

CITY 3
CM YOGI LAUNCHES
'SAMARTH 2023'**OPINION 6**
A FAIRY TALE THAT IS THE
KERALA STORY**WORLD 10**
SOUTH KOREA, US TROOPS HOLD
LARGE LIVE-FIRE DRILLS

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CAPSULE

KEJRIWAL BLAMES OTHERS
FOR HIS FAILURE: CONG**New Delhi:** Congress leader Pawan Khera on Thursday said Arvind Kejriwal is the only Chief Minister of Delhi who is seeking full powers to function and is blaming external factors for his failure to deliver.SOOD TAKES OVER AS
NEW CBI DIRECTOR**New Delhi:** Senior IPS officer Praveen Sood took over as the new CBI Director on Thursday and he will be in the post for two years, officials said. On his last working day, the outgoing director, Subodh Kumar Jaiswal, handed Sood the charge of the agency at its headquarters here, they said.4 SENTENCED TO 7 YRS
IN ALWAR LYNCHING**Jaipur:** A court in Rajasthan's Alwar on Thursday sentenced four people to seven years imprisonment for lynching Rakbar Khan on the suspicion of cow smuggling in 2018. The fifth accused in the case was acquitted due to lack of evidence.IMRAN, WIFE BARRