100 metres to escape from the spot.

Reports said that a speeding truck

hit a motorcycle on which three youths were riding in Lalitpur district on Sunday morning. While two youths were thrown away from the motorcycle after it was hit, the one driving the motorcycle was dragged for several metres by the truck.

After getting information about the incident, the police reached the spot and arrested the truck driver and sent the injured youths to the district hospital

but the doctors pronounced all the three dead. Two of the youths who died in the accident were going to Jakhora village under Bansi police station to drop one of their relatives, who also died in the mishap. The victims were later on identified as Awadhesh (25) of Mathura village, Bablu Brar (29) of Jakhaura village and Purushottam (38) of Ranipura Sagar (Madhya Pradesh).

The bodies were sent for post-

mortem examination and the driver was sent to jail. In a separate mishap, two people died and three others suffered injuries after the car they were travelling in crashed into a tree in Hamirpur.

The mishap took place after the driver took a sharp turn to save a cow.

The injured were taken to hospital where their condition was said to be critical. The accident took place in Maudaha locality of Hamirpur on Sunday morning.

A case was registered in this regard by the police and efforts were on to identify the victims.

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KDA V-C inspects progress of schemes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Vice-Chairman of Kanpur Development Authority (KDA) Arvind Singh on Saturday inspected the progress of the schemes being developed in Zone 4. On seeing the slow pace of work, he expressed his displeasure and took the officials to task for their lackadaisical attitude at some places. The KDA had been carrying out developmental works in its Sakrapur, Bhagirathi-Janvhi, Highway City, Alaknanda Enclave and Swarn Jayanti Vihar schemes. In a bid to study the progress in these projects, the vice-chairman made a spot inspection. He expressed satisfaction on progress of some projects while he expressed displeasure over slow pace of work in some other schemes. In the Alaknanda Enclave scheme,



KDA V-C Arvind Singh inspecting progress of different schemes.

he directed the officials to complete the electricity work soon. On the slow progress of electricity work in Bhagirathi-Janvhi scheme, he directed the executive engineer to speed up. He also planted a mango sapling in the park being developed by KDA. During inspection of Swarn Jayanti Vihar scheme, he came to know that on the land of arazi Nos.1957, 1958, and 2112 in Daheli

Sujanpur got vacated by KDA, formalities related to its regularisation had not been completed so far. He immediately took the officer concerned to task and directed him to complete the formalities soon for its regularisation for onward utilisation by general masses. Seeing the illegal construction being carried out around the KDA-owned land, he directed the officials to initiate action

against the enroachers. He asked them to carry out fencing with barbed wires around all lands which had been got vacated from illegal possession on the court orders during past eight-10 months. Meanwhile, KDA squad sealed three buildings being constructed beyond the approved layout norms on Saturday. These included the construction on arazi No 138 of Nand Kishore in Mainawati Marg and arazi No 410 of Gyan Singh in Akbarpur Kachhar Bairei.

TRIBUTE PAID: On the 92nd death anniversary of journalist and freedom fighter late Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, the Journalism department of the Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU) paid tribute and remembered his extraordinary work in the journalism field on Saturday. Director, School of Humanities and

Social Sciences, Dr Prashant Kumar Mishra, who was the chief guest said Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi was an ideal journalist and a gem of India. He also advised that a journalist should prioritise the nation by taking inspiration from Vidyarthi's journalistic ethics. The Head of Department of Journalism and Mass Communication Dr Yogendra Pandey, Department Coordinator Dr Jitendra Dabral, Professor Om Shankar Gupta and Assistant Professor Dr Diwakar Awasthi were also present.

Dr Yogendra Pandey said also spoke on the occasion. Students of the department remembered him by presenting their speeches and views on current journalism ethics and values. A documentary was also shown to the students on the life of GS Vidyarthi.

Prayers offered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Hundreds of devotees thronged Vishalakshi Gauri temple at Dharmakop (Meerghat) on the auspicious occasion of Panchmi (fifth day) in the ongoing Vasantik Navratri here on Sunday. A good number of devotees also reached Maa Bageshwari



Devi (Skanda Mata) temple in Jaitpura area to offer prayers. Besides, a rush of devotees was

also seen at Durga Mandir (Durgakund) as usual. As per tradition, the rush should be at Vishalakshi Gauri temple but thousands of devotees also reached Skanda Mata and Durgakund temples to offer prayers. Meanwhile, a good number of people also went to Vindhayachal in Mirzapur, about 65 kilometres from here, to offer prayers at Maa Vindhayasini Devi, using Roadways buses and their own or hired vehicles. Rush continued to be seen at the old Durga Mandir at Ramnagar and Sheetla Mata temple at Adalpara.

Placement drive held



Placement drive Lakshya organised at BECDC, Mandhana.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Placement Cell of Bhagwanti Education Centre Degree College (BECDC), Mandhana, organised a placement drive 'Lakshya' in the college campus in which the final year students of BBA and BCA departments participated with enthusiasm. In this placement fair, representatives of famous companies of different sectors like information technology, banking, financial, real estate, infrastructure, etc. interviewed the aspiring candidates of the college. The companies visited the campus were Meesho, Amazon, Deals of Loan, DPS Technologies, SS Digital India, Anant Vijay Infra Developers, Novell Infotech etc. The aim of this drive was to remove the concern of parents of students regarding employment. In this direction the placement drive Lakshya was organised.

UPSDM successfully completes self-defence training programme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Uttar Pradesh Skill Development Mission (UPSDM) successfully completed a three-day self-defence training programme under the SANKALP Scheme for 1,216 girls at seven government ITIs, including World Bank Mahila ITI Lal Bangla, Pandu Nagar, Kalyanpur, Bhognipur, Akbarpur and Rasulabad here in Kanpur city and dehat districts. The programme which was organised under a pilot project, aimed to empower girls by teaching them self-defence techniques and tactics. MLA Surendra Maithani distributed 'Nirbhaya kits' consist-

ing of a chain alarm, safety whistle, spray and stinger to the girls as a safety measure at Government ITI Lal Bangla and WBM along with their principal. The pilot project which is being implemented by the UPSDM in collaboration with the Sports, Physical Education, Fitness and Leisure Skills Council (SPEFL-SC) aims to provide self-defence training to 10,000 girls in 16 cities across the state. The programme is being conducted by skilled trainers who have been trained to provide the best self-defence practices and techniques from some of the best fighting systems in the world. Speaking about the impor-

ance of self-defence training, UPSDM Director Andra Vamsi said, "By learning self-defence techniques, women can gain confidence and skills to defend themselves and fight against attackers. This six-month pilot project will positively impact the lives of 10,000 daughters. After this pilot project, it will be started in ITI and UPSDM training centres in every district of UP." Tahsin Zahid, CEO of SPFL-SC, said, "This initiative has been started with the aim of empowering women and girls. In this training they are being taught skills along with technology. The programme focuses on the importance of physical and mental fitness." A

female candidate said, "After learning self-defence training, I have noticed a significant change in my confidence and overall sense of security. I feel more capable of defending myself in potentially dangerous situations. I have also gained a better understanding of how to assess and avoid risky situations. The training has taught me how to use my body effectively in a fight and how to use everyday objects around me as potential weapons if needed." Another girl said, "One of the most important things I learned is that self-defence is not just about physical strength but also about being aware of your surroundings and know-

ing how to diffuse dangerous situations before they escalate. I have also learned how to better use my voice and assert myself in difficult situations. Overall, the training has given me a sense of empowerment and control over my own safety, which has had a positive impact on my daily life." Self-defence training programme has received positive feedback from the participants, who have reported feeling more confident and empowered because of the training. The programme also received praise from local authorities, who have acknowledged the importance of self-defence training for girls and women.

Body of Bhojpuri actress found hanging

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The body of a Bhojpuri actress was reportedly found hanging in a room of a hotel in Buddha City Colony under Sarnath police station on Sunday. The police sent the body for autopsy and started an investigation into the matter.

According to the information, the body of the Bhojpuri actress Akanksha Dubey (25) was found hanging from the fan in a room of a hotel in the above mentioned colony and it led to a sensation there for a while. On being informed, the local police reached the site and

sent the body for the post-mortem examination by taking into their custody. It was said that the actress had come to the city on March 22 last for the shooting of a Bhojpuri film. There was her shooting on Sunday in an area of the city. When a member of the film team reached her room in the hotel in the morning to take her for the shooting and knocked on the door, there was no response from inside. He informed the hotel staff about this and when the hotel staff opened the door with the master key, they were stunned to see the scene inside the room as the actress was hanging from the fan. They

informed the local police about this and on being informed, the police reached the spot and took first hand information about the incident. The police took the body into their possessions and sent it for the post-mortem examination. The police also started an investigation into the matter. According to the hotel staff, the actress had left the hotel around 8 pm on Saturday to attend a birthday party by informing the film unit and returned to the hotel late at night. The actress belonged to Bhadohi district and she had started her career from TikTok. She had also done two films besides modeling.

Akash Goenka felicitated



MD, Goldiee Masale, Akash Goenka being felicitated at Kanpur Divas Samaroh.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Managing Director of Goldiee Masale Akash Goenka was felicitated in the 220th Kanpur Divas Samaroh jointly organised by the Merchants Chamber of Uttar Pradesh and Kanpur Panchayat. He was felicitated for being a successful entrepreneur for exporting different varieties of Goldiee Masale in overseas countries apart from states of India. With the tagline 'Jahan Jaye, Rishte Banaye', Goldiee Masale products have become popular in foreign countries also along with India. Secretary of Kanpur Panchayat Dharm Prakash Gupta, Co-convenor Sudeep Gupta, MLC Salil Vishnoi, MLA Neelima Katiyar, President of Merchants Chamber of UP Atul Kanodia, Vice-President Vimal Jhagharia along with eminent industrialists and dignitaries were present.

Hindalco gets CII HR Award

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Confederation of Indian Industries (CII) has given Hindalco Renukoot (Sonbhadra) the "CII Award for Excellence in Human Resource and Practices". The CII gave the award at its 13th national awards ceremony held in Mumbai recently. Sanjay Behl, Chairman, Leadership Committee (CII) and Indrani Kar, Senior Director presented the trophy and citation which were received by Hindalco's CHRO Samik Basu, Cluster COO N Nagesh and Cluster HR Head Jasbir Singh. Addressing the function as keynote speaker Group HR Director of Aditya Birla Group and Director of Birla Carbon Santrupt Mishra threw light on excellence and management in HR field while Hindalco's CHRO Samik Basu spoke on the topic of culture as a driver of organisation effectiveness and Jasbir Singh on cracking the new code of workplace learning in the age of tech-

nology and personalisation. Hindalco Renukoot is a flagship aluminum producer of Aditya Birla Group and since its inception the company has been continuously striving for all possible development of the employees and their families by giving them

the status of Hindalco family. The Human Resource Development department of the organisation is presenting the best example of human resource development by



participating in the happiness and sorrow of each employee and their family and this is the reason why Hindalco has got the honours as the 'Best Place to Work'. The function was attended by many well-known companies of the country like Tata Steel, BALCO, Larsen & Toubro, Kirloskar, Sterlite etc. The function was also attended by HR Advisor and Mentor Vineet Kaul and Hindalco's HR department officer Debasish Nayak.

BHU V-C interacts with faculty

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Vice-Chancellor of BHU Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain has said that the Institute of Science of the university is doing an exemplary job despite the challenges in terms of resources. He was interacting with the faculty members of departments of Geophysics, Geology, Biochemistry, Chemistry, Physics and Geography of the institute here on Sunday. During the four-and-a-half hour long interaction the V-C sought to know about the difficulties faced by teachers in the course of teaching, research and other administrative works and the suggestions in resolving such issues. He said that the institute is setting an example as a model institute in many ways and assured that the university is constantly working on resolution of difficulties that obstruct the smooth teaching and research. He underlined the need to make greater efforts for creating and making available new opportunities for students. Responding to the issue of lack of space raised by several faculty members, Prof Jain informed that approvals have been granted for construction of new buildings and renovation and extension of the existing ones, and once these projects are complete, the challenge of space for classrooms and laboratories would be addressed to a large extent. He also exhorted members of the BHU fraternity to be more responsible and judicious while using resources.

CDO for achieving targets

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The meeting of the District Health Committee was held at Vikas Bhavan under the chairmanship of CDO Himanshu Nagpal on Saturday in which he emphasised to achieve cent per cent targets of various health schemes. In the meeting, the CDO expressed displeasure over less achievement in this year in comparison to last year in the district under Janani Suraksha Yojana. For which, he warned the medical officer in-charges of Pindra and Badagaon and asked them to achieve 100 per cent target as soon as possible. Nagpal also directed all the hospital in-charges to get information about the causes of maternal death in the district in the right way, so that these reasons can be removed in future and maternal death can be prevented. He also expressed displeasure over the less number of caesarean deliveries as per the standard in the First Referral Unit (FRU) of MCH wing of DDU Hospital Pandeypur and LBS Hospital Ramnagar. Expressed displeasure over the lack of children admitted to nutritional rehabilitation centres. The CDO said that all the medicines are not being kept in the Jan Aushadhi

Kendras of the district hospitals, due to which the patients have to buy medicines from outside. "All doctors should ensure that the list of essential medicines prescribed by them is made available to Jan Aushadhi Kendras every month so that the availability of medicines can be ensured at Jan Aushadhi Kendras," he said, adding that apart from this, it was asked to make kiosk desks of Ayushman Bharat- Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana at block level CHCs/ PHCs including all district hospitals. He said that wherever health ATMs are being operated, their daily monitoring and functioning should be ensured. CMO Dr Sandeep Chaudhary informed about progress of all programmes. The participants were informed that Dastak Abhiyan under the Communicable Disease Control Campaign will be run from April 1 to 30 and according to the guidelines set for it department-wise microplan and action plan should be sent to district headquarters by all blocks. Superintendents of all government hospitals, all ACMOs, deputy CMOs, DPMs, DCPMs, medical officers in charge, representatives of WHO, UNICEF and others were present in the meeting.

PSIT College team wins moot court competition

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Atal Bihari Vajpayee School of Legal Studies (ABVLS) under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor, CSJMU initiated its first District Moot Court Competition on Saturday. The Moot Court Competition started with the Saraswati Vandana and lighting of the lamp at the seminar hall. Prof Vinod Shankar Tripathi, HOD Law, Brahmanand College, Kanpur and Prof. Ajay Bhoopendra Jaiswal, HOD Law, Vikramajit Singh Sanatan Dharma College, Kanpur were the special guests. The event started with the welcome note from Dr Shashikant Tripathi, Director, ABVLS. The special guest Prof VS Tripathi encouraged the students to participate in the competition with an open heart without giving any thought to triumph or failure. Prof AB Jaiswal enlightened the students about intricacies of the advocacy and shared his experiences when he had a chance to be part of the Moot Court Competitions at the Banaras Hindu University in the 1990s. Dr Pankaj Dwivedi concluded the event with a vote of thanks.

Earlier out of a large number of applicant teams a total of 12 teams were selected for the preliminary rounds. The preliminary rounds were conducted in two stages on Friday. The first District Moot Court Competition was continued on Saturday where the four teams were qualified for the semi-final round. The teams for the final round were DTC 05 (Saziya Khan, Arya Walia, Aditi Chauhan) from PSIT College of Law and DTC 13 (Vistara Singh, Anshul Pandey, Athul Krishnan) from ABVLS, CSJMU, Kanpur. The

topic on which moot court competition was held was 'whether the words secular and socialist added to the preamble by the 42nd constitutional amendment are valid or not'. Some of the articles mentioned under the topic were Article 14, 15, 16, 25, 28, 30, 51A(e), 38, 39, 39A, 41. The chief guest for the award ceremony was Justice Neeraj Tiwari (Allahabad High Court) on Saturday along with Rohit Pandey (Advocate High Court). The chief guest and the special guest presided over the final round of the moot court competition. Justice Neeraj Tiwari talked about his journey from former counsel of CSJMU, Kanpur to the permanent judge of the Allahabad High Court. He also raised questions for respondent and petitioner teams. He spoke about the importance of learning the nuances of legal profession and improve upon the legal points during the time of legal research. The special guest in line with the theme of the moot court competition encouraged the students to take life along with the challenges. The students must participate without any fear of the result. In the end the team from PSIT College won the first District Moot Court Competition with the team from ABVLS winning the runner-up trophy. The best speaker award went to Manavee Srivastava, student of ABVLS and the Best Memorial Award went to the team of Saumya Dwivedi and Shubhi Singh (ABVLS). Dr Rahul Tiwari, Dr Pramod Kumar, Dr Smrita Srivastava, Priya Awasthi, Mayuri Singh, Smriti Roy etc. were the other eminent faculty members of ABVLS present at the inaugural ceremony and showered their blessings for the event.

Mobile vet units flagged off



MLAs Saurabh Srivastava and Awadhesh Singh flagging off mobile veterinary units in Varanasi on Sunday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Two local MLAs Saurabh Srivastava (Varanasi Cantonment) and Awadhesh Singh (Pindra) flagged off the mobile veterinary units from Circuit House here on Sunday. On the occasion, District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam

and Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal were also present. Balloons were also released by the DM.

At the main function in Lucknow, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagged off 520 mobile veterinary units equipped with GPS systems at a cost of Rs 201 crore and these units for all the 75 districts of the state. Under the Gokul Mission, six mobile veterinary units have been made available to Varanasi by the central government. These units are equipped with the facilities to treat the sick animals under the 'Pashu Upchar Pashu Palak Ke Dwar' of Livestock Health and Disease Control Scheme. For this, by calling the toll free number 1962, the animal owner can call the veterinary unit for the treatment of his sick animal as the treatment facility will be made available at the doorstep within an hour. Live telecast of Chief Minister's flag off programme organised in Lucknow was also seen during the programme here.

Graduation ceremony held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Graduation is an exciting time, it is both an ending and a beginning. The students of the Pre-primary section, Bloom (Sr KG) of Sir Padampat Singhania Education Centre (SPSEC) celebrated their graduation ceremony. The programme



commenced with the welcome song by the school choir. Principal Bhawna Gupta extended a warm welcome to the parents. The event unfolded with the welcome song by school choir. The little buddies looked classy while performing their immaculate steps mixed with spirited movements. The students of Bloom (Sr KG) section won the hearts of dignitaries and parents with their fine oratorical skills and exhibited their con-

fidence through a successful rendition on the topic 'My journey in kindergarten.' for the event. Each section of Class Bloom (Sr KG) exhibited their skills through dances on foot-tapping numbers. To motivate and bless the outgoing Bloom children, mementoes were given to each child by the principal. It was indeed a treasurable moment when the little ones thanked teachers and parents for their ceaseless support through a thank you song while cherishing their preschool memories. The event was celebrated with a lot of fervour. The event was also graced by the headmistress Vandana Trivedi.

Ethics for trustworthy AI discussed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

After two eventful days, the day three of Techkriti'23 continued with an impressive lineup of events curated to captivate the imagination of tech enthusiasts at the IIT Kanpur on Saturday. The day hosted the "Moon Man of India," MYSwamy Annadurai for the Tech Talks, who served as the Project Director of Chandrayaan I, India's first lunar mission. During his talk on "Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan Challenges: The Inside Stories," Annadurai shed light on the complex issues that arose during the development of these missions. He emphasised that the challenges faced were not limited to technical and economic aspects, but also included geopolitical concerns. Annadurai also reminisced his early days at ISRO where he dedicated four years to the development of a software satellite simulator. His contribution to the success of India's space missions was significant, and he commended the team behind the film "Mission Mangal" for their portrayal of the events. It was followed by an exciting session with Prateek Sethi, the founder of Trip Creative Services and former host of FAQ on POGO TV. He shed light on his latest project, Animator Skill, which aims to showcase and acknowledge talents of Indian cartoon film makers through a forthcoming festival. Sethi also expressed concern about how deserving productions in children's comedy often lack marketing and success they deserve due to monopoly of big production houses. The E-Conclave talks were given by Alok Bansal, the Co-Founder and Executive Vice-Chairman of Policy Bazaar Fintech Limited.

He emphasised the importance of gathering customer insights and understanding office culture to ensure a productive and positive work environment. Data science and analytics were key tools in growing his company, specifically in streamlining insurance claim processes and reducing bureaucratic formalities. He discussed the challenge of overcoming negative perceptions surrounding insurance policy companies and how his company, Policy Bazaar, tackled this issue. Sandeep Singhal, a Senior Advisor of Avanaa Capital and Co-Founder of Nexus Ventures Partner, a leading early-stage venture capital firm in India, also spoke at the EC Talks event. He emphasised the intersection of AI and sustainabil-

ity, particularly with regards to carbon footprints and their impact on crop patterns. He also highlighted the importance of implementing security systems and infrastructure around AI to ensure privacy and maintain ethical practices.

Harsh Vinayak, a technology leader and the Senior Vice-President of Intelligent Automation and Data Services at NTT Data Services, shared his expertise with the audience. He discussed "Ethics and Principle for Trustworthy AI," highlighting potential harm of AI to individuals and society. He also discussed policies formulated by companies and governments to address this issue and proposed additional solutions. He shared Niti Aayog's Approach Document for India, outlining principles for responsible AI implementation. Vinayak shared his experience developing expert systems, a precursor to AI, during his time at IIT-K. The panel discussion on digital transformation moderated by Arvind Sivaramakrishnan (CIO of Karkinos Healthcare, ex-CIO of Apollo Hospitals) and Ajit Kolhe (CIO and CDO at VIP Industries), delved into the potential transformations that can be achieved in the telecom sector through direct customer interaction. They highlighted the role of data structures in enhancing customer experience and offered insights into investments that can be made in digital transformation companies. The discussion touched upon the vital issues of privacy and security in this context. Apart from the talks, workshops from the previous day, including product management and consulting, drone, robotics and app development, continued on day 3 while also introducing new workshops on cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, blockchain and Internet of Things. These workshops were designed to introduce the attendees to the basics of these technologies and their real-world applications. The day concluded with an exciting Bollywood Night with popular singer Divya Kumar rocking the stage.

His soulful renditions of popular tracks like "Maston Ka Jhund" from the movie 'Bhaag Milkha Bhaag' captivated the audience, leaving them spell-bound. The night turned electrifying with Divya Kumar's performance.

The day 3 of Techkriti'23 ended on an exciting note with several diverse events taking place throughout the day.

We’re ready to lead global fight against TB, says Mandaviya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

“We have seen the unwavering commitment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to end tuberculosis (TB) in India and we are ready to lead from the front and be voice of the global fight against TB,” said that Union Minister of Health & Family Welfare Dr Mansukh Mandaviya while addressing the 36th board meeting of the Stop TB Partnership here on Saturday. The meeting was also attended by Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Dr Bharati Pravin Pawar.

Addressing the gathering, Dr Mandaviya stated that India has identified three important health priorities under the G-20 Presidency and all of these are focused on universal health coverage and relevant to our response for TB elimination.” A lot of exceptional work is being done at the ground level through innovation in case finding, mathematical modelling, digital interventions and surveillance,” he said, adding that India would be happy to share technical assistance with other countries to replicate such good practices.

The Union Health Minister emphasised that effort is on not only to rebound from Covid but also bring innovative strategies like the Pradhan Mantri TB Mukti Bharat Abhiyaan



Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya addressing Stop TB Partnership Board meeting in Varanasi on Saturday.

which has become a one-of-a-kind movement in the world. He said that it is a ‘Call to Action’ to mobilise communities to end TB. Highlighting the crucial importance of TB vaccine in the global fight against the disease, he urged the Stop TB Partnership Board to deliberate on this and take up this matter at the UN High Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September this year. “TB vaccine is needed urgently”, he said, adding that it is also important to fast-track

its development, expand the manufacturing capacities and help countries in its easy access.

Executive Director of Stop TB Partnership Dr Lucia Ditiu emphasised that India has a pivotal role in eliminating TB because India’s progress will drive the world. She also praised India for doing very sophisticated modelling with their Ni-kshay data. “Their innovations, ideas and strategies for bringing healthcare closer to people are something

that the whole world can emulate”, she stated.

Additional Secretary (Health Ministry) Roli Singh, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asian Region Dr Poonam Khetrpal Singh, Vice-Chair, Stop TB Partnership Austin Arinze Obiefuna, Joint Secretary (Health Ministry) Dr Ashok Babu, Deputy Director General, Central TB Division Dr Rajendra Joshi and many other senior officials were also present in the meeting.

Brahmins contributed a lot in independence: Bajpai

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former state Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) president and Rajya Sabha member Dr Laxmikant Bajpai said the Brahmins have contributed a lot in India’s independence and the history of Brahmin society begins with the Vedic religion as all sects of Brahmins take inspiration from the Vedas. He was addressing the inaugural function of two-day 7th national convention of the Kendriya Brahmin Mahasabha at Dharmasangh near Durgakund here on Sunday.

As the parliamentary elections are inching close, various castes and groups have intensified their activities of polarisation and in this direction, the conference was important as it was attended by several dignitaries including former UP Minister and local MLA Dr Neelkanth Tiwari.

“Traditionally, it is believed that the Vedas are impersonal and eternal, but rather the manifestation of eternal truth whose validity is eternal. Vedas are considered to be Shruti. In ancient times, a person of



Rajya Sabha MP Laxmikant Bajpai addressing Kendriya Brahmin Mahasabha conference in Varanasi on Sunday.

every caste, society etc was eager to become a Brahmin. Everyone has the right to be a Brahmin even today. Be it from any caste, province or sect, he can become a Brahmin by taking Gayatri Diksha, but to be a Brahmin, some rules have to be followed,” he said, adding that we are not talking about that Brahmin society as most of whom have left their Brahmin deeds and adopted other professions.

During the convention, the entire Dharmasangh was flooded with saffron turbans and yellow coloured flags. The participants discussed several resolutions including implementation of economic based reservation instead of caste quota; Uniform Civil Code; formation of Brahmin Welfare Board; stoppage of commercialisation of agricultural land; checking the insults of idols and photographs of deities; honorarium

salary to priests of maths and temples etc.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Neelkanth Tiwari said that our unity would be used in nation building and in eradicating unrighteousness. “Lord Parshuram had received the ax from Lord Shiva after great penance to protect the religion. Everyone should have this same energy and unity,” he said. In his welcome speech, Mahasabha general secretary Dr Rajesh Pathak said that EWS reservation should get all the benefits which are available in other reservations. The function was conducted by national vice president Dr Ganesh Dutt Shastri. In the beginning, Dr Amlesh Shukla and Aastha Shukla presented bhajans. National president Pt Kamalakant Upadhyay presented the annual report while youth wing chief Dr Arun Upadhyay released the organisation’s magazine ‘Janmanas’. Dr Jagjit Pandey, general secretary of Dharmasangh Shiksha Mandal presided over the function. Pt Arun Upadhyay proposed the vote of thanks.

Legal profession requires 4Cs: Apex court judge

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Faculty of Law, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) organised 10th Mahamana Malviya National Moot Court Competition-2023. As many as 54 teams across the Indian law colleges registered and finally 24 teams were shortlisted for the competition. In the inaugural ceremony, Justice Rajesh Bindal, Supreme Court of India was the chief guest and Prof VK Shukla, Rector, BHU presided over the event. Addressing the function, Justice Bindal encouraged the young lawyers by saying that they should develop the four ‘Cs’ that is competency, concentration, clarity and commitment. He also pointed out the importance of Artificial Intelligence, concept of e-court and its demerits.

Justice Bindal highlighted the glory of BHU and said that the motto of the Law School, BHU ‘Dharmo Vishwasya Jagatah Pratistha’ is a very encouraging one. He pointed out that nowadays society is moving towards the right oriented society whereas the motto of the Law School is reflecting the duty. Where there is duty oriented society, there



SC judge Justice Rajesh Bindal at a function in BHU, Varanasi on Sunday.

would be less conflict and problems. He said that India is the country of around 6,50,000 villages and we have approx 4-5 lakhs law students all over the country. Therefore, these law students should provide legal awareness and legal aid to the people living in the remote areas. He drew the attention of students towards the opportunity in the legal profession and urged students to not make it a business rather focus on quality of services.

Prof VK Shukla said that

BHU is the premier institute having 100 years of glorious history. “Moot court competition plays a crucial role in enhancing the personality of the students,” he said, explaining that Malviya ji wanted to make our country independent which was not possible without education.

In the beginning, Dean, Faculty of Law, BHU Prof Ajai Kumar while welcoming the dignitaries, referred to several landmark judgments delivered by Justice Rajesh Bindal. He

also highlighted the contribution of Prof VK Shukla in the field of medical science to the society. The vote of thanks was extended by Prof CP Upadhyay. Faculty members and students were present in the ceremony.

Dr Anil Maurya was the organising secretary of the event. Prof DK Mishra, Prof Pradeep Singh, Prof VS Mishra, Prof AK Pandey, Prof Ali Mehndi, Prof RK Murli, Prof MK Padhi, Prof GP Sahoo etc were also present.

Huge cache of arms recovered

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Continuing with its raids at the ancestral village of absconding sharpshooter Abdul Kavi in Bhaknada of Kaushambi police recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition on Saturday evening.

The police recovered three double barrel guns (licenced), three rifles (licenced), two single barrel guns (licenced) along with 54 pieces of 0.315 bore cartridge, 19 of 0.12 bore, 65 hollow cartridges of 0.12 bore, four 0.315 bore and one 0.12 bore country made pistols.

Five relatives of Abdul Kavi — Mohammad Avesh, Mohamad Irfan, Shamsul Nisha and Tabsum (both Kavi’s sister) and Liaquat Ali—have been arrested.

In the last two days a total of 10 people have been arrested. A senior cop said that these persons were arrested on the charges of sheltering and assisting gang members of Atiq Ahmed. The police said as many as 11 teams were formed to conduct raids in search of absconder Abdul Kavi, carrying a cash reward of Rs 50,000 in connection with 2005 BSP MLA Raju Pal murder case.

On Friday, police had seized a huge cache of weapons, including three licenced SBBL of 0.12 bore, two licenced rifles of 0.315 bore and one country made pistol of 0.315 bore along with 93 live cartridges of different bores during a series of raids.

HISTORY-SHEETER ARRESTED: A wanted histo-

ry-sheeter was injured and arrested in an exchange of fire with a joint team of Khakhrru and SWAT near Kale Baba Ki Mazur, Kulli village under Khakhrru police station of Fatehpur in wee hours of Sunday.

The injured criminal, identified as Mohd Zarrar Ahmad (44) of Kulli village was admitted to district hospital, Fatehpur. The police said the injured criminal was a close aide of Atiq Ahmad gang. He was also carrying a cash reward of Rs 25,000.

Superintendent of police (Fatehpur) Rajesh Kumar Singh said Mohd Zarrar Ahmad wanted by police in connection with eight criminal cases was taking shelter near Kulli village forest area. A joint team of

Khakhrru police and SWAT received an input that Zarrar was moving around a forest area and intercepted him. When cops asked him to surrender, the history-sheeter opened fire on a police party and the history-sheeter was injured in exchange of fire, he said.

Police said Zarrar suffered gunshot injuries in his right leg and was admitted to the district hospital, Fatehpur. The police have also seized one NP bore rifle, one 0.38 bore revolver and several live cartridges on the spot. The SP claimed that a joint team of police, administration and revenue department had razed two-storey house of Ahmad being constructed on the land of pond at Khakhrru village last week.

Helping mafia: Investigation into role of doctors starts

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

After the Umesh Pal murder case, where more than a 100 property dealers have been identified among the helpers of mafia Atiq Ahmed, now the investigation into the role of doctors has also started. So far 20 doctors have been identified as helpers of the mafia. This includes the names of seven government doctors.

On the basis of the report of the Intelligence Department, STF and other investigative agencies have started searching the role of such doctors.

The names of many doc-

tors have come up among the helpers of Atiq. Of these, maximum 13 doctors are from Kaushambi. The role of three doctors of Prayagraj and four of Pratapgarh is being considered suspicious. Out of these 20 doctors associated with Atiq gang, seven are said to be posted in government hospitals. Apart from the hospitals of these doctors, details of their properties are being collected.

There is also a possibility that the earnings of such doctors are invested in the business of the mafia and its gangs. Their association and relationship with Atiq gang is being

thoroughly investigated. After getting information about this, such doctors have become alert. Two hospitals in Kaushambi have also been closed. There is also a doubt whether the black money of the mafia is being used in the medical field. Such aspects are being investigated.

The government has also been informed about this. The details of the meetings of these doctors with the mafia and its henchmen are also being collected. The numbers of such doctors have also been put on surveillance. Earlier, more than 100 small and big builders

have also been listed. Information has been received about these builders that by forming companies they consume the amount collected by Atiq.

The role of five big builders of the city is also being considered suspicious. A builder has left the city and is living in Lucknow.

These builders are being seen as big helpers of the mafia. Investigating agencies have also received information about Atiq’s money being used to build large residential apartments in the city and the land under his possession.

Pritinkar Diwakar sworn in as CJ of Allahabad High Court

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Senior Justice Pritinkar Diwakar was on Sunday sworn in as Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court by Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandi Ben Patel. The swearing-in ceremony took place in the Chief Justice’s court. On the occasion Minister Suresh Khanna, Chief Secretary Uttar Pradesh, Advocate General Ajay Mishra,

Additional Advocate General MC Chaturvedi, Neeraj Tripathi, Manish Goel and judicial officers, besides a large number of senior and junior lawyers were present. The swearing-in ceremony took place at the Chief Justice Court at exactly 11:00 am. After it the governor met all the judges. Justices of Allahabad and Lucknow bench were present on the occasion. Family mem-

bers and relatives of the Chief Justice and sitting judges of Madhya Pradesh also participated in the function. Justice Pritinkar Diwakar started practice in the Chhattisgarh High Court after studying law from Durgavati University, Jabalpur. He was designated as senior advocate in 2005. In 2009 he became a judge in the Chhattisgarh High Court. In 2018 he was transferred to the

Allahabad High Court. Rajesh Bindal, who was the then Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court, was made a judge of the Supreme Court and then Justice Pritinkar Diwakar was appointed as the acting Chief Justice here. After this, on the recommendation of the Supreme Court Collegium, the President appointed him as the Chief Justice of the Allahabad High Court.

NSS camp to inculcate spirit of selfless service

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A one-week NSS special camp was held at Faculty of Health Sciences, SHUATS. One hundred NSS volunteers from various departments of SHUATS got themselves enrolled for this special camp.

The main purpose of the special camp is to inculcate the spirit of selfless service and voluntary work among volunteers.

The programme began by invoking God’s blessing by Dr Sapna S Lal. NSS deputy coordinator, SHUATS, Satyam Kumar Kesari welcomed the chief guest of the inaugural function Dr SD McCarty, officiating registrar, SHUATS. Dr Dipak Kumar Bose, NSS coordinator presented bouquet and shawl to the chief guest and explained the purpose of the special camp.

The chief guest shared

the memories of NSS camp during his time in SHUATS and encouraged the students to serve the nation through community service.

Prof Veeru Prasad, Dean, Faculty of Sciences encouraged the NSS volunteers with his words.

A blood donation camp was organised on March 23 in collaboration with Colvin Hospital.

A total of 72 units blood were collected. The NSS volunteers also visited Indalpur and Shinghveerpur villages and completed village survey work.

In the valedictory session Dr Vishnu Agarwal, was the chief guest and Dr Nekram Rawal was the guest of honour. They encouraged the NSS volunteers.

Satyam Kesari proposed the vote of thanks. He said NSS volunteers Shambhvi Raj,

Khushbu Rani and Ishita who gave great performance in national camp, Jaipur, have been honoured with prizes and medals on the last day of NSS special camp.

NSS programme officers Dr Anup Masih, Dr Hira Bose, Dr Anisha Verma, Dr Mukesh Kumar Maurya, Dr Kamin Alexander, Dr Ankur Jain and Dr Bhawana Singh Ghosh were present in the camp.

SANT SAMAGAM: UP Industrial Development Minister Nand Gopal Gupta ‘Nandi’ said the Nirankari Mission has given a direction to the society. Kindness, compassion and benevolence are the qualities that make our devotion meaningful.

The minister expressed these views on the concluding day of the three-day-long Sant Samagam of the Nirankari

Mission organised at the Parade Ground here.

Lakhs of devotees joined the Nirankari Mission. The minister said the teachings of the mission make us a true human being. Rising above caste, religion, we are a human being, its importance should be understood by every person, he added.

Nandi said the service work being carried out by the mission is an inspiration for the society. Blood donation, cleanliness mission, tree plantation, etc are being run by the mission.

“Since its inception in 1929, the mission has made the welfare of human life its goal. Today the divine light of the mission is illuminating the whole world. Today, let us all together take a pledge to end all negative feelings and evil in the mind”, the minister added.

Thana Samadhan Diwas held

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

Divisional Commissioner Dr Muthukumarasamy B has directed the officials concerned to dispose of all applications on merit. Such direction was issued by him while hearing the applicants at Chilpl police station during the Thana Samadhan Diwas on Saturday.

He directed the supervising officers to check the disposed of cases on random basis and ensure effective justice. He made it clear that if in any case laxity or false reporting was found stringent action must be

taken. On the day total five matters had been brought for the disposal in which one case was disposed of on the spot while for the rest teams were formed for disposing them on the site. The Thana Samadhan Diwas was organised at all 18 police stations which was attended by officers above SHOs/SOs.

At Vindhychal police station Additional District Magistrate (Finance & Revenue) Shiv Pratap Shukla, city magistrate Vinay Kumar Singh and Circle Officer (City) Parmanand Kushwaha heard

the problem of the applicants.

CLAIMED: Uttar Pradesh Minister of Industrial Development, Export Promotion, NRI, Investment Promotion and minister incharge of the district Nand Gopal Gupta ‘Nandi’ while addressing a press conference on Saturday claimed that Yogi government was the first under which all 403 assembly constituencies were being covered under developmental activities. Giving details of works done in the district during the year he said government had done a lot in all the sectors be

it power, health, tourism, education, providing job to labourers and development of Vindhychal area which was a place of international importance.

He said the government was committed to providing industrial infrastructure to entrepreneurs, including well-developed industrial estates, air facilities etc. During the press conference he was accompanied by MLAs Ratnakar Mishra and Rama Shankar Singh Patel, district president BJP Brij Bhushan Singh and other party workers.

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PAPER WITH PASSION

Dirty debate

Our leaders must shed some sanctimony and mawkishness to cleanse the political arena

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's conviction in a defamation case, the ensuing disqualification from Lok Sabha as a Member of Parliament, and the attendant political row over it reveals—if any revelation was needed—a lot that is wrong and rotten in Indian politics. To begin with, there are the falling standards of political debate: A court in Surat found his rhetorical remark “why all thieves have Modi surname” defamatory. As we mentioned earlier, it was surely in bad taste. A senior leader not only condemned a large section of people just because they share their surname with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but also refused, and refuses, to show any remorse for making the unsavoury remark. An apology might have resulted in the withdrawal of the case or perhaps his exoneration. There is nothing wrong in apologising. After all, our political masters are also human, and it's human to err. They, however, refuse to act like the man on the street, who says sorry when he does anything wrong. Apparently, Rahul doesn't believe that he can err. So, the day he was disqualified from Lok Sabha, he said, “My name is not Savarkar, my name is Gandhi. Gandhis don't apologise to anyone.” It is interesting to note here the fact that he had quoted Gandhi immediately after his conviction—as if his deplorable remark is something any politician could be proud of. But then in politics, self-righteousness has become an integral part of the belief systems that parties subscribe to and the communication strategies they adopt. On Sunday, the former Congress chief changed his Twitter bio, which now describes him as a ‘Dis'Qualified MP’. Evidently, he is wearing the conviction and the disqualification as badges of honour.

The same day, the Congress started a day-long Sankalp Satyagraha at Rajghat in Delhi to show their solidarity with Rahul Gandhi. The entire grand old party is with him. Party luminaries like president Mallikarjun Kharge, general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and senior leaders KC Venugopal, P Chidambaram and Salman Khurshid were among those who participated in the satyagraha. While the GOP has not covered itself in glory, the Bharatiya Janata Party too has not reacted in a manner that can be termed as dignified. Vice-president of Gujarat BJP Gordhan Zadaphia said at a press conference an OBC (other backward class) community has been insulted. In response, Kharge asked, “Is Nirav Modi OBC? Is Mehul Choksi OBC? Is Lalit Modi OBC? They are fugitives.” On her part, Priyanka indulges in sentimentalism and whataboutery. She said on Sunday, “You call my brother, the son of a martyr, a traitor and Mir Jafar. You insult his mother. Your Chief Minister says Rahul Gandhi doesn't know who his mother is. You insult my family every day. But no cases are filed.” Could our political leaders shed some sanctimony and mawkishness? For the same of some swachhata in the political arena.

PICTALK



People buy bananas for 'Chaiti Chhath' festival, in Patna.

PTI

Fight for ticket heats up in coastal Karnataka

Too many hands for Kumta seat in coastal Karnataka, writes Manjunath K Shresthi

The southern state of Karnataka with 224 seats is scheduled to the assembly polls anytime in the next two months in 2023. This is subject to the Election Commission of India (ECI) dates. The state's geographical area begins with the Uttara Kannada (UK) district in north-west Karnataka. One enters Karwar via Polem (Goa state) after crossing the excise check post on NH 66. The state shares land borders with Maharashtra in the north; Telangana/Andhra Pradesh in the East, Tamil Nadu and Kerala in the south and south west respectively. The Uttara Kannada (UK) district in the state has 11 taluks and six legislative assembly constituencies (LAC), and two or more taluks make up one assembly constituency. They being: Haliyal-Joida (including Dandeli) 76; Karwar-Ankola (77); Kumta-Honnavar (78); Sirsi-Siddapur (80); Mundagod-Yellapur (81); Bhatkal (79) stands out as the smallest constituency compared to the larger areas in the largest UK district. The Kumta-Honnavar (78) constituency has definite-



ly raised political temperatures during an election season, and the heat may become unbearable in the run up to the polls. The BJP has clarity with its choice of candidates and only a formal announcement is expected for most of the seats in the district, barring a few (or only one seat). The five current MLAs from the saffron party in the district might retain their seats (but surprises are not ruled out). The Congress party has one MLA, R.V. Deshpande, representing the Haliyal-Joida assembly seat.

Dinakar Shetty twice and the current BJP MLA won the seat from the JD (S) in 2008. In 2013, the seat was won by Congress MLA Ms. Sharada Shetty; Dinakar Shetty con-

tested for the BJP seat in the 2018 assembly election, and defeated his Congress opponent. There's no smooth sailing for the Congress party, as it's now facing a plenty problem for the Kumta-Honnavar assembly seat. It is learnt that there are 15 candidates aspiring for the party ticket. They are old loyal party members who have been in the party for a long time. There's another new entrant, from outside Kumta, who's thrown his hat in the ring.

Former Governor Ms. Margaret Alva's son, Nivedith Alva, is also vying for the Kumta party ticket. This new development has taken the party members in Kumta by surprise; and they are trying to push their candidature for

the B Form. There has been a mixed response to Nivedith's entry, as some voiced their dissent and others quietly supported him. None of the Congress ticket hopefuls criticise him, as he wields clout in the party. There is both opposition and support for his entry. Some ticket aspirants have invited him to the Kumta constituency. They have also convinced him of their support in the upcoming elections.

Nivedith Alva along with another candidate from Uttara Kannada (UK) district, were conspicuous on the dais, during Rahul Gandhi's one-day recent visit to Belagavi on March 20. If Nivedith gets the party ticket, will he win the confidence and support of Congress members in the constituency? The constituency voters will finally get to decide who they will choose in the elections ahead? And will the Congress party finally be able to increase its tally in the geographically large Uttara Kannada (UK) district in the 2023 elections? There's a lot of answering for Nivedith Alva to do, if he gets the party ticket from the Kumta assembly constituency?

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Sarpanchs need to be accountable

A large amount of funds allocated to panchayati raj institutions are misused through the mutual connivance of the Pradhans and the Govt functionaries

Haryana witnessed a major Sarpanch agitation against the state government. The sarpanchs were on a warpath with the state government on two crucial issues. One, the introduction of an e-tendering process for development works above Rs 5 lakhs and two, the “right to recall” law that allows people to remove a sarpanch if they are not happy with their performance. The state government justified these actions as steps towards “course correction” taken with the intention of bringing transparency and credibility in the working of the Panchayats. They are directly related to the use of developmental funds and the continuation of sarpanchs in power.

These remedial measures were suggested by the report submitted by the Haryana Lokayukta Justice, Hari Pal Verma in December, 2022. The audit report of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) for 2017-18 had also listed many cases of irregular expenditure and account books. The report cited many instances of misappropriation of lakhs of rupees. It found that in most cases the records of panchayats were found missing which were supposed to be in the custody of the sarpanchs. It was revealed that nearly 1,100 former sarpanchs had not submitted village development records. The explanation given for this lapse was that the records were either burnt, washed away or soiled. The office bearers of the Association of Sarpanchs put the blame on the panchayat secretaries who had failed in maintaining and submitting the records to the authorities. Recently, on the complaint of a resident of Aashiyaki Tappa Jadhval village in Rewari district, an enquiry conducted by Block Development Panchayat Officer (BDPO), Dharuhera, has found the ‘gram sakhiv’, Rohit Kumar and former sarpanch Mahesh Kumar guilty of embezzling Rs 7.44 Lakh in the construction of the pathway. Construction work cost Rs 8,37,399 on paper. However, the inquiry revealed that the cost of work was evaluated as Rs 92,692 causing a loss of Rs 7,44,777 to the state exchequer.



The ‘gram sakhiv’ has been suspended and orders for recovery of the embezzled amount from the former sarpanch and gram sakhiv have been issued. We find that candidates spend a phenomenal amount of money to win the elections for sarpanch in villages. They lure voters by offering gifts, interest free loans, distribution of liquor and sweets. The intention is to win the elections by hook or crook. This will enable me to recover many times the election investment. After getting elected, the sarpanchs indulge in corruption by siphoning away the money allocated for the village's development.

In order to contain the agitation, the state government announced that sarpanchs could get development works up to Rs 5 lakh executed on a quotation basis. This was earlier Rs 2 lakh and e-tendering mode would be used for works valued at more than Rs 5 lakh. The honorariums of sarpanchs were increased from Rs 3,000/- to Rs 5,000/- and the panches from Rs 1,000/- to Rs 1,600/- by linking these with Dearness Allowance on the lines of government employees. To make

BOTH ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES AND GOVERNMENT SHOULD DISCHARGE THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES HONESTLY AND TRANSPARENTLY

the gram sakhivs accountable to the sarpanchs, the provision of recording the comments in the Annual Confidential Report (ACR) of gram sakhiv by sarpanchs has been introduced. For the social audit of development works in panchayats, a committee would be formed at the village level. This committee would consist of village residents who would keep watch of the development works being undertaken in the village.

A separate engineering wing would be set up for the Development and Panchayat Departments. The panchayats could get works done on quotations for a total amount of Rs 25 lakh in a financial year or up to 50 per cent of the total grant amount of the State Finance Commission, whichever is less. The responsibilities for quality have also been fixed. The technical staff would ensure the quality of the development works through e-tendering. The sarpanchs would be responsible for the quality of works carried out on a quotation basis.

The introduction and implementation of the Panchayati Raj system in the 1980s was a landmark decision of the Government headed by

then Prime Minister, late Rajiv Gandhi. It led to decentralization of financial powers to the local grassroot representatives—the gram pradhans paving way to the implementation of the concept of “Gram Swaraj” envisaged by Mahatma Gandhi and to ensure the utilization of funds meant for panchayats in a transparent manner.

Through the connivance of government functionaries and pardhans, crores of rupees are disbursed annually to PRIs, of which a large amount is misused. The practice of these practices needs to be checked and those found guilty should be punished. Both elected representatives and the government should discharge their responsibilities honestly and transparently. The Haryana government has done a commendable job in checking malpractices by laying down checks and balances. This would help in judicial use of funds at the grassroots level.

(The writer is a senior journalist and Chairman, Panwar Group of Institutions, Solan, Himachal Pradesh. The views expressed are personal.)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LACK OF STORAGE FOR FARMERS

Sir — Farmers often struggle to grow fruits and vegetables. But due to a lack of storage options, they have to sell them at very low prices. It is also often the result of natural calamities. When rain falls unseasonably, all stored goods are soaked and damaged. The government intends to implement the godown scheme in the village so that agricultural produce can be stored locally till it fetches a high price. The study will be conducted by a 12-member committee. There are times when the cost of production is not even available.

But transportation costs also have to be paid. Due to lack of price, sometimes the plow is turned in full fields. Therefore, it is not possible for all the farmers to store till they get a reasonable price. Vakhar Corporation has warehouses. Their number is very small, 205. The storage capacity is 17 lakh 60 thousand metric tons. There is capacity.

There are only two things farmers need to do before they can sell at the price they get: take a risk. So this is the government's plan for rural areas. By setting up storage areas in rural areas with all the necessary facilities, improving the quality of its goods, and providing financing and credit facilities, we will be able to achieve our goals. The government is implementing this plan. Through this plan, efforts will be made to invest in the private and cooperative sector in warehouse construction.

The criteria for the scheme, the exact nature of the scheme, how to provide state-of-the-art facilities for perishable goods, and this committee will study. The report is to be given till 13th June. From the point of view of farmers, the scheme “Village There Godown” is commendable. The committee should give its report at the earliest and the government should give justice to farmers through the recommendations of the committee.

Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Rahul Gandhi's disqualification



Kapil Sibal, a top Indian lawyer and former federal law minister, told the media that while Gandhi was automatically disqualified as a legislator, his two-year jail sentence itself was “bizarre”.

The court granted him bail immediately and suspended the sentence for a month. After Rahul Gandhi was sentenced to two years in prison in a defamation case, India's parliament disqualified him. Though the Opposition not only have accused the prime minister of using the law to stymie political critics, but they have also accused PM Modi of misusing national agencies, including the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Directorate of Enforcement (ED), to go after critics including journalists (“The press must remain free if a country is to remain a democracy,” Chief Justice of India Mr. Chandrachud), nonprofits and media companies.

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

DIABETIC FOOT CARE

Sir — Most diabetes patients can prevent serious foot complications. Regular care at home and doctor's appointments are your best bet for preventing foot problems. This will help in stopping small problems from becoming serious ones. Wash your feet every day in warm (not hot) water. Don't soak your feet. Dry your feet completely and apply lotion to the top and bottom—but not between your toes, which could lead to infection. Never go barefoot. When you check your feet every day, you can catch problems early and treat them immediately. Early treatment greatly reduces your amputation risk. Check your feet every day for cuts, redness, swelling, sores, blisters, corns, calluses, or any other change to the skin or nails. Use a mirror if you can't see the bottom of your feet, or ask a family member to help. Remember: Diabetes-related foot problems can worsen very quickly and are difficult to treat, so seek prompt medical attention.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

VANDALISM BY KHALISTAN SUPPORTERS

Sir — Khalistan supporters' vandalism acts at Indian missions abroad are serious concerns. Khalistan demand is not justified as India cannot be further broken into pieces. But equally wrong are those who want India to be declared a ‘Hindu rashtira’ since people do not want India to become a ‘Hindu Pakistan’. India is a secular country and cannot be based on religion. Action should also be taken against those who raise such obnoxious demands. Secondly, the Punjab Police has launched a major crackdown against radical preacher Amritpal Singh, and his outfit Waris Punjab De. Kejriwal proudly claimed that strict action being taken against criminals by the government had shown that ‘AAP is a hardcore patriotic party’. Amritpal escapes the police dragnet.

Vishal Mayur | Tumkur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

HOW TO DEAL WITH SEIZURES?


Epilepsy is a lifelong condition, and but it can be managed with medication



DR RAVINDRA SRIVASTAVA

In the early human civilisations, it was geography and weather that decided what crops were to be grown in any region. The same crop was consumed by the people of that area. Exports were tough and risky. But, in modern civilisation, Governments directly or indirectly control the food consumed.

Epilepsy accounts for a significant proportion of the world affecting 50 million people. Each year an estimated 5 million people are diagnosed with epilepsy. In India, more than 10 million patients suffer from epilepsy, which represents 20% of the 50 million worldwide. Purple Day is an international awareness day dedicated to raising awareness about epilepsy and reducing the stigma surrounding this neurological disorder. Observed annually on March 26th, Purple Day encourages people to learn more about epilepsy. It encourages people to recognize the signs of a seizure and support those living with this condition. By coming together to raise awareness and support those affected by epilepsy, we can improve the lives of millions of people around the world.



What is epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a chronic disorder that affects the brain's ability to transmit electrical impulses. These disruptions can cause seizures, which can be mild or severe and affect various parts of the body. Epilepsy is a lifelong condition, and while it can be managed with medication, it cannot be cured. Some people may outgrow epilepsy, while others may have it for their entire lives.

What are seizures?

Seizures are the primary epilepsy symptom. They occur when there is a sudden surge of electrical activity in the brain. The symptoms of a seizure can vary widely depending on the type and severity of the seizure. Some people experience a brief loss of awareness or consciousness, while others have convulsions and lose control of their limbs.

