

CITY 3
ATIQ AHMAD BROUGHT
TO NAINI JAIL**OPINION 6**
DISQUALIFICATION AND
AFTERMATH**WORLD 10**
CHINA SILENT ON REPORTS OF
SKIPPING G20 MEET IN ARUNACHAL

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY MARCH 28, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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BY TOTTENHAM
HOTSPUR
11 SPORT

SC OK's UP urban local body elections

UP panel report on OBC quota accepted

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday paved the way for holding the urban local body polls in Uttar Pradesh as it allowed the State Election Commission to issue a notification in this regard in two days with an OBC quota in terms of a report of the Uttar Pradesh Backward Classes Commission.

A bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and Justices PS Narasimha and JB Pardiwala said, "This court, in an order dated January 4, 2023, noted that in view of the decisions of this court, the government of Uttar Pradesh issued a notification for setting up the Uttar Pradesh Backward Classes Commission in December 2022. Though the tenure of the commission was six months, it was to complete its task by March 31, 2023."

It further said, "The solicitor general informs that the report has been submitted on March 9, 2023 to the cabinet. The process of notifying the local body elections is going on and will be done in two days. The plea is disposed of. The direction in this order is not to be used as precedent."

On January 4, the top court stayed an Allahabad High

Yogi welcomes SC order

Lucknow (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has welcomed the Supreme Court order allowing the state government's petition for accepting the OBC commission report and allowing the urban local bodies' elections along with reservation of seats for the Other Backward Classes.

The apex court on Monday allowed the UP government's petition on municipal elections and reservations for the OBCs. The notification for the elections is likely to be issued in the next 48 hours.

"We welcome the Supreme Court order accepting the report of the OBC commission and holding the elections of the urban local bodies in the state with reservations of seats for the OBCs."

"The state government is committed to holding these polls within the time frame set by the Supreme Court," the chief minister tweeted.

Court order directing the holding of the urban local body polls without any reservation for the Other Backward Classes (OBCs).

It had also ordered that the panel appointed by the state government to decide on issues related to the grant of the OBC quota for the local body polls will have to conclude its exercise within three months (by March 31), instead of six months as stipulated earlier.

The top court had taken note of the submissions made by Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who appeared in the matter on behalf of the state government, that one of the directions issued by the high court with regard to the functioning of the local bodies under administrators after the expiry of the terms of the elected representatives can be allowed to operate.

The top court allowed the state government to appoint administrators to run the affairs of the local bodies after the expiry of the terms of the elected representatives, but said they will not be empowered to take major policy decisions. "The high court by impugned judgment dated ... has directed (to hold the elections without the OBC reservation)..."

Continued on Page 9

Rahul unites 18 Opp parties; chinks in MVA over Savarkar

Uddhav asks Rahul to refrain from 'insulting' Savarkar; Opp leaders in black robes protest in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha last week has brought under one umbrella 18 Opposition parties whose leaders attended a strategy meeting late on Monday evening at Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's residence. Former Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Rahul too were present in the meeting.

However, Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) leader Sanjay Raut said the party did not attend the meeting at Kharge's residence in protest against Rahul's "unacceptable" remarks against VD Savarkar.

The Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray) said Rahul's attack on freedom fighter VD Savarkar will lead to ebbing of sympathy he has gained due to his disqualification as a Lok Sabha member.

An editorial in party mouthpiece "Saamana" said



Opposition MPs, wearing black over the disqualification of Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha, protest over the Adani Group issue at Parliament House complex, in New Delhi on Monday

Ranjan Dimrill Pioneer

the truth, which Rahul is fighting for today, will not win by making defamatory statements against Savarkar.

At a rally on Sunday, Uddhav Thackeray said he considers Savarkar as his "idol", and asked Rahul to refrain from "insulting" him.

Leaders of TMC, AAP and BRS attended the meeting. The TMC, which has so far stayed away from the Opposition's protests, joined the sit-in at Vijay Chowk in the morning.

TMC supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee will hold a dharna in Kolkata. BRS, earlier known as TRS, too expressed their solidarity with the Opposition

which has so far been making attempts for a third front of its kind eyeing TMC, DMK, Shiv Sena, JD(U) on its side.

To keep up its charge against the Government, the Congress has decided to hold Press conferences across the country on March 28 and 29.

"Senior Congress leaders will address Press conferences in 35 cities on March 28 and 29 on 'Democracy Disqualified'. Among other issues, the reality of 'Modani' and the Modi Government's clean chit to Nirav Modi and Lalit Modi will also be highlighted," party general secretary Jairam Ramesh said.

Continued on Page 9

Rahul asked to vacate house; Cong insulting judiciary, alleges BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Housing Committee of the Lok Sabha on Monday served a notice on Rahul Gandhi, asking the disqualified Member of Parliament to vacate the Government bungalow allotted to him by April 22, official sources said on Monday.

Rahul, who enjoys Z-plus security, has been living in the 12 Tughlaq Lane bungalow in the heart of Lutyens' Delhi since 2005. The Housing Committee of the Lok Sabha, headed by BJP MP CR Patil, comprises 11 members from different parties.

Meanwhile, the BJP launched a multi-pronged attack on the Congress, Rahul and Priyanka Vadra, accusing them of being "arrogant" and "disrespectful" to the judiciary.

Commerce Minister and senior BJP leader Piyush Goyal asked the Congress MPs whether they came to attend the Parliament session dressed



in black and staged protests to insult the "temple of democracy" and the country's law and order to justify Gandhi's remarks against the Other Backward Classes (OBCs). "Was it a protest against the court that convicted Rahul Gandhi or against the Supreme Court which ruled that anyone sentenced to two years (in jail) becomes disqualified (from Parliament or a state Assembly) automatically?"

Information & Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur hit out at Priyanka, saying it was out of "arrogance" that she compared the Gandhi family with the dynasty of Lord Ram.

Continued on Page 9

Block Amritpal's escape, arrest him: India to Nepal

Fugitive radical leader is likely to be hiding in Himalayan nation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE /
AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI /
KATHMANDU

As Amritpal Singh continues to escape the police dragnet, India has requested the Nepal Government not to allow the fugitive radical leader, believed to be hiding there, to flee to a third country and arrest him if he escapes using Indian passport or any other fake passport.

In a letter sent to the Department of Consular Services on Saturday, the Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has requested the Government agencies to arrest Singh if he tries to flee from Nepal, the Kathmandu Post newspaper reported on Monday.

"Singh is currently hiding

in Nepal," the paper said, citing a copy of the letter obtained by it. "The esteemed Ministry is requested to inform the Department of Immigration not to permit Amritpal Singh flee Nepal for any third country and arrest him if he attempts to escape using Indian Passport or any other fake passport under intimation to this mission," it said.

The letter and Singh's personal details have been circu-

lated to all the concerned agencies from hotels to airlines, the paper said, citing multiple sources.

Singh, who is said to be possessing multiple passports with different identities, has been on the run since March 18 when the police launched a crackdown against him. The elusive preacher gave the police the slip and escaped their dragnet when his cavalcade was intercepted in Punjab's Jalandhar district.

Meanwhile, Nepal, on Monday, put fugitive radical preacher Amritpal Singh on its surveillance list after India's request.

The Department of Immigration has put Singh on its surveillance list following a request from the Indian Embassy here, officials said.

"We have received a written note along with a copy of his passport from the (Indian) embassy suspecting that Amritpal Singh might have entered Nepal," said Kamal Prasad Pandey, the Information Officer at the Department.

K-supporters in Canada burn Tricolour

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE /
AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI /
TORONTO

Stepping up their protests, Salleged Khalistan supporters have burnt the Indian flag outside its consulate in Toronto and came close to the boundary wall of the Indian embassy in Ottawa. More protests are expected in the coming days causing concern about security of the Indian diplomats there. Another protest was held outside the Indian consulate late Sunday in Vancouver. The protesters late on Saturday staged a demonstration in front of the consulate in Toronto and the Tricolour was burnt with several in the gathering shouting "Khalistan Zindabad" in the presence of local police, reports said.

Two days earlier, on Thursday, protesters from Montreal and the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) gathered outside the High Commission in Ottawa.

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CAPSULE

TN IPS OFFICER SHUNTED OVER TORTURE CHARGES

Tirunelveli: An IPS officer in Tirunelveli District of Tamil Nadu has been placed on compulsory wait for torturing at least 10 arrested men by removing their teeth using cutting pliers and crushed the testicles of two.

SVB TO BE ACQUIRED BY FIRST CITIZENS

New York: First Citizens will acquire much of Silicon Valley Bank, the tech-focused financial institution that collapsed this month, setting off a chain reaction that caused a second bank to fail and tested faith in the global banking sector.

PAK POLICE DEMOLISH AHMADI WORSHIP PLACE

Lahore: Police in Pakistan's Punjab province demolished minarets of a 70-year-old worship place of minority Ahmadi community allegedly on the pressure of radical clerics, a spokesman for the minority community said on Monday.

Cheetah dies 6 months after translocation from Namibia

PNS ■ BHOPAL

One of the eight cheetahs translocated from Namibia in mid-September last year died of kidney failure at Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh on Monday. The death of the more than four-and-a-half-year old female feline Sasha is being seen as a setback to Project Cheetah, aimed at reviving the population of the world's fastest land animal in India, seven decades after they became extinct.

Sasha was suffering from a kidney ailment even before her translocation from Namibia, said Principal Chief Conservator of Forest (PCCF-Wildlife) JS Chauhan.

"A monitoring team found Sasha lazy on March 22, following which they decided to take her to a quarantine enclosure for treatment," he said. Her blood sample was col-



File photo of Sasha

lected the same day and examined. A wildlife expert armed with a portable ultrasound machine went inside the KNP to examine the ailing cheetah and it was found that Sasha's kidneys were infected, said Chauhan.

Later, senior Wildlife Institute of India (WII) scientists and KNP management contacted the Cheetah Conservation Fund, Namibia, to know the treatment history of Sasha.

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LIC/P1/2022-23/14/Eng

CM reviews Covid, influenza situation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Asserting that novel coronavirus infection was under control in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath issued instructions to officials to increase tests, make dedicated hospitals in every district, and provide immediate treatment to influenza and COVID-19 patients.

In a high-level meeting with the officials on Monday, the chief minister evaluated ground level preparations and status of the vaccination campaign. He also enquired about new variants of novel coronavirus and that of influenza virus.

In the last seven days, 2.20 lakh tests were conducted and 265 novel coronavirus positive patients were found. There are currently 262 active COVID-19 cases in the state and all of them are recovering at home. The maximum number of cases have been found in Lucknow, Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar.

Officers informed the chief minister that the condition of all the people found positive in a school in Lakhimpur was fine and they had been quarantined.

"In the upcoming days, the volume of people entering temples and other religious



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath presides over a Covid and influenza review meeting in Lucknow on Monday

buildings will rise. The infection may spread in this circumstance. In such a situation, elderly people and people with serious illnesses should make every effort to limit their movement in crowded areas. In case they go out, they should wear a mask. People should be made aware of this. People should be made aware through the public address system," the chief minister said.

The chief minister said

that all resources were available in UP to prevent COVID-19. He said Covid dedicated hospitals should be identified in all 75 districts; all the oxygen plants set up last year should be functional; ventilators provided to hospitals should be active and paramedical staff should be deployed.

"Suspected patients of influenza should be monitored along with COVID-19. Test preparations by conduct-

ing mock drills in hospitals across the state on April 11 and 12," the chief minister said.

"Every year in April, July, and October a special campaign is conducted with inter-departmental coordination for effective control of communicable diseases. Its new phase is starting from April 1 this year," the chief minister said, adding that making the campaign effective was a collective responsibility. "Along with gov-

ernment efforts, public participation is also important," he said.

"Concerted efforts should be made for sanitation and health security with inter-departmental coordination by Medical and Health, Medical Education, Rural Development, Urban Development, Women and Child Development, Agriculture, and Basic and Secondary Education depart-

ments. Ministers will be present in the districts during the campaign and will participate in various programmes with the general public. Cleanliness campaign should be started by Panchayati Raj and Urban Development departments through public cooperation," he said.

The chief minister also gave directions on 'School Chalo Abhiyan' starting from April 1 this year. "Like the communicable disease campaign, the participation of all public representatives including MPs, MLAs, zila/kshetra panchayat members and gram pradhans should be ensured in this School Chalo campaign," he said.

The chief minister said programmes like Swamitva, Gharauni, and Varasat had achieved success in providing great convenience to the general public. He said their updated status should be reviewed. "So far more than 60 lakh villagers have been provided houses. Drone survey work has also been completed. Our target should be that by the end of this year all the eligible villagers get 'gharauni' certificates, giving them ownership rights of their houses," he said. He also gave directions on easing traffic on the road.

Most Covid cases detected in city asymptomatic

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Covid-19 cases detected in Lucknow have largely been asymptomatic. According to a senior official from the CMO office, these patients have been diagnosed through random sampling in hospital OPDs. "Once we come to know about a Covid case, we ask the patients to go for self-isolation," he said. He further said that no case was detected in the district on Monday and that the total number of Covid cases was 26.

Organized Medicine Academic Guild secretary Dr Ishwar Gilada said the Covid cases have seen an increase in the country in the past weeks. "In the last 27 days, the cases have increased ten-fold, and the country recorded the highest number of cases (1,700) on Sunday. Most of the cases are Omicron-2 and 20 per cent are Omicron XxB 1.16, which is prevalent in the USA. Currently, there is no need for oxygen or ventilator. As many as 25 patients have died in the last two weeks. So long as deaths don't increase, there is

not much cause to worry. However, the Central government feels that there should be preparedness since in some places such as Mumbai, there has been an increase in hospitalisation," he said.

"People should mask up and those above 60 years must take their second dose of booster shot," he said. He pointed out that immunity through vaccination and infection was waning. "XXB 1.16 is evading immunity and even if you have taken the vaccine, it will not help. The vaccines were for the previous variants and not for the current variants and sub-variants. We need to be watchful and not panic," he added.

"Preparedness is important as we have seen how coronavirus multiplies in a short period of time. In India, 100 cases a day have gone up to 1,700 cases a day in a month, and what is required is genome sequencing irrespective of whether the cases are symptomatic or not, whether hospitalisation is required or not, and whether or not the vaccines will work on the new variants and sub-variants," he added.



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NOTICE

I, Army No-14655188N, Rank-Sep, Sushil Kumar Dixit R/o Village and Post Pokhari Teh Bighapur Dist. Unnao. Declare that by mistake name of my son Priyansu Dixit is registered in my EME Record's office which is wrong. His correct name is Priyanshu Dixit. He will be known as Priyanshu Dixit for all future purpose.

Man booked for 'misleading' tweet about govt scheme

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A Twitter user was accused of posting misleading information about the 'Make in UP' and 'Make in India' projects, denting the image of the state government and Basic Education department against which the tweet was directed at.

Senior manager (hardware) and incharge (accounts) of ICT and Digital Initiative Program for Monitoring Rahul Purwar lodged a complaint, alleging that Manish Pandey, whose Twitter handle is @ManishPandeyLKW, misled his followers for unlawful gain.

"A global tender was advertised on GeM portal for setting up 18,381 smart classes and supply of material on the instructions of the Basic Education department under

ICT and Digital Initiative Programme for Monitoring," he stated in the complaint.

The advertisement was published on February 6 and the last date for submitting the application is March 30.

"On March 22, the accused posted tweeted that the Basic Education department was floating a tender worth Rs 500 crore and it was going to purchase interactive panels for 18,000 smart classes. He further wrote that what was use of Make in UP and Make in India as it was a global tender," the complainant stated.

"The accused tweeted that the bidders had not been asked to submit their annual turnover. The Twitter user posted misleading information without knowing the facts. The department had asked

for turnover from the bidders and the condition of having domestic manufacturing facilities was mandatory. Besides, MII guidelines had also been implemented," the complainant said. A case was registered in this connection.

STUDENT DROWNS

A class IX student drowned in a pond in Mohanlalganj on Monday afternoon. Reports said Anand Dhiman (15) of Dhanwara village in Mohanlalganj had gone to the pond to take a dip.

His brother Amit said Anand started drowning and other children present near it raised an alarm. A huge number of villagers rushed to the pond to rescue him. He was pronounced dead.

Ex-friend booked for abetment after man commits suicide

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A case of abetment to suicide was registered against a former friend of the deceased and his present close friend in connection of his suicide in Ghazipur police station area on Monday.

The deceased, Mayank Awasthi aka Shashank of Barabanki worked in Lucknow and was staying at a house in sector D of Indira Nagar for the last 4 years. His brother Raj Awasthi said Mayank was in friendship with one Nidhi Verma, who is also a resident of Barabanki for the last 8-10 years. "Mayank had told me on a number of times that Nidhi used to play harassing tactics with him and exploited him mentally, monetarily and physically in connivance with her friends," Raj alleged.

He said Mayank later became very close to one Anshu Singh of Aliganj. "In the night of March 22,



A n s h u phoned me a n d informed me that Mayank was not opening the doors of the room he was residing on rent. I reached the room and found Mayank hanging from the ceiling under mysterious circumstances," Raj said. He said he had phoned Mayank on March 21 but calls remained unanswered. "I then called Anshu who informed me that Mayank was resting in his (Mayank's) room," he said.

The father of the deceased lodged a complaint in this connection.

THEFT

A case of theft was registered a week after it took place at a house in Sushant Golf City police station area on Monday. Report said the house owner Preeti Lata Singh of sector 3 B had gone to take her child from a school locking the house. When she returned home, she found the house burgled. "The thieves made off with gold and silver ornaments and also ornaments studded with diamonds," she said. The police registered a case in this connection.

In another incident, thieves made off with household articles and wire of worth Rs 75,000 from a newly constructed three storeyed house at Jarhara road in Indira Nagar in the intervening night of March 24/25. The police registered a case in this connection.

One held over SBSP MLA Ansari, wife's meeting inside jail

Chitrakoot (PTI): A man was arrested in connection with the meeting of SBSP MLA Abbas Ansari and his wife inside a jail here, police said on Monday. Shahbaz Alam was nabbed from Varanasi, they said, adding it was the 10th arrest in the case. Abbas Ansari, the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) MLA from Mau and son of jailed gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, has been in prison for the past three months in a money laundering case. DIG, Chitrakoot Dham range, Vipin Kumar Mishra and Superintendent of Police, Chitrakoot, Vrinda Shukla told reporters that Alam was arrested on Sunday in connection with the meeting of Abbas Ansari and his wife Nikhat Bano in Chitrakoot jail.

Police said Alam was working at the office of a chartered accountant and on the instructions of Ansari, he had transferred about Rs 2

lakh to the account of Navneet Sachan, the contractor of the jail canteen.

During the probe, it came to light that Alam had created two bank accounts in the name of Roshni Bano and Ashaf Shah, and he did a transaction of Rs 92 lakh from one account and Rs 87 lakh from another account in the last six months. Police said that both these accounts have been frozen, adding they will also take the help of the Income Tax Department and the Enforcement Directorate in this regard. Police officials said that such a huge transaction confirms the earning from illegal sources. On February 10, District Magistrate of Chitrakoot Abhishek Anand and Superintendent of Police Vrinda Shukla had raided the Chitrakoot district jail on getting information about the meeting of Ansari and his wife as well as his driver Niyaz in contravention of rules.

Over 100 surgeries performed at RMLIMS under govt scheme

Lucknow (PNS): Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences has conducted over 100 surgeries under the Rashtriya Bal Suraksha scheme. Paediatric surgeon Dr Srikesht Singh said it is the nodal hospital in the city for the scheme which deals with the treatment of children with congenital defects. The scheme is only for neonates.

He said surgeries in the paediatric surgery department have increased after it was shifted back to the hospital from Shaheed Path.

"It has been a year since the department has been shifted back, and we are doing all

sorts of surgeries; from neonates to 15 year olds and from head to toe. We have also started laparoscopy. We have a full-fledged modular OT and we are performing around 25-30 surgeries per week," he said.

Dr Singh said the scheme was started in November last year, treatment under which is carried out for congenital defects of heart, brain and spinal chord. It is the only hospital in the city as, probably in the state too, to be working under this scheme," he said, adding they are carrying out 4-5 surgeries per week.

"The government is pay-

ing around Rs 35,000 per surgery under the scheme, and it is sufficient in a government set-up like ours, and makes a huge difference. These congenital defects cause several issues such as problems in the limb and bladder, and most of the parents doubt if it is wise to spend so much as they belong to a humble back. The initiative of the government and our aim is to counsel these parents that children like these have gone up to become doctors, IAS officers and engineers. Motivation is a big factor, and this scheme will go on to be a great help for these children," Dr Singh said.

CITYBRIEFS

FELLOWSHIP

CSIR-CDRI scientist Dr Rajesh Jha has been conferred the prestigious 'International Fellowship for Young Biomedical Scientist 2022'. His research group is working on biology and management of gynaecological endocrine and metabolic disorders such as endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS). These disorders are routinely observed in nearly 10% infertile women visiting the gynaecological clinics. The group is studying the disturbed endocrine, hormone associated molecular signaling in the ovary and uterus for the disorders management and a successful pregnancy.

CME HELD

An inter-command continued medical education (CME) conference on "Technology and surgical practice: Boon or bane?" was conducted by the department of surgery, Central Command Hospital in Lucknow, on March 25

and 26. It was conducted by the surgical division of the hospital. The opening address was delivered by Lt Gen Vivek Kashyap, Chief of Staff, Central Command. It was followed by the keynote address by Lt Gen Bipin Puri, Vice-Chancellor of KGMU. A series of lectures by specialists in general surgery, paediatric surgery, neuro surgery, vascular surgery, etc were held in two days. The event also included an online quiz in which general surgery residents from various medical colleges participated.

INSTRUCTIONS

Lucknow University Vice-Chancellor Prof AK Rai has issued instructions to all the departments to start preparing for even semester classes of the session 2022-23 on time. Along with the classes for this session, the admission process for 2023-24 session has also been started. Registrar Sanjay Medhavi has sent a letter to all the departments, asking for

the preparations and arrangements to be made regarding time table, lab, industrial tour, field trip, etc for even semester studies. Details have been sought by March 31.

MEETING

A meeting regarding preparation for the IPL matches to be played in Lucknow was held by District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar at the Collectorate Auditorium on Monday. ADM (Administration) Vipin Kumar Mishra and other officials concerned were present in the meeting. The DM said the road adjacent to the Ekana stadium should be levelled. The DM directed the health officials to arrange for an ambulance, appoint doctors and keep the medical facilities functional. He also directed the Lucknow Municipal Corporation to make arrangements for cleanliness, fogging, mobile toilets, sprinkling of water, drinking

'Eat Right Millets' Mela kicks off today

Lucknow (PNS): The 'Eat Right Millets' Mela, organised by the Food Safety and Drug Administration will kick off at the Gomti Riverfront on Tuesday with a walkathon from Samta Moolak crossing to Ambedkar crossing and right up to the mela venue. The fair will be inaugurated by Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak. In the context of the United Nations General Assembly declaring 2023 as the 'International Year of Millets' (IYOM) 2023, the main objective of the fair is to ensure participation of all ministries and departments to popularise and encourage the use of millets among the general public. It will be done at the fair on March 28 and 29. The

Food Safety and Drug Administration has been organising this fair and food carnival in the past. Officials said that special stalls of various millets products like kodo, sawa, bajri, jowar, bajra, ragi, kuttu, etc should be set up in the fair and through competition, curiosity should be generated among people about the recipes of these food items.

"On March 29, yoga, aerobics, zumba, etc will be organised. The chief medical officer will organise a free health camp during the fair. Only hygienic food items will be sold in the fair," an official said. He said boost would also be given to RUCO re-purposed used cooking oil scheme to convert burnt oil into biodiesel.

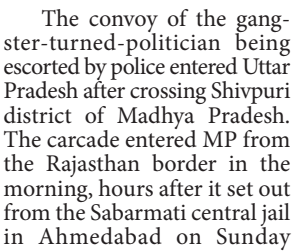
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Civil Lines, Kanpur
आवश्यकता- असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर
दयानन्द गर्ल्स कॉलेज, कानपुर में शासन की स्व-वित्त पोषित योजना के तहत स्नातक स्तर पर संचालित B.Sc.-Physics & Math पाठ्यक्रमों में असिस्टेंट प्रोफेसर पद हेतु अर्ह अभ्यर्थी, कार्यालय से आवेदन पत्र प्राप्त कर दिनांक 10 अप्रैल 2023 तक आवेदन करें। शैक्षिक अर्हता, वेतन एवं सेवा शर्तें शासन द्वारा जारी शासनादेशों के प्राविधानों के तहत होंगी। अन्य जानकारों के लिए कार्यालय से सम्पर्क करें।
सचिव-प्रबंध समिति

PUBLIC NOTICE
The site admeasuring 4.31 acres, Comprising G/L Sy.No 251, Lucknow Cantonment is held on Lease in Schedule X of Cantonment Land Administrative Rule, 1937 and is recorded in the name of Shri Radhey Shyam, Shri Mahabir, Shri Vishwa Nath, Tejpal and Shri Raghubar Dayal as holder of occupancy rights. As per entries made in General Land Register maintained under Rule 10 of Cantonment Land Administration Rules, 1937, the Land Lord of Land in question is Government of India and falls under the management of Defence Estates Officer, Lucknow Circle. The premise in question is described as 'building and cultivation'. Shri Suresh Kumar, Umashankar Yadav, Rakesh Kumar Yadav, Shri Sandeep Yadav, Shri Brijesh Yadav, Shri Muralilal Yadav, Shri Raj Kumar Yadav, Shri Sunil Kumar Yadav, Shri Anil Kumar, Shri Amit Yadav, Shri Ankit Yadav, Shri Vijay Singh and Shri Sudhir Yadav requested vide letter dated 06.02.2023 to mutate in their favour on the basis of required documents i.e. death certificate, affidavit, undertaking, Legal heir certificate and others. Any person claiming to have any right or interest in the above-mentioned bungalow and having any objection to the above said mutation in their favour, may file his written objection to the undersigned alongwith supporting documents within 30 days from the publication of this notice. The objection received after expiry of 30 days from the publication will not be considered.
Defence Estates Officer,
Lucknow Circle, Lucknow Cantt.
(Vikash Kumar, I.D.E.S.)
File No. L-7/29/IV
Dated: 21 March, 2023

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Additional CCTV cameras have been installed in the cell for round-the-clock watch on the gangster, and the surveillance is being monitored by the top brass of jail administration.



evening. The convoy halted briefly at Kharai in Shivpuri district at around 7 am on Monday to enable Atiq Ahmed to attend nature's call. The convoy left Shivpuri district after a brief halt and entered Jhansi district of UP at around 9 am, officials said.

When Atiq Ahmed, wear-

Earlier, on its way to Prayagraj on Monday morning, a vehicle in the convoy carrying Atiq Ahmed hit a cow in Shivpuri district. A video of the incident which occurred at around 6:25 am shows a cow darting towards the road when it was hit by the vehicle carrying Atiq Ahmed. The cow fell near the road divider. After the incident, the vehicle stopped for a while before resuming the onward journey. According to eyewitnesses, the cow got up after a while and went away.

He has been brought to Prayagraj in compliance with the court's orders, Police Commissioner Ramit Sharma said. Atiq Ahmed, a former Samajwadi Party MP from Phulpur, was shifted to the Sabarmati central jail in Gujarat in June 2019 following a Supreme Court order after he was accused of orchestrating the kidnapping and assault on real estate businessman Mohit Jaiswal while in prison in Uttar Pradesh. He is named in more than 100 criminal cases, including the recent Umesh Pal murder case, according to the police. Atiq Ahmad's younger brother Khalid Azeem aka Ashraf was also brought to Prayagraj from Bareilly jail by a separate police team under tight security.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath flagging off motorcycles and scooters provided to the Forest department by Hero Motocorp Ltd from its CSR fund

PNS ■ **LUCKNOW**

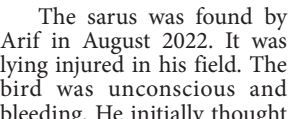
Sources said that the government was still looking whether Chauhan could get extension as DGP hence so far

Mukul Goel, an IPS officer of 1987 batch, is the senior most IPS officer in the state and is to retire in February next

sends a panel of three officers then besides Anand Kumar, the names of Vijay Kumar, an IPS officer of 1988 batch (to retire in January next year) and Safiq Hassan Rizvi, an IPS officer of 1989 batch (to retire in January 2026) will be included. Out of these three officers, Anand Kumar and Vijay Kumar, are seen as closest to the government.

PNS **LUCKNOW**

"It is the tradition of our country to respect those who save any life. Those who set an example of love are appreciated in this country but what is the idea of the UP government in serving a notice on the man who saved the life of a crane and kept it as a friend," Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi said while attacking the state government. "This injustice towards sensitivity is not right at all," she added.



PNS **LUCKNOW**

The chief minister said that 250 motorcycles and 35 scooters had been provided by Hero Motocorp from its CSR fund for the protection of wildlife. "For the first time, I am seeing that the Forest department is making such a huge use of CSR funds. It should be our

The chief minister said that Jalotsav month was being announced on Monday. He said that thousands of 'amrit saravs' were developed in UP where tree plantation work was done on a large-scale. "We can start this work for reservoirs of the forest also," Yogi added.

PNS ■ **LUCKNOW**

The UPPCL order issued on March 25 said the absence of all the employees who did not report on duty without sanctioned leave be treated as “unauthorised absence in ERP

The High Court had taken a dim view of the 72-hour token strike by the power employees and had held the power employees' leaders in contempt of court and directed withholding of their salary and pension. The UPPCL management, adopting a tough stance, has also not initiated the process for withdrawing the cases lodged against the power

inal cases and ESMA against the employees and their leaders. The minister had said that he had instructed UPPCL Chairman M Devraj to withdraw FIRs and suspension and termination orders issued against the employees and their leaders.

Brick kiln owner Muktinath Tripathi, Ajeet Tripathi, Sanju and Mustafa, and some unnamed persons were charged under the Indian Penal Code as well as the Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986. The SP said the action was taken on a complaint lodged by Mohit Ram Yadav, a resident of Chhattisgarh, and efforts are on to arrest the accused. The deceased — Yashwant alias Chhotu Yadav (36) and Harinath (35) — hailed from Chhattisgarh.

Both wanted to get married. Chitra's family members were against the affair. They married Chitra to Hemant of Bulandshahr.

Despite this, Chitra and Ankit continued to meet. To end the relations, Chitra called Ankit on Sunday and poisoned his cold drink. After this she went to her house and Ankit boarded the train going to Mainpuri. When his health started deteriorating the way, he called his brother and told that he had been given something in the cold drink. He was admitted to the district hospital in Mainpuri but could not be saved.

It is alleged that when Anant was battling for life in the hospital,

In Aligarh, a man allayed the fears of his children after an argument over the place. The shocking incident took place in the Mahbubnagar area under Rorawar police station.

According to reports, on Sunday night, the accused, identified as Sagir, got into a fight with his wife, Guddo (30), for bringing meat. In a fit of rage, he picked up a knife and slit his wife's throat as his children watched in terror.

The neighbours rushed to Sagir's house after hearing his children crying. The cops were alerted and he then arrested the accused from his house. The daughter of the deceased narrated the incident.

Kotwali in-charge Maheshwari Singh said that the 5-month-old son Chhota Sehpur village in Tirwar district was sleeping on Monday night. The family suddenly heard a scream and when they went to enquire about the matter, they found the boy lying under a blanket and rushed him to hospital. The doctors pronounced him dead.

It is alleged that Manoj Kumar in-law Kanchan hit the child on the head with a hammer when he was sleeping. The child was grilling the aunt and claiming to have also recovered the hammer with which she hit the child. The motive for murder is still not confirmed.

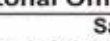
Sr. No.	Name of Borrower/ Branch
1.	Borrower: M/s Pawan Co. Ltd. Bharu Prakash Gupta B Gandhinagar, Qasba-Bal Fatehpur. Borrower & Mortgage

PNS **LUCKNOW**


In Lucknow, the CPI-ML leader and workers took out the protest march from

They said the Lok Sabha secretariat worked on the Supreme court's order within 26 hours by disqualifying Rahul Gandhi. "It is a surgical strike on democracy by the Bharatiya Janata Party and attempt to

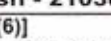
The CPI-ML said the protests staged in Ghazipur, Ballia, Gorakhpur, Mau, Sonbhadra, Mirzapur, Azamgarh, Varanasi, Ayodhya, Rae Bareilly, Sitapur, Jalaun, Bareilly and Moradabad.




इंडियन बैंक
(An ISO 9001:2015 Certified)




Indian Bank
(A Govt. of India Undertaking)





ALLAHABAD



ALLAHABAD

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

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

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrowers and Guarantors for the below described immovable property mortgaged/ charged to the Secured Creditor, the Symbolic possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Indian Bank (e-Allahabad Bank), Zonal Office: 10/379 Rameni (Tarauns), Hamirpur, Uttar Pradesh - 210301 as Secured Creditor, will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 28.04.2023 for recovery of Bank's dues from Borrowers and Guarantors to the Secured Creditor. The details are described as below:

Sr. No.	Name of Borrower/ Branch/Phone No.	Name of Property owner/Mortgagor	Bank's Dues	Details of Property	Reserve Price Earnest Money
1.	Borrower: M/s Pawan Cold Drinks (Prop.-Smt Sunita Devi W/o Bhanu Prakash Gupta) Business Address:- Banda Sagar Road, Gandhinagar, Qasba-Bahua, Pargana- Ayah Shah, Tehsil & Distt- Fatehpur. Borrower & Mortgagor: Smt. Sunita Devi W/o Bhanu Prakash Gupta, R/o Mohalla- Gandhinagar, Qasba- Bahua, Pargana-Ayah Shah, Tehsil & Distt.-fatehpur Guarantor: 1. Shri Bhanu Prakash Gupta S/o Keshav Prasad R/o Banda Sagar Road, Mohalla- Gandhinagar, Qasba-Bahua, Pargana- Ayah Shah, Distt.-fatehpur 2. Shri Sanjay Kumar Gupta S/o Devi Charan Gupta R/o Qasba- Bahua, Pargana-Ayah Shah, Distt.- fatehpur Branch: Bahua, Distt. Fatehpur	Smt. Sunita Devi W/o Bhanu Prakash Gupta, R/o Mohalla- Gandhinagar, Qasba- Bahua, Pargana- Ayah Shah, Tehsil & Distt.- fatehpur 210505, U.P.	On or after 05/09/2022 Rs. 21,14,343.00 + interest till the date of realization and costs, charges and expenses from 06.09.2022	All that part and parcel of the property - One residential plot situated at village / Mohalla - Gandhi Nagar, Qasba - Bahua, Pargana- Ayah Shah, Tehsil- Sadar Fatehpur, District- Fatehpur in the name of Sunita Devi W/o Bhanu Prakash Gupta Boundaries: East: Field of Jagdev Singh, West: Banda Sagar Road, North: In Past Plot of Noor Ali S/o Rasool Bakh, At present House of Noor Ali, South: In past Plot of Jahan Khan, At present House of Jahan Khan Property ID No : IDIB562PAWAN	Rs. 44.70 Lacs Rs. 4.47 Lacs Details of the encumbrance known to the Bank -

Date & Time of submission of process Compliance form & EMD - 26.04.2023 upto 11 A.M. at and Date & Time of e-auction 28.04.2023 from 10.00 AM - 4.00 PM with unlimited extension, with Bid incremental Amount. Rs. 1000/-

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

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

Bidders are advised to visit the website (www.mstccommerce.com) for an e-auction service provider MSTC Ltd. to participate in online bid. For Technical Assistance Please call MSTC HELPDESK No. 033-22901004 and other help line numbers available in service providers help desk. For Registration status with MSTC Ltd. please contact ibapi@mstccommerce.com and for EMD status please contact ibapi@mstccommerce.com.

For property details and photograph of the property and auction terms and condition please visit: <https://ibapi.in> and for clarification related to this portal, please contact help line number '18001025026' and '011-41106131

Corporate Office: Avai Shannugam Salai Royalpettah, Chennai-600014

Date: 28.03.2023

Place: Hamirpur

Authorized Officer, Indian Bank

Visitor gallery getting good response: DC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar while inspecting the Green Park visitor gallery on Monday said it was highly encouraging to know that visitor gallery was getting a very good response from cricket lovers and enthusiasts, especially youth and students. He said the total number of visitors between February 19 and March 19 was 2,243 of which students were 790, adults 910 and children 543. He said the Green Park Stadium is one of the most important cricket stadiums for international cricket matches in India. He said it had a glorious history of more than 70 years. He said to bring these memo-



Divisional Commissioner Dr Raj Shekhar inspecting the visitor gallery at Green Park Stadium on Monday.

orable moments and glorious history of Green Park stadium before cricket lovers and sports lovers, Kanpur Smarty City in association with the Sports Department of Uttar Pradesh had established the 'Green Park

Visitor Gallery'. He said it was inaugurated by Chief Minister, Yogi Adityanath on December 9, 2022, and was thrown open to public on February 19 this year by UP Chief Secretary DS Mishra and BJP MP Satyadev

Pachauri. He said it was a 'self-sustainable model' with special facilities like display section (two), audio visual room, cricket cafe, souvenir shop, virtual vovling and batting pitch (two) and multicuisine restaurant.

Besides 1,372 persons have also taken the pleasure of batting on "virtual pitch" in the last one month. He said smart city and Sports department were taking regular feedback from the visitors. He said the Mandalviya Khel Protsahan Samiti, Kanpur Smart City and Sports department had planned to add following facilities to the visitor gallery in the next two months. He said they were children adventure section and fun zone (outside open area near entry point of visitor

gallery, 3D virtual cricket games and other adventure sports games (through 3D eye wearable devices). He said it was also decided to install three to four large LEDs in display section and also in restaurant to show case to the public and visitors the highlights of visitor gallery, projects of Smart City, important government schemes besides those of the Sports department. The Commissioner asked the O&M operator and also DD Sports to double the number of visitors in coming months by taking necessary steps to increase the number of visitors through special attractions and use of social media and other platforms of advertisements for the visitor gallery.

Pathak elected AIU vice-president

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak, Vice-Chancellor of Chhatrapati Shahu Ji Maharaj University (CSJMU), has been elected the vice-president of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) on Sunday. A decision in this regard has been taken in the AIU meeting held in Guwahati. Vice-chancellors (V-Cs) of universities from across the country participated in this three-day annual conference of AIU. Prof Pathak has been unanimously elected as the vice-president of this prestigious association. The AIU is representator of Indian universities to the world. CSJMU media incharge Dr Vishal Sharma said this year the three-day annual conference of



CSJMU Vice-Chancellor Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak

AIU is being held in Guwahati from March 25 to 27 in which V-Cs of universities, educationists and enlightened people from across the country are

participating. Former President of India Ramnath Kovind, Governor of Assam and prominent personalities from the education world addressed the conference.

The AIU is committed to the development of education along with better academic environment in universities across the country. Universities across the country compete at a high level in cultural, academic, sporting, scientific and academic activities through the AIU. This association also provides opportunities for universities to work together. V-Cs, professors, university teachers and employees from all over the country have extended their best wishes to Prof Pathak on his appointment as the vice-president.

Deputy secy visits National Sugar Institute

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Deputy Secretary, Department of Food and Public Distribution Jyotsna Gupta visited National Sugar Institute (NSI) on Monday. She informed that field visits of the new recruits had been planned by the government to familiarise them about the working of various organisations working under the ministry and also to provide them exposure about the sector to be served by them. Around 15 newly recruited assistant section officers of Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution, Government of India, arrived for undertaking Induction Training Programme. The trainees visited various laboratories, Experimental Sugar Factory, Specialty Sugar Division, Ethanol Unit and brewery etc. to get first-hand knowledge about the process of sugar and ethanol production and also to get insight of research work being carried out to develop newer technologies for producing value-added products and waste water treatment. During the interactive session, Director, NSI, Prof Narendra Mohan, gave an insight



NSI Director Prof Narendra Mohan takes the team of assistant section officers of Department of Food and Public Distribution, Ministry of Consumer Affairs, on a visit of the entire institute on Monday.

to the trainees about process of production of different type of sugars and advent of technology in sugar industry since first sugar factory came into operation in 1903. The country is not only self-sufficient in its requirements but also exporting sugar to other countries. It has also played a major role in production of bio-energy, particularly ethanol being blended with petrol. Dr R Ananthalakshmi, Assistant

Prof Biochemistry made a presentation about the journey of Ethanol Blending Programme and contribution of Indian sugar industry. She said from a meagre 1.53 per cent blending in 2013-14, the country has achieved blending to the extent of 10.12 per cent during 2021-22 and were sure to achieve the target of 12 per cent blending during 2022-23. Lectures were also delivered by SK Trivedi, Assistant Professor Sugar Technology and Dr Ashok Kumar, Assistant Professor Agriculture Chemistry on technological developments in factories and sugarcane productivity enhancement respectively.

FUNCTION: Noted social worker Aarti Mohan while addressing the Mahila Diwas function organised by the Indian Bank Officers Association, Uttar Pradesh (UP-South) said the role of women in banking services was unparalleled and it was no exaggeration to state that they are able to strike a perfect coordination in running the branch smoothly and perfectly.

Five-month-old boy hammered to death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A five-month-old boy was hammered to death by his aunt in Singhpur village under Tirwa Kotwali police station of Kannauj on Monday morning. The police immediately rushed to the spot and took the guilty woman into custody. The police have started quizzing her. The cause of incident could not be ascertained so far. The parents of the victim are in a state of shock. The five-month-old child, son of Manoj of the village was fast asleep in the house when suddenly Kanchan, wife of his brother, Pramod, reached there and attacked him with the hammer on his head. The kin immediately took the seriously injured child to the medical college where doctors declared him dead. They informed the police which rushed to the spot and took Pramod and Kanchan into custody. Tirwa Kotwali incharge Dr Maheshvir Singh said the body was sent for autopsy and the woman accused was being quizzed. On receipt of complaint further action will be taken in the matter, he said.

Meanwhile a mentally deranged Divyang youth missing since Saturday evening was crushed to death with a brick in a village of Chhibramau, Farrukhabad. His partly naked body with injury marks was

recovered from the Council School campus on Sunday morning. The police have started investigating the matter.

According to a report, Devendra Kumar Sharma (28), son of Jagdish Chandra of Mehmoopur under Vishungarh police station was mentally deranged and a Divyang. He suddenly went missing since 7 pm on Saturday. Father Jagdish Chandra with family members tried to trace him in the village but failed to find him. On Sunday morning, when villagers went towards the Council School, they found the partly naked body of a youth near the Havan Kund in the school campus. He was wearing only a green T-shirt.

His head was crushed with the brick while there were injury marks on the waist and other parts of the body. His kin alleged the killing of the youth and demanded action against the guilty. SHO Vishungarh Kishanpal Singh along with force rushed to spot and took stock of the situation. Father Jagdish said his son Devendra had gone missing on Saturday evening and despite efforts, could not be traced till late night. Devendra's brother Pappu was a daily wageer in a cold storage and had two sisters also. SHO Kishanpal Singh said investigation was on in the matter. After the autopsy

report, exact cause of death will be ascertained. Forensic team was also called to probe the matter, he said.

ARRESTED: The Kohna police have arrested a wanted criminal from Jamshedpur (Jharkhand). Station House Officer (SHO) Sukhvir Kushwaha said Kamaljit Singh runs a licenced arms shop in Bishtupur, Jamshedpur. His son Simarpal Singh lived here in Shipra Apartment, Tilak Nagar. Darshan Singh had lodged an FIR against Kamaljit Singh and his son Simarpal Singh for loot, scuffle, kidnapping and attempt to murder at the Kohna police station in the past. However they were found absconding. The court had issued a non-bailable warrant against them on March 3. On coming to know about their presence in Jamshedpur (Jharkhand), a police team led by sub-inspector Mukesh Kumar was sent there which, with the help of Bishtupur police, arrested Simarpal from his house. Due to illness of his elderly father Kamaljit Singh, police did not arrest him. As the condition of Simarpal Singh was also not found well, police took him to MGM Hospital. The police had taken him to the court of chief judicial magistrate, Jamshedpur, for getting his transit remand but the latter ordered to again admit him to the hospital. After the con-

dition of both the accused becomes well, police will bring them to Kanpur, SHO said.

SERVICES OF 4 TERMINATED : On charges of issuing insurance policies in place of fixed deposit receipts to over 30 customers, PNB MetLife Insurance Co.Ltd. has terminated the services of its four employees. Addressing mediapersons, Chief Distribution Officer Samir Bansal said there were reports that company employees were issuing insurance policies to innocent account holders of the Punjab National Bank who had submitted applications for the fixed deposit of their money. When the victims lodged complaint with the chief minister and police stations of respective branch, the company carried out investigation and on finding their charges true, the services of its four employees were terminated. At the same time, the company had returned money to all the victims forthwith. Meanwhile, he also announced the launch of company's Genius Plan on this occasion.

The plan offers life insurance coverage while allowing parents to select the timing of benefit pay-outs that suits their unique requirements and pay premiums for a chosen time period as per their convenience and affordability.

BMMKWA protests against shifting of office

PINS ■ VARANASI

The Baat Maap Marammat Karta Welfare Association (BMMKWA) on Monday

staged a demonstration in protest against the shifting of the office of Weight & Measurement department outside the city. They demanded

re-shifting of the department's office in its old office and threatened to intensify their agitation if the demand is not met. The activists of BMMKWA gathered at the new office of the Weight & Measurement department in Prem Chand Nagar Colony, Pandeypur and staged a demonstration to raise their protest against the shifting of the office here from Lahurabir. The office of Weight & Measurement is also known as the Laboratory of Measurement where the testing and verification of measurement equipment are

made, they said, adding that the complaints of consumers are also addressed here. The traders are facing inconvenience after the office has shifted from Lahurabir to Pandeypur, the agitators said and demanded the re-shifting of the office of the department in its old office. The agitation will be intensified if the demand is not met, they threatened. Sunil Upadhyay, Chandra Shekhar Singh, Ajay Gupta, Anil Keshari, Vinay Agrahari, Dharmendra Maurya and Ashafuddin were among those present on the occasion.

BHU confers Prof Rao Award on four faculty members

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has conferred the Prof CNR Rao Education Foundation Award for Excellence in Research to four faculty members. The award is

given for remarkable research contributions. For the year 2018-2019 Prof Ravi Kumar Asthana, Head, Department of Botany, has been named for the award, while for the year 2019-2020 the award is being conferred on Prof Maya Shankar Singh, Head, Department of Chemistry, Institute of Science. Dr Rajeev Pratap Singh, Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development, has been selected for the award for 2020-2021 and Prof Sunit Kumar Singh, Molecular Biology Unit, Institute of Medical Sciences, will receive the award for the year 2021-2022. The university in December last year had called nominations of faculty members from various institutes and faculties. The award is presented to those making significant contributions in the disciplines of pure and applied sciences including basic sciences, agriculture, engineering and technology. The award carries a cash prize and citation. Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain has congratulated all the award winners. Prof Jain has time and again reiterated that the university will take all possible measures to encourage and facilitate members of the university fraternity in their quest for excellence. In order to ensure that the deserving duly get acknowledged, BHU has also revamped the procedure of nominating faculty members and scientists for renowned awards and fellowships to add shine to their exceptional contributions. DHARNA: The All India Coal Pensioners Association (AICPA) on Monday staged a dharna in favour of its demands including the implementation of the Coal Mines Pension Scheme. The activists of AICPA gathered at Shastri Ghat here and staged a dharna to raise their protest against the indifferent attitude of the government in implementing the Coal Mines Pension Scheme, 1998.

Attack on doctors condemned

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Indian Medical Association (IMA), Kanpur chapter strongly condemns the brutal attack on peacefully protesting doctors by the Rajasthan police. The police action in Rajasthan is totally undemocratic, unethical, unconstitutional and unwarranted and the whole medical fraternity was deeply concerned. The IMA-K wants that the Rajasthan Government must invite the doctors of Rajasthan IMA to settle the issue in an amicable manner in the larger interest of doctors and patients.

President of the IMA-K Dr Pankaj Gulati while addressing presspersons on Monday said it was quite disheartening to note that this attack was launched on peaceful protestors and was infringement on the fundamental rights of the citizens and they had been put to stake. He said the police



IMA-Kanpur president Dr Pankaj Gulati addressing presspersons on Monday.

action was totally undemocratic and was being condemned by every section of the medical fraternity across the country. He said the IMA-K urges the Rajasthan Government to con-

sider all views and defuse the tension growing among doctors. The agitation by the Rajasthan doctors was being held to protest against the Rajasthan government's deci-

sion to provide quality health care free of cost to citizens of the entire state like trauma cases, complications during pregnancy and any emergency as defined by the state health authority or animal or snake bite etc. The bill, which was passed by voice vote, gives every resident of the state the right to emergency treatment and care "without prepayment of requisite fee or charges" by any public health institution, health care establishment and designated health care centres. The WHO Constitution (1946) envisages "...the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right of every human being." Acknowledging health as a human right recognises a legal obligation on states to ensure access to timely, acceptable and affordable health care. Dr Archana Bhadauria, Dr SK Mishra, Dr AK Srivastava, Dr Amit Singh Gaur and several others were present on the occasion.

Techkriti concludes its 29th edition with a bang

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Techkriti, one of Asia's largest annual technical and entrepreneurial festivals hosted by IIT Kanpur, concluded its 29th edition with a bang. This year's theme "Enigmatic Tessellations" and its mascot Tessellato, aimed to explore the fascinating world of tessellations and its applications in technology and innovation.

The concluding day of Techkriti 23 was thronged by thousands with an exciting schedule full of captivating events. The day began with insightful tech talks from two distinguished speakers who shared their expertise on various topics.

The first speaker was Vivek Nagabhushan, Director of Flight Sciences at Blue Origin. He spoke about his experiences in the aerospace industry and shared his insights into the future of space exploration. During the conversation he shared his knowledge about the different elements that go into launching a space mission, including the types of engines used and various types of launchers that are utilised in spaceflight. Vivek also highlighted Blue Origin's motto, "Gradatim Ferociter," which translates to "step by step ferociously". Blue Origin's reusable launch system, New Shepard, has successfully completed several test flights, showcasing the company's dedication to developing cost-effective and sustainable spaceflight technology. The next talk featured Jeffrey Archer, one of the world's best-selling authors, who spoke about his writing process and shared tips for aspiring writers. His talk was hosted virtually and the participants had the opportunity to interact with him through a question and answer session. He shared his inspiring life journey from humble beginnings, through professional challenges and triumphs, to his current status as a bestselling author. He candidly discussed the setbacks he faced, including bankruptcy, which ultimately led him to discover his

passion for writing. Archer also expressed his gratitude towards India and its people for being avid readers of his books. His love for the country was evident, particularly in his admiration for the Indian cricket team.

A special panel discussion on AI and sustainability was graced by Dr Kedar Kulkarni, Head of AI for New Energy, Sustainability and Climate Change at JIO AI Centre of Excellence, Anand Hadgaonkar, CIO - Asia Pacific at Whirlpool, and Rajiv Sikka, former CEO of Indian Oil Adani Gas. The panellists emphasised the role of AI in controlling climate change through reducing greenhouse gases and carbon footprints. They also discussed the future of AI globally and specifically in India, highlighting that implementing AI at the consumer level doesn't require significant capital. In essence, the panellists shed light on how AI can positively impact sustainability and enable a greener future. The day also featured

continued workshops from the previous days on Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain, providing participants with the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in these areas. In addition new workshops on Python programming and ethical hacking were conducted, allowing participants to gain hands-on experience and expand their skill set.

The night was electric with the renowned Indian electronic music producer Nucleya headlining the EDM Night. His performance was an exciting blend of Indian music elements and electronic beats, which had the audience grooving to mesmerising rhythms all night long. Nucleya's showmanship and stage presence were equally impressive, creating an immersive experience that left the audience in awe. The four days of technical and cultural extravaganza filled with insightful talks, workshops and performances came to an end marking the successful conclusion of Techkriti 23 at IIT Kanpur.

GUJARAT WATER SUPPLY AND SEWERAGE BOARD
TENDER NOTICE NO.- SK/ RC / 02 of 2022-23
(2nd Attempt)
Annual Rate Contract

Sr. No	Item	Tender ID
1.	Manufacture, Supply and Delivery of Various Sizes of 3 Core Flat PVC Copper Cable for Submersible Pumps as per IS 694/2010 (Class-5) with ISI Mark (only Indian manufacturer)	582962

Pre-bid meeting on Dtd. 03/04/2023 at 11.00 Hrs. at GWSSB
Last Date of Online Submission of Tender:- 10/04/2023
Bid Opening Date:- 11/04/2023 at 15.05 Hrs
Contact Office:- Executive Engineer, Public Health Mechanical Store Division, "A" Block, Patnagar Yojana Bhavan, 2nd Floor, Near GH-4, Sector-16, Gandhinagar-382 016, Gujarat State. Tel/fax. No. (079) 2322844, 9978493321
The detailed tender notice and tender documents are available on www.nprocure.com
For Village Level Drinking water Complaint Please Contact our Toll Free No : 1916
Sd/-
Executive Engineer
P.H. Mech. Store Division
Guj. W.S. & S. Board
Gandhinagar,
No/INE/VPN/2023/G/2760

Office of the Chief Engineer & Basin Manager,
Rushikulya Bahuda Vansadhara Nagavali Basin, Brahmapur - 760004
e-mail: ce_rvn@yahoo.co.in
e-Procurement Notice No. **CEBM-RBVN- 12/2022-23**

1. Type of Work	-: Irrigation Work.
2. Total No of Works	-: 01 (One) No.
3. Amount put to tender	-: Rs 18200.00 Lakhs
4. Period of completion	-: 24 (Twenty Four) Calendar months.

Procurement officer	Bid Identification No.	Bid Amount (Rs. in lakh)	Availability & Submission of Bid On-line
Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, RBVN Basin, Berhampur, Ganjam.	CEBM-RBVN(CCD)-02/2022-23	18200.00	From 29.03.2023, 10.00 A.M. to 11.05.2023, 5.00 P.M.

Date of opening of the Technical Bid **12.05.2023 at 11.00 A.M.**
Further detail can be seen from the Govt. website www.tendersodisha.gov.in
Chief Engineer & Basin Manager, RBVN Basin, Berhampur
OIPR-32459/11/0016/2223

GOVERNMENT OF ODISHA, "e"-PROCUREMENT NOTICE
WORKS DEPARTMENT
B-1392 E-mail : ceworldbankprojects@gmail.com
Bid Identification No. **CE-W.B.P. (O) - 45 / 2022-23**

- The Chief Engineer (World Bank Project), Odisha on behalf of Governor of Odisha invites percentage rate bid in double cover system in ONLINE MODE from eligible contractors for construction of Road & Bridge work as detailed below :
- Nature of work : Road work
- No. of work : 01 no.
- Tender cost : Rs.10,000.00 (on-line)
- Class of Contractor : Special/ Super Class Contractor
- Available of bid document : From 10.00 AM of 28.03.2023 to 5.00 PM of 20.04.2023 in the website
- Pre - Bid meeting : Dt.04.04.2023
- Date of opening of Bid : Dt.21.04.2023 at 11.30 AM
- The Bidders have to participate in ONLINE bidding only. Further details can be seen from the website : <https://tenderodisha.gov.in> . Any addendum / corrigendum / cancellation of tender can also be seen in the said website.

OIPR-34003/11/0091/2223
Chief Engineer
World Bank Project, Odisha

TB-Mukt Panchayat campaign to be started in Varanasi soon

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

TB-Mukt Panchayat campaign will be started in the district soon as its process, planning and strategy have gained momentum immediately after the successful conclusion of three-day One World TB Summit which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his parliamentary constituency recently and it was concluded a day ago. During the summit, the PM had launched various initiatives including the TB-Mukt Panchayat campaign.

Giving this information, Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary informed here on Monday that in the recent summit, apart from the PM, the Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya and Union Minister of State for Health Dr Bharti Pravin Pawar had also emphasised on the initiative, appealing to all to ensure that there should not be any TB patient in their gram panchayats. “If any TB patient is identified, one should immediately ask him/her to go to the nearest Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centre. Regional ASHA workers, gram pradhans



Union Minister of State for Health Dr Bharti Pravin Pawar at concluding day function of One World TB Summit in Varanasi on Sunday. **Pioneer**

and panchayat members should cooperate with the patients in this work,” the CMO said.

Dr Chaudhary said that preparations have already been started to make the PM’s call of TB-Mukt Panchayat a reality in Varanasi. “First we will make all gram panchayats TB free, then the entire district will be called TB-free,” he said. District Tuberculosis Officer (DTO) Dr Piyush Rai said that initially all the 89 gram panchayats of Cholakpur block have been selected for the TB-Mukt

Panchayat initiative. “After this, the campaign will be started in all the blocks and urban areas,” he said, adding that Cholakpur has three additional PHCs, 13 Ayushman Bharat - Health and Wellness Centres and 37 health sub-centres where 20 Community Health Officers (CHOs), 27 ANMs and 206 ASHA workers have been posted.

Earlier, on the concluding day of One World TB Summit, Union Minister of State for Health Dr Bharti Pravin Pawar said that like the corona vac-

cine, India would also become the hub of anti-TB drug manufacturing. She said this while addressing the representatives from 40 countries including Brazil, France and Nigeria. She said that in the way the cooperation of ICMR, DRDO, Department of Atomic Energy etc was used in corona prevention, similarly it will be taken in making TB preventive vaccine and medicine.

“After making the vaccine, the needy countries of the world will be helped and the work of providing medicines and vaccines at low cost will be done,” she said.

Executive Director of Stop TB Partnership Lucica Ditiu has praised the Indian model of TB eradication.

She said that patients and their relatives are being made aware by ASHA and ANM workers in the villages and arrangements are being made to give medicines on time, cooperate with them in investigation apart from distribution of nutrition packets and transfer of funds to the accounts of patients. She informed that the Indian model will also be discussed in the summit to be held in New York in coming September.

Witnesses who turned hostile in Raju Pal case approached court in 2007

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

When Mayawati took charge of Uttar Pradesh from the SP in the year 2007, the witnesses who had turned hostile in Raju Pal murder case owing to ‘death threat’ from Atiq and Ashraf, approached the court in the ‘changed’ political scenario and the police also geared itself up after the change of command.

Not only Umesh Pal had been kidnapped, tortured and forced to change his statement in the above sensational murder of the then BSP MLA Raju Pal who had defeated Ashraf of the SP from Allahabad City West Assembly constituency,

but there are four other witnesses who had been kidnapped by the Atiq gang to force them for turn hostile. Surprisingly in two of the above kidnapping, torture and posing death threat, in the absence of witnesses the accused were freed from the charges. In these cases police inspectors and sub-inspectors of Kareli police station had also been accused, but the case could not stand before the court.

All the five witnesses of Raju Pal murder case had informed police after they had been kidnapped and tortured, but owing to ‘political patronage’ to the Atiq gang, police

preferred to remain a ‘mute spectator’ and the victims had no option, but to change their statements in favour of Atiq and his gang men.

When BSP came to power in 2007, the applications of the above five were converted into FIRs and Umesh Pal was one of the victims who had been kidnapped and tortured by the Atiq gang. He approached the court and fought the case till his death.

As he had refused to bow down before the mafia, Umesh was done to death on February 24. In connection of this very case Atiq and Ashraf are being brought here from Sabarnati and Bareilly jails respectively to

be present in the special MP/MLA court on March 28 when verdict is to be pronounced.

Such cases were lodged against the Atiq gang by Saifullah, Mahendra Patel and Mohammad Sadique who had turned hostile under pressure.

Umesh Pal was first served threatening message. When he did not bow down, Umesh was kidnapped on February 28, 2006 and kept in Karbala office of Atiq and was tortured. He ultimately changed his statement, but waited for an opportune time to bring the truth to the fore and he did it in 2007 when SP was replaced by the BSP.

UP’s 1st floating restaurant all set to come up in Sangam city

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The first floating restaurant of Uttar Pradesh is all set to come up in Sangam city on the Yamuna bank. The government will spend Rs 5 crore on this project to boost tourism under the Smart City plan. The UPSTDC had been entrusted with the responsibility to convert this dream project into reality.

After its completion, this floating restaurant will be operational on the Yamuna bank for nine months, while it will be shifted to a safer place during floods, from July to September.

Besides floating restaurant, a boat shed will be developed there. A slip way and two catamarans will be there to host parties and boating. Speed boats, life jackets

and life guards will be ready to meet any eventuality.

Taking a tip from some international tourist attractions, the state government took a decision to develop a floating restaurant in the state and Prayagraj had been chosen as the best suitable place for the same. Besides religious tourism at Sangam, the holy confluence of the Ganga, the Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati,

this restaurant will boost general tourism in the Sangam city. It will be funded by the Smart City project and through tenders the work has been entrusted to UPSTDC and after getting NOC from the departments concerned work will start soon.

It is expected that the floating restaurant will be operational before the flood season this year.

Saints flag off Corona Bhagirathi Rath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A section of saints flagged off Corona Bhagirathi Rath from Assi Ghat here on Monday. On the occasion, Mahamandaleshwar Satua Baba Santosh Das, Brahmachari Mukundanand, disciple of Pujya Shankaracharya Ji Maharaj, Dr Vijay Nath Mishra, eminent neurologist of BHU and others were also present.

Addressing the gathering organised after flagging off the Corona Bhagirathi Rath, OTT 56 director Vibha Sharma and Gaurav Tiwari jointly said that this is the world’s first such grand campaign which is dedicated to the salvation of the souls who died in the orgy of the corona pandemic period.



Saints flagging off Corona Bhagirathi Rath in Varanasi on Monday. **Pioneer**

They said that the world’s biggest Bhagwat Katha is going to be held for the salvation and liberation of the departed souls during the corona period under

the guidance of Shankaracharya of Jyotish Peeth Swami Avimukteshwarananda Saraswati Maharaj.

They said that the main objective of rath (chariot) is to roam around the country and collect data on people killed in corona so that in the presence of 11,000 pundits Vedic Yagya would be performed for their salvation. They said that about 100 such chariots would be spread across India. The programme was also attended by media in-charge of Shankaracharya Sanjay Pandey, Ram Sajeevan Shukla, Sunil Shukla, Sunil Upadhyay, Ravindra Mishra, Raj Kumar Sharma, Rakesh Pandey, Arun Ojha, Shivkant Mishra and Kamlesh.

Earlier, Shankaracharya Swami Avimukteshwarananda felicitated Vibha Sharma and Gaurav Tiwari at Srividya Math, Kedar Ghat.

Influenza test facility available at SSH BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Medical Officer Dr Sandeep Chaudhary has informed that the patients with influenza symptoms are being screened at Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH) in Banaras Hindu University (BHU). He said that the facility of influenza test is not available in Shri Shiv Prasad Gupta (SSPG) Divisional Hospital at

Kabirchaura and the patients with the influenza symptoms are referred by doctors/specialists to higher institutions for examination. Similarly, he said that due to non-availability of influenza kit from UP Medical Corporation in Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay (DDU) Government Hospital, it is not being tested but as soon as the kits will be available it would be started at DDU Hospital.

However, he said that the patients suffering from influenza symptoms are being treated at LBS Hospital, Ramnagar but the influenza test facility is not available there.

Meanwhile, according to a release from SSU BHU, keeping in mind the convenience of the patients in view of the increasing number of patients having Ayushman cards, the hospital administration has

decided to extend the operating time of the Ayushman counter.

Medical Superintendent of SSH BHU has informed that from April 1, instead of opening from 10 am to 5 pm, the Ayushman counter will now operate from 7 am to 9 pm. For this, the duty of Ayushman Mitra employees at the counter will be imposed in two shifts from 7 am to 2 pm, and from 2 pm to 9 pm.

Devotees offer prayers at Katyayani Devi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Hundreds of devotees thronged Lalita Gauri (Lalita Ghat) on the auspicious occasion of Shasti (sixth day) in the ongoing Vasantik Navratri here on Monday. Besides, a good number of devotees also reached Mata Katyayani Devi (Adi Visheshwar temple) near Sangha Gali. Apart from this heavy rush continued to reach the famous Durga Mandir at Durga Kund.

Not only this, a good number of devotees also went to Vindhyachal in Mirzapur district, about 65 kilometres from here, to offer prayers at Maa Vindhyavasini Devi, using Roadways buses and their own or hired vehicles. A large number of people go there during both Vasantik and Shardiya navratris for conducting various rituals including ‘mundan’ of the children. Rush continued to be seen at the old Durga Mandir at Ramnagar and Sheela Mata temple at Adalpura.

This religious city has separate temples of all the nine Devis and nine Gauris where



Devotees offering prayers at Katyayani Devi temple in Varanasi on Monday. **Pioneer**

the devotees offer prayers on different days of Shardiya and Vasantik Navratri respectively. Though as per the tradition, on the sixth day of this Navratri, the devotees offer prayers at Lalita Gauri, but generally it is seen that rush is also throng Katyayani Devi apart from

Durga Mandir. Meanwhile, Samajwadi Party (SP) has demanded cleanliness on the occasion of Navratri and the holy month of Ramzan. City president Vishnu Sharma said that the holy month of Ramzan has already started but due to the faults of

street lights in most of the streets, the people are facing a lot of difficulties in offering namaz.

He urged the Nagar Nigam to ensure proper cleanliness in all Muslim-dominated localities by deploying safai employees in two shifts.

World Theatre Day celebrated in BLW

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Colourful cultural programmes were organised in ‘Rangotsav’ on the occasion of World Theatre Day in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) here on Monday. The General Manager (GM) Basudev Panda was the chief guest, while Chairperson of BLW Women’s Welfare Organisation Neelima Panda was guest of honour. In the beginning, Principal Chief Electrical Engineer (PCEE) SK Srivastava and Principal Chief Personnel Officer (PCPO) Renu Sharma welcomed the guests.

The cultural programme began with Vandana dance by Ritu Karmakar which was followed by Vadhyat-Triveni by Ravi Prajapati, Chandan Pandey and Raghavendra and a group Garba dance directed by Pooja Chaudhary. Then a drama ‘Sutputra’ under the guidance of Sudhakar Mani and direction of Neeraj Upadhyay was performed in front of the audience. Recently, the play got the first prize at Akhil Bhartiya Rail Hindi Natyaotsav organised at Kapurthala in Punjab apart from receiving several individual awards.

All the programmes staged on the occasion were appreciated. GM Basudev Panda praised the programme and wished for a bright future for the artistes. He said that the fame of BLW’s artistes is



Artistes presenting a programme on World Theatre Day at BLW in Varanasi on Monday. **Pioneer**

spreading everywhere, who have shown excellent performances at the inter-railway and all-India level competitions and brought laurels to the BLW. Neelima Panda also blessed the artistes along with the citation.

Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar said that every year March 27 is celebrated as ‘World Theatre Day’ all over the world. According to him,

theatre is such a medium through which we can convey our message to millions of people and it is a mode, through which every positive and negative change happening in the society is shown in a very subtle way. In the beginning, secretary of the cultural organisation and Deputy Chief Mechanical Engineer Jitendra Agrawal gave the details of the programme and the pro-

gramme was conducted by Amlesh Srivastava. Apart from heads of various departments, staff Council’s members and office-bearers of BLW WWO, the function was also attended by Avinash Kumar Singh, Praveen Kumar, Sandeep Kumar, Sushil Kumar Tripathi, Mukesh Kumar Dubey, Neeraj Kumar, Rakesh Kumar Srivastava and Sharad Kumar Srivastava.

Gangotsav organised with grandeur

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

On the fifth day of Navratri on Sunday the district administration organised Gangotsav with grandeur at Deewan Ghat in Vindhyachal. To make the event more attractive preparations had been started since morning and the entire area was decorated with ‘rangoli’ made by skilled artists. The main function started in evening with welcoming the ‘Gangajal’ which had come from Sangam (Prayagraj). The welcome programme was held amidst the chanting of the Vedic ‘shlokas’. In the evening the event started with the cultural programme based on prayer to Ganga by renowned artistes. The ghat was decorated with clay lamps along with boats. The ‘maha aarti’ was per-

formed by artistes from Varanasi along with the locals. Among those who took part in ‘maha aarti’ were MLAs Ratnakar Mishra and Rama Shankar Singh Patel, MLC Shyam Narain Singh ‘Vineet Singh’, District Magistrate Divya Mittal, ADM Shiv Pratap Shukla, city magistrate Vinay Kumar Singh, BJP leaders Dhanendra Pandey, Santosh Goyal and others.

FLAGGED OFF: MLC Shyam Narain Singh ‘Vineet Singh’ while flagging off the mobile veterinary unit at Collectorate on Sunday appealed to peasants to come forward to avail the facilities of the government schemes to increase their income. He was said livestock was helpful in earning more.

Welcoming the guests, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Srilaxmi VS apprised that through eight mobile units the health facilities were to be provided at the doorstep of the herdsmen throughout the district.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Chief Veterinary Officer (CVO) Dr Rajesh. He highlighted the facilities available in the mobile unit. Chairman Zila Panchayat Raju Kanaujia, representative of the member Rajya Sabha Arun Singh Dhanendra Pandey, DPRO Arvind Kumar and others were present.

ARRESTED: The Dramondganj police on Sunday arrested an accused of molestating a minor girl. One person had lodged a named FIR at Dramondganj police

station on March 25 alleging that the accused had molested his daughter. The police arrested Basant Lal on Sunday and sent him to jail.

Meanwhile Gulab Shankar Yadav of Fatepur village under Sahabganj police station, Chandauli, had lodged a case at Adalhaat police station on March 22 in which he said his daughter, married to Deepak Yadav of Khiraudi village under Adalhaat police station and was allegedly murdered by her husband and in-laws for dowry.

The police arrested the husband of the deceased Deepak Yadav, father-in-law Ram Vriksh Yadav and mother-in-law Jeera Devi of Khiraudi on Sunday and sent them to jail after completing the legal formalities.

Girl power

Four boxing gold medals, beginning of Women's Premier League — women's sports have arrived

The last few days witnessed a huge fillip to the cause of women emancipation; and the best part of it was that it didn't come from young girls, not from the pompous speech of some politician or some hyped welfare measure. Boxers Nitu Ghanghas and Saweety Boora won gold medals in Women's World Boxing Championships in their respective weight categories on Saturday; the next day, Nikhat Zareen and Lovlina Borgohain became world champions. Quite deservedly, India won the best team award at the tournament. This is not the first time that India have won more than one gold medal in a single year. In 2006, MC Mary Kom, Sarita Devi, Jenny RL and Lekha KC won a gold medal each in their categories. On Sunday, women also made their presence felt in another sport. Harmanpreet Kaur-led Mumbai Indians also won the inaugural edition of the Women's Premier League (WPL). The way all teams played in the tournament made the WPL very successful. While men's cricket is immensely popular in our country, the same cannot be said about women's cricket. Neither test matches nor one-day internationals nor T-20 games have been big draws till recently. In the beginning, WPL also had its anxious moments with concerns regarding filling up stadiums. The Board of Cricket Council of India (BCCI) was keen on audience attendance, so it kept



entry free for women and girls.

The BCCI did a lot to promote the WPL, so there were giant outdoor hoardings with women cricketers, something India is not much familiar with. A seven-storey wallpaper featuring the Mumbai Indians' trio Harmanpreet Kaur, Pooja Vastrakar and Nat Sciver-Brunt covering part of a 20-storey skyscraper near the busy Haji Ali Junction announced that women's cricket has arrived. There were other billboards as well. The point that needs to be underlined is that a lot of effort has gone into making women excel in sports. While it is true that Indians like cricket (cricket, it has been said, is an Indian game accidentally invented by the English), it was not making progress in our country till recently. The BCCI took a number of steps to promote WPL. Similarly, the Boxing Federation of India (BFI) in particular and other sports bodies in general put in a lot of effort to make our pugilists successful. Just before the four girls won gold medals, BFI's Bernard Dunne told a newspaper, "We are not just 'attack, attack and attack.' There is a thought process involved. India has never lacked heart, never lacked hard work. We are trying to bring those little changes within the programme, in terms of reducing the load. If you speak with the athletes, they would see they feel a lot fresher. Our performances demonstrate that. We have got very clear goals now." It is not just the government but also the private sector whose initiatives have ensured that women's sports have made a giant leap. The endeavour must go on.

PICTALK



An artist makes paintings depicting the Uttarakhand culture as part of preparation ahead of the G-20 meeting

Disqualification and aftermath

What is the future of Rahul Gandhi after his disqualification from Parliament? It is not over yet if we are to go by the history of politics in India

Is Congress leader Rahul Gandhi politically finished after the recent court verdict and his subsequent dismissal from Parliament? Is it an advantage or a setback for him and his party? It is too early to predict as it is an evolving story. But experience says that no politician is finished until he is finished.

The BJP is happy that the court has fixed Rahul and believes he is politically finished. However, the Congress claims Rahul is in a win-win position. It will be advantageous if a higher court stays or overturns the verdict. If it does not, Rahul is prepared to pay 'any price' and even go to jail, which might give him more political mileage.

Why did the court punish Rahul? Gandhi said at a campaign rally in Karnataka in April 2019: "Why do all these thieves have Modi as their surname? Nirav Modi, Lalit Modi, Narendra Modi?" In response, a BJP politician Purnesh Modi filed a criminal defamation complaint accusing Gandhi of defaming the "Modi community."

The ruling could have been milder. The court pronounced a two-year sentence on Thursday. The court also gave him bail immediately and suspended the sentence for a month. This allowed him time to appeal against the punishment. The defamation provisions used against Gandhi date back to the 1860s, when India was a British colony. Section 500 of the IPC makes the crime punishable by up to two years in prison.

Rahul will also be unable to contest the Lok Sabha elections for the next eight years apart from losing his present membership in the lower house. According to a historic Supreme Court decision in 2013, the membership of an MP or MLA sentenced to two years or more ends immediately after the court convicts them. The Lok Sabha announced Rahul's dismissal the next day. Rahul needs three layers of support to escape the situation: the strong backing of the united party, the united Opposition and the support of the public.

Congress responded that the



conviction was to divert the Adani issue in Parliament. Congress has demanded a joint parliamentary probe into the Adani-Henderson report. Rahul Gandhi said he would not "back down" from asking questions on the Adani stocks issue or be intimidated by threats, disqualifications, and prison sentences. Refusing to apologize for the remark, Rahul said: "My name is not Savarkar, my name is Gandhi. Gandhis don't apologize to anyone."

Secondly, the judgment united the Opposition against the ruling dispensation. Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal and other Opposition leaders, like Tamil Nadu chief minister M.K. Stalin, Former U.P. chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav, and former Maharashtra chief minister Uddhav Thackeray joined the condemnation of the act. West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee was the first to condemn the action while opposing Congress for years.

Thirdly, though the pub-

“
RAHUL WILL BE UNABLE TO CONTEST THE LOK SABHA ELECTIONS FOR THE NEXT EIGHT YEARS APART FROM LOSING HIS PRESENT MEMBERSHIP IN THE LOWER HOUSE

lic is shocked at the punishment, the complete response is yet to come. The Congress is yet to take it to the streets to involve the people. As a result of Rahul's punishment, other contentious issues, such as Rahul's controversial Cambridge speech, have become more prominent. The BJP has stalled business in Parliament, demanding an apology from him.

Even though the conviction was a psychological blow to Rahul, his party, and the entire Opposition, it all depends on how it is communicated to the people. This is because they must handle the situation, translate it into public sympathy, and sustain it until the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. Critics are skeptical about this. Given the BJP's increasing popularity and tight control over the media, it might not be easy. But Gandhi will still be news.

In the coming months, before 2024, the Congress will face its first significant test in Karnataka, Rajasthan,

Madhya Pradesh, and Chhattisgarh. This will be a direct contest with the BJP. If the party wins the elections in these states, it will cheer the opposition. If the party loses, it will be a setback before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and the party will have to reconcile itself with Modi completing the hat trick.

Rahul's success depends on many ifs and buts. This includes whether he will get a higher court order to stay his verdict and how the public reacts. Congress must also change the poll narrative for the 2024 polls. In short, the BJP cannot wish away Rahul. No politician is finished until he is finished. Rahul is no exception. The BJP probably realizes that it's best not to bring your opponent to the forefront of your campaign. The moral of the story is that politicians, whatever high positions they occupy, should have tight control over their tongues.

(The author is a senior journalist)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION

Sir — Small steps can bring big changes. The Uttarakhand government has chosen the Char Dham Yatra route that includes temples at Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri. This is to implement the first waste-disposal system in the Himalayas, Uttarakhand tourism secretary Sachin Kurve has confirmed. Hemkund Sahib and the Valley of Flowers will also see the implementation of a QR-code-based system that will streamline waste collection and reduce the amount of garbage along the route. Visitors will scan a QR code on each plastic bottle and multi-layer plastic bag (of chips or biscuits) and pay a deposit over the maximum retail price (MRP). They can claim this amount back as a refund when they deposit the waste at a point at the end of the yatra. Up to 45 lakh QR codes are expected to be printed this year.

Jayanthi Subramaniam | Mumbai

APPLY 'SOUND WAVE GIVING'

Sir — When a bat touches the ground, within the crease (when stump out or runout occurs), the snick-o-meter "sound wave giving" technique should be used. Many times, in slow motion TV images, it is unclear whether the batsman's bat touches the ground or is slightly above the ground. Solution is, more microphones / sound sensors must be placed in the area near the crease and wickets (to enable a snick-o-meter to give a more powerful sound wave, if the bat is on the ground). Double benefit is snick- sound- waves (of bat and ball) can also be captured with greater clarity.

Madhu Nivriti | Secunderabad

RAHUL GANDHI DISQUALIFICATION

Sir — With lightning speed Congress leader Rahul Gandhi lost his position as a parliamentarian. The Lok Sabha secretariat moved in indecent haste and ensured Rahul Gandhi's removal from the house. This was before a higher court could stay the conviction. Rahul acquired the credentials of a Pan-India mass leader after the

Far from over



The major concern for convening a high-level COVID-19 task force meeting is necessitated by an increase in Covid-19 cases in the country. This is the first time this year that such a meeting has been convened, with the last such meeting. As in the past Kerala reported the first death and that is worrisome. By all metrics,

COVID-19 cases have increased over the past few weeks. As of March 23, India officially reported 1,300 newly reported Coronavirus cases over a 24-hour period bringing the overall tally of active cases to 7,605. In the previous few weeks, an average of 800 cases were recorded weekly. The death toll climbed to 5,30,813 with five deaths, one each recorded in Chhattisgarh, Delhi, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Kerala, as of March 22. The number of daily deaths has been in the single digits in the past few weeks. Globally, about 1 lakh cases are reported daily. In 2023, far from being the end of pandemic, there is another dangerous phase that requires urgent attention.

CK Subramaniam | Mumbai

Bharath Jodo Yatra.. Rahul Gandhi was a consistent critic who highlighted Modis role in Adanis issue. He was the biggest thorn in Narendra Modi's flesh. Now the Narendra Modi Government has taken unethical measures to silence Rahul Gandhi.

Because of disqualifying Rahul Gandhi as a parliamentarian, his voice is unlikely to be heard in Parliament. Rahul Gandhi is a thorn in many because he is straight forward, fearless and speaks from his heart. Now the voice that had pierced the iron curtain installed by the BJP Government and told the nation the story of crony capitalism of how an industrialist has jumped from 609th position to second spot on the global rich list earning lakhs of crores in a couple of years was silenced in Parliament. The voice has raised and roared against the Government on the progressive land acquisition, their farm laws on Demonitisation, on the price rise, unemployment, the flawed GST, the Rafael deal, covid mismanagement, the Chinese encroachment on Indian territory, attacks on Dalits and Muslims has been silenced in Parliament. The voice without fear has brought the story of 700 farmers were killed during the farmers agitation. The voice

roared like a Lion on how different institutions of our country, the press, the judiciary, the Parliament, the Election commission are under pressure. RSS is a fundamentalist, fascist organization, which he never hesitated to mention. The voice which said and called a thief a thief is sent to prison, whereas people like Anurag Thakur who is accused of chanting "desh ke Gaddaron ko Goli maaro salonko" are having no cases and now calling shamelessly Rahul Gandhi an offender. People like Pragya Thakur who is accused of terrorism are allowed to move freely in Parliament. Nearly 50 percent of Parliament members have criminal records and are in Parliament. The absence of Rahul means a dramatic change in Parliament. He was the most powerful voice on many issues. Now the Rahul Gandhi issue has brought to the foreground to the nation that the defamation laws are being misused in India to stifle free speech and settle scores and used as a weapon of vendetta politics and politics of witch hunt and harassment.

Zakir Hussain | Kazipet

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

Role of technology in developing digital art

Technology has greatly impacted the art world. It has added a number of techniques artists can use to express their creativity

Digital space thrives in almost every sphere. You name it and it's there. With a vision of transforming India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge-based economy by ensuring easy access, digital inclusion, digital empowerment and bridging the digital divide, the Government of India launched the Digital India programme on July 1st, 2015. Since then, there has been no turning back.

Art is a broad category that incorporates creativity with the goal of expressing aesthetic, emotional depth or intellectual concepts. Today, companies hire web designers and graphic designers who can create designs and art as per society's requirements. This is unlike the traditional form which required pen, paper, lots of money and time. Today, the traditional form of art is almost out of range. The world of art has always played a significant part in everyone's life. Anyone can express information, ideas, feelings, such as love, happiness, sorrow, or boredom through art. Art is



everywhere and can be experienced anywhere and at any point of time be it walking through the city, listening to the radio or even while driving a car. Behind every art there is a message that makes an individual aware of the world around them and how one reacts to each other.

We are living in a world where technology has provided artists with new tools of expression. Art and technology have allowed artists to cross over into new perspectives, thus giving birth to the booming term 'Digital Art'. Digital art is a growing creative evolution in which traditional painting techniques such as watercolour, oil pastel, impasto and acrylic are combined with powerful dig-

ital tools such as Coral Draw, Canva, Adobe Photoshop and much more. It encompasses a wide range of techniques from digital drawings to paintings and illustrations, photos, videos and many more.

Technology has greatly impacted the art world and the artists. It has not only opened numerous opportunities for artists but expanded the number of techniques they can access. Digital styles such as dynamic painting, digital photography, pixel art, 2D and 3D computer graphics are among the most in demand. Artists can paint or draw on an iPad or tablet with a stylus just as they can on canvas with a paintbrush and paint by quickly switching

between tools and colours in just a few clicks thereby having access to a wealth of colours, effects, layers and tools unlike traditional artists worrying about refilling colour palettes. Art has no universal definition, but perspectives evolve over time. Artists are often tempted to implement new media technologies and interpretations. Today, artists from across the globe can display their art virtually and viewers can access it at their convenience. The world is going through a digital revolution, India being one of them, thereby stretching the bounds of conventional media and generating a strong presence that aptly describes general societal perspectives on social, cultural, and other elements of existence.

Soon, its advancement in art will be worth observing considering the huge talent the country possesses. Also, it will be a great opportunity for artists both existing and aspiring in terms of employment and available in non-accessible geographical locations. Digital art will benefit India. (The writer is a teacher at a reputed school in Delhi)



SAKSHI SETHI

FIRST COLUMN

HARD SELTZERS ARE REPLACING ALCOHOL

Hard seltzers are healthier alternative to traditional alcoholic beverages



VIMAL CHAND

As the Indian alcohol industry continues to evolve, we are witnessing the rise of the latest category of beverages — Hard Seltzers. Compared to other alcoholic beverages, hard seltzer has an unusual taste and is often described as refreshing and fruity. It is also relatively new, having only gained popularity in the past decade. It has seen significant growth in the US, Canada, and Australia. While still in its nascent stage in India, the global success of Hard Seltzers can be attributed to its low-calorie, low-carb, and gluten-free nature, making it an attractive option for the health-conscious consumer.

As the majority of India's population is under 40, consumer preferences are rapidly evolving and favoring innovative products that fit with their active and health-conscious lifestyles. Additionally, brands have leveraged the power of social media, collaborating with influencers and celebrities to increase their visibility and popularity. This has helped them create buzz around their products amongst younger consumers. In the United States, the Hard Seltzer market has grown unprecedentedly, with sales skyrocketing. It is estimated that by 2025, the global Hard Seltzer market will be worth \$14.5 billion, with the Asia-Pacific region being the fastest-growing market.



India, being a young and rapidly evolving market, presents a significant opportunity for Hard Seltzers to disrupt the traditional alcohol industry. Hard seltzers are low-calorie, low-carb, and lightly flavored alcoholic beverages marketed as a healthier alternative to traditional alcoholic beverages. Unlike beer, wine, or spirits, true seltzer has a low ABV (alcohol by volume) content, typically ranging from 4% to 6%. Hard seltzers are a brew of simple sugars, commonly known as Sugar Brews in the industry. Most of the natural sugars are converted into alcohol, resulting in low calories and carbs. A brewed hard seltzer is also far apart in taste from infused seltzers, leaving no taste of alcohol or artificial sweeteners. It also is incredibly light on the stomach compared to beers as there is no malt base.

Consumer preferences have steadily shifted toward low-calorie and low-sugar beverages. As health and wellness become increasingly a priority to consumers, traditional alcoholic beverages, which are high in calories and sugar, are losing their appeal. Hard Seltzers, low in calories and carbs, appeal to this new generation of active, health-conscious consumers. Historically, beer and other alcoholic beverages have been marketed primarily toward men, while wine and cocktails have been marketed toward women. However, true seltzer is marketed as a gender-neutral and inclusive drink. Its light and refreshing taste appeals to both men and women. Its packaging is often unisex, which allows it to appeal to a wider range of consumers.

While the Indian market is still in its early stages of adoption, we can draw comparisons from other countries that have already experienced Hard Seltzer disruption. In the United States, Hard Seltzers have replaced beer and wine as the preferred beverage choice for many consumers. Furthermore, the wide range of flavors available in Hard Seltzers has made it a popular choice for those looking to experiment with various tastes.

The rise of Hard Seltzers in the US can be seen as a glimpse of what is to come in India. With the launch of Hard Seltzers in India, we expect a similar shift in consumer preferences toward low-calorie and low-alcohol beverages. Seltzers are not just another alcoholic beverage. They are a revolution in the making, disrupting the traditional alcohol industry with its low-calorie and low-carb profile. *(The writer is Co-Founder and CEO of SPYK, the first hard seltzer in India)*

Fine tune PM-KISAN to be efficacious



UTTAM GUPTA

The inclusion of ineligible persons on the beneficiaries list of PM-KISAN raises concerns and undoes the very purpose the scheme was launched for



A significant decline in the number of farmers receiving income transfers under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme from 104 million during 2021-22 to 80 million during 2022-23 and a corresponding reduction in payment from Rs 67,032 crore in 2021-22 to Rs 57,646 crore in 2022-23 has caused much consternation.

Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 24, 2019, and made effective from December 1, 2018, PM-KISAN is a Central Sector Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) Scheme under which the Union Government. It provides an income support of Rs 6,000 a year to farmers with a valid enrolment, paid in three equal cash transfers of Rs 2,000 each every four months. The money is credited to their account via the DBT mode.

Any landholding farm household is eligible for cash transfers, provided they don't pay income tax, hold government posts, or are retirees receiving pensions above Rs 10,000. The cutoff date for beneficiary identification based on Agriculture Census 2015-16 estimates is February 1, 2019. The total number of beneficiaries intended to be covered under the scheme was about 140 million.

Since the launch of the scheme, Rs 250,000 crore has been given to nearly 110 million farmers spread over 13 installments. Having decided who should be eligible to receive income transfer, with time, the number of beneficiaries can only increase as more farmers are added to the list. There is no reason for the number to go down. Unlike other schemes such as NREGA, where the number of beneficiaries covered and payments made thereof is linked to the availability of work, under PM-KISAN, all farmers in the beneficiaries list once decided are entitled to receive the money.

It is only plausible that the farmers (24 million) were incorrectly identified and, therefore, ineligible to receive assistance if there was a reduction. Their names have now been dropped from the list. This has ensured that they haven't received pay-

PM-KISAN WAS DESIGNED TO SUPPLEMENT THE FINANCIAL NEEDS OF SMALL AND MARGINAL FARMERS

(The writer is a policy analyst)

ments during 2022-23 and will not in the future. What about the money already given to them during 2021-22 and even before that?

The Centre claims it has a 'smooth' and 'transparent' recovery mechanism in place. This is where by the ineligible beneficiaries are identified and the money is auto-transferred from the state nodal department's account to the Central Government account. Hopefully, it would have recovered all the excess payments made during the relevant years. The process should be expedited in cases where it hasn't been done yet. But the inclusion of 'ineligible' persons in the beneficiaries list raises concern. This is all the more relevant since the Centre has adopted a robust and foolproof IT-based process for beneficiary identification. Let's look at the steps involved.

The farmer registers on the PM-KISAN portal and the State validates her eligibility; after eligibility verification, the State uploads farmer details on the portal; the portal validates the records for junk data or duplicity; accepted data is forwarded to the public financial management system (PFMS) for account number and type validation; the list is sent back to States for the final approval; eligible records are available for generation of Request for Fund Transfer (RFT); signed RFTs are submitted to PFMS for generation of Fund Transfer Order (FTO); creation of sanction orders by agriculture ministry for approved FTOs; payment is processed and the beneficiary list is made available on the portal.

At all levels of authentication, the rejected data is sent back to the States for correction. At the foundation of this fintech architecture is 'confirming the genuineness of beneficiaries'; States have the sole

responsibility of doing this. In particular, it is important to know which documents they used for this purpose.

On a close scrutiny, it turns out that in the initial years, neither States used Aadhaar for validation nor the Centre made it compulsory; it was required to do so a year after the scheme's commencement. In such circumstances, a large number of 'ineligible' persons making their way to the beneficiary list was inevitable. Other issues related to the implementation of the scheme also deserve attention.

When launched, PM-KISAN was designed to supplement the financial needs of small and marginal farmers (SMFs), those with land holding less than 2 hectares, in procuring various inputs such as fertilisers, suitable quality seeds, pesticides, etc. To ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields, commensurate with farm income at the end of each crop cycle.

The scheme was meant to protect poor/vulnerable farmers (read: SMFs). Yet, within six months, from June 01, 2019, its scope was extended to cover all landholding farmers. In other words, the Government decided to give Rs 6,000 even to farmers with large landholdings who didn't deserve it. This meant an increase in beneficiaries by 25 million and expenditure by Rs 15,000 crore.

The Government should exclude better-off farmers from the beneficiaries' list. The money saved (Rs 15,000 crore annually) should be used to increase SMF support. Within this group, it may also consider giving more to marginal farmers, i.e., those with land holding less than 1 hectare in sync with PM Modi's philosophy of using national resources for the poorest of the poor.

Farmers in certain States don't benefit from the scheme. For instance, in Bihar, against a total of around 16 million potential beneficiaries, the state has uploaded only 6 million. West Bengal hasn't joined the scheme, thereby denying access to about 7 million farmers in the State; the Centre is now encouraging those farmers to apply directly on the portal. In other jurisdictions, coverage in some districts is poor. To address it, the Centre has taken some initiatives.

States that have achieved 90 per cent coverage are required to verify 100 per cent 25 randomly selected villages in districts where the coverage is low. In States where the coverage is less than 80 percent, they need to verify 25 villages even in districts that are relatively high. These efforts should be vigorously pursued to ensure that all SMFs get income transfer in every nook and corner of the country.

There are millions of farmers who cultivate the land but don't own it. But, under the current arrangement for income support under PM-KISAN, they are not eligible; instead, the money is sent to the account of the person who owns the land. This anomaly should be corrected by securing data on all such tenant farmers and transferring the money to their accounts.

Finally, PM-KISAN is meant to meet the small SMF needs. It can't replace assuring them of a reasonable income on a sustainable basis. This won't be possible unless they get a reasonable price for their produce. This in turn, will require the resurrection of the now junked three Central farm laws. Unless this is done, episodes similar to that of a farmer from Maharashtra's Solapur getting a measly Rs 2.49 from the sale of over 5 quintal onions will continue to reverberate.

Have a positive mind and a healthy lifestyle

The key to success is to harness the power of human mind and tap its true potential

Recently, I watched a web series, Taj—Divided by Blood. I also read an Instagram post by a woman who had had two Caesarean operations. I also read another post about a woman who was extremely depressed yet emerged triumphant in life. The common reference point in the cases mentioned is the power of the human mind, how to harness and tap its potential.

The web series is all about the darker side of the Mughal Empire during the reign of Emperor Akbar. It is a riveting story about Shah Salim (later Jehangir), Daniyal Mirza and Murad Mirza, among the eleven children of the Mughal emperor.

Salim, despite all his talent, became a heavy drinker,



RAVI VALLURI

(The writer was the Principal Chief Commercial Manager, Southern Railway. He was decorated with the Chief of Army Staff award)

an opium addict and spent most of his time in the harem satisfying his carnal instincts. Murad Mirza could never overcome his anger, arrogance and haste, though he was blessed with remarkable military acumen and craft. Daniyal Mirza, who was extremely obedient and religious, grappled with his demons. He grappled with his fears, sexuality and tried to be a worthy son, always searching for his mother. The three princes were all subsumed in the cesspool of negativity since they did not possess robust minds to reflect efficacious thoughts. They suffered immensely in life.

Now the hardy woman who had to undergo the Caesarean operation has become a master of her mind

and runs half marathons regularly. She began with baby steps—first walking, then brisk walking, and finally running. Running a half marathon of twenty-one kilometres was certainly an arduous task, but she accepted the challenge and began practising. On a few occasions even after adequate training, she ran only fifteen to eighteen kilometres, but her legs and body caved in and she could not breast the tape. But she eventually reached the goal of completing the marathon through sheer will power and a positive thought process.

Then there is the story of a certified yoga instructor, who helps individuals live their most fulfilling lives by staying physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually

fit. Before she became an instructor, she suffered from repeated migraine attacks. The intensity of the migraines was enormous which drained her completely.

Finally, in desperation she joined the Art of Living Foundation and was immensely helped by the unique rhythmic breathing technique of Sudarshan Kriya—proper vision process, pranayama, yoga and meditation. She spends quality time five days a week imparting yoga to a large number of candidates and inspires several thousand others through her LinkedIn posts.

In a succinct manner she puts it: to learn yoga one needs a willing, positive mind, the desire to pause and self-connect and a yoga mat. What

you do not need is expensive equipment, eye-catching gym wear, protein shakes/drinks or an extremely flexible body. A healthy and positive lifestyle is a way of living where the human mind has a significant role to play. Research has proven that the human mind is bombarded by 60,000-70,000 thoughts a day and most of them are antipathetic in nature. Consequently, we become slaves of our minds and become lethargic or destructive.

By nature, the human mind gravitates towards the past or the future. This is true of most people, successful people and even achievers. When the mind constructs a nest in the past, it is full of regrets; when it builds a home in future, the tendency is to

become anxious. In both the situations it is not at peace and or in harmony with the self. Only when the mind is in the present does it find the sanctuary of happiness and peace.

There are some simple ways to train the mind to remain in the present. A regular regime of prayer, chanting, working out, meditating, planning the day in a systematic manner, practising gratitude and giving back to society, prioritising self-care, focusing on self-improvement, listening to our own gut feelings and appreciating each day as a fresh challenge and focusing on it are some methods.

A healthy and balanced lifestyle makes us grow and glow from within and the aura spreads. Without a doubt,

the principle of the Law of Attraction plays a significant role in rejigging our persona. If we emit positive thoughts, we attract positive thoughts, feelings, emotions and people. Unfortunately, the contrary is also true.

Therefore, it would be sagacious to look at the positive side by making our minds strong and lead a healthy lifestyle. And if nothing works, just surrender to the Almighty (if you believe) or surrender to your wishes and desires. Certainly, the mind will transfigure, and life and lifestyle will metamorphose for the better, nay the best. Like Buddha said, "To live a pure unselfish life, one must count nothing as one's own in the midst of abundance."

BJP-Cong stand-off touches new low in LS

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The stand-off between the ruling party and the Opposition members on Rahul Gandhi's disqualification and the Adani issue touched a new low in Lok Sabha on Monday with the Congress members trooping into the Well of the house wearing black clothes with two of its MPs throwing papers towards the Chair, leading to adjournment of proceedings in less than a minute till 4 pm.

Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day by the BJP MP Rama Devi who was in the chair after the house resumed its proceedings and passed the finance bill amid the repeat bedlam.

The trouble started right from the word go in the lower house as Congress members wearing black scarves trooped into the Well shouting slogans.

Two Congress members, T N Pratapan and Hibi Eden, who were in the Well holding placards, hurled order papers towards the Chair along with their scarves.

"Dear ED daro mat, Adani per raid karo (ED don't be scared, raid Adani)," read one



of the placards.

Congress leader Sonia Gandhi was seen wearing a black scarf while other members of her party wore black shirts. National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah was wearing a black kurta.

Amid the ruckus by Opposition members, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla adjourned proceedings of the House in less than a minute after it assembled for the Question Hour.

"I want to run the House with dignity," Speaker Birla said, adding that "proceedings are adjourned till 4 pm."

Lok Sabha has been derailed since the second leg of the Budget Session commenced on March 13 with Opposition members demanding a joint parliamentary com-

mittee probe into the alleged Adani share manipulation issue.

The Lok Sabha could hardly conduct any business in the second part of the budget session with a number of bills waiting to be passed.

However, Parliament on Monday approved the Union Budget for 2023-24 with the Lok Sabha clearing the Finance Bill as amended by the Rajya Sabha, amid continuous uproar by the Opposition over the Adani issue. The amendment to the Finance Bill 2023, which sought to correct an error with regard to the tax rate on Securities Transaction Tax, was moved by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

The passage of the Finance Bill completes the budgetary exercise for 2023-24.

Khalistan supporters take out car rally in New York

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI/NEW YORK

Continuing their protests in the US, alleged Khalistan supporters have taken out a car rally in New York. However, there was no violence reported. The rally in support of Amritpal Singh took place late Sunday a day after the Khalistan backers staged a demonstration outside the Indian embassy in Washington.

A large number of Khalistan supporters staged a protest at the iconic Times Square in New York to express support for the fugitive radical preacher Amritpal Singh.

The protesters took out a car rally that originated from the Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center in the Richmond Hill neighbourhood and culminated at Times Square in the heart of Manhattan city on Sunday afternoon amid tight security.

With blaring music and loud horns, a multitude of cars with Khalistani flags and LED mobile billboard trucks displaying photos of Singh crisscrossed the streets near the venue.

Men, women and children gathered in large numbers at the popular New York desti-



nation, carrying the Khalistan flags and raising slogans at the rally.

The protesters, carrying placards reading 'Free Amritpal Singh', held up photos of Singh as they raised anti-India slogans. Singh's photo was also displayed on one of the billboards at Times Square.

There was a heavy police presence in the area with several New York City Police Department (NYPD) vans and cars manning the area.

The car rally came a day after Khalistan supporters gathered outside the Indian Embassy in Washington on Saturday, where many of their speakers tried to incite violence, but timely intervention by an alert US Secret Service and local police prevented a

Cong experts deciphering Guj court order; Rahul's appeal to take more time

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI

Four days have elapsed since Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's conviction by a trial court followed by disqualification from Lok Sabha but the appeal at a higher judiciary system which he is not entitled to take some more time as legal experts of the grand old party are still deciphering the translation of the Gujarat court order despite its top leaders like Shakti Singh Gohil, Amee Yajnrik, are big lawyers in the State and represents party as Rajya Sabha members.

While Congress workers have taken to streets and sported black attires calling Rahul Gandhi's disqualification as MP a 'death of democracy', party is yet to move higher court to appeal against the conviction because the court order is in Gujarati and the translation is taking time. "There is a procedural delay that's all we can say this time," said a party office bearer.

Party's top legal eagle Abhishek Manu Singhvi, Salman Khurshid, P Chidambaram, Vivek Tankha



are coordinating while also in consultation with its former colleague and currently Rajya Sabha MP backed by Samajwadi Party, Kapil Sibal as the latter has been espousing the cause of Congress, particularly for Rahul Gandhi, through his social media platforms. Sibal had also expressed his dismay over the way Delhi police questioned Rahul over his certain political remarks during Bharat Jodo Yatra.

Congress is also waiting for the outcome of the NCP leader Mohammed Faizal's plea against the Lok Sabha Secretariat for not withdrawing a notification disqualifying him as an MP stayed by the Kerala High Court, now listed for Supreme Court for Tuesday.

CPR urges Govt re-look at Heat Action Plans

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a public policy think tank, on Monday picked holes in the Heat Action Plans (HAPs) in 18 states stating that most of them are not only underfunded but also do not target the 'actual' risks faced by local populations. It has recommended the Government to re-look these plans and work on their improvements in keeping with requirements at the ground level.

This is the first critical assessment of the HAPs formulated by the Government over the last ten years as a primary policy response to economically damaging and life threatening heatwaves. They prescribe a variety of preparatory activities, disaster responses, and post-heatwave response measures across state, district, and city government departments to decrease the impact of heatwaves.



The CPR's report "'How is India adapting to heatwaves?," a review of 37 heat action plans in the city (nine), district (13) and state (15) levels across 18 states showed that most of them do not explicitly carry out vulnerability assessments, leaving the authorities with little data on where to direct their scarce resources.

Though the exact number of HAPs in India is unknown, some estimates claim the existence of well over 100 HAPs nationwide.

"India has made considerable progress by creating several dozen heat action plans in the last decade. But our assessment reveals several gaps that must be filled in future plans.

Israel's embassy in India takes part in labour union strike



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Against the backdrop of political events in Israel, its embassy in India is taking part in a strike called by its labour union. The protest is against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's push to overhaul the justice system.

"The Histadrut, Israel's largest labour union, instructed all government employees to go on strike, including Israel's diplomatic missions around the world. The embassy of Israel will be closed today until further notice and no consular services will be provided," Israel's embassy in India said in a statement on Monday evening. Officials of all Israeli missions in India and around the world will remain on strike until it is called off.

IIL announces DCGI's, State admin's approval to manufacture MR vaccine

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Hyderabad-based Indian Immunologicals Limited (IIL), a vaccine manufacturer has announced receipt of approval from Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI) and State Drug Control Administration for manufacture of Measles-Rubella (MR) Vaccine.

This is the outcome of the Indo-Vietnam partnership, where IIL partnered with the Center for Research and Production of Vaccines and Biologicals, also called Polyvac, Vietnam.

Under an exclusive agreement, Polyvac, Vietnam will supply the Measles vaccine component to IIL. Rubella Vaccine components will be produced by IIL to manufacture a combined MR vaccine. This Live Attenuated MR vaccine adds to the list of several other vaccines that IIL supplies



to Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) of India. This vaccine has been proven through extensive human clinical trials to be immunogenic and safe for people of 9 months to 49 years.

Dr K Anand Kumar, Managing Director, IIL said, "We have successfully completed all phases of Product development to the satisfaction of the regulatory authorities in India. Measles-Rubella (MR) vaccine is listed in the UIP of India and is an important vaccine for our country. IIL's collaborative effort will help in the immunization of several million children against Measles and Rubella and thereby saving lives".

NCERT textbooks for 2024-25 session revised in accordance with NEP: Govt

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Education Ministry on Monday said the new NCERT textbooks to be introduced in secondary schools from the 2024-25 academic session has been revised in accordance with the new National Education Policy (NEP) and textbooks is to be developed in accordance with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF). "The new textbooks are likely to be introduced from 2024-25 academic session. It is a tall task but we are aiming for that. The textbooks will be revised as per the new NCF, work on which is already going on. Developing textbooks is a laborious task," said a senior official of the Ministry of Education.

All the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) textbooks developed as per the revised NCF will also be available in digital format. "Since COVID-19 has taught us that there is an



appetite for digital learning, all the new textbooks will simultaneously be made available digitally so anybody can download them," he added.

Noting that textbooks should not be "static", the official said an institutional framework will be developed to ensure that the textbooks are updated on a regular basis.

The NEP 2020 envisages a "5+3+3+4" curriculum pedagogical structure. According to the new school education system outlined in NEP 2020, children will spend five years in the foundational stage, three years each in the preparatory and middle stages, and four years in

the secondary stage. The Centre had in 2020 started the process to revise school textbooks by appointing former Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Chairman K Kasturirangan as the head of a 12-member steering committee responsible for developing a new National Curriculum Framework (NCF).

The four NCFs being prepared are -- NCF for Early Childhood Care and Education (NCFECE), NCF for School Education (NCFSE), NCF for Teacher Education (NCFTE), NCF for Adult Education (NCFAE).

SC issues notice to Gujarat Govt in Bilkis case

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Observing that Bilkis Bano's gangrape and murder of her family members during the 2002 Godhra riots as a "horrendous" act, the Supreme Court on Monday asked the Gujarat Government whether uniform standards, as followed in other cases of murder, were applied while granting remission to 11 convicts in the Bilkis case. The top court, which at the same time clarified that it would not be overwhelmed by emotions in the case and would only go by the law, also directed the Gujarat Government to present all the relevant documents on April 18, the next date of hearing.

Bano had moved the apex court on November 30 last year



challenging the "premature" release of 11 lifers by the State Government, saying it has "shaken the conscience of society". The 11 men convicted in the case walked out of the Godhra sub-jail on August 15 last year, after the Gujarat Government allowed their release under its remission policy. They had completed more than 15 years in jail.

A bench of Justices KM Joseph and BV Nagarathna issued notice to the Centre, Gujarat government and the

convicts on the plea filed by Bano and asked the parties to complete the pleadings by the next date of hearing. "It is a very horrendous act. We have an experience of people coming to this court saying they have been languishing in jails for ordinary cases of murder and their remission is not being considered. So is this a case where the standards have been adopted uniformly as in other cases? the bench remarked orally.

As the hearing commenced, the bench said there is a gamut of issues involved and it needed to hear the matter in detail. "What is the broad line of submission that you will take? Since power under section 432 (remission) of CrPC has been exercised by State of Gujarat, was there a direction

by this court directing Gujarat to take a decision? We would like to know before hand what is the gamut of issues and the framework within which you will operate because I am retiring on June 17. I need time to understand the matter," Justice Joseph observed.

Advocate Shobha Gupta, appearing for Bano, submitted that the State where the trial is held is to decide the remission application and Gujarat did not have jurisdiction to grant remission to the convicts. She also stated that the impact of the crime on the society is to be taken into consideration while granting remission. "The jurisdiction with the State here was Maharashtra and not Gujarat. Here please look at the impact of the crime on society," she said.

Bank's decision to classify account as fraudulent must be reasoned order: SC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Monday held that a decision by a bank classifying a borrower's account as fraudulent must be a reasoned order and such an order should be passed only after giving an opportunity to the borrower. A bench of Justices of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud and Justice Hima Kohli upheld an order of the Telangana High Court in this regard.



SC to hear on Tuesday Lakshadweep MP Faizal's plea against LS Secretariat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court will hear on Tuesday Lakshadweep MP Mohammed Faizal's plea against the Lok Sabha Secretariat for not withdrawing a notification disqualifying him as an MP upon his conviction and 10-year sentence that was later stayed by the Kerala High Court. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices S Narasimha and JB Pardiwala took note of the submissions of senior advocate AM Singhvi, appearing for the former Lakshadweep parliamentarian, that the person has not been reinstated as an MP despite his conviction and sentence being stayed by the high court.

Singhvi said the appeal of the Union Territory against the High Court order is coming up for hearing before another apex court



bench on Tuesday. "Tag this with the SLP (of Lakshadweep)," said the bench. The Lok Sabha was "prompt to disqualify Faizal as an MP immediately after he was convicted and sentenced by a local court in January this year, but his membership has

not been restored yet despite the high court staying the conviction", Singhvi, appearing for the Nationalist Congress Party leader, said.

Faizal stood disqualified from the membership of Lok Sabha from January 11, the date of his conviction in an attempt to murder case by a sessions court in Kavaratti, according to a notification issued on January 13 by the Lok Sabha Secretariat. In his petition filed in the apex court through advocate K R Sasiprabhu, Faizal said the Lok Sabha Secretariat failed to withdraw the notification despite the fact that his conviction was stayed by the high court on January 25.

CBI chargesheets bank officer for embezzling ₹55 cr from public sector bank accounts

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The CBI has charge-sheeted a bank officer and his accomplice whose vulgar greed for online gaming lured them to allegedly embezzle over Rs 55 crore from various accounts of a public sector bank here.

The agency alleged that accused officer Bedanshu Shekhar Mishra and his accomplice Shailesh Kumar Jaiswal committed forgery in Punjab & Sind Bank, where Mishra was employed, to channel funds from various bank accounts into different betting games online, officials said.

Mishra was posted at the North Campus branch of Punjab & Sind Bank at Khalsa College of Delhi University



from June 28, 2021.

In his statement during a bank enquiry, Mishra admitted that he used banking IDs (iden-

tities) of colleagues to make illegal transfers for online gaming bids, they said.

His statement was record-

ed during the enquiry after the bank noticed irregularities, forgery, siphoning and misappropriation of funds in various

accounts such as RTGS, Inward Parking Account amongst Deposits Customers, primarily of Khalsa College.

The CBI probe revealed that Mishra was found to have "illegally and without any authority" encashed 32 fixed deposits receipts belonging to Khalsa College, maintained at the bank, amounting to Rs 48.76 crore, while also siphoning Rs 6.74 crore from various Mudra Loan accounts, they said. "During the investigation aforesaid original FDRs are said to have been seized from the Principal of Khalsa College, Jaswinder Singh, out of which 12 FDRs were found to be issued in the name of the Principal, SGTB Khalsa College and rest in the name of student

fund, SGTB Khalsa College," the CBI has alleged.

Mishra used the official IDs allotted to the officer of Khalsa College Branch for transferring the funds into 29 different bank accounts without any supporting vouchers, according to the CBI findings. "It is further alleged that...Mishra along with an unknown person has carried out these unauthorised forgery and fraudulent transactions by using system ID's of other staff members without their authorities," the chargesheet revealed.

Mishra has a penchant for online games such as Monopoly and CrazyTimes offered on the web site "Goa247.Live," registered in Curacao in the Caribbean and

managed in India by individuals based in Dubai, the probe has revealed.

Between May 12 and September 14 in 2022, Mishra regularly played online games and transferred the liquidated amount of the FDRs, to the tune of Rs 10.81 crore, in the four accounts provided by the gaming website, the agency alleged in the charge-sheet.

Dubai-based individuals Rajat Muralidhar, Nishanth, Rahul Kumar, A Rajath, and Nishanth were managing the gaming website in India.

Rahul Kumar and A Rajath, allegedly lured individual current account holders to offer their bank accounts in lieu of commission. These personal bank accounts were used

to accept deposits from the customers of the gaming website.

Mishra allegedly sanctioned and opened 48 Mudra loan accounts during the period from June 2021 to November 2022. Jaiswal managed eight of these accounts through his relatives and employees.

The proceeds of the loan amount were allegedly funnelled into the gaming business site GameKing11, and the rest of the amount was allegedly utilised for illegal purposes other than those for which the loans were sanctioned.

Alleged fraudulent transactions to the tune of Rs 6.74 crore in seven bank accounts were made by Mishra on the directions of Jaiswal.

Pro-Khalistan body makes threat calls ahead of G-20

PTI ■ DEHRADUN

A banned pro-Khalistan organisation has made threat calls to hundreds of people including journalists ahead of a crucial three-day G-20 meeting to be held in Uttarakhand's Ramnagar with an aim to "internationalise" the issue, officials said.

They said those who received the calls on Sunday night heard pre-recorded messages by Gurpatwant Singh Pannu, head of the organization 'Sikh for Justice', in which he said they will raise flags at airports, railway stations and other areas during the meeting days.

"Ramnagar is not a part of India and it will be made a part of Khalistan after Punjab is freed," Pannu said in the message, according to Uttarakhand Special Task Force's Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Senthil Abudai Krishnaraj S. The Chief Scientific Advisors' Roundtable (CSAR) of G-20



countries will be held in Uttarakhand's Ramnagar from March 28-30 with its focus on harnessing the benefits of traditional knowledge in health-care.

Krishnaraj S said all the numbers from which such recorded calls were received are being traced. The DIG said the Special Task Force is probing the matter. It seems that Pannu is trying to gain "publicity" on the Khalistan issue through the G-20 meeting. However, the Uttarakhand police is fully prepared and

"we will not allow the purpose of these separatists to be fulfilled", he said. "There is a full security arrangement for the G-20 meeting. Our senior officers are keeping a watch there," he said.

Meanwhile, the police in Udham Singh Nagar district which has a sizeable Sikh population are on alert over the absconding Khalistan separatist preacher Amritpal Singh and his associates. Following intelligence received from the Punjab Police and central agencies, the district police has

tightened security especially in areas bordering Uttar Pradesh districts of Rampur, Pilibhit and Bareilly, and Nepal.

All government and private vehicles are being checked and religious places are also being monitored, officials said. City Superintendent of Police Manoj Kumar Katyal said religious places near the international border are also being searched, and a special vigil is being kept on the people passing through the India-Nepal border. The police have also pasted posters of Amritpal and his associates at various places, and running a "verification campaign", he said.

The Punjab Police has alerted their Uttarakhand counterpart suspecting that absconding Amritpal Singh might have taken a shelter in Uttarakhand and might flee to Nepal. The Sashtra Seema Bal (SSB) and the state police in Pithoragarh are also keeping a close watch in areas near the India-Nepal border, officials said.

Pvt doctors protesting against Rajasthan Right to Health Bill

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Private doctors protesting against the Rajasthan Right to Health Bill took out a massive rally in Jaipur on Monday in a show of strength and to press their demand for its withdrawal. Thousands of doctors, their family members, and people associated with the medical profession including medical shop owners took part in the rally which started from the resident doctors hostel ground of the SMS Hospital.

The rally passed through Suchna Kendra Tiraha, Maharani College Tiraha, Ashok Marg and Paanch Batti on MI Road. Private hospitals and nursing homes have been closed for several days due to a strike of private doctors, leading to a rush of patients in government hospitals.

Medical services in government hospitals were also affected as doctors across the state boycotted work for two hours in solidarity with the protesting private doctors. Chief Secretary Usha Sharma and other senior officials of the state government held a meeting with a delegation of the agi-



tating private hospitals on Sunday and assured them to hold a discussion on their suggestions regarding the bill.

However, the doctors were adamant and said any discussion would be possible only after the bill was withdrawn. The bill was passed by the Assembly last week. Private doctors say that the bill will increase bureaucratic interference in their functioning.

According to the Rajasthan Right to Health Bill, passed by the Assembly on Tuesday, every resident of the state will have the right to emergency treatment and care "without prepayment" at any "public health institution, health care establishment and designated health care centres".

Countrywide Covid mock drills planned on April 10-11

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Alert at the fast spreading XBB1.16 of SARS-CoV-2 which is believed to be behind the fresh surge of Covid infections in the country, the Centre has asked the States to conduct mock drills in hospitals to ensure operational readiness of hospital infrastructure including oxygen cylinders, PSA plants, ventilators and human resources. Countrywide mock drills have been planned to be conducted on April 10-11.

According to the INSACOG data, a total of 610 variant XBB1.16 samples have been found across 11 states and Union Territories with the highest number found in Maharashtra and Gujarat at 164 each, followed by 93 Telangana and 86 in Karnataka.

In yet another advisory issued on Monday, the Centre after reviewing public health

preparedness for management of Covid-19 and Covid-19 vaccination progress with States asked them to strengthen surveillance with focus on whole genome sequencing of positive samples and increase testing with higher proportion of RT-PCR tests.

On their part, States are gearing up to meet any emergency in case the infections spurt. For instance, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday reviewed the Covid-19 and influenza situation at a high-level meeting with officials and directed them to identify covid-dedicated hospitals in all 75 districts.

He directed officials to test preparations by conducting mock drills in hospitals across the state on April 11-12 and ensure that all the oxygen plants in the state are functional and ventilators provided to hospitals and medical colleges are active.

Transgressions may trigger escalation along LAC with China: Army chief

PTI ■ PUNE

Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande on Monday said transgressions remain the potential trigger for escalations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with China and asserted India has adequate reserves and was prepared to deal with any contingency.

He said China has accrued significant capacities for force mobilization, application, and

sustenance of military operations and maintained the long-pending boundary issue can not be divorced from bilateral relations between the two Asian giants.

General Pande said Chinese attempts to carry out transgressions across the LAC in violations of past agreements/protocols remain a matter of concern for India, but the Army's preparedness remains of a high order, comments coming in the backdrop

of the border standoff in eastern Ladakh that started in May 2020. He was speaking at the 2nd Strategic Dialogue on 'Rise of China and its Implications for the World', organised by the Savitribai Phule Pune University and the New Delhi-based Centre for China Analysis and Strategy.

"I think the most important aspect of our operational environment remains our legacy challenges of the unsettled

and disputed borders. Pockets of dispute and contested claims to the territory continue to exist due to differing perceptions of the alignment of the Line of Actual Control. Transgressions remain the potential trigger for escalations," the Chief of Army Staff cautioned.

Hence, Sino-Indian border management requires close monitoring as infirmities can lead to a wider conflict, General Pande said.

Suvendu meets Shah, slams Didi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari on Monday said that only a 'double engine' Government could pull his out of the muck that the Mamata Banerjee-led Trinamool Congress government had pushed it into.

Emerging from a meeting with Union Home Minister Amit Shah — the content of which he refused to divulge — Adhikari said the Bengal Chief Minister was running a government of corruption and appeasement and could be res-



cued by only a (BJP-led) double engine government at the Centre and the State. 'Bengal's future is bleak under the (TMC) government... The State's debts have gone up by

three times whereas unemployment has doubled" after Banerjee came to power, Adhikari said alleging how "the State's condition is worse than a jangule Raj." Adhikari's meeting with Shah and his double engine claim statement comes barely weeks ahead of the declaration of the State's panchayat elections.

Alleging how the central schemes were being hijacked by the State Government he said "the names of the central schemes are being changed by the TMC rulees to usurp their credit." Apparently in line with

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's suggestions to win over the minority votes too Adhikari alleged how the Bengal Chief Minister had decided to stage a 2-day dharna in Kolkata on days when Ramanavami and Ramadan coincide.

Adhikari also attacked the State Government for its alleged discriminatory policies alleging how he being the Leader of the Opposition was kept out of the facilitation programme of President Droupadi Murmu. "This is the way how the Leader of the Opposition is treated in Bengal," he said.

FROM PAGE 1

SC NOD TO URBAN LOCAL BODY POLLS

Pending further orders of this court, the operation of the above direction shall remain stayed," the apex court had said in its order.

The state government had said it had set up the Uttar Pradesh State Local Bodies Dedicated Backward Classes Commission in pursuance of the top court's judgments to decide on the issue of quota, keeping in mind the political representation of different backward castes in the local bodies.

The top court had taken note of the submission of the state government that though the tenure of the newly-appointed commission is six months, an effort will be made to ensure that the exercise gets over as expeditiously as possible, on or before March 31.

It had issued notices to those who had moved the high court against the state government's notification.

Earlier, the state government had moved the apex court with its appeal against a December 27, 2022 order of the high court, saying the latter cannot quash the draft notification issued on December 5 last year, which provided for reservation of seats in the urban civic body polls for the OBCs, apart from those for the Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and women.

The appeal said the OBCs are a constitutionally-protected section and the high court erred in quashing the draft notification. After the high court's order, the Uttar Pradesh government appointed a five-member commission for going into the entire gamut of issues for providing reservation to the OBCs in the urban local body polls.

The panel was headed by Justice (retired) Ram Avtar Singh.

The four other members of the panel were retired Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers Chob Singh Verma and Mahendra Kumar, and former legal advisors to the state government Santosh Kumar Viskarna and Brajesh Kumar Soni. The Lucknow bench of the high court had ordered that the state government notify the polls "immediately" as the term of several municipalities was going to expire by January 31, while annulling the December 5, 2022 draft notification.

The high court had directed the State Election Commission to hold the elections by January 31, after transferring the OBC seats in the draft notification to the general category.

The high court's order had come on pleas challenging the preparation of the OBC reservation draft without following the "triple test" formula prescribed by the Supreme Court.

The triple test requires setting up a commission to hold a "rigorous empirical inquiry" into the nature of the "backwardness" in the context of the local bodies, specifying the proportion of reservation based on the commission's recommendations and ensuring that it does not exceed the overall 50-per cent quota

limit.

The high court had held that the triple test condition formulated by the Supreme Court 11 years ago was mandatory.

"Until the triple test is completed in all respects by the state government, no reservation for a backward class of citizens shall be provided," the order had said.

In December last year, the state government issued a provisional list of reserved seats for the mayors of 17 municipal corporations, chairpersons of 200 municipal councils and 545 nagar panchayats for the three-tier urban elections.

It had sought suggestions and objections to the draft within seven days.

According to the draft notification, four mayoral seats — Aligarh, Mathura-Vrindavan, Meerut and Prayagraj — were reserved for OBC candidates. Of those, the mayor's posts in Aligarh and Mathura-Vrindavan were reserved for OBC women.

In addition, 54 seats for chairpersons in the 200 municipal councils were reserved for OBCs, including 18 for women. Among the seats for chairpersons in the 545 nagar panchayats, 147 were reserved for OBC candidates, including 49 for women.

RAHUL UNITES 18 OPP PARTIES, CHINKS IN MVA OVER SAVARKAR

Kharge shared some photos of the Opposition meeting and tweeted, "To save one man, Modi is trampling the interests of 140 crore people. To protect PM's Param Mitra, BJP stalls Parliament that discusses people's issues."

If NO wrong is committed, why is Govt shying away from Opposition's demand of a probe by Joint Parliamentary Committee?

In Parliament, Opposition members caused disruptions in both Houses forcing their adjournment soon after they reassembled for the day.

Kharge said Opposition MPs were dressed in black as the Prime Minister is "finishing" off democracy.

Sonia was seen wearing a black scarf while other members of her party wore black shirts. National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah was wearing a black kurta.

In the morning, MPs of various Opposition parties met at the Parliament Complex to discuss a strategy.

In the Lok Sabha, Congress members wearing black scarves trooped into the Well shouting slogans. Two Congress members, T N Pratapan and Hibi Eden, who were in the Well holding placards, hurled order papers towards the Chair along with their scarves.

"Dear ED daro mat, Adani per raid karo (ED don't be scared, raid Adani)," read one of the placards.

After the Houses were adjourned, Opposition MPs, including Sonia and Kharge, gathered near the statue of Mahatma Gandhi in the Parliament Complex and raised slogans against the government.

Holding a huge "Satyamev Jayate" ban-

ner and placards with "save democracy" written on them, the MPs proceeded towards the Vijay Chowk where they staged a sit-in.

"Today is like a Black Day! Such things never happened earlier. For small things defamation cases are put on leaders and even when the punishment is not exceeding two years our leader has been disqualified," Kharge told reporters, alleging that this has been done to discourage him, silence him and scare him.

The Modi Government asked the Speaker to disqualify him in minutes and acted in lightning speed because they did not want him to speak in Parliament, Kharge alleged, adding that "they wanted him to be silenced so that he does not raise his voice against the prime minister on the Adani issue". He also asked how businessman Gautam Adani's wealth rose so much in the last few years.

"When you are going to foreign countries how many times have you taken the industrialist with you," he questioned the prime minister and said, "We want a JPC on the Adani issue. Why is the government not agreeing to this? Why are you scared of a JPC probe... It means 'dal mein kuch kala hai' (something is wrong)."

The Opposition has been seeking a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the allegations of corporate fraud and stock price manipulations against the Adani Group. The business group has denied the allegations.

Leaders from DMK, Samajwadi Party, JD(U), BRS, CPI(M), CPI, RJD, NCP, IUML, MDMK, Kerala Congress, TMC, RSP, AAP, NC and Shiv Sena (UBT), among others, met at Kharge's chamber.

Opposition members have displayed coordination during the Budget Session of Parliament and the Congress has expressed hope that this coordination will also be extended outside Parliament.

K-SUPPORTERS IN CANADA BURN TRICOLOUR

They were dangerously close to the embassy.

During previous protests, they were held across the road, but on this occasion, they came close to the boundary wall. The incident was termed as "an infringement of diplomatic space". About 400 protesters gathered in front of the High Commission, the largest number ever witnessed in a demonstration there.

About 500 also protested in front of the Indian consulate in Vancouver on Sunday. India had already alerted Ottawa to the requirement for heightened security measures given tensions related to the manhunt in Punjab for Amritpal Singh and the potential for escalation if he were to be located. The National Alliance of Indo-Canadians criticised the flag burning incident and said in a tweet, "Is publicly burning flag of a country, in this case India, consistent with Canadian values? This must not be allowed in a civilised democracy, like ours."

In the US, a large number of Khalistan

supporters staged a protest at the iconic Times Square here to express support for the fugitive radical preacher.

The protesters took out a car rally that originated from the Baba Makhan Shah Lubana Sikh Center in the Richmond Hill neighbourhood and culminated at Times Square in the heart of Manhattan city on Sunday afternoon amid tight security. There was a heavy police presence in the area with several New York City Police Department (NYPD) vans and cars manning the area

On March 19, India's High Commissioner to Ottawa Sanjay Kumar Verma had to cancel an appearance at a reception organised by the Friends of India and Canada Foundation in Surrey, British Columbia as nearly 200 protesters, some wielding swords, gathered in front of the venue, the Taj Park Convention Centre, and blocked the entrance.

RAHUL ASKED TO VACATE HOUSE; CONG INSULTING JUDICIARY, ALLEGES BJP

While addressing a rally on Sunday to protest the disqualification of Rahul as a member of the Lok Sabha, Priyanka had criticised the BJP for labeling the Congress as a "dynastic" party. "They (BJP) accuse us of dynasticism... Then what was Lord Ram?" she had asked.

The senior BJP leader said there can be nothing more unfortunate than the comparisons drawn between Lord Ram and the Gandhi family.

Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister Hardeep Puri also criticised Congress leaders for their comments. He asked them to "introspect" and ponder over what is acceptable in a political and legal system.

CHEETAH DIES 6 MONTHS AFTER TRANSLOCATION FROM NAMIBIA

They found that in her last blood sample, collected on August 15, 2022, the animal's creatinine level was 400 (an indicator of poor kidney function), he said.

Namibian wildlife experts and KNP veterinary doctors worked hard day and night to cure Sasha, but the animal did not survive, the forest official said. The seven other cheetahs are doing well. Among these seven, three male and a female were released in the park's open forest area and they are "totally healthy, active and hunting in a normal manner", the statement said.

Twelve cheetahs brought to the KNP from South Africa last month are at present housed in a quarantine enclosure and they are healthy and active, it added. The eight Namibian cheetahs — five female and three male — were released into their enclosures at the KNP on September 17 at an event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The last cheetah died in India in Koriya district of present-day Chhattisgarh in 1947 and the fastest land animal was declared extinct in the country in 1952.

Kavitha's plea against ED summons, arrest rejected

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

BRS leader K Kavitha on Monday failed to get any interim relief from the Supreme Court on her plea, seeking protection from arrest and challenging the summons by the Enforcement Directorate in the alleged Delhi excise policy scam, and tagged her petition with others.

A bench of justices Ajay Rastogi and Bela M Trivedi said it will hear the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) leader's petitions and other pleas after three weeks.

Appearing for Kavitha, senior advocate Kapil Sibal said, "whether she needs to be interrogated at home or in the ED office is the issue which is seized of by this court and notice has been issued in petitions filed by Nalini Chidambaram and Abhishek Banerjee. I have more to say than tagging the matter".

He informed the bench that the plea filed by Nalini Chidambaram, a senior advocate and wife of Congress leader P Chidambaram, deals with a similar issue of summoning women accused by the ED.

BJP MLA arrested after his bail plea rejected in graft case by K'taka HC

PTI ■ BENGALURU

The Lokayukta police arrested BJP MLA Madal Virupakshappa hours after the Karnataka High Court dismissed his bail petition in a bribery case relating to Karnataka Soaps and Detergents Limited (KSDL) on Monday.

The Channagiri MLA had got bail days after his son Prashant M V, who was caught while receiving a bribe of Rs 40 lakh from a contractor on March 2.

Subsequent raids led to the detection of unaccounted cash of Rs 8.23 crore from

Virupakshappa's house, sources said.

"We arrested him in Tumakuru when he (the MLA) was on the way to Bengaluru," Lokayukta Inspector General of Police A Subramanyeshwara Rao told PTI.

The High Court had reserved its judgment in the matter last week. The case pertains to the alleged demand and receipt of bribes for allotting contract for supplying chemicals to the state-run company. Subsequent raids by the Lokayukta unearthed cash to the tune of Rs 8.23 crore.

Osmanabad, Aurangabad renamed due to history, Maha Govt tells HC

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Maharashtra Government on Monday told Bombay High Court that Aurangabad and Osmanabad were renamed Sambhaji Nagar and Dharashiv, respectively, due to history and not for political reasons.

The government filed its affidavits in response to two public interest litigations challenging the decision to change the names of these cities. The petitions claimed the decision was politically moti-

vated. The government in its affidavits denied the name change was being effected for any such reason as alleged in the petitions. "The state government has complied with all the necessary procedures involved in effecting change of name. The decision to change the name of Osmanabad to Dharashiv neither leads to any religious and communal hatred nor creates any rift between religious groups," the state government said. The affidavit said a majority of the people celebrated the name change.

2 women, 1 teen commit suicide in Kota

Kota: Two women and a 17-year-old allegedly committed suicide by hanging themselves at their houses in Rajasthan's Kota within 24 hours, police said on Monday. In Bambulia village, 28-year-old Mamta hung herself at her home on Monday, two months after her husband Murarilal died in a road accident, SHO Dhanraj Meena said. The woman was depressed after her husband's death. Her

4-year-old son sustained serious leg injuries in same mishap, he said. On Sunday night, 17-year-old Krishna, a student of 12, died after hanging herself with a 'dupatta' at her home in Itawa town here, SHO Meena said.

The reason behind extreme step by the minor was yet to be ascertained as no suicide note was recovered from the spot, he said.

Embattled Netanyahu appeals for peace

Israeli President asks PM to halt judicial overhaul

PTI ■ JERUSALEM

A head of a much-anticipated announcement to freeze his plan for a judicial overhaul, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday urged protesters “to behave responsibly and refrain from violence” as Israelis from all over the country started descending into Jerusalem and workers from a range of sectors joined a protest movement against the government’s contentious plan.

Netanyahu’s appeal came hours after President Isaac Herzog Monday appealed to him to immediately halt his controversial judicial overhaul, warning that the move has put the country’s security, economy and society under threat.