Medically Intractable Epilepsy

Medically intractable epilepsy is a severe form of epilepsy that cannot be controlled with medication. People with this type of epilepsy may experience multiple seizures per day, which can severely impact their quality of life. Treatment options for medically intractable epilepsy may include surgery or implantable devices that regulate brain activity.

Seizure First Aid

If you witness someone having a seizure, it is essential to stay calm and take the following steps:

- Keep the person safe: Clear the area around the person to prevent injury. Remove any sharp objects that could harm.
- Protect the person's head: If possible, place something soft, like a jacket or pillow, under the person's head to cushion it.
- Turn the person on their side: If the person is lying down, turn them onto their side to prevent choking.
- Time of the seizure: Note the time the seizure began and how long it lasted. This information can help medical professionals.
- Do not restrain the person: Do not restrain the person or put anything in their mouth during the seizure.
- Stay with the person: Once the seizure has ended, stay with the person until they are fully alert and oriented.

(The writer is Director, Neurosciences, Primus Superspecialty Hospital)

Open letter to Rahul Gandhi

By questioning Rahul's conviction, the Opposition party is undermining the judiciary



SUMEET BHASIN



Within a couple of hours of his conviction by a Surat court, the party's legal luminary Abhishek Manu Singhvi spoke at length about the merits of the case. The Congress has a strong battery of lawyers practicing in India's higher courts. There have been occasions in the past when they rushed to the top court for judicial intervention in matters where their leaders are caught in discomfort.

However, the Congress did not approach the judicial authorities for relief from the Surat court sentence. It is not possible that Congress' legal eagles are aware of the Supreme Court order of 2013 which said that a conviction with a jail term of two or more years leads to automatic disqualification of a member of the legislatures—the Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and state Assemblies. Clearly, staging a political stunt, Congress leaders feigned ignorance that Gandhi was automatically disqualified upon his conviction by the Surat court magistrate. Curiously, Gandhi came to Parliament despite knowing he had already been disqualified.

This must have been clear to him more than to anyone else since it was he who had torn apart an Ordinance approved by the Union Cabinet, presided over by Manmohan Singh, the former prime minister. The Ordinance intended to dilute the Supreme Court ruling of automatic disqualification of membership of a convicted legislature member. If Rahul Gandhi claims that he did not know the import of the Supreme Court ruling of 2013, he is guilty of acting impulsively as an ignoramus. He tore apart the Ordinance at the Press Club of India in the presence of the press corps.

Rahul Gandhi is accused of impulsive behaviour. His willful resorted to defamatory utterances in the past. He is involved in several court cases. He is also on bail in the National Herald case. He has only shown that he is an incorrigible bully of Indian politics, from insulting Manmohan Singh to demeaning Indian democracy on foreign soil in London. The Congress' yearning for sympathy votes is old. The party daydreams that people will vote for it out of sympathy. It has been marginalised under the Gandhi family.

Why should the country sympathise with Rahul Gandhi? What is his contribution to the uplift of the poor of this country? He has been convicted for defaming a community. In his statement that "all thieves have the Modi surname", what message did he intend to convey? Did it not occur to him that he was defaming a hard-working community, spread over the country and abroad?

People must decide if the country's politicians have freedom to say anything against anyone. Some people argue that defamation should not be a criminal offence. But it is worthwhile to ask: why should anyone level allegations against others which they cannot substantiate? This license to defame others has taken Indian politics to a new low. Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made libelous insinuations against Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a television show. The news anchor tried to contest Kejriwal's claims, but he was bullied to stay silent. Kejriwal questioned the educational qualifications of PM Modi. The same news channel reproduced the interview of PM Modi given several years ago from which Kejriwal had selectively quoted.

The Delhi Chief Minister repeated his insinuations against PM Modi in the Assembly. There are millions of youths who pursue distant learning. Kejriwal has defamed a vast number of youths for such learning which government has promoted for several decades. There are a number of universities, including the Indira Gandhi National Open University, for this purpose.

Also, it is well known that Kejriwal escaped conviction in defamation cases by apologising to the late Arun Jaitley and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari. Gandhi chose not to apologise in the Surat court. Defamatory political discourse, based on mudslinging, has no space in Indian democracy, which is known to be aspirational. Rahul Gandhi has also said that he's "not Savarkar, but Gandhi and Gandhis don't apologise." But not long ago he had apologised to the Supreme Court for making baseless allegations on the Rafale issue.

Members of the legislature must commit themselves to the singular efforts to realise the dreams of the people. This naturally calls for a review of the discretionary powers of the Members of Parliament. It must be asked if it's still relevant for an MP to recommend students for admission in Kendriya Vidyalaya and to exercise similar discretionary powers in extending other entitlements.

There must not be any doubt that the Gandhi family has a feudal mindset. Despite a strong campaign for inner democracy, the Congress coterie defeated the efforts for genuine intra-party democracy. This coterie keeps alive the feudal mindset of the party's ruling family.

Memories are still fresh of how Sitaram Keshri was thrown out of the party by the Gandhi family. People of the country have not forgotten that the mortal remains of late PV Narsimha Rao, former prime minister, were not allowed into the party office premises for his followers to pay their last respects to the departed soul. As a result of breaking the law and claiming victimhood, the Gandhis have demonstrated the least political decency in the world.

But the law is the same for all. Laws don't discriminate between citizens.

The Opposition protesting against Rahul Gandhi's disqualification from the Lok Sabha membership after his conviction in a criminal defamation case is as good as a celebration of corruption, which the people in the national capital saw after the arrest of Manish Sisodia, the former deputy chief minister of Delhi, by the Central Bureau of Investigation. The New Excise Policy of the city government is being probed for financial irregularity and conspiracy.

Indian democracy rests on institutions. The judiciary is a crucial institution in the country. By questioning Rahul's conviction, the Opposition party is undermining the judiciary.

Also, Parliament has passed laws. If the Opposition parties believe that some laws need changes, they can certainly change them in Parliament. But for that they need people's mandates. Self-centered politics must stop immediately. Stringent rules should be framed with necessary amendments to the Representation of People's Act. This will guide Indian democracy on the path free of compulsive lying and defamation.

IT IS WORTHWHILE TO ASK: WHY SHOULD ANYONE LEVEL ALLEGATIONS AGAINST OTHERS WHICH THEY CANNOT SUBSTANTIATE

(The author is a political analyst)

Human resource management is a prerequisite for growth

The top management must be compassionate towards their employees, it ensures productivity and high standards of corporate ethics



RAVI CHANDER KOCHHAR

In the recent past, Human Resource Management has transformed and become the epicentre of any organisation aspiring for excellence. Day by day the involvement and importance of Human Resource Management have increased and become the central point of the outcome of any Centre of Excellence.

This transition has not been an easy one but over some time all out sustained efforts by the organisations have been made for a complete overhaul of the system. No doubt digitisation has made some difference in HR Processes and Decision Making, however, it's the policies that have triggered the overall changes and brought about the revolution in HRM. First and foremost, has been the WHY factor in the decision-making at the highest echelon of management to decide in which direction you want the organisation to move and once WHY has been clearly defined then the whole process will revolve around it to achieve this aim. This WHY factor can be defined by the Mission and Aim of the Organisation. Having decided the WHY factor one can now clearly move to WHAT type of personnel you want to hire. Clearly define their roles and responsibilities, set the targets, and milestones and carve out a roadmap to be followed by the organisation to achieve its Mission and Aim.

The next step will be when the recruiters start defining the QRs including the Qualification, Expertise, Experience, Previous Job profile and the notable results achieved. Having decided the WHY and WHAT factors one has to move to the next factor, HOW. This is also an important factor, one has to start planning as to how one wants to proceed in this direction.

The organisation must ensure that the best person for the job is available and thus the search has to be perfect before recruiting anyone. Check out the newspapers which have maximum circulation and accordingly insert a well-designed advertisement in local / all India editions as per the requirement. The head-hunting team of the organisation must search on the job portals, as well as various websites that provide the details of employees, check if anyone matches the organisational requirement of a specific job and establish contact if they are willing to change before setting up the process of recruitment. Once the database is available, the process of shortlisting begins, making sure that no compromise is made on the QRs laid down for each profile. For every possible job, shortlist at least five persons and conduct personal interviews at various levels to check the suitability of the person for the job. Of these five, the best two must be met by the top management. During the process, it must also be considered what financial package is to be decided. During the interviews, the family background of the candidate must also be examined as that will determine how much time he / she will be able to devote towards undertaking the task assigned including roles and responsibilities.

Yet another consideration must be, the scope for his/her future growth in the organisation. Once the selection process is complete, the financial package is acceptable and the candidate has joined the organisation, the even more important phase of onboarding must be seamless. The buddy system has proved very beneficial wherein one person is attached to the new joiner to make him feel comfortable and introduce him/her to the systems and practices of the organisation, introduce him/her to colleagues and others as required.

This phase is of relevance so that the person doesn't feel out of place and adapts to the new environment amicably. Initially, at short intervals, the candidate may be guided and advised to appreciate his/her strong/weak points and there's ample opportunity available for him to take corrective action. As the organisation grows, the employees must also grow and part of the benefits must also be passed on to the employees. It's very important to retain experienced people so that they effectively contribute to the growth of the organisation. At the same time, the organisation must also continuously evolve ways and means to look after the employees, be it annual increments or various welfare measures so that the employees concentrate on their job and performance to ensure the growth of the organisation. One of the important aspects must be that top management must be compassionate towards their employees, be it leave or medical cover or such other arrangements so that each employee feels confident that in times of need the person will not be left high and dry to face the emergent condition and this aspect is very important, everyone must be treated with dignity and humanity must prevail.

Finally for any organisation to grow it needs qualified, experienced and dedicated, sincere and loyal employees and this leadership must be provided by the top management with compassion and transparency in their policies and systems.

(The writer is s the Group Pro Vice Chancellor with Amity University Noida Campus)

BRO reopens strategic Leh-Manali Highway in record 138 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) has opened strategically important Leh-Manali Highway (NH 3) in record time of 138 days after clearing snow. Last year, it took 144 days for the BRO to open the highway for traffic.

The key road opened for traffic on Saturday is 427 km long highway connecting Ladakh to the rest of India via Manali, having strategic importance for the movement of the armed forces and their supplies to forward areas in Ladakh, as well as connecting the people



of Ladakh to India, officials said here.

The highway is an alternate route to the 422 km long Srinagar-Kargil-Leh Highway (NH-1D) which was opened by the BRO on March 16.

November end with onset of winter till it is opened in March. The entire 427 km road has been cleared of snow by BRO frontline Project Himank in Ladakh and Project Deepak in Himachal Pradesh.

These challenging operations commenced from two extremities of the road by two different teams comprising skilled manpower and state-of-the-art machines. As the two snow clearance teams converge at a common point in Sarchu, Himachal Pradesh, a 'Golden Handshake' ceremony was organized there to declare the highway open.

The BRO also opened the mighty Shinkula Pass located at 16,580 ft in Nimmu-Padum-Darch road in record time of 55 days, on March 23.

The Leh-Manali highway generally remains closed from

People from within country taking politics outside, outsiders interfering : Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has said "people from within the country are taking politics outside, and people from outside the country are interfering in politics inside." These remarks came even as the BJP is seeking an apology from Congress leader Rahul Gandhi for his recent speech in London and the opposition party not conceding to the demand.

"Many people in the world were very comfortable with how things were in India till 2014 and after things changed, they saw different confidence, different beliefs. Suddenly peo-



ple started saying there is something wrong, the court is not performing properly, the election commission is not okay, press is being restricted. Everything happened after 2014 only?" Jaishankar said at an event in Bengaluru on

Friday.
"Why is that happening? You have people outside India who have an interest in people inside India. And when those people do not get electoral success and they are today seen as less and less

representing the reality of India, there is an attempt from outside to make out as though that is normal and somewhere India has started to deviate. Now if you look historically, this is the normal -- what you are seeing today," Jaishankar said.

As Jaishankar interacted at the event organised by Bengaluru South MP Tejasvi Surya, he also commented on the recent attack on Indian missions abroad by pro-Khalistani supporters. "It is the obligation of the receiving country to ensure the embassy or the high commission or the consulate and their premises are respected. These obligations were not met," Jaishankar said.

Prez Murmu on two-day tour of West Bengal from today, to visit Santiniketan



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu will be on a two-day tour of West Bengal from Monday, during which she will visit Santiniketan to grace the annual convocation of Visva-Bharati, according to a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Sunday.

The president will visit Netaji Bhawan in Kolkata to pay homage to Subhash Chandra Bose on Monday.

Later on during the day, she will visit Jorasanko Thakurbari

-- Rabindranath Tagore's House -- to pay tributes to him, the statement said. In the evening, the president will attend a civic reception to be hosted in her honour at Netaji Indoor Stadium, Kolkata, it added.

The president will visit Belur Math the next day.

She will also grace the celebration of completion of 80 years of UCO Bank in Kolkata.

Later, the president will visit Santiniketan where she will grace the annual convocation of Visva-Bharati, the statement said.

Plea in SC seeks 'Ram Sethu' be declared as national monument

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A plea has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking that the Ram Sethu be declared as a national monument.

The PIL, filed by advocate Ashok Pandey, also seeks construction of a wall at the spot to facilitate devotees.

On March 20, the top court had said that it will list at the earliest a petition by BJP leader Subramanian Swamy seeking a direction to the Centre to declare the Ram Sethu as a national heritage monument.

Ram Sethu, also known as Adam's bridge, is a chain of limestone shoals between Pamban Island, off the south-eastern coast of Tamil Nadu, and Mannar Island, off the north-western coast of Sri Lanka.

Swamy had raised the issue of declaring the Ram Sethu a national monument in his PIL against the controversial Sethusamudram Ship Channel project, initiated by the UPA-



I government.

The matter reached the apex court, which in 2007 stayed work for the project on the Ram Sethu.

The Centre later said it had considered the "socio-economic disadvantages" of the project and was willing to explore another route to the shipping channel project without damaging the Ram Sethu.

The Sethusamudram shipping channel project has been facing protests from some political parties, environmentalists and certain Hindu religious groups.

Under the project, an 83 km water channel was to be created, linking Mannar with Palk Strait, by extensive dredging and removal of limestone shoals.

Increasing road accidents matter of grave concern, says LS Speaker

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla expressed "grave concern" on Sunday over a rising number of road accidents in the country and urged people to follow basic traffic rules.

He said these incidents are also leading to an increasing number of fatalities.

Birla pointed out that more than four lakh road accidents, with a cumulative death toll of over 1.5 lakh, are reported in the country every year.

If the number of road accidents annually is assessed economically, the loss would be equal to about one per cent of the GDP, he said. "Therefore, road accidents are a loss to the family, society and the country," the Lok Sabha Secretariat quoted Birla as saying in a statement.

The speaker made these remarks after flagging off a car rally at the Constitution Club here.



Besides members of Parliament, officers from defence and central police forces, eminent personalities from industry and people from different walks of life participated in the car rally.

The theme of this year's car rally was "road safety". Birla lamented that while people are aware of traffic

rules, including those related to walking, those are seldom followed.

Describing engineering, enforcement, education and emergency care as the four pillars of road safety, the speaker said while the government can frame rules, it is the citizenry that has to follow those.

Delhi excise policy scam: SC to hear today plea of BRS leader Kavitha against ED summons

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea by K Kavitha, Bharat Rashtra Samithi leader and daughter of Telangana Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, seeking protection from arrest and challenging the summons by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case arising out of the alleged Delhi excise policy scam.

A bench of justices Ajay Rastogi and Bela M Trivedi is scheduled to hear the plea by Kavitha.

On March 15, the top court agreed to hear her plea seeking protection from arrest and challenging the summons issued by the ED.

On March 11, the 44-year-old BRS leader deposed before the ED to record her statement and was summoned again on March 16 for questioning.

She was last quizzed for about 10 hours on March 21, which was her third day of deposition before the Enforcement Directorate.

The BRS leader has denied all allegations against her.

According to official sources, Kavitha, during her

questioning by the ED, was confronted with the statements made by Hyderabad-based businessman Arun Ramchandran Pillai, who has been arrested in the case, apart from those of a few others allegedly involved in the case.

Kavitha's statement was recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Pillai was arrested by the ED earlier. He has moved a city court accusing the ED of forging his statements.

The ED had said Pillai "represented the south group", an alleged liquor cartel linked



to Kavitha and others that paid kickbacks amounting to about Rs 100 crore to the Aam Aadmi

Party to gain a larger share of the market in the national cap-

ital under the now-scrapped Delhi excise policy for 2020-21.

The "south group", according to the ED, comprises Sarath Reddy (promoter of Aurobindo

Pharma), Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy (YSR Congress MP from Ongole in Andhra Pradesh), his son Raghav Magunta, Kavitha and others.

The ED had also alleged in Pillai's remand papers that he "represented the benami investments" of Kavitha, who has also been questioned by the Central Bureau of Investigation in connection with the case.

The ED has so far arrested 12 people in the case, including former Delhi deputy chief minister and AAP leader Manish Sisodia.

It has recorded the statement of Butchi Babu, a char-

tered accountant allegedly linked to Kavitha, where he said "there was a political understanding between K Kavitha and the chief minister (Arvind Kejriwal) and the deputy chief minister (Sisodia). In that process, K Kavitha also met Vijay Nair on March 19-20, 2021."

Nair was arrested in the case by both ED and CBI. Butchi Babu has been arrested by CBI.

According to Butchi Babu's statement, Nair was "trying to impress Kavitha with what he could do in the (excise) policy". "Vijay Nair was acting on

behalf of Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia," the statement recorded by the ED said.

It is alleged that the Delhi government's excise policy for 2021-22 to grant licences to liquor traders allowed cartelisation and favoured certain dealers who had allegedly paid bribes for it, a charge strongly refuted by the AAP.

The policy was subsequently scrapped and the Delhi lieutenant governor recommended a CBI probe, following which the ED registered the case under the PMLA.

Reduce civil services recruitment cycle, assess reasons for candidates low turnout: Par Panel to UPSC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Asserting that the nearly 15 months long recruitment process wastes candidates' prime years besides taking a heavy toll on their physical and mental health, a Parliamentary Committee has asked the UPSC to reduce the civil services examination's selection cycle.

In its latest report, the panel also asked the Union Public Service Commission to examine the reasons for the low turnout of candidates in the civil services examination.

The examination is conducted annually by the UPSC in three stages -- preliminary, main and interview -- to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.

The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice said according to the data provided by the UPSC, the average time taken for civil services examination from the date of issue of notification to the date of declaration of the final result is nearly 15 months.

"The Committee is of the opinion that the duration of any recruitment examination should not ordinarily exceed six months as long and protracted recruitment cycles



waste prime years of a candidates' life besides taking a heavy toll on their physical and mental health. The Committee, accordingly, recommends that UPSC should take steps to reduce the duration of the recruitment cycle significantly without compromising the quality," the report said.

On the low turnout, it said out of approximately, 32.39 lakh candidates who had applied for examinations conducted by UPSC in 2022-23, only 16.82 lakh candidates, (51.95 per cent) actually appeared for examinations.

For instance, 11.35 lakh candidates applied for the civil services examination in 2022 but only 5.73 lakh candidates (50.51 per cent) actually appeared for the exami-

nation.

The Committee recommended UPSC furnish the details of examination fees collected from the candidates during the last five years.

"The Commission may also provide the details of expenditure incurred by it on the conduct of the examinations for the same period. The Committee also recommends UPSC to examine the reasons for low turnout of candidates and share the findings thereof with the Committee," the report said.

The panel has recommended forming an expert committee to assess if the present scheme of recruitment through civil services examination provides an equal opportunity to both English-medium-educated urban can-

didates and non-English medium-educated rural candidates.

While UPSC has changed the pattern of civil services examination from time to time on the basis of recommendations made by various expert committees, no study has been commissioned to assess how such changes impacted the aspirants, nature of recruitment and administration at large, it said.

The panel said an expert group or committee should be appointed to assess the impact of changes made in the scheme, pattern and syllabus of civil services examination in the last ten years on the quality of recruitment and administration at large.

"The expert group so constituted may assess if the present scheme of recruitment provides an equal opportunity to both english-medium educated urban candidates and non english medium educated rural candidates," said the report tabled in Parliament recently.

This group may also assess whether the existing pattern of preliminary and mains examination provides a level playing field for all candidates irrespective of their academic background, it said.

The Committee is of the considered opinion that the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) and UPSC should consider making fur-

ther changes in the scheme and syllabus of civil services examination in the light of the findings of the impact assessment study, the report said.

The panel was also apprised that the UPSC releases the answer key of the preliminary test of the civil services examination only after the completion of the entire process of the said examination.

In other words, the Commission is depriving the candidates of an opportunity to contest the answer key before progressing to the next stage of the examination, the report said. "This practice not only demoralises the candidates but also compromises the validity and fairness of the examination process. Although recruiting agencies exercise utmost caution to ensure that the answer key is foolproof, the possibility of errors cannot be ruled out.

"The Committee, therefore, recommends that UPSC may take steps to publish the answer key right after the preliminary stage of the civil services examination and allow candidates to raise objections," it said.

The Committee said UPSC may also collect feedback from the candidates and effect improvements in the examination system from time to time to ensure more transparency, fairness and candidate friendliness.

ICMR releases first ethical guidelines for AI application in biomedical research, healthcare

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has come up with the country's first Ethical Guidelines for the Application of Artificial Intelligence in Biomedical Research and Healthcare to provide an ethical framework for the development of AI-based tools which will benefit all stakeholders.

According to a document drafted by the Department of Health Research and ICMR's Artificial Intelligence Cell, AI for health, to a large extent, depends on data obtained from human participants and invokes additional concerns related to potential biases, data handling, interpretation, autonomy, risk minimization, professional competence, data sharing, and confidentiality.

"It is therefore imperative to have an ethical framework that addresses issues specific to AI for biomedical research and healthcare," the guidelines stated.

The adoption of AI technology in healthcare is growing in India. However, AI as data-driven technology has many potential ethical challenges which include algorithmic transparency and explainability, clarity on liability, accountability and oversight, bias and discrimination, said ICMR Director General Dr Rajiv Behl.

"The DHR-ICMR AI Cell has identified the need to develop these guiding ethical



principles concerning artificial intelligence and machine learning-based tools.

"These guidelines will provide the ethical framework for the development of AI-based tools which will benefit all stakeholders, including innovators, developers, patients, technologists, researchers, healthcare professionals, ethics committees, sponsors and funding agencies involved in research related to AI in biomedical research and healthcare," he said.

NTAGI chief Dr N K Arora said the purpose of the guideline is to provide an ethical framework which can assist in the development, deployment, and adoption of AI-based solutions for biomedical research and healthcare delivery.

The guidelines are intended for all stakeholders involved in research on artificial intelligence in healthcare, including creators, developers, technicians, researchers, clinicians, ethics committees, institutions, sponsors, and funding organizations.

It includes separate sections addressing ethical prin-

ciples for AI in health, guiding principles for stakeholders, the ethics review process, governance of artificial intelligence for healthcare and research, and the informed consent process involving human participants and their data.

The guideline has been formulated after extensive discussions with subject experts, researchers and ethicists, said Dr Arora.

The induction of AI into healthcare has the potential to be the solution for significant challenges like diagnosis and screening, therapeutics, preventive treatments, clinical decision-making, public health surveillance, complex data analysis, and predicting disease outcomes. This list is likely to grow in the future, the document said.

The purpose of these guidelines is not to limit innovation or recommend any disease-specific diagnostic or therapeutic approach but to guide effective yet safe development, deployment and adoption of AI-based technologies in biomedical research and healthcare delivery, it said.

Shah lauds Karnataka Govt, says religious quota unconstitutional

Home Minister slams previous Cong Govt for appeasement politics

PTI ■ BIDAR/RAICHUR

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Sunday lauded the Karnataka Government's decision of scrapping the four per cent reservation for Muslims under 2B Other Backward Classes (OBCs) category, saying the quota on religious lines was constitutionally invalid. Addressing public gatherings at Gorata village in Bidar district and Gabbur in Raichur district, he slammed the Congress for introducing the four per cent reservation for Muslims for "its vote bank politics".

The Union Minister pointed out that Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government also tried to do away the injustice to the Scheduled Castes by introducing a new internal reservation.

The entire 2B category was only for the Muslims and the BJP government scrapped it saying that it was not constitutionally tenable and divided the four per cent quota equally among the two dominant communities of the state: Vokkaligas in 2C reservation category and Veerashaiva-Lingayats in 2D reservation category.



With this, 2B became redundant while Vokkaligas' reservation went up from four per cent to six per cent and Lingayats from five per cent to seven per cent. "The BJP never believes in appeasement."

So, it decided to change the reservation," Shah said strongly defending the decision. "The BJP abolished the four per cent reservation given to the minorities

and gave two per cent to the Vokkaligas and two per cent to the Lingayats," Shah said.

"The reservation for minorities is not Constitutionally valid. There is no provision in the Constitution to give reservation based on religion. This Congress government did it for its appeasement politics and gave reservation to the minorities," he added.

CG copter crashes soon after takeoff from Cochin Airport

PTI ■ KOCHI

One person was injured when a Coast Guard helicopter crashed on Sunday just after takeoff from its enclave at the Cochin International Airport Limited (CIAL) here, but the "presence of mind" of the pilot saved the lives of three persons

onboard, a release said.

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) said the ALH Mk III chopper CG 855, based in Kochi, took off from the enclave located inside CIAL complex at about 12.25 pm for "inflight checks after fitment of control rods" on the aircraft.

It said the chopper lost control when

it was about 30-40 ft above the ground. However, the pilot showed "exemplary professionalism and presence of mind" with bare minimum controls and manoeuvred the aircraft away from blocking the main runway of the international airport, the ICG statement said

"Prior to the inflight checks, HAL

36 satellites placed into orbits, another feather in ISRO's cap

PTI ■ SRIHARIKOTA

The Indian Space Research Organisation on Sunday scripted yet another history after its LVM3 rocket successfully placed 36 satellites of UK-based OneWeb group company into intended orbits. The 43.5 metre tall rocket blasted off at prefixed time at 9 am today, from the second launch pad of Satish Dhawan Space Centre here, about 135 kms from Chennai, at the end of a 24.30 hour countdown.

This is the second dedicated mission for NewSpace India Ltd, the commercial arm of Indian Space Research Organisation. ISRO had signed an agreement with Network Access Associates Ltd, United Kingdom (OneWeb Group Company) for the launch of 72 satellites into Low-Earth orbits (LEO).

The first batch of 36 satellites of OneWeb Group company were launched on October 23, 2022 by ISRO. OneWeb is a global communication network powered from space, enabling connectivity



ISRO's LVM3 carrying 36 satellites lifts off from the Satish Dhawan Space Station, in Sriharikota, on Sunday. The 36 satellites were part of the agreement with NewSpace India Ltd, the commercial arm of ISRO and Network Access Associates Ltd, United Kingdom

for governments and businesses. Soon after the take off, the rocket sequentially deployed the satellites into multiple orbits.

While the first set of 16 satellites were injected, it was announced that the remaining satellites would be placed into the intended orbits. ISRO said, "LVM3-M3/OneWeb India-2 mission is accomplished. All 36

OneWeb Gen-1 Satellites injected into the intended orbits." In its sixth consecutive successful flight, LVM3 carried 5,805 kgs of payload to Low Earth Orbit," the space agency said in its official social media account.

ISRO chairman S Somanath congratulated NSIL, ISRO and OneWeb for the successful launch of LVM3-

M3-OneWeb India-2 Mission. "As we know today the first 16 satellites of the series are already placed into the right orbit.

And now it has gone into the far south of the Earth and we will be getting confirmation of the remaining spacecraft separation soon once the onboard storage data is acquired by our Indian ground stations," he said addressing the scientists and guests at the Mission Control Centre.

The launch was the 18th for OneWeb Group company while for ISRO, it would be the second mission in 2023 after the successful launch of SSLV/D2-EOS07 mission undertaken in February.

"Till now, based on the observations, the vehicle has done extremely well, it went up to the right orbit and placed spacecraft at the right orbit and also with very minimal disturbances to it," Somanath noted. Somanath expressed gratitude to NSIL for the support and for the confidence that OneWeb India team reposed in ISRO for building this rocket.

CONG'S 'SATYAGRAH' PROTESTS ACROSS INDIA

The Congress leader alleged that Rahul was disqualified for questioning the prime minister on industrialist Gautam Adani and people will give a befitting reply to those behind the action.

"My family's blood has nurtured democracy in this country. We are ready to do anything for this country's democracy. Great leaders of the Congress laid the foundation of democracy in this country. If they think they can scare us, they are wrong. We will not be scared," she said. "You call my brother, the son of a martyr, a traitor and Mir Jafar. You insult his mother. Your Chief Minister says Rahul doesn't know who his mother is. You insult my family every day. But no cases are filed," and aggressive Priyanka said.

"Your Prime Minister, in a Parliament full of people, says 'why doesn't this family use the name Nehru name'. He insults the whole family of Kashmiri Pandits, and the custom of a son carrying forward the family's name after the death of his father," she said.

Slamming the BJP over its charge that Rahul insulted OBCs with his remark for which he has been convicted in a criminal defamation case, Kharge said why is the ruling party pained if fugitives such as Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi are criticised.

Kharge also thanked all Opposition parties for standing with Rahul and the Congress to save democracy.

"They talk of OBC now, is Lalit Modi OBC, is Nirav Modi OBC, is Mehul Choksi OBC, they ran away with people's money. If they are fugitives why are you pained if they are criticised. You (BJP) punish the person who works to save country and send those abroad who loot country," Kharge said.

"Rahul is fighting for the people of this country, for the women, for the youth, fighting against unemployment and inflation," he said.

Rahul was disqualified from the Lok Sabha on Friday, a day after a court in Gujarat's Surat convicted him in a 2019 defamation case. The disqualification will prevent Rahul (52), a four-time MP, from contesting elections for eight years unless a higher court stays the conviction. In Gujarat, the police detained state Congress chief Jagdish Thakore, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly Amit Chavda and senior leader Bharatsinh Solanki along with party workers when they arrived at Lal Darwaza in Ahmedabad to protest.

The protesters were taken to the police stadium where they continued to shout slogans against Modi and the Bhartiya Janata Party. In Srinagar, party members led by former JKPC president Ghulam Ahmad Mir protested at the party's headquarters at M A Road. Mir said not only Congress party, but all non-BJP secular parties have come together, and are "wailing over the death of democracy" in the country.

Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring alleged that the action against Rahul was taken because the BJP-led Centre was "scared" of his next speech in Parliament on the Adani issue. Warring said a "tearing hurry" was shown by the Lok Sabha Secretariat in disqualifying Rahul allegedly at the behest of the BJP-led Government. Haryana Congress chief Udai Bhan said Rahul has been raising his voice against the BJP-led Centre on various issues. "They want to silence his voice, but they are mistaken," he said. Charging that institutions are being attacked in the country, Punjab's Leader of Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa said it is time for "all democratic forces to get together". In Congress ruled Rajasthan, the party's State unit chief Govind Singh Dotasra, Food and Civil Supplies Minister Pratap Singh Khachariya and several other leaders took part in the protest.

RASSI JAL GAYI, BAL NAHI GAYA: NADDA'S DIG AT RAHUL

BJP national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Sudhansu Trivedi while addressing a Press conference here also called out Congress for staging 'satyagrah' in the name of Mahatma Gandhi but "doing just the opposite" of what the Father of the nation stood for. He attacked the Congress for going to the 'samadhi' of Gandhi and taking Jagdish Tytler, an accused in the anti-Sikh riots, in its "so-called 'satyagrah'". The BJP leader accused Rahul of "insulting" OBCs in the country and seeking special treatment in law for himself. Trivedi charged the Congress leader with unending arrogance and repeatedly maligning country in the foreign land.

INDIA SUMMONS CANADIAN ENVOY OVER KHALISTAN STIR

The Indian side further said it expects the Canadian Government to take all required steps to ensure the safety of Indian diplomats and the security of the country's diplomatic

premises. Last Sunday, an event in Canada was cancelled due to security concerns after a violent protest by Khalistan supporters. The event was organised at the Taj Park Convention Centre in British Columbia to honour Sanjay Kumar Verma, the Indian envoy to Canada, while he was on his first visit to the west coast. An Indian-origin journalist, who was at the event to cover the protest, was also reportedly assaulted by the radicals.

The protest came amid ongoing operation to nab Amritpal Singh and his associates in Punjab. Earlier, Khalistan supporters had pulled down the tricolour outside the Indian High Commission in London. The Government had lodged a strong protest and called on the British authorities to ensure adequate security. A day after the High Commission attack, the Indian consulate in San Francisco was also vandalised by a group of Khalistan supporters. India strongly raised the matter with both countries.

The External Affairs Ministry sought an explanation about how "separatist and extremist elements" were able to breach the security of Indian Missions in Canada despite the presence of police, the Ministry said in a statement.

The Canadian Government was reminded of its obligations under the Vienna Convention and "asked to arrest and prosecute the individuals who have already been identified as being involved in such acts".

PM BATS FOR ORGAN GIFT, HAILS WOMEN FOR SPREADING WINGS

Modi also noted that the cases of corona are rising in some places and asked people to take precautions.

In the field of clean energy, he said, India's growing presence is being lauded globally. The speed with which India is moving forward in the field of solar energy is a big achievement in itself, he said, noting that Diu has become the first district in India to consume only clean energy for all day time needs.

"Through solar panels, more electricity is being generated in Diu than required during the day time. Through this solar project, about 52 crore rupees have also been saved. The environment has also benefitted a lot," he said, encouraging the use of clean energy. Noting the recent celebration of ancient ties between people of Varanasi and Tamil Nadu through the 'Kashi-Tamil Sangamam' held in the holy city, he said 'Saurashtra-Tamil Sangamam' will be held in different parts of Gujarat during April 17-30. Such programmes are driven by the spirit of 'Ek Bharat-Shreshtha Bharat', he said.

Amid the ongoing official celebration of the 400th birth anniversary of Assamese general Lachit Borphukan, credited for defeating the Mughals, Modi said people will be surprised to know that about 45 lakh people sent essays on his life as part of a campaign. "You will also be happy to know that now it has become a Guinness record," he said. The essays have been written in 23 languages, he said. In his address, Modi also mentioned the rising demand for Kashmir's lotus stems not only in India but abroad as well and the boost in farmers' income of Jammu and Kashmir's Bhadarwah after they began growing lavender. "A few days ago, the grand temple of Maa Sharda was inaugurated in Kupwara. This temple is built on the same route one would use to go to visit Sharda Peeth. Local people have helped a lot in its construction. I congratulate the people of Jammu and Kashmir for this auspicious work," he said. Modi also asked people to share their ideas for the 100th episode of the programme scheduled for next month.

CENTRE NOTIFIES REVISED NREGA WAGE RATES

Bihar and Jharkhand have registered a percentage increase of around eight from last year. Last year, the daily wage for a MNRGA worker in these two states was Rs 210. It has now been revised to Rs 228. For Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, which have the lowest daily wages at Rs 221, the percentage increase from last year was recorded at 17.

In 2022-23, the two states had a daily wage of Rs 204. The increases in the wages for States range between two and 10 per cent. Karnataka, Goa, Meghalaya and Manipur are among the states to register the lowest percentage increase. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme is a flagship programme aimed at enhancing livelihood security of households in rural areas by providing at least 100 days of guaranteed wage employment in a financial year to every household whose adult members volunteer for unskilled manual work.