Prime Minister Netanyahu in his first public statement since widespread demonstra-



Israeli police use a water cannon to disperse demonstrators blocking a highway during a protest against plans by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government to overhaul the judicial system in Tel Aviv, Israel on Monday. AP/PTI

tions erupted in reaction to his sacking of the defence minister has urged protesters, from the left and right, “to behave responsibly and refrain from

violence.”As Israelis from all over the country started descending into Jerusalem, in a tweet Netanyahu appeared to address fears of violent clashes

‘Diplomats strike against govt plan’

Tel Aviv: The spokesman for Israel’s largest trade union says diplomats at Israeli missions abroad are also striking against the government’s plan to overhaul the judiciary. Yaniv Levy, the Histadrut spokesman, said the missions were providing only emergency services. Ambassadors and consuls-general were among those on strike. Workers from across a range of fields went on strike Monday, in a bid to ramp up pressure on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to scrap the overhaul plan. AP

this evening between opponents and supporters of the government’s judicial overhaul plan. “All of us are brothers and sisters,” Netanyahu stressed in his tweet. Unverified reports in

the local media, quoting sources in Netanyahu’s Likud party, have said that the Prime Minister is going to freeze the Judicial blitz that has completely paralysed the nation with widespread strikes across all walks of life.

President Herzog’s remarks came after Prime Minister Netanyahu sacked Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for opposing his judicial reforms, sparking widespread street protests. The president also called on the government to put aside political considerations for the sake of the nation.

“Last night we witnessed very difficult scenes. I appeal to the Prime Minister, members of the Government, and members of the Coalition: there are harsh and painful feelings. The entire nation is rapt with deep worry,” Herzog said. “Our security, economy, society — all are under threat. The whole people of Israel are looking at you. The whole Jewish People are looking at you. The whole world is looking at you,” the ceremonial president in a statement.

China silent on reports of skipping G20 meet in Arunachal Pradesh

PTI ■ BEIJING

China on Monday declined to react to reports that its officials skipped a “confidential” G20 meeting held in Arunachal Pradesh, which Beijing claims as part of the mainland.

When asked about reports that China has abstained from the meeting held on Sunday at Itanagar, the capital of Arunachal Pradesh, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning told a media briefing here “I am not aware of what you said.” “I have to check it with my colleagues,” she said. The question and her reply did not figure in the official transcript of the media briefing posted on the Chinese Foreign Ministry website hours later. China claims

Arunachal Pradesh as part of South Tibet. India firmly rejects China’s claims and asserts that the state is an integral part of the country.

Chinese Foreign Minister Qin Gang visited New Delhi earlier this month to attend the G20 Foreign Ministers’



Meeting. Qin also met External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on March 2. The meeting was the first between Jaishankar and Qin after the latter became the Chinese foreign minister in December.

Taiwan’s former leader Ma begins China visit

Taoyuan (Taiwan): Former Taiwan President Ma Ying-jeou departed for a tour of China on Monday, in what he called an attempt to reduce tensions a day after Taiwan lost one of its few remaining diplomatic partners to China. The ex-president is visiting in a private capacity, bringing a delegation of academics and college students for exchanges, as well as members of his family, but the trip is loaded with political meaning.

Ma’s policies brought Taiwan and Beijing to their closest relationship ever, but his exit from office was overshadowed by massive protests against a trade deal with the mainland and his successor has focused on bolstering ties with the US and defending the autonomy of the democratically governed island that China claims as part of its own territory. Current President Tsai Ing-wen is expected to launch a 10-day diplomatic tour of her own Wednesday, ostensibly to visit the island’s remaining allies in Latin America. She will stop in the US, Taiwan’s biggest unofficial partner and supplier of arms.

Ma’s visit comes amid rising tensions. Beijing has stepped up pressure against Taiwan in recent years, poaching its diplomatic allies while also sending military fighter jets flying towards the island on a near daily basis. On Sunday, Honduras established diplomatic relations with China, leaving Taiwan with only 13 countries that recognise it as a sovereign state. Ma, a member of the opposition Nationalist Party (Kuomintang), will land in Shanghai before starting his visit in nearby Nanjing. He is expected to tour the mainland from March 27 to April 7, stopping in Wuhan and Changsha, as well as other cities. He is bringing college students from Taiwan to meet with fellow students from Shanghai’s Fudan University and Changsha’s Hunan University. Ma has framed the visit as a bid to lower the tensions in cross-strait relations through people to people exchange. AP

Streets seethe with protest in France

AP ■ PARIS

A big day has come for French high school student Elisa Fares. At age 17, she is taking part in her first protest. In a country that taught the world about people power with its revolution of 1789 — and a country again seething with anger against its leaders — graduating from bystander to demonstrator is a generations-old rite of passage. Fares looks both excited and nervous as she prepares to march down Paris streets where people for centuries have similarly defied authority and declared: “Non!”

Two friends, neither older than 18 but already protest veterans whose parents took them to demonstrations when they were little, are showing Fares the ropes. They’ve readied eye-drops and gas masks in case police fire tear gas — as they have done repeatedly in recent weeks.



“The French are known for fighting and we’ll fight,” says one of the friends, Coline Marionneau, also 17. “My mother goes to a lot of demonstrations ... She says if you have things to say, you should protest.” For French President Emmanuel Macron, the look of determination on their young faces only heralds deepening crisis. His government has ignited a firestorm of anger

with unpopular pension reforms that he railroaded through parliament and which, most notably, push the legal retirement age from 62 to 64.

Furious not just with the prospect of working for longer but also with the way Macron imposed it, his opponents have switched to full-on disobedience mode. They’re regularly striking and demonstrating and threatening to make his

second and final term as president even more difficult than his first. It, too, was rocked by months of protests — often violent — by so-called yellow vest campaigners against social injustice.

Fares, the first-time protester, said her mother had been against her taking to the streets but has now given her blessing. “She said that if I wanted to fight, she wouldn’t stop me,” the teen says. Critics accuse Macron of effectively ruling by decree, likening him to France’s kings of old. Their reign finished badly: In the French Revolution, King Louis XVI ended up on the guillotine. There’s no danger of that happening to Macron.

But hobbled in parliament and contested on the streets piled high with reeking garbage uncollected by striking workers, he’s being given a tough lesson, again, about French people power.

Zelensky meets UN atomic agency chief

Zaporizhzhia: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky met Monday with UN atomic energy chief Rafael Mariano Grossi in southern Ukraine where they discussed the precarious situation at the Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant. The plant, which is Europe’s biggest, has lost several of its power transmission cables during Russia’s war, and on multiple occasions has had to switch to emergency diesel generators.

Grossi, who is director-general of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency, plans to visit the plant, which is held by Russian forces, this week. The agency has permanent staff stationed at the plant.

In the meeting, covered exclusively by The Associated Press, Grossi expressed his concern to Zelensky that the situation at the plant “isn’t getting any better.” He stressed that the



situation at the plant remains tense because of the militarisation of the area around it and the recent blackout at the plant. It wasn’t the first time that has occurred since Russian forces last year took it over.

The two met in the city of Zaporizhzhia, which is in Ukrainian-held territory, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) north-east of the nuclear plant with the same name. Elsewhere, two people were killed and 29 wounded Monday when Russian forces shelled the

Ukrainian city of Sloviansk, in the partially occupied eastern Donetsk region, local officials said. Video footage of the aftermath showed damaged residential buildings, debris in the streets and vehicles on fire.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelensky described the attack as “terrorism.” Russia has denied targeting residential areas even though artillery and rocket strikes have hit Ukrainian apartment buildings and civilian infrastructure daily during the war. AP

Imran gets interim bail in 7 cases

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistani court on Monday granted interim bail to Imran Khan in seven different cases registered against him following clashes at the federal judicial complex here earlier this month when the former prime minister arrived from Lahore to appear in a corruption case hearing.

A two-member division bench of the Islamabad High Court (IHC), comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Mianul Hassan Aurangzeb, heard the bail applications. Khan, the chairman of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, sought interim bail in seven cases registered against him in Golra, Bara Kahu, Ramna, Khanna and CTD police stations.

Barrister Salman Safdar, Khan’s counsel, who filed the pleas, stated that the former prime minister would suffer

“irreparable loss” if he was arrested.

“Furthermore, being head of the single largest political party, there is an apprehension that his political adversaries and opponents would be able to further their nefarious designs and political ambitions if pre-arrest bail is not granted to the petitioner,” according to the petition.

The court after hearing arguments granted interim bail to the former premier. Intense clashes erupted outside the judicial complex on March 18 when Khan arrived from Lahore to attend a much-awaited hearing in the Toshakhana case.

During the confrontation between PTI workers and police, over 25 security personnel were injured, prompting Additional District and Sessions Judge Zafar Iqbal to defer the court hearing in this case till March 30.

Prince Harry in court as privacy case against newspaper begins

PTI ■ LONDON

Britain’s Prince Harry, who now lives in the US, made a surprise appearance at the High Court in London on Monday as his legal action against a newspaper group for breach of his privacy began. The 38-year-old Duke of Sussex is among a group of celebrity claimants, including singer Elton John and actor Liz Hurley, who are suing the Associated Newspapers Limited (ANL) for “abhorrent criminal activity” and “gross breaches of privacy” as part of alleged phone-tapping.

ANL, the publisher of ‘Daily Mail’ newspaper, denies the allegations as “preposterous smears” and Monday’s preliminary hearing will consider their legal arguments for a judge to decide whether the case will go further to a full hearing. A spokesperson for ANL also said the allegations were “unsubstantiated and highly defamatory claims, based on no credible evidence.” The four-day preliminary hearing is set to include ANL’s bid for the claims to be dismissed without a trial.

The legal action was announced in October 2022, when law firm Hamlins representing Prince Harry set out a number of allegations against the newspaper group, including hiring



of private investigators to secretly place listening devices inside people’s cars and homes and commissioning of individuals to surreptitiously listen into and record people’s private telephone calls, among others.

In a statement released at the time, the newspaper group said: “We utterly and unambiguously refute these preposterous smears which appear to be nothing more than a pre-planned and orchestrated attempt to drag the Mail titles into the phone hacking scandal concerning articles up to 30 years old.” “These unsubstantiated and highly defamatory claims — based on no credible evidence — appear to be simply a fishing expedition by claimants and their lawyers, some of whom have already pursued cases elsewhere,” it said.

Sunak launches crackdown on anti-social behaviour

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday launched a new Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan to crack down on illegal activities within communities by handing additional powers to the police to punish drug-related offences and criminal gang activity. Under the new Immediate Justice scheme, those found committing anti-social behaviour will be made to repair the damage they inflicted on victims and communities, with an ambition for them to start work as soon as 48 hours after their offence.

Offenders, who will be made to wear high-visibility vests or jumpsuits and work under supervision, could be made to pick up litter, remove graffiti and wash police cars as punishment for their actions.

Victims of anti-social behaviour from the local com-



munity will be given a say in offenders’ punishments to ensure justice is “visible and fits the crime.” “Anti-social behaviour undermines the basic right of people to feel safe in the place they call home,” said Sunak. “The public have rightly had enough — which is why I am determined to restore people’s confidence that those responsible will be quickly and visibly punished. This action plan maps out how we will tackle this issue with the urgency it deserves and stamp out these crimes once and for all — so that

wherever you live, you can feel safe in, and proud of your community,” he said.

Under the plans’ “zero-tolerance approach”, Nitrous Oxide or “laughing gas” will also be banned to send a message to intimidating gangs that hang around high streets and children’s parks and litter them with empty canisters.

The drug is now reported as the third most used among 16 to 24-year-olds in England and both the police and public have repeatedly reported links between use of this drug and nuisance or anti-social behaviour. “The British public are fed up with crime and nuisance behaviour in their neighbourhoods inflicting misery on people,” said UK Home Secretary Suella Braverman. “There is no such thing as petty crime — not only does antisocial behaviour leave people feeling unsafe, it can also be a gateway into serious criminality.

Pak’s electronic media watchdog bans live coverage of rallies

Islamabad (PTI): Pakistan’s electronic media watchdog banned the live coverage of rallies and public gatherings in the federal capital on Monday, hours before former prime minister Imran Khan was scheduled to appear before a top court here seeking interim bail in seven cases.

The PEMRA issued this communique after law enforcement agencies said Khan’s appearance before the Islamabad High Court could lead to a possible law and order situation in and around the federal capital. The watchdog observed that satellite television channels run live footage/images of violent mobs attacking police and law enforcement agencies.

“Such footage or images were seen on TV without any editorial oversight during the recent standoff between political party workers and law enforcement agencies in Lahore and Islamabad wherein, the violent mob used petrol bombs, injuring armless (sic) policemen and blazing (sic) police vehicles,” it observed. It said that airing footage on different satellite TV channels “created chaos and panic” among viewers and the police. “Such activism by mob not only jeopardises law and order situation but also makes public properties and lives vulnerable,” it warned. PEMRA said airing such content would be tantamount to the violation of several Supreme Court judgments.

Pak-origin Humza Yousaf declared leader of Scottish National Party

London (PTI): Pakistani-origin Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP) Humza Yousaf on Monday won the Scottish National Party (SNP) leadership contest and is set to be named as Scotland’s new First Minister, replacing Nicola Sturgeon.

The 37-year-old MSP served as the Health and Social Care minister in Sturgeon’s Cabinet until she announced her resignation last month, triggering a leadership contest within the governing party for the devolved region.

Yousaf defeated his closest rival finance minister Kate Forbes, who spent some of her formative years in India, where her parents worked as Christian missionaries, and now faces a vote at the Scottish Parliament of Holyrood on Tuesday before being formally confirmed as the region’s First Minister.

“It is hard for me to find the words to describe just how honoured I am to be entrusted

ed by our membership of the SNP to be the party’s next leader and to be on the cusp of being our country’s next First Minister,” Yousaf said in his victory speech in the Scottish capital of Edinburgh.

Yousaf said he felt “like the luckiest man in the world” as he thanked his wife and children for their support. “I feel like the luckiest man in the world to be standing here as leader of the SNP, a party I joined almost 20 years ago and that I love so dearly,” he said.

Yousaf said he would serve “in the interests of all party members” and “lead Scotland in the interests of all of our citizens, whatever your political allegiance.” He vowed to be a First Minister “for all of Scotland.” The Glasgow-born and bred politician is the son of Pakistan-born Muzaffar Yousaf, whose family migrated from Mian Channu to Glasgow in the 1960s. Yousaf’s mother, Shaista Bhutta, was born in Kenya and migrated with her

family to Scotland too.

He touched upon his migrant roots in his victory speech as he shared that his grandparents arrived in Scotland in the 1960s barely able to speak a word of English and would not have believed “in their wildest dreams” that their grandson would one day be set to be elected the First Minister of Scotland.

In 2016, Yousaf made history by taking his oath as a new MSP in English and also in Urdu while dressed in the traditional Scottish kilt.

“Taking the oath in Urdu after having done it in English is making headlines across the world — the best thing is, it is in praise of Scotland for being a tolerant and open country where diversity is celebrated. We are not without our problems or challenges but very proud of how many Scots believe our tartan is better with as many different threads woven throughout it,” he said at the time.

Complex housing Wright Brothers plane factory gutted

Dayton (AP): An early morning fire damaged a commercial building complex housing an historic airplane factory founded by the Wright Brothers in Ohio on Sunday, authorities said. Dayton fire crews were sent to the site just before 2:30 a.m. and found heavy fire throughout the complex. Fire crews used hoses to spray water on the flames and used aerial ladders to get water into openings in the roof.

The Dayton Daily News reports that crews were still on the scene nearly 12 hours after the fire was reported. Black smoke continued to stream from a collection of multiple hangar buildings, including historic Wright Brothers airplane factory hangars, and flames could be seen on the backside of the hangars, the paper reported.

Capt. Brad French said in a news release that the structure involved is listed on the National Historic Register as the first aircraft manufacturing facility founded by the Wright Brothers. Mackenzie Wittmer, executive director of the National Aviation Heritage Area, said in a Facebook post that the group was “deeply saddened by the fire that damaged our historic Wright Company airplane factory, the first-purpose built buildings for the aviation industry.” Officials were working to assess the damage, Wittmer said.

Jack Ma returns to mainland China

Hong Kong (AP): Alibaba founder Jack Ma has resurfaced in China after months of overseas travel, visiting a school Monday in the city where his company is headquartered and discussed topics such as artificial intelligence. Ma founded e-commerce firm Alibaba in the 1990s and was once China’s richest man.

He has kept a low profile with few public appearances since Nov. 2020, when he had publicly criticised China’s regulators and financial systems during a speech in Shanghai.

Shortly afterward, authorities put the brakes on the initial public offering of Alibaba’s financial affiliate Ant Group, which had been set to raise \$34.5 billion in what would have been the world’s largest share offering at the time. Alibaba was later investigated and fined \$2.8 billion for breaching antitrust rules as Chinese authorities cracked down on the once-freewheeling technology industry.



In the past year, Ma has been travelling, with reports of sightings in Europe, Japan, Thailand and Hong Kong. His itinerary has been closely watched as a barometer of Beijing’s attitude towards private businesses.

On Monday, Ma visited the Yungu School in Hangzhou, in eastern China, that was established by Ma and other partners of Alibaba, according to a WeChat post by the school. Ma discussed technologies such as the artificial intelligence chatbot ChatGPT, and spoke of his passion for learning. Alibaba did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



AP ■ LUXERBORG

Cristiano Ronaldo remains a "very important" player for Portugal, coach Roberto Martinez said on Sunday after the veteran striker scored a second successive brace in Euro 2024 qualifying against Luxembourg. The 38-year-old opened the scoring for the Euro 2016 winners by turning in Nuno Mendes' header and slotted home another in the 31st minute as Portugal won 6-0.

Ronaldo, who also netted twice against Liechtenstein on Thursday, increased his records of most men's international appearances and goals to 198 and 122 respectively.

"Cristiano is a unique player in the world, with the highest number of international caps," said Martinez, who has restored Ronaldo to the starting

line-up after he was dropped during the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

"The experience he has for the dressing room is very important.

"All players have an important role. The younger ones due to their willingness to play and players like Cristiano Ronaldo, Rui Patricio and Bernardo Silva bring experience.

"It's important to have a complete dressing room."

Martinez joined Portugal after the World Cup, replacing Fernando Santos who had been in charge since 2014.

The Spaniard has enjoyed a fine start, with his team already two points clear at the top of Group J having scored 10 goals without reply. Joao Felix, Bernardo Silva, Otavio and Rafael Leao were all also on the scoresheet in Luxembourg.

Ukraine coach upbeat despite defeat against Eng

AP ■ LONDON

Ukraine interim head coach Ruslan Rotan said the "incredible" Wembley atmosphere during their 2-0 defeat against England on Sunday would inspire the team as they battle to qualify for Euro 2024.

The side from the war-torn nation were well beaten in their opening qualifier in London in front of a packed house including thousands of Ukrainian fans.

Despite the result, Rotan took positives from the contest against the beaten finalists at Euro 2020.

"I want to thank all the Ukrainian supporters for their incredible signals to the team, the incredible wave of support the Ukrainian team felt every minute of the game," said the caretaker manager. "I'm also grateful for the support of

the England fans because it was an atmosphere like no other international game I have ever experienced and this unique Wembley Stadium atmosphere will give an incredible boost to the Ukrainian players who experienced it first hand."

But Rotan said the current situation, in which Ukraine are forced to play their matches at neutral venues following Russia's invasion of the country last year, made it tough.

"The logistics of moving from A to B are incredibly hard," he said. "It takes us almost 24 hours to get together and move to our training camp before the games.

"Unfortunately we have a war on our backs and we can only be grateful to the Ukrainian armed forces who make it possible for us to play games and to participate in competitions.



Rotan bemoaned the lack of recent match practice — Ukraine had not played an international since facing Scotland in the Nations League in September.

"We knew the quality and the strength of the England team but the Ukrainian boys deserve better," he said. "It's a good team and it will progress."

Ukraine narrowly missed out on qualifying for last year's World Cup in Qatar, losing a play-off to Wales.

"We need time," said Rotan. "When you play a competitive game half a year after the last one it's a hard task to perform."

"The Ukrainian team is getting younger. We've got future stars and in the future I'm sure we'll get good results against anyone."

England have now picked up six points from their two qualifiers so far, with their win on Sunday following a 2-1 victory in Italy last week.

Conte leaves Tottenham 'by mutual agreement'



AP ■ LONDON

Antonio Conte has left Tottenham "by mutual agreement" after 16 months in charge, the Premier League club announced on Sunday.

His departure comes after the Italian's extraordinary post-match rant following a 3-3 draw at Southampton on March 18, a game in which they blew a 3-1 lead.

The 53-year-old, who took over in November 2021, will be replaced by his assistant Cristian Stellini until the end of the season.

"We can announce that head coach Antonio Conte has left the club by mutual agreement," a club statement read.

"We achieved Champions League qualification in Antonio's first season at the club. We thank Antonio for his contribution and wish him well for the future.

"Cristian Stellini will take the team as acting head coach for the remainder of the season, along with Ryan Mason as assistant head coach."

Spurs chairman Daniel Levy added: "We have 10 Premier League games remaining and we have a fight on our hands for a Champions League place.

"We all need to pull together. Everyone has to step up to ensure the highest possible finish for our club and amazing, loyal supporters."

Conte leaves with Spurs

fourth in the Premier League, but only two points above fifth-placed Newcastle, who have two games in hand on the London side in the race for Champions League qualification.

Stellini previously stood in for Conte on the touchline this season when the Italian was recovering from gallbladder surgery.

Conte won league titles in his previous three spells in club management at Juventus, Chelsea and Inter Milan, but was unable to end Tottenham's 15-year wait to win a major trophy.

His contract was due to expire at the end of the season.

Conte labelled his players "selfish" and accused them of not being able to perform under pressure in an extraordinary tirade after the draw against Southampton.

He also took aim at Tottenham's long trophy drought and pinned the blame on a culture of repeatedly changing managers.

Conte arrived at Spurs in November 2021 with the reputation of a ruthless serial winner who could transform the fortunes of a club whose last English league title was in 1961.

There was an initial impact as an upturn in form in the second half of last season saw Spurs edge out north London rivals Arsenal to finish fourth and qualify for the Champions League.

However, there is a 20-point gap between the two this season as the Gunners close in on a first league title in 19 years.

Nikhat eager to use World C'ship experience to win Olympic quota

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Newly crowned world champion Nikhat Zareen is keen to use the experience gained in the recently concluded global event to qualify for the 2024 Olympics at the Asian Games scheduled later this year.