ISIS FORMS 2 SUB-GROUPS IN SOUTH INDIA

"To achieve these objectives, the PFI had established vari-

FROM PAGE 1

ous wings and units, such as 'Reporters Wing', 'Physical and Arms Training Wing' and 'Service Teams'. Investigations by the NIA have revealed that the PFI was using its various campuses, facilities and infrastructure to impart arms training to selected cadres in the guise of physical education, Yoga training etc. They also established a 'Reporters Wing' and 'Service Teams or Hit Teams' to eliminate their 'targets'. Whenever required, the PFI pressed into service its loyal and highly trained cadres of their 'service teams', as 'executioners' of the orders pronounced by their parallel courts, called 'Dar-ul-Qaza', it had said recently.

The NIA is also probing the role of the PFI for encouraging vulnerable youth to join terrorist organisations, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)/Daesh and Al-Qaida. The NIA has already charged the PFI for conspiracy to establish Islamic rule in India by 2047 by dismembering the country through jihad.

NIKHAT BAGS 2ND WORLD TITLE; LOVLINA BREAKS JINX WITH GOLD

"Today's bout was the toughest for me, she is an Asian champion and my next target is Asian Games and I might meet her, so I will work hard," Nikhat said.

"It was a roller coaster bout, she got warning, I got a warning, she got count so did I. But I went all out."

Nikhat, who has moved down from her preferred 52kg, looked tentative at first as Tam was the first one to attack. But after a few seconds, the home favourite leaped forward to attack. She then landed two right hooks, followed by straight jabs.

Tam was handed a penalty point for clinching further, tilting the result in Nikhat's favour as she took the first three minutes by a unanimous verdict.

But, Tam made a strong comeback as she launched into attack mode. The southpaw landed several punches, forcing Nikhat to play with her head down which earned her a penalty point. The Vietnamese managed to take the round 3-2.

In the final three minutes, both boxers went for broke and attacked each other relentlessly. If Nikhat's powerful right cross forced the referee to give Tam the eight count, Tam's jab compelled the referee to do the same to the Indian. "For me, this is the first major competition in this category after the Commonwealth Games, which did not have much competition. "But here, countries from all over the world competed and had back-to-back matches also, my body was a bit slow in some matches. I will learn from these experiences and try to become stronger," Nikhat, who has already qualified for the Asian Games, said.

Maiden world title for Lovlina. Eyeing her maiden gold medal, Lovlina, who has moved to the middleweight category as her 69kg doesn't feature in the Olympics, started the bout from a distance. The Tokyo Olympics bronze medalist looked to use her slight height advantage in the opening round. She used her reach to land accurate jabs. Parker too was accurate with her punches. But Lovlina managed to take the first round 3-2.

Lovlina changed her strategy in the second round, switching to playing from a close range. The change in the game plan did not work for her as Parker had better access and launched a series of attacks on the Indian to take the round 4-1.

The final round was played on an even keel and the bout was sent for review with Lovina emerging winner.

"It was the final so there was stress but I tried to play like the coaches said, I wasn't entirely successful at times but I am happy to win the gold and make India proud," Lovlina said after the bout. "Our plan was to play the second round from a closer range and play the final round from afar. Coaches had told me dur se khelna (play from a distance)."

The gold came after Lovlina made early-round exits at the World Championships and Commonwealth Games last year.

However, since bulking up to 75kg, it is Lovlina's fourth title. She won the National Games, National Championship and the Asian Championships. Although she is self-admittedly still adapting to the category, the hope is that she can book an Olympic berth at the Asian Games later this year.

With Nikhat and Lovlina winning their bouts, it has been a golden weekend for India. On Saturday, Nitu Ghanghas (48kg) and Saweety Boora (81kg) were crowned world champions in their respective weight categories. Hosts India matched their best-ever performance in terms of gold medals, though the country did not win any silver or bronze this time. India had won four golds in the 2006 edition at home which was also the country's best-ever performance with a haul of eight medals, including a silver.

INDIAN SCRIBE ASSAULTED BY KHALISTAN PROTESTERS IN US

He also shared a video of the Khalistan supporters on his

Twitter handle. "Thank you @SecretService 4 my protection 2day 4 helping do my job, otherwise I would have been writing this from hospital. The gentleman below hit my left ear with these 2 sticks & earlier I had to call 9/11 & rushed 2 police van 4 safety fearing physical assault," Jha tweeted on Sunday.

"At one point I felt so threatened that I called 911. I then spotted Secret Service officers and narrated the incident to them," Jha said, adding that the protesters took charge of the situation.

However, the journalist decided to take no action against those who heckled him.

The pro-Khalistan protesters even openly threatened to vandalise the embassy and threatened Indian Ambassador Taranjit Singh Sandhu, he said.

The protesters included turbaned men of all ages who raised pro-Khalistan slogans. They came in from different parts of the DC-Maryland-Virginia (DMV) area. The organisers used microphones to make anti-India speeches both in English and Punjabi and targeted the Punjab Police for alleged human rights violations.

Condemning the incident, the Indian embassy said in a statement, "We condemn such a grave and unwarranted attack on a senior journalist. Such activities only underscore the violent and anti-social tendencies of the so-called 'Khalistani protestors' and their supporters, who routinely engage in wanton violence and vandalism".

"We have seen disturbing visuals of a senior Indian journalist from the Press Trust of India being abused, threatened and assaulted physically while covering so-called 'Khalistan protest' in Washington DC earlier today," the Indian embassy said. The Indian embassy also thanked the law enforcement agencies for their prompt response in the matter.

"We understand that the journalist was first verbally intimidated, then physically assaulted, and fearing for his personal safety and well-being, had to call in law enforcement agencies, who responded promptly," the press release further said.

Multiple events of protests by supporters of Khalistan have been staged outside the Indian embassy and the San Francisco Consulate. The Indian Consulate in San Francisco was also attacked on March 20.

The US strongly condemned the attack on the Indian consulate in San Francisco a week back by a group of separatists, terming it absolutely unacceptable. The US has also pledged to defend the safety and security of such diplomatic facilities and the diplomats who work there.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said on Twitter the US condemns the acts of violence against the Indian Consulate in San Francisco. He further said the US is committed to the safety and security of Indian diplomats. He said the US State Department is in touch with the local law enforcement authorities.

UP POLICE TAKE ATIQ TO PRAYAGRAJ FROM GUJARAT

"As part of the procedure, all the accused are to be produced before the court on the date of the judgment and then sent back to their respective jails," the police officer said.

The Supreme Court had in April 2019 directed that the former MP from Phulpur in UP be shifted to a high-security jail in Gujarat after he was accused of orchestrating the kidnapping of a real estate businessman Mohit Jaiswal and assault on him while in jail.

He is named in more than 100 criminal cases, including the recent Umesh Pal murder case, according to police.

Among the most sensational murders in which Atiq Ahmed is allegedly involved was that of Raju Pal, the MLA of Bahujan Samaj Party who was shot dead in 2005. Umesh Pal, a key witness in this murder case, was gunned down outside his residence in Prayagraj on February 24 this year, they said.

Earlier this month, Atiq Ahmed had moved the Supreme Court for protection, claiming that he and his family were falsely implicated in the Umesh Pal murder case in Prayagraj and he may be killed in a fake encounter by the Uttar Pradesh Police.

In his plea, Ahmed said the UP police were in all likelihood seeking his transit remand and police remand to take him from Ahmedabad to Prayagraj and he "genuinely apprehends that he may be eliminated during this transit period".

Soon after stepping out of the Sabarnata central jail here before being taken to Prayagraj by the UP police, gangster-turned-politician Atiq Ahmed on Sunday expressed fear that he might be murdered. "Hatya, hatya (murder, murder)," Ahmed told reporters outside the jail.

When some reporters asked him when he was being taken to a police van whether he was feeling afraid, the former Samajwadi Party MP said, "Mujhe inka programme maloom hai... Hatya karna chahte hain (I know their programme... They want to murder me)."

‘Russia will station tactical nukes in Belarus’

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russian President Vladimir Putin announced plans on Saturday to station tactical nuclear weapons in neighbouring Belarus, a warning to the West as it steps up military support for Ukraine. Putin said the move was triggered by Britain's decision this past week to provide Ukraine with armour-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium. The Russian leader earlier made a false claim that the rounds have nuclear components.

He subsequently toned down his language, but insisted in a state television interview broadcast on Saturday night that the ammunition posed an additional danger to both troops and civilians in Ukraine.

Tactical nuclear weapons are intended for use on the battlefield, unlike more powerful, longer-range strategic nuclear weapons. Russia plans to maintain control over the ones it plans to Belarus, and construction of storage facilities for

them will be completed by July 1, Putin said.

Putin didn't say how many nuclear weapons Russia would keep in Belarus. The U.S. government believes Russia has about 2,000 tactical nuclear weapons, which include bombs that can be carried by tactical aircraft, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery rounds. In his interview, Putin argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States, noting that the U.S. has nuclear weapons based in Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

"We are doing what they have been doing for decades, stationing them in certain allied countries, preparing the launch platforms and training their crews," Putin said. "We are going to do the same thing."

Russia has stored its tactical nuclear weapons at dedicated depots on its territory, and moving part of the arsenal to a storage facility in Belarus

Ukraine seeks emergency UN meeting

AP ■ KYIV

Ukraine's government on Sunday called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to "counter the Kremlin's nuclear blackmail" after Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed plans to station tactical atomic weapons in Belarus.

One Ukrainian official said that Russia "took Belarus as a nuclear hostage". But Moscow said it was making the move in response to the West's increasing military support for Ukraine. Putin announced the plan in a television interview that aired on Saturday, saying it was triggered by a UK decision this past week to provide Ukraine with armour-piercing rounds

containing depleted uranium. Putin argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States. He noted that Washington has nuclear weapons based in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey.

"We are doing what they have been doing for decades, stationing them in certain allied countries, preparing the launch platforms and training their crews," he said.

Ukraine's Foreign Ministry condemned the move in a statement on Sunday and demanded an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council.

"Ukraine expects effective action to counter the Kremlin's

nuclear blackmail by the UK, China, the US and France, including as permanent members of the UN Security Council, which have a special responsibility to prevent threats of aggression using nuclear weapons," the statement read.

"The world must be united against someone who endangers the future of human civilisation."

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's National Security and Defence Council, tweeted on Sunday that Putin's announcement was "a step towards internal destabilisation" of Belarus that maximised "the level of negative perception and public rejection" of Russia and Putin in Belarusian society.

weapons to send a signal to the West about the readiness to use them.

Putin said Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has long asked for the nuclear weapons as a counter to NATO. Belarus shares borders with three NATO members — Latvia, Lithuania and Poland — and Russia used its territory as a staging ground to send troops into Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022.

Putin noted that Russia helped modernize Belarusian military aircraft last year to make them capable of carrying nuclear warheads. He said 10 such planes were ready to go. He said nuclear weapons also could be launched by the Iskander short-range missiles that Russia provided to Belarus last year. Belarusian opposition leader

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, who is living in exile, said the agreement to transfer the tactical nuclear weapons to Belarus "underlines the threat to regional security" from Lukashenko's regime.

Three hurt in drone blast in Ukraine

Kyiv (AP): Russian authorities said on Sunday a drone caused an explosion that injured three people in a town far from the border with Ukraine, but gave no word on the drone's origin.

The explosion occurred on Sunday afternoon in the town of Kireyevsk, in the Tula region about 300 kilometres (180 miles) from the border with Ukraine and 175 kilometres (110 miles) south of Moscow. Russia's state news agency RIA-Novosti cited local authorities as saying the explosion, which damaged some residential buildings, was caused by a drone but did not immediately give further details.

The Latvia-based Russian news outlet Meduza reported that the blast left a crater about 15 metres (50 feet) in diameter and five metres deep (16 feet). Ukraine's government on Sunday called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to "counter the Kremlin's nuclear blackmail" after Russian President Vladimir

Putin revealed plans to station tactical atomic weapons in Belarus.

One Ukrainian official said that Russia "took Belarus as a nuclear hostage". But Moscow said it was making the move in response to the West's increasing military support for Ukraine. Putin announced the plan in a television interview that aired on Saturday, saying it was triggered by a UK decision this past week to provide Ukraine with armour-piercing rounds containing depleted uranium.

Putin argued that by deploying its tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus, Russia was following the lead of the United States. He noted that Washington has nuclear weapons based in Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Turkey. "We are doing what they have been doing for decades, stationing them in certain allied countries, preparing the launch platforms and training their crews," he said.



Natalia cries at the grave of her husband and Ukrainian serviceman Andrii Neshodovski during his funeral ceremony at the cemetery in Kyiv, Ukraine, Saturday.

Nepal, US to have bilateral talks

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

The Army teams from the US and Nepal will participate in a three-day bilateral land forces' talk here starting Monday, an army statement said on Sunday.

Such talks are organised every year regularly, alternately in Nepal and the US. Last year, the talk between the two armies was organised in Hawaii, USA, according to a press release issued by the Nepal Army.

This time, the discussions will focus on four subjects -- peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance, disaster management training, and subject matter expert exchange, it said. As many as 14 officials from Nepal, including officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Finance Ministry, Ministry of Defence, and the Nepal Army will participate in the talks.

A team of 22 personnel led by Deputy Commander Major General Christopher Smit of the Pacific Command of USA has arrived in Kathmandu to participate in the talk.

Lanka, India to begin passenger ferry service

PTI ■ COLOMBO

The much-delayed passenger ferry service between Sri Lanka and India is set to start by the end of April, Civil Aviation Minister Nimal Siripala de Silva said on Sunday.

"On April 29, the ferry service between Karaikal and Kankesanthurai in port in Jaffna district would begin. Each passenger would be allowed a 100 kg baggage allowance at a very concessional rate," the minister said. De Silva said the opportunity would be open to any passenger ferry operator of both countries to run the service.

A passenger terminal is being built by the Sri Lanka Navy at Kankesanthurai.

The service would be a four-hour-long voyage, the Aviation Ministry here said.

Mid-air plane collision averted in Nepal's ky

PTI ■ KATHMANDU

A major tragedy was averted on Friday when an Air India and a Nepal Airlines aircraft came close to collision mid-air but the warning systems alerted the pilots whose timely action prevented the disaster, authorities said here on Sunday. The Civil Aviation Authority of Nepal (CAAN) has suspended three employees of the air traffic controller department for "carelessness" during duty hours, according to CAAN spokesperson Jagannath Niroula. On Friday morning, an aircraft of the Nepal Airlines coming to Kathmandu from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and an Air India plane coming to Kathmandu from New Delhi almost collided. Both aircraft were Boeing A320 with the capacity of around 150 passengers. The Air India aircraft was descending from 19,000 ft while the Nepal Airlines aircraft was flying at an altitude of 15,000 ft at the same location, Niroula

said. After it was shown on the radar that the two aircraft were in proximity, the Nepal Airlines aircraft descended to 7,000 ft, the spokesperson said.

The Civil Aviation Authority has formed a three-member probe committee to investigate the matter.

The CAAN has removed three staff of the Tribhuvan International Airport who were on duty at the time of the incident from active control position until further notice, according to a notice issued by the CAAN.

Meanwhile, the CAAN has written a letter to the Safety Department of the DGCA (Director General Civil Aviation, India) to conduct an investigation into the matter. The CAAN has also asked the Indian regulatory authority to take necessary action against the guilty and inform it, according to spokesperson Niroula. There was no immediate comment from Air India.

Sharif accuses President Alvi of following PTI diktat

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday hit back at President Arif Alvi, accusing him of being partisan and following the dictates of his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party instead of remaining neutral as the head of the state. His comments came two days after President Alvi in a letter on Friday accused the premier of using disproportionate force against politicians, political workers and journalists in recent clashes with former prime minister Imran Khan's PTI.

The president, who was a member of Khan's party before assuming the office, had also asked Sharif to direct all authorities to assist the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in holding the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elections as per the orders of the Supreme Court. In his five-page letter to President Alvi, Sharif said that he was writing to "set the record of the government straight" and bring the latter's "partisan attitude" on

record. He said Alvi's communication in parts read like "a press release of the opposition political party PTI whose one-sided, anti-government views you continue to openly espouse, notwithstanding your constitutional oath/office of President".

He said that the president on several occasions violated his oath, including the order of the dissolution of the National Assembly in April last year on direction of then prime minister Imran Khan, and also his failure to discharge his constitutional duty to give oath to Sharif on his election as the prime minister.

"Despite the foregoing and several other instances, where you actively worked towards undermining a constitutionally elected government, I have made all-out efforts to maintain a good working relationship with you. However, the contents of your letter, its tone, and language have compelled me to respond to it," he stated in the letter. Sharif said that actions by the law enforcement agencies were in accordance with the

Imran unveils Pak's revival roadmap

PTI ■ LAHORE

Pakistan's ousted prime minister Imran Khan held a massive rally here on Sunday and presented his party's 10-point roadmap for the cash-strapped country's economic recovery, including sops for the diaspora. Addressing the public rally at Minar-i-Pakistan in the early hours of Sunday, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman challenged the country's ruling party to put forward a plan to rescue Pakistan from the many crises it finds itself mired in.

"I challenge that the incumbent rulers don't have

the ability or the intention [to save the country]," he said. Khan, 70, said he would happily step aside if the establishment tells him they have a plan.

"I know what the programme is...there is no programme," he was quoted as saying by the Dawn newspaper. Announcing the 10-point programme, Khan said that overseas Pakistanis will be motivated to invest in Pakistan to attract foreign direct investments to avoid going to the IMF again and again. "We will facilitate all those who would export and bring dollars into the country," he added.

Pakistan, which is in dire need of funds as it battles a wrenching economic crisis, has received economic assistance from the IMF in the past. The country is in discussions with global lender to resume its loan programme. Khan asserted that the country needs to take difficult decisions to improve its tax collections and exports.

"A major surgery is needed to put our house in order. Overseas Pakistanis will bring their dollars to the country provided they are given incentives," he said, adding that only 2.5 million Pakistanis out of 220 million pay taxes.

complete defiance of court orders." Regrettably again, you never raised your voice or shared your concerns in the manner that you have in your letter, in the past while the PTI was in power," he said. He further stated that Alvi's reference regarding meaningful consultation between the president and prime minister was "out of place".

"Mr President, in the exercise of your functions, you must act on and in accordance with the advice of the Cabinet or the Prime Minister under clause (1) of Article 48," he wrote.

Talking about the election in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, he said that the federal government provided every support to the ECP which is an autonomous body and free to decide about election. Sharif also said that he was "fully aware" of his duties, asserting that his government was fully committed to preserving, protecting, and defending the Constitution but would not allow anyone to violate the law or create unrest.

‘Political turmoil could lead to martial law’

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) party chief Sirajul Haq has said that the tussle between the ruling coalition and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) could result in the imposition of a martial law in the country, according to a media report on Sunday. The cash-starved country is under constant political turmoil after the ouster of prime minister Imran Khan in April last year. "The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) government has become a burden on the nation," Haq was quoted as saying by the Express Tribune newspaper. Haq said that the tussle between the ruling coalition and the Pakistan opposition could result in the imposition of a martial law in Pakistan. Proposing nationwide elections, Haq condemned the government's attempts to suppress protests, saying peaceful demonstrations are the constitutional right of every political party. "The government and the Election Commission of

Pakistan (ECP) are violating the Constitution and the orders of the Supreme Court by running away from elections," he said while addressing the media on Friday in Lahore. Haq said that the caretaker Punjab government was a part of the PDM. "It seems from their (the caretaker government) statements that they will stay for a long time. I want to make it clear that this country has come into existence through a democratic process and can only be sustained through democratic action," he said, adding that unconstitutional measures should be avoided. Warning of grave consequences, he announced that he would resist those who "undermine the Constitution". Pointing out the duplicity of the ruling alliance, the JI chief said that the same parties, including the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), had been protesting against inflation before coming to power.

Hindus among healthiest, says UK census

PTI ■ LONDON

Hindus living in the UK are among the healthiest and well qualified religious groups and Sikhs are most likely to own their homes, according to latest census data for England and Wales. The UK's Office for National Statistics (ONS) has been analysing census statistics to release information across various subcategories for the country's population based on the responses of the online census conducted in March 2021. In its latest release entitled 'Religion by housing, health, employment and education' this week, the ONS finds that life outcomes for religious groups varied considerably.

"In 2021, those who identified as 'Hindu' had the highest percentage of their population reporting either 'very good' or 'good' health (87.8 per cent), compared with 82.0 per cent of the overall population," the ONS finds, adding that the Hindus also reported the "lowest prevalence of disability". "People who identified as 'Hindu' had the highest percentage with a 'Level 4 or above' [certificate-level] qualification (54.8 per cent), compared with the overall population (33.8 per cent)," it noted.

"People who identified as 'Sikh' were more likely to live in households that owned their home... 77.7 per cent of those who identified as 'Sikh' lived in households that owned their home," the ONS said. The



70.9 per cent of the overall population); this resulted from the high percentages of people who were students or looking after home or family in this group," it said.

The ONS pointed out that life outcomes for religious groups often overlap, as people in poor health or caring for others may be less able to work or gain education.

Income, where people live, and cultural background, also have an influence on outcomes.

The analysis reveals that those who identified as 'Christian' had an older age profile and reported poorer health than the overall population.

"People who identified as 'Christian' were most likely to live in households that owned their home outright (36 per cent), 8.9 percentage points higher than the overall population (27.1 per cent). This group had a median (average) age of 51 years, compared with 40 years for the overall population, suggesting that they may have had time to pay off a mortgage or loan," the ONS said.

The 2021 census survey was filled out by more than 24 million households across England and Wales and data from the survey is being published in stages by the ONS since then. According to an earlier release, people identifying as Christian fell below half the population for the first time, while those identifying as Hindu, Muslim or Sikh registered a small rise.

29 dead as boat sinks in Tunisia

AP ■ TUNISIA

Boat sinkings off the coast of Tunisia over the weekend killed at least 29 people from countries in sub-Saharan Africa who were trying make the perilous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea to Italy, the Tunisian National Guard said on Sunday.

Tunisian fishermen recovered 19 bodies, said National Guard spokesman Houssameddine Jebabli.

The Coast Guard also recovered eight bodies on Saturday night and rescued 11 survivors who had been aboard a boat that went down, he said.

Two other bodies were recovered in waters off the Tunisian port of Sfax, he said.

It wasn't immediately clear how many more people might also have been aboard boats that sank. A Tunisian NGO that tracks migration issues said five boats are believed to have foundered in the past two days off Sfax and that 67 people remain unaccounted for.

People fleeing conflict or poverty routinely take boats from Tunisian shores toward Europe, even though the central Mediterranean is the most dangerous migration route in the world, according to the International Organisation for Migration. Many are from sub-Saharan Africa.

Gallant calls govt to halt 'judicial reforms' in big jolt to Netanyahu

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant has called upon the government to stop the controversial judicial overhaul legislation that has sparked protests across the country, sticking his neck out amid Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's insistence to go ahead with the proposed "reforms". His intervention came as Israelis opposed to the changes held mass rallies across the country for the twelfth week in a row. "The security of the State of Israel is my life's mission. Over the course of my entire adult life, I have dealt with Israel's security day in and day out," Gallant, Netanyahu's close aide, said on Saturday.

He said that he still supported the need to revamp the court system, but acknowledged that "unprecedented feelings of anger, pain and disappointment have risen" within the military over the proposed changes to Israel's balance of power. The revamp includes enabling Parliament to overrule decisions made by the Supreme Court - a move that critics say will undermine the independence of the judiciary and could be used for political ends.

"Clothed in the IDF's (Israel Defence Forces) uniform, I have risked my life

dozens of times for the State of Israel. And at this time, for the sake of our country, I am willing to take any risk and pay any price," Gallant said in a televised speech. "I declare loudly and publicly, for the sake of Israel's security, for the sake of our sons and daughters - the legislative process should be stopped," he asserted, pointing to the visible diminishing morale of the Army he could sense that is endangering Israel's security and unity.

Thousands of soldiers, including those in critical divisions of the Army, had called to stop reporting for reserve duty amid the ongoing judicial overhaul process stressing that it poses a grave danger to Israel's democracy and could turn it into a dictatorship.

"I hear their voices, and I am worried. The events taking place and the issues in Israeli society do not skip the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Unprecedented feelings of anger, pain and disappointment have risen from all over," the Israeli Defence Minister said.

"I see the source of our strength eroding," Gallant warned. "The growing rift in our society is penetrating the IDF and security agencies. This poses a clear, immediate, and tangible threat to the security of the state. I will not lend my hand to this," he asserted.

Satwik-Chirag win Swiss Open title

PTI ■ BASEL

Indian men's doubles pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty capped off their impressive campaign with a title win, beating China's Ren Xiang Yu and Tan Qiang in the final of the Swiss Open Super 300 badminton tournament here on Sunday.

The second-seeded Indian pair, the 2022 World Championships bronze medalist, was solid in defence and dished out an attacking game to outwit the world No. 21 pair 21-19, 24-22 in 54 minutes.

It was the first title of the season for India with Satwik and Chirag putting to rest the disappointment of last week's All England Championships where they had exited in the second round.

Overall, it was the fifth career world tour title for the Indian pair, who had claimed the India Open and French Open last year, besides securing the Thailand Open in 2019 and Hyderabad Open in 2018. Satwik and Chirag had also won the Commonwealth Games gold in 2022.

The title run also meant India continued its love affair with the Swiss Open, with PV Sindhu (2022), Saina Nehwal



(2011, 2012), Kidambi Srikanth (2015) and HS Prannoy (2016) claiming the crown in the past.

The two pairs had contracting march to the final

with Satwik and Chirag playing three three-game matches on their way to the summit clash, while Tan and Ren didn't drop a game.

Tan had forged a world No. 10 pairing with He Jiting in 2019, winning the 2021 World Championships silver medal, while Ren had been ranked as

high as 16 with his former partner Ou Xuanyi.

Playing the Chinese pair for the first time, Satwik and Chirag turned up the heat at the right moments, displayed their attacking prowess and steely nerves to come out victorious.

A service error from Chirag was a dampener but India managed to lead 3-1 early on before the Chinese drew parity at 6-6. There was another service error for height from Satwik before the Indians entered the break with a three-point cushion.

The Indians tried to keep the rallies flat and short and it worked, as they led 15-10 and then 18-13.

However, Tan and Ren soon narrowed down the gap to 17-18.

But, a precise smash from Chirag, which bisected the court, gave India two game points. Satwik sailed one long before sealing the game with a winner to take the first advantage.

The second game was an extremely close affair as the rivals fought tooth and nail.

After trailing 2-4 early, Chirag went on the attack from the front court to draw level.

The Chinese pair kept fighting and clawed back at 8-8 with Tan finding a winner at the forecourt with a drop.

Satwik smashed one into the net before the Chinese made a service error to hand a two-point advantage to the Indians at the mid-game interval.

The Indian duo quickly extended the lead to 14-11 with Satwik producing a powerful smash. Tan and Chirag then engaged in a terrific rally but the latter went long as the Chinese kept breathing down the neck of the Indian pair.

With Satwik erring twice, China was back on level par at 16-16. In the end, a straight smash from Chirag earned India two championship points. After another exciting rally, Chirag went long to squander one opportunity.

A lucky net chord helped China draw parity at 20-20 before Tan sent one into the net to gift another match point to the Indians.

However, once again, a return bounced from the net as China saved another championship point.

Tan and Ren then grabbed a game point of their own with Chirag erring, but China lost it with a shot going into net.

Samra clinches 50m 3P bronze in shooting WC

PTI ■ BHOPAL

India's upcoming shooter Sift Kaur Samra came up with an inspired performance to clinch her second senior medal at the international level, beating a tough field to win the 50m rifle 3P bronze on the penultimate day of the ISSF Rifle/Pistol World Cup here on Sunday.

On a day when China continued their domination, with Zhang Qiongyue winning gold in the event, Samra, the reigning national champion, scored a total of 403.9 points in the ranking round to finish third, even as Zhang (414.7 points) and Czech Republic's Aneta Brabcova (411.3) entered the title round.

In the gold-medal round, Zhang defeated her Czech rival 16-8.

India are currently second on the medals table behind China with one gold, one silver and five bronze medals.

China are leading the tally with seven gold, two silver and an equal number of bronze.

On Sunday, Samra added to the bronze medal she had won



last year at the World Cup in Changwon, China.

All eyes were on world championships silver medalist in air rifle Anjum Moudgil in the preliminary round of the 3P event. But Samra was in a different zone on Sunday, shooting superb series in all three positions to emerge second best at the end of the qualification round with a score of 588.

Samra, 21, who had some of the best scores in the trials held in New Delhi ahead of the World Cup, had three awful 'standing' rounds in the ranking match, which allowed Zhang and Brabcova to race to the top.

Gauff loses out to Potapova, Rybakina rallies in Miami

AP ■ MIAMI

American Coco Gauff was knocked out of the Miami Open on Saturday after an intense three-set battle with Anastasia Potapova while Indian Wells champion Elena Rybakina earned a hard-fought comeback win against Spain's Paula Badosa.

Three-times Miami winner Victoria Azarenka fell to Poland's Magda Linette but third-seed Jessica Pegula advanced with a 6-1, 7-6 (7/0) win over fellow American Danielle Collins.

Potapova showed determination, stamina and some powerful baseline hitting as she beat South Florida-based Gauff, the world number six, 6-7 (8/10), 7-5, 6-2.

The two hour, 41 minute match in the early afternoon heat ebbed and flowed before Potapova took a firm grip in the third set.

The win was Potapova's third career victory against a top 10 opponent and her first against Gauff after two losses.



"I think I just let it go, and I started to focus on my tennis and going for my shots and not thinking what she is going to do," Potapova said of her turnaround performance.

Gauff was disappointed with a performance where she failed to find a consistent rhythm.

Potapova will play Chinese starlet Zheng Qinwen in the round of 16 after she beat 12th seed Liudmila Samsonova 5-7, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 in 3 hours and 7 minutes.

Rybakina rallied from a set down to sink Badosa 3-6, 7-5, 6-3. She extended her winning streak to 10 matches as she kept on course to claim the Miami-Indian Wells 'Sunshine Double'.

Azarenka fell in three sets to the lower-ranked Linette 7-6 (7/3), 2-6, 6-4 ending her hopes of a fourth Miami title.

Linette, who had not won a set off of Azarenka in their two prior meetings, converted five of her eight break points and will now face Pegula for a place in the quarter-finals.

Former French Open winner Jelena Ostapenko defeated 13th seed Brazilian Beatriz Haddad Maia for the fourth time in as many meetings to reach the fourth round with a 6-2, 4-6, 6-3 win.

Indian lifters bag two bronze on Day 1 of World Youth C'ships

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian weightlifters Dhanush Loganathan and Jyoshna Sabar won bronze medals in their respective categories on the opening day of the IWF World Youth Championships in Durres, Albania.

Competing in the women's 40kg event, 14-year-old Jyoshna had a combined lift of 115kg (53kg in snatch and 62kg in clean & jerk) as she came in third on Saturday night.

Jyoshna won silver in the snatch section but was sixth in the clean and jerk category in the seven-lifter field.

Dhanush, on the other hand, heaved a total weight of 200kg (88kg+112kg) to finish third behind Filipinos Prince K. Delos Santos and Eron Borres in the men's 49kg event.

The 16-year-old won a silver medal in the snatch category.

Lifters between the age of 13-17 are eligible for youth competitions.

Morocco stun Brazil for first time

AP ■ TANGIERS

Morocco stunned Brazil 2-1 in a friendly international on Saturday as the north African side recorded a first ever win over the five-time world champions.

Midfielder Sofiane Boufal, a former Southampton star, but now playing with Al Rayyan in Qatar, gave Morocco the lead after 29 minutes, scoring with a powerful turn and drive from a pass by Bilal El Khannous.

Brazil skipper Casemiro

levelled in the 67th minute when his weak shot was fumbled by goalkeeper Yassine Bounou.

But on-loan Sampdoria midfielder Abdelhamid Sabiri struck the winner with a volley in the 79th minute as Morocco showed that becoming the first Arab or African nation to reach the World Cup semi-finals last year was no fluke.

"I wouldn't say we lacked understanding, it's about putting into practice the ideas of a new coach," said



Manchester United's Casemiro. "I think we played a good game and did everything as far as possible to win."

Only 10 of the 23-man squad that took Brazil to a disappointing quarter-final exit at the World Cup made the trip to Morocco for the game.

The injured Neymar was again missing with his number 10 shirt passing to Real Madrid youngster Rodrygo.

Brazil also had a new manager in the dugout with interim coach Ramon Menezes having replaced Tite who

stepped down after the World Cup last-eight exit at the hands of Croatia.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) hopes to be able to announce the name of its new coach before the start of qualifying for the 2026 World Cup in September.

According to Brazilian media, the CBF's first choice is Carlo Ancelotti, currently in charge of Real Madrid.

However, he is not expected to make a decision on his future before the end of the European season.

LOCAL EVENTS

DONSKOY LIFTS ITF TROPHY



Evgeny Donskoy overcame Eric Vanshelboim's challenge 6-2 7-5 to win the men's singles title of UP Open ITF \$25K Men's Tournament at the Ekana Sports City on Sunday.

In the first set, Eric struggled with his backhand and made several unforced errors, while Donskoy displayed a strong variation in his game to take the first set.

Eric got some momentum in the second set and was leading the set 5-4 but lost the focus and made several unforced errors at crucial juncture to go down 7-5. This was Donskoy's second consecutive ITF \$25K title. He expressed his delight, saying, "I am thrilled to have won this tournament in Lucknow. I love coming to India and performing well."

Additional chief secretary (Sports) Navneet Sehgal handed over the trophy to the winner.

UP SHINE IN WUSHU FEDERATION CUP



Uttar Pradesh team bagged 14 medals, including six gold, six silver and 2 bronze, in the 6th Federation Wushu Cup at Lovely University in Fagwara.

RESULTS: Sanda (Men's) Gold: Avnish Yadav (52kg), Abhishek (90kg) **SILVER:** Ashish ((85kg) **BRONZE:** Nitin Chaudhary (65kg) **(Women's) GOLD:** Bulbul Chaudhary (60kg), Milan Chaprana (65kg), Shivani (75kg) **SILVER:** Mahi Rana (70kg) **Taolu (Men's) GOLD:** Visham Kashyap **SILVER:** Ayush Tyagi, Visham Kashyap, Mohit Thapa **BRONZE:** Mohit Thapa.

ARYAVRAT ACADEMY WIN



Aryavrat Academy of Hiamchal Pradesh defeated Haryana 25-22 to win the 45th National Junior Girl's Handball Championship in Bareilly on Sunday. Forest Minister Arun Kumar Saxena gave away the prizes. Former minister Santosh Gangwar, Anandeshwar Pandey, Mukesh Gupta and Deep Gupta were also present.

CYCLE RACE



Poonam Yadav won the cycle race organised by the International Sports and Martial Arts School in Indira Nagar on Sunday. Around 320 players participated in the race. Earlier, UP Kalaripayattu Association CEO Praveen Garg flagged off the race. **RESULTS:** (Senior) 1-Poonam Yadav, 2-Sandeep Verma, 3-Vivek rawat (Junior) 1-Vivek Tanwar, 2-Shaurya, 3-Rudra (Kids) 1-Sriyast Tripathi, 2-Athrav Singh, 3-Nitish Giri.