The Asian Games are the first qualifying event for the Paris Olympics for the boxers of the continent.

Nikhat, who won the 52kg world title last year, dropped down to the 50kg weight class as it is an Olympic category.

"This tournament was a good experience. Especially in the 50kg category, which is an Olympic category. I didn't get seeding also I had to fight six bouts. But in the end, I have won a gold medal here and I am happy," Nikhat said.

The World Championships was Nikhat's second international event in the 50kg event. She had won the gold at the Commonwealth Games in the same weight class last year.

"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 is now only the second Indian boxer to have two



World titles, the first being the trailblazing MC Mary Kom, who has won six golds.

"I feel good that I have won back-to-back gold and I'm happy to continue this winning streak. The Asian Games are about to come soon and people will obviously have expectations but I will take the pressure in a positive. Whatever the result it will be a good learning lesson for me."

Moving down to 50kg has been a tough task for Nikhat, who has to shed 3 to 4kg from her natural weight to make the cut.

"This World Championships were tougher because last time I did not have to put in a lot of effort for weight management."

"But this time I had to follow a diet and I had to be disciplined and after the Nationals we did not get much time to prepare for the competition," she said.

Delighted by the Indian contingent's performance at the World Championships, Boxing Federation of India President Ajay Singh said the national governing body would try to identify the Olympic team as soon as possible.

World champions Nikhat and Lovlina Borgohain have already qualified for the Asian Games and thus have an opportunity to seal an Olympic berth at the continental event.

"The performance in this tournament has been historic. Next is the Asian Games, let's see how we fare there. Preparation will go on continuously," he said.

"We will try to identify our Olympic team as soon as possible-- all individuals in all categories — and focus on them, train them and study the opponents as well. Last time or preparation was left wanting."

Andreescu finds her joy for tennis again

AP ■ MIAMI

Canada's Bianca Andreescu heads into Monday's last-16 of the Miami Open brimming with confidence and feeling she has finally refound her love for tennis.

Andreescu burst onto the scene with a stunning US Open win as a teenager in 2019 and rose to number five in the world that year.

But then her career stalled. Injury in 2020 sidelined her and then the COVID pandemic blocked any chance of regaining momentum and at the end of the following year she decided to take six months off.

In Miami, Andreescu has had a tough draw but has beaten two other former Grand Slam winners in Emma Raducanu and Sofia Kenin as well as seventh seed Maria Sakkari.

Those results leave her unsurprisingly in a positive mood, but she says one of the keys to her overall happiness and balanced approach to the sport has been how she handles setbacks and defeats.

"Obviously there were ups and downs, but for the most part, I was very, I guess, level throughout 2022, even with the losses."

"I was like, it's fine, I'll go have dinner with my team. I'll go watch a movie, whatever, and not lock myself in the room for three days like I used to," she said.

AP ■ MIAMI

World number one Carlos Alcaraz moved into the last 16 of the Miami Open after beating Serbia's Dusan Lajovic 6-0, 7-6 (7/5) on Sunday as he remains on track for tennis' "Sunshine Double."

The 19-year-old Spaniard, who beat Daniil Medvedev to win the title in Indian Wells last week, looked in top condition as he outclassed Lajovic in the first set to keep his Miami title defence on track.

But the Serb was able to provide some tension towards the end of the second set, breaking to make it 5-5 with Alcaraz paying the price for a sloppy return.

Alcaraz was 6-2 up in the tie-break, but Lajovic won the next three points before the Spaniard's big back-hand winner settled the 91-minute contest.

"Everything was under control or I thought it was but, you know, in the match it's never easy," Alcaraz said. "The nerves came out. I made a few mistakes that I hadn't done during the

Alcaraz powers into last 16 at Miami, Ruud out

whole match. So it was tough to win the match. But I'm really happy with the level that I'm playing and it was a good match," he added.

Alcaraz will face Tommy Paul in the last 16 and the American goes into that game on the back of a 12-match winning streak against Spanish players including wins over Alcaraz and Rafael Nadal last year.

"I lost the first and only match that I played against Tommy. I know that he's a really talented and really tough player, so I have to play at my best and let's see what's going to happen," said Alcaraz.

With Nadal injured and Novak Djokovic barred from entering the US due to his refusal to take a COVID vaccine, Alcaraz is the face of this tournament and the crowd was noticeably bigger on the Hard Rock Stadium court for his game.

In the front row of the crowd was Miami Heat NBA star Jimmy Butler who embraced Alcaraz after the match. Alcaraz said that dealing with his magnified profile is something he has yet to get fully used to.

"I feel great seeing celebrities watching my matches. It's unbelievable. I feel a little bit nervous when I see a person like Jimmy and the celebrities when I was playing in the US Open," he said.

"In a certain way, I can't believe that these people enjoy watching my matches. For me, it's crazy," he said.

STRAIGHT SETS FOR FRITZ

American Taylor Fritz rolled into the fourth round for the third consecutive year after clinching a 6-4, 6-4 win against Canada's Denis Shapovalov.

In a hard-hitting encounter,



with both players blasting from the baseline, Fritz did not face a break point during the 81-minute encounter.

Fritz has already won one tournament in Florida this year, taking the title last month at Delray Beach and in the fourth round, the American will be up against 19-year-old Holger Rune in who beat Argentine Daniel Schwartzman 6-4, 6-2.

As always at Miami, there is a large contingent of Argentine tennis fans and they were vocal in their support for Schwartzman.

But Dane Rune converted all four break points he earned in the hot afternoon sun.

"My focus was really to step in every time I could and play my game. I think there were a few rallies where I didn't, but 95 per cent of the match was played on my terms, which was what I wanted," he said.

Dutchman Botic van de

Zandschulp triumphed for the third time in four meetings with Norway's world number four Casper Ruud, emerging with a 3-6, 6-4, 6-4 victory.

The tight encounter, with a 75 minute third set, turned decisively towards Van de Zandschulp when he held to go 5-4 up with Ruud going wide at the end of a long rally.

The Dutchman sealed victory, when on match point, Ruud's soft volley found the net.

Italian Jannik Sinner continued his strong start to the year, defeating Bulgarian Grigor Dimitrov 6-3, 6-4.

It was an error-strewn match in which players hit double the number of unforced errors to winners but Sinner handled Dimitrov's second serve well as he seeks his second Miami final appearance.

Fourth-seed Daniil Medvedev moved into the fourth round after his scheduled third round opponent Alex Molcan of Slovakia withdraw from Monday's clash with a right hip injury.

WINNING CRUCIAL MOMENTS KEY TO MI’S SUCCESS: HARMAN

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur feels that focussing on winning crucial moments of matches and not the ultimate prize worked well for her side, as they lifted the inaugural Women’s Premier League trophy after a seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in the final here.

MI chased down the target of 132 with three balls to spare in the low-scoring but tense summit clash at the Brabourne Stadium on Sunday, with England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt playing sheet-anchor with an unbeaten 60.

"(Right from start) we were talking about winning the moments. We were not looking for the trophy, we were looking to win all the moments. (We thought) if we win the moments, the trophy will come automatically," Kaur told reporters after Mumbai Indians’ title win on Sunday.

Kaur said she was waiting for this moment for a long time, to win a trophy as a captain.

"It feels very good personally also. I was waiting for this moment for a long time when I could win something as a captain. It is also very important for women’s cricket," she said.

"Many times we were there but could not make it. But here the tournament was different, the teams were different. Every side is so balanced and did well in the tournament."

Kaur’s run out on Sunday reminded of her dismissal in the T20 World Cup semifinal against Australia, but



the MI captain said there was enough in her team’s tank to overhaul the target.

"Both the run outs were quite disappointing. I was confident in the last match (India versus Australia) because we had so many wickets in hand. I thought we would be able to do it.

"But the scenario was a lot different here, we had Nat in the middle and

she was well settled. I knew who was going to bowl and how. We were quite positive to finish the game one or two overs left. But when I got out we thought we had to go by the situation," she said.

She said playing the Eliminator against Gujarat Giants helped her side gain momentum into the final.

"When we were doing well, the

only thought in mind was to not get into the elimination round. But after losing two matches we were in search of momentum. It went in our favour that we got one more match to play before the final and everybody got into the rhythm.

"It worked well in our favour. If you play after a long gap, it is tough to get back into momentum," Kaur explained.

The India captain was impressed with how Delhi Capitals players Shikha Pandey and Radha Yadav added 52 runs from just 24 balls for the unbroken 10th wicket, and asked them after the game to play similarly for the national team.

"I told Radha after the match that the way they were playing, I want to see the same approach when you come and play for India. She promised to come with the same approach."

Kaur said the inaugural WPL was an open tournament and all the five teams played well.

"This was not a one-sided tournament. The next season will be more exciting. People will be waiting for this. Every team did really well," she said.

Delhi Capitals coach Jonathan Batty lamented his side losing wickets in heaps against Mumbai Indians in the final.

"Losing three early wickets hurts you. The partnership between captain Meg (Lanning) and Marizanne (Kapp) got us back but then lost a flurry of wickets. That made it really hard but full credit (to the team) for going into the last over, (losing by) three balls left. We still had a chance of winning there at the end," he said.

Batty said Delhi Capitals respected the call made by third umpire against Shafali Verma, who fell off a full toss from Issy Wong.

"We could not tell, the third umpire is in the best position to adjudicate on that and gave what they thought was a fair dismissal and we just lost a wicket, it was just unfortunate timing," he said.

Mayers or Hooda likely to open with KL Rahul in LSG’s first two games



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In absence of Quinton de Kock, either West Indies southpaw Kyle Mayers or the flamboyant Deepak Hooda is likely to open the innings with skipper KL Rahul during Lucknow Super Giants’ first two games in this edition of the IPL.

With the South African team playing two ICC World Cup qualifier 50-over games against the Netherlands on March 31 and April 2, none of their top players will be available for their respective IPL sides in the first couple of games.

Hence, LSG will be missing their regular opener de Kock, while their first match opponents Delhi Capitals will be without the services of Anrich Nortje and Lungi Ngidi.

LSG will take on DC on April 1 in Lucknow and then fly to Chennai for their next game against Chennai Super Kings.

"In case of De Kock, the best option is Kyle Mayers, who is also a left-hander and has a

decent strike rate of close to 135 in T20Is. On Sunday, he was brilliant against South Africa during his 27-ball-51. So Mayers is favourite to partner Rahul in first two games," a source privy to developments in LSG camp said.

In case, LSG wants to beef up their middle-order or bowling arsenal with overseas recruits, then there is a case for talented Hooda to face the new ball alongside his skipper.

Hooda has already scored a century for India opening the innings in T20 cricket and has shown that he can be an enforcer in the Powerplay overs with his improvisation skills.

Mohsin Khan, who is currently doing his rehabilitation with LSG’s strength and conditioning unit, is expected to miss at least first leg of the tournament but team think-tank feels he might be available for the second phase.

Jaydev Unadkat is the closest like-for-like replacement of Mohsin, although the Saurashtra

Sandeep replaces injured Krishna at Rajasthan Royals

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Veteran Punjab seamer Sandeep Sharma will replace injured Prasidh Krishna in the Rajasthan Royals squad for IPL 2023, the franchise confirmed on Monday.

Prasidh, a bowling mainstay for Royals, is out of action following a lower-back surgery. It was a lucky break for Sandeep, who has 114 wickets from 104 IPL games at an economy rate of 7.77, as he went unsold at the auction.

"Fast bowler Sandeep Sharma will represent Rajasthan Royals this season after being signed as a replacement for Prasidh Krishna.

veteran neither has the pace nor the lethal blockhole delivery like the UP man.

During the course of the tournament, Jammu and Kashmir’s Yudhvir Singh Charak and Vidarbha’s Yash Thakur, both of whom have made an impression at training sessions might be tried out depending on team’s situation and pitch conditions.

DC TO MISS ALL FOREIGN PACERS IN 1ST 2 GAMES

In case of the Capitals, they are likely to miss their entire foreign pace unit during the first two games as Mustafizur Rahman will also be unavailable due to Bangladesh’s ongoing series against Ireland.

Nortje and Ngidi are in the Proteas’ squad to play the Netherlands, while Kagiso Rabada will also be absent for Kings XI Punjab as he will also be on national duty.

RANA TO LEAD KKR



PTI ■ KOLKATA

Kolkata Knight Riders on Monday named left-handed batter Nitish Rana as the team’s new skipper for the upcoming season of the Indian Premier League.

Rana will replace Shreyas Iyer, who is likely to undergo back surgery and is in danger of missing the entire season.

In fact, KKR’s statement was an indicator that Iyer’s chances of an early return to play looks improbable at the moment.

"...Nitish Rana would captain the side in the absence of Shreyas Iyer, who is recovering from a back injury. While we are hopeful that Shreyas will recover and participate at some stage in the IPL 2023 edition, we feel fortunate that Nitish, with the captaincy experience having led his state side in white ball cricket and the IPL experience he has had with KKR since 2018, will do a great job," KKR said in a statement.

"We are also confident that under head coach Chandrakant Pandit and the support staff, he will get all the support needed off the field, and the highly experienced leaders in the squad will provide all support that Nitish may need on the field. We wish him the best in his new role and Shreyas a full and speedy recovery," it further stated.

While Rana has captained Delhi in Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, the results have been far from encouraging for the southpaw. It is understood that he would be asked to implement the strategy prepared by coach Pandit, who along with team boss Venky Mysore and former Mumbai Ranji stalwart Abhishek Nayar will be calling the shots.

It may noted that Rana was dropped by Delhi in this season’s Ranji Trophy squad due to his poor show and inept technique in red-ball cricket.

Rana has captained Delhi in 12 T20s in the Syed Mushtaq Ali Trophy, with eight wins and four defeats. The 29-year old middle-order batter was bought by KKR ahead of the 2018 season and has been retained by the franchise ever since.

Rana 74 matches for KKR, scoring 1744 runs at a strike rate of 135.61.

KKR will open their campaign against Punjab Kings at Mohali on April 1.

Bangladesh beat Ireland in rain-hit 1st T20I

AP ■ CHATTOGRAM

Rony Talukdar hit his maiden half-century to help Bangladesh secure a 22-run win against Ireland by DLS method on Monday in the opener of a three-match T20I series.

Talukdar struck 67 off 38 with seven fours and three sixes as opener to steer Bangladesh to 207-5 before rain halted the innings with four balls remaining.

Ireland’s revised target was set for 104 in 8 overs but it managed only 81-5.

Put into bat first, Bangladesh made a fluent start with Talukdar and Liton Das adding 81 runs in the first powerplay,

eclipsing the previous high of 74 against Sri Lanka in 2018.

Paceman Craig Young, who claimed 2-45, broke through with the wicket of Liton in the eighth over. Liton hit four boundaries and three sixes in his 23 ball-47.

Talukdar slashed legspinner Ben White for a boundary through extra-cover to bring up his fifty off just 24 deliveries.

Shamim Hossain, who made 30 off 20, and skipper Shakib Al Hasan injected some spark as the side went past 200 runs for the fourth time in its T20 history.

Before the rain arrived, Shakib was batting on 20 off 13 with Mehidy Hasan Miraz on 4.



WPL 2023 ends with promise of changing Indian cricket for better

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Women’s Premier League made a captivating debut and promised a bright future for the aspiring female cricketers in India but the hurriedly organised first season also left a lot of scope for improvement going forward.

The WPL, played entirely across two venues in Mumbai, witnessed special performances from some of the best cricketers in the world but leaving aside left-arm spinner Saika Ishaque, did not unearth a plethora of local talent like it was expected to.

The five-team competition culminated on Sunday with Mumbai Indians captain Harmanpreet Kaur finally leading her side across the line in the summit clash against a team captained by Australian legend Meg Lanning.

The tournament began with plenty of scores over 200 with boundaries as short as 42-44 metres, but pitches tired out eventually and became spin-friendly.

Mumbai’s Hayley Matthews won the Purple Cap for her 16 wickets — including four in the final — but Nat Sciver-Brunt was the overall top performer with 10 wickets and 332 runs.

Apart from Mumbai Indians’ Ishaque, who took 15 wickets, Shreyanka Patil and Kanika Ahuja of Royal Challengers Bangalore made their mark on the big stage but there was a clear gap between those from the Indian domestic circuit and the world’s best.

While Patil lit up the field with her energy and enthusiasm, 20-year-old Ahuja showed tremendous promise at a young age with her explosive batting.

Harmanpreet acknowledged that little-known Indian players did not get many roles and opportunities to play, but added value to their teams with their fielding, citing the examples of MI’s Amanjot Kaur and Jintamani Kalita.

The Indian skipper hoped that young and uncapped Indian players would emerge wiser from the experience, knowing what they need to do in order to bridge the gap.

Delhi’s head coach Jonathan Batty left with the message, challenging young Indian players to work on their game and fitness for season two.

While Mumbai Indians achieved the high of recording five consecutive wins en route to the title triumph, a team led by another Indian star, Smriti Mandhana’s Royal Challengers Bangalore, endured a five-game losing streak when the competition got underway and the tournament ended for them even before it began.

Mandhana admitted facing difficulties handling a team full of players with bigger stature and more experience than her.

Her own form with the bat failed to inspire RCB, who also had the likes of Ellyse Perry, Heather Knight, Sophie Devine, Megan Schutt and Renuka Singh to name a few.

No doubt Mandhana, a leadership prospect with the Indian team, will emerge better from her first WPL stint as captain and player but it remains to be seen how the team responds after a horrendous first season.

Lanning’s Delhi Capitals did not instill fear in the opposition as Harmanpreet’s MI did but the Australian Lanning led from the front and ended as the tournament’s leading run-getter.

But if Lanning was consistent with the bat at the top, Shafali Verma blowing hot and cold remained an issue which Delhi Capitals could not do much about.

If RCB had to bear with Mandhana’s poor run with the bat, Delhi Capitals experienced the same with their vice-captain Jemimah Rodrigues. The right-handed batter failed to score even a fifty, but entertained the crowd with her athleticism in the field taking some stunning catches.

Gujarat Giants began with losing their preferred captain Beth Mooney halfway into the first game and endured a largely disappointing campaign, but Deol’s contributions mixed with Ashleigh Gardner’s prowess gave them hope for the future.

Sneh Rana did her best as stand-in captain, but overall, GG were not good enough to advance to the knockouts.

Alyssa Healy’s UP Warriorz got outplayed in the Eliminator by Mumbai Indians, but they were the first side to beat the eventual winners and showed a lot of promise with Navgire, Grace Harris, Anjali Sarvani and Sophie Ecclestone — who took joint highest 16 wickets — in their ranks.

The 22-game competition spread over as many days this March was held entirely in Mumbai, and like many, both Healy and Ecclestone also wished for home and away games from next season onwards.

It remains to be seen if the BCCI decides to organise the next WPL in the home-away format like the Indian Premier League, as crowd support plays a big part in the success of teams and also helps in creating a much needed fan base.

Indore pitch rating changed from ‘poor’ to ‘below average’

PTI ■ DUBAI

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has changed the pitch rating of Indore’s Holkar Stadium — the venue for the third Test between India and Australia — to ‘below average’ from ‘poor’ following a BCCI appeal.

The ICC also gave the Narendra Modi Stadium pitch in Ahmedabad, the venue for the fourth Test, an ‘average’ rating for the slow batting deck where both teams had one completed innings each. The match had ended in a tame draw, with India winning the series 2-1.

At Indore, Australia had defeated India by nine wickets

inside three days of the Border-Gavaskar Test to secure a World Test Championship final berth.

The ICC appeal panel reviewed the earlier decision of the match referee Chris Broad and found that there was not enough excessive variable bounce to warrant the ‘poor’ rating.

The pitch, which had initially received three demerit points, will now get only one demerit point. The ICC match referee however gave ‘very good’ rating to the the Wankhede Stadium and Dr. YS Rajasekhara Reddy ACA-VDCA Cricket Stadium, Visakhapatnam pitches, where the first two ODIs between India and Australia were played.

Afghanistan thump Pakistan to claim T20I series

AP ■ SHARJAH

Afghanistan overcame late nerves in the closing overs to beat Pakistan by seven wickets in the second T20I on Sunday and take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-game series.

Needing 30 off the last three overs, and 22 from the last two, Najibullah Zadran and Mohammad Nabi hit a six each off pace bowler Naseem Shah in the penultimate over to reduce the target to five runs.

Zadran then hit the winning boundary off Zaman Khan’s last over to chase down the 131-run target with one ball to spare.

"It’s a great honour and

pleasure to lead this wonderful team," said Afghanistan skipper Rashid Khan.

"It was a great effort with the ball, and then we took it deep and finished it."

He added: "I think 130 was a good total. We tried our best to take it deep and finish it. Our strategy was to go out there and make sure you take responsibility. We have players to finish it like Nabi and Najib."

Pakistan’s 130-6 in 20 overs was built around a sedate 57-ball 64 not out by all-rounder Imad Wasim — his maiden T20I half century.

This was Afghanistan’s first bilateral T20I series against any of the top six teams — India, England, Pakistan, South



Africa, New Zealand and Australia.

They have previously won a T20I series each against the West Indies and Bangladesh and five in five against Zimbabwe.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz (44 off 49 balls) and Ibrahim Zadran (38 off 40 balls) set the platform during their 56-run second wicket stand.

However, their slow batting left Afghanistan needing to score 46 off the last 30 balls.

Najibullah (23) and Nabi (14) remained unbeaten to seal the victory.

"Our motive for this series was to check out talented young players and we have to back them in the future," said

Pakistan captain Shadab Khan.

Earlier, Pakistan’s recovery was led by Imad who hit two sixes and three boundaries to rescue Pakistan from 63-5 after winning the toss and batting.

Imad and Shadab (32) added 67 for the sixth wicket.

Pakistan had got off to a disastrous start with left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi claiming Saim Ayub and Abdullah Shafique, both for nought, in the first over of the innings.

Farooqi finished with 2-19 in his four overs.

Shafique has now been dismissed for nought on four successive occasions in five T20Is since making his debut in November 2020.