VARANASI BEAT AZAMGARH



Varanasi defeated Azamgarh 25-20, 26-24 to clinch the Under-15 boys' state-level volleyball tournament at KD Singh 'Babu' Stadium on Sunday. Following the tournament, 43 outstanding players were chosen to participate in a 15-day training camp. Based on their performance during the camp, some players will be selected for hostel.

PARA BADMINTON



Gaurav Khanna Excellia Badminton Academy bagged 51 medals in the 5th National Para Badminton Championship, concluded at Shakuntala Mishra university on Sunday.

Fuellkrug at the double as Germany sink Peru

AP ■ MAINZ

Two goals from Niclas Fuellkrug helped Germany blow away their World Cup blues with a 2-0 win in a friendly against Peru on Saturday.

Fuellkrug struck twice in the first half to give Hansi Flick's side a welcome victory in their first game since a catastrophic World Cup campaign in Qatar last year which ended with a group stage exit.

"It was all about getting a good start to the year today," said Fuellkrug.

"After what happened at the World Cup, it was important that we started well in 2023, so I'm happy we managed to do that," added Germany goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen, who deputised in place of the injured Manuel Neuer.

With his side automatical-



ly qualifying for Euro 2024 as hosts, Flick had made clear his desire to experiment with younger players in friendlies against Peru and Belgium.

The Germany coach named a squad which con-

tained five uncapped players and left out big-name stars such as Thomas Mueller, Leroy Sane and Ilkay Gundogan.

But it was 30-year-old Bundesliga journeyman Fuellkrug who made the differ-

ence as Germany eased past a toothless Peru side.

Germany dominated the first half and deserved to take the lead on 12 minutes.

Kai Havertz brought down a long ball from Nico Schlotterbeck in the box, allowing an unmarked Fuellkrug to smash in the opener from close range.

Debutant Marius Wolf fizzed a low cross into the box to set up Fuellkrug for a first-time, close-range finish to double the lead just after the half-hour mark.

Fuellkrug has now scored five goals in as many games for his country, and is well on the way to establishing himself as a regular for Germany.

"I'm getting my opportunities and I'm really happy that I'm linking up so well with the others, so let's hope it continues," he told broadcaster ZDF.

Spain make winning start in Euro qualifying

AP ■ PARIS

Spain won 3-0 against a Norway side missing the injured Erling Haaland in the opening round of Euro 2024 qualifiers on Saturday, while Wales snatched a stoppage-time equaliser to frustrate Croatia.

Dani Olmo turned in Alejandro Balde's driven low cross on 13 minutes in Malaga and Joselu scored twice on his Spain debut to give new coach Luis de la Fuente a victory in his first match in charge.

Three-time European champions Spain next go to Scotland, who saw off Cyprus 3-0 in their Group A opener after Scott McTominay scored twice late on as a substitute at Hampden Park.

Croatia, finalists and semi-finalists at the past two World Cups, conceded a last-gasp equaliser to kick off Group D as Wales debutant



Nathan Broadhead tapped home a flick-on from a long throw.

Turkey came from behind to defeat Armenia 2-1 in Yerevan.

Renato Steffen scored a first-half hat-trick as Switzerland thrashed Belarus 5-0 in a game played behind closed doors in Serbia.

Dennis Man and Denis Alibec were on target as Romania eased to a 2-0 win away to 10-man Andorra, while Israel drew 1-1 at home to Kosovo.

MI CREATE HERSTORY, WIN WPL TITLE

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A late flourish from England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt (60 not out) helped Mumbai Indians beat Delhi Capitals by seven wickets in a low-scoring summit clash to become champions of the inaugural Women's Premier League here on Sunday.

In front of a partisan crowd that filled the Brabourne Stadium here to the brim, Mumbai Indians chased down the target of 131 with three balls to spare to lift the trophy.

Opting to bat first, Delhi Capitals suffered a collapse to be reduced to 79 for 9 in 16 overs but posted a respectable total of 131 for 9, thanks to a 52-run partnership for the unbroken 10th wicket between Shikha Pandey (27 not out) and Radha Yadav (27 not out).

It was not an easy run chase for MI but they eventually crossed the line, reaching 134 for 3 in 19.3 overs, with Sciver-Brunt and captain Harmanpreet (37) playing crucial roles.

Sciver-Brunt (60 not out from 55 balls, 7x4), also the Player of the Final, struck her third fifty and finished second behind DC captain Meg Lanning (345) in run-scorers' chart in the WPL with 332 runs.

Harmanpreet (37 from 39 balls, 5x4s) and Sciver-Brunt joined forces when MI were precariously placed at 23 for 2 in

the fourth over, and combined their batting prowess to soak the pressure and add 72 runs for the third wicket.

MI needed 45 runs from the last five overs though they had eight wickets in hand then. Sciver-Brunt was 28 off 38 balls at that stage but she struck a flurry of boundaries to help her side cross the line.

In the process, Mumbai Indians recorded their second win over Delhi in three meetings this season, with their bowlers producing a stunning show in the first half.

MI made a shaky start, with Yastika Bhatia (4) hitting straight to deep midwicket for the fourth wicket of the final on a full toss, off Radha Yadav. Jess Jonassen dealt the second blow to Mumbai with Hayley Matthews (13 of 12 balls, 3x4s) chipping one straight to short midwicket.

Earlier, Shikha Pandey and Radha Yadav fought back with a counter-attacking 52-run unbeaten stand for the 10th wicket, lifting Delhi to 131 for 9.

Delhi Capitals were off to a rocky start, collapsing from 74 for 3 in the 11th over to 79 for 9 after 16, thanks to devastating show from overseas bowlers Hayley Matthews (4-2-5-3), Isabelle Wong (4-0-42-3) and Amelia Kerr (4-0-18-2).

However, the 52-run stand between Shikha (27 not out



from 17 balls) and Radha Yadav (27 not out from 12 balls) took them across the 100-mark and gave them a fighting chance.

Shikha hit three fours and one six in her knock, Radha smashed two boundaries and as

many maximums.

Earlier, Matthews, Wong and Kerr had shared a total eight wickets between them to put Mumbai in a strong position.

While the Caribbean all-rounder Matthews took her

wickets tally to 16 - highest in the tournament alongside UP Warriorz' Sophie Ecclestone - Wong and Kerr also finished at 15 wickets each.

Saika Ishaque failed to get any breakthrough and ended up

with an impressive 15 wickets too.

The final was off to a dramatic start with MI claiming the first three wickets off full-tosses from Wong.

The first two decisions were

ruled against the batters by the third umpire.

Shafali Verma (11 off 4 balls, 1x4s, 1x6s) began with a six over long-on and a four on the next ball in the second over from Wong, sliced over backward point to beat the third man.

However, the Delhi dasher was caught at point by Kerr off a full toss from the English bowler which was waist high.

Wong dealt another blow to the Delhi Capitals, again off a surprise full toss with Alice Capsey (0) failing to control her shot. The catch was completed by a stunning diving effort from Amanjot Kaur at extra cover, and left Delhi reeling at 12 for 2 in 1.5 overs.

Jemimah Rodrigues (9 off 8 balls, 2x4s) began with a superb cover drive off the first delivery she faced off Wong and brought out another drive against Sciver-Brunt in the third over. But before that, Lanning smacked two fours on the first two balls to shrug off some pressure.

But Delhi sunk further when a low full toss swinging away from the off stump from Wong, who changed the bowling ends, had Jemimah playing it straight to Hayley Matthews at point.

DC, who were 38 for 3 at the end of the powerplay, were steadied by Lanning and Kapp. At the halfway mark the Capitals were relatively safe at 68

for 3, but the worst was yet to come.

From 74 for 3 in the 11th over, Delhi Capitals collapsed to 77 for 7 after 14 overs with some poor batting and communication in the middle.

Kapp (18 off 21 balls, 2x4s), who hit her first four on the 17th ball she faced, was removed by Kerr in the 11th over with Yastika Bhatia grabbing the catch.

The South African all-rounder added 38 runs for the fourth wicket in 37 balls.

Mumbai Indians, however, made the biggest breakthrough in the 12th over when Delhi's captain and mainstay Lanning was run-out for 35.

Lanning's hesitation to run after Jess Jonassen (2) hurdled a delivery off towards Amanjot at cover cost her dearly, with Bhatia breaking the stumps.

Kerr claimed her second wicket by getting rid of Arundhati Reddy (0), and after Matthews spilled a return catch off Jonassen's bat in the 14th over, she grabbed a similar chance.

Matthews returned to cap off her best spell in the WPL, getting Minnu Mani (2) stumped to take her 15th wicket in the competition, and added one more when she got one to sneak between Taniya Bhatia's (0) bat and pads for her third wicket in the game to leave DC tottering at 79/9.

LSG paints city in IPL colours



PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Ahead of their opening match of the Indian Premier League against Delhi Capitals on April 1, Lucknow Super Giants team drenched the city in the colours of IPL excitement on Sunday. The players, riding in vintage cars, made a tour of the city. It all started from Rumi Darwaza and ended at Ambedkar Memorial Park, where cricket enthusiasts were waiting for the LSG team.

The event at Ambedkar Park started with a cricket-themed drone show. Hundreds of drones spread the magic of their art together in the sky as rapper Panther belted out the team's theme song.



Team captain KL Rahul, Krunal Pandya, Karan Sharma, Manan Vohra, Mark Wood, K Gautam, Mohsin Khan, Mayank Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi, Ayush Badoni, Avesh Khan along with coaches Andy Flower, Vijay Dahiya and Jonty Rhodes gave selfies to the fans and acknowledged them with autographs.

Patidar could miss first half of IPL, Hazlewood doubtful

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Royal Challengers Bangalore's top-order batter Rajat Patidar could miss the first half of the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) owing to a heel injury.

According to a report in ESPNcricinfo, the 29-year-old Patidar, who was one of the top performers for RCB last season,

is currently undergoing rehab at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru.

There are also "serious doubts" over Australian pacer Josh Hazlewood's participation in the tournament as he continues to recover from Achilles tendonitis, adding to the Faf du Plessis-led team's woes ahead of the league starting in less than a week's time.

The way Shubman is playing, I'll pick him ahead of myself: Dhawan

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India cricketer Shikhar Dhawan has said he would pick Shubman Gill over himself in the national side, given the young cricketer's form with the bat of late.

Gill has been in sublime form in all three formats this season, with the 23-year-old virtually securing his place in the side for the ODI World Cup in India later this year, even as Dhawan finds himself out of favour due to a dip in form.

The young cricketer's form has seen him score centuries in all three formats this year, including an ODI double ton against New Zealand and a century against Australia in the drawn fourth Test at

Ahmedabad.

Dhawan, a veteran of 167 ODI, who would still be eyeing a place in the India side for the ODI World Cup at home, said had he been the selector, he would pick Gill over himself based on current form.

"I feel the way Shubman is (playing). Like he was playing two formats and performing well in Tests and T20s. He was playing more matches in the international circuit and I wasn't... If I were the selector then definitely would have given the chance to Shubman. Would have selected Shubman over Shikhar," Dhawan told Aaj Tak.

Dhawan added that while skipper Rohit Sharma and coach Rahul Dravid had earlier backed him and told him to



South Africa chase record target in T20Is

IAN S ■ CENTURION

South Africa scripted a record run-chase in T20Is after they chased down 259 runs against West Indies in the 2nd T20I to level the series 1-1 at SuperSport Park, here on Sunday.

Johnson Charles had brought fireworks for the West Indies by striking a 39-ball century in the first innings. But Quinton De Kock smashed his maiden T20I century in the chase for South Africa in a blistering 152-run opening partnership in little more than 10 overs to set the base for South Africa completing the highest ever successful run chase in T20Is with seven balls to spare.

Racking up 102 in the first six overs in the run-chase, the highest score by any team in the Powerplay in T20Is, de Kock and Reeza Hendricks kickstarted South Africa's innings in style.



The opening stand of 152 came off just 10.5 overs as South Africa suddenly turned into favourites to win the game. De Kock then fell for 100 off 44 balls, hitting nine

fours and eight sixes at a strike-rate of 227.27.

While the visitors made a comeback of sorts by dismissing Rilee Rossouw, Hendricks and David Miller in

fairly quick succession, skipper Aiden Markram continued the carnage to lead his side to a memorable win, remaining unbeaten on 38 off just 21 balls as a whopping 517 runs were aggregated from the match.

With this, South Africa now hold the record for the highest successful run-chase in both ODIs and T20Is.

The previous record for the highest successful run-chase in T20Is was held by Bulgaria against Serbia in 2022, when the former chased down 243 in 19.4 overs.

Earlier, Charles broke the record of Chris Gayle when he slammed the fastest T20I hundred by a West Indies batter in men's T20Is in the first innings. Coming in early, Charles hit 10 fours and 11 sixes in his innings at a strike-rate of 256.52. He was eventually cleaned up at 118 by a Marco Jansen yorker.

Batting with Virat was just fantastic: Gayle

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Swashbuckling West Indian batter Chris Gayle praised Indian batting maestro Virat Kohli for his work ethic and passion, and recalled the intense competition between the two during their heyday at Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Both Gayle and Kohli spent several seasons together at the IPL, dominating the rival bowlers and entertaining the crowd at their home base, Chinnaswamy Stadium, with as many as 10 century partnerships. "Batting with Virat was just fantastic. I like the passion he has for the game. I like his passion and his work ethic, it's fantastic. You have to give him credit for that and he wants to show it with his performances," Gayle said.

"Sharing a dressing room with Virat and the other guys, once I am there, I am always jovial and having a lot of fun, dancing and everything like that," said Gayle.

"I'd show them a few moves and realise Virat's got the skills. He can move, you know. But if it's an Indian dance, Chris Gayle will win. If it's a Caribbean dance, Chris Gayle will win!"

Their relationship was strong but the pair could also be competitive with each other. Gayle narrated a story about Kohli's reaction to the former earning the Orange Cap from him during a season.

"One thing I remember, just to go back a bit, I remember Virat was the Orange Cap holder one particular season. I was getting runs but he was more of the guy at the time scoring a lot of runs.

Nikhat wants to send her parents to perform Umrah with WC money

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Contrary to her earlier plans of buying a Mercedes, newly-crowned two-time World Champion Nikhat Zareen now wants to send her parents to perform 'Umrah' with the prize money.

Nikhat won her second world championship title with a 5-0 win over Nguyen Thi Tam of Vietnam here on Sunday.

With the title she also received USD 100,000 winner's cheque and 'Thar' car gifted by sponsors Mahindra.

She had earlier said she would buy a Mercedes car with the prize money.

"I haven't thought about it. Last time I said I will get a Mercedes but since I have got a Thar as a gift so now I'm thinking of not getting a Mercedes.

"I want to send my parents

for Umrah because Ramadan is going on. I will talk to them about this at home," Nikhat, who belongs to a Nizamabad-based Muslim family, told reporters hours after her bout.

'Umrah' is a minor pilgrimage to the twin Muslim holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

A believer in thinking positively, Nikhat said she manifest her two world titles and Commonwealth Games title.

"Everyone has a success mantra. I visualise things. I like to think positive. I have written 'champion' and drew a gold medal on a sticky note and pasted it on my bed.

"Every day when I wake up I see that, when I go to sleep I see that. It motivates me to do well. I did that for the last world championships, the CWG and this time too."

Nikhat has already quali-

fied for the Asian Games, which is also an Olympic qualifier later this month.

"My next target is Asian Games which is a qualifier. I hope to qualify for Paris Olympics."

Lovlina breaks bronze medal jinx

As the referee raised Lovlina Borgohain's hand, the Olympic medallist Assam boxer let out a scream, pent-up emotions finally getting the better of her.

She finally won her maiden World Championships gold after two bronze medals, in her fourth attempt.

After her semifinal win over China's Li Qian, Lovlina had broken her 'bronze medal jinx'. And what better shade of the medal than gold to change the bronze to.

The 25-year-old has won three bronze medals at mar-

quee events, including two at the World Championships and one at the Tokyo Olympics.

"I am happy to win the gold and make India proud," a relieved Lovlina said after her final bout.

"I had two bronze in Worlds and one in the Olympics. Worked really hard to change the colour. I am ecstatic to have changed the colour," she said.

"Ups and downs are part of life, but I took these as opportunities and worked hard and I have gold today."

It was also a redemption of sorts after a string of underwhelming performances after the Olympic medal.

Lovlina has had a roller coaster of a year and a half. The Assam boxer, who prefers to keep a low profile, was pushed to the spotlight ever since she won the bronze at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021.



She had afterwards admitted that she lost focus due the endless felicitations and other commitments outside the boxing ring, which affected her performance. She made an early exit from the last edition of championships in 2022.

Lovlina was at the centre of controversy at the 2022 Commonwealth Games as she alleged that her preparations were getting affected due to the "continuous harassment" of her coaches.

Her personal coach Sandhya Gurung, whom she credits for pulling her out of a difficult mental situation before the Tokyo Olympics, was not allowed to enter the Games Village since she did not have an accreditation.

In the end, Gurung was given an accreditation and also allotted a room in the Games Village. But the result was the same as the World

Championship -- an early exit.

Lovlina then bulked herself up from 69kg to 75kg, which became an Olympic category. She has put in the hard yards to adapt to her new weight class, improving her power punches. And the Assam boxer has been reaping the rewards.

She won the National Games, the Asian Championships and the National Championships before winning gold at the Worlds, her first big medal since the Olympics.

Brought up at Baro Mukhia village of Assam's Golaghat district, Lovlina started out as a kickboxer, following the footsteps of her two elder sisters -- Licha and Lima -- before Sports Authority of India coach Padum Boro, while scouting for talent in Assam's Golaghat district, noticed her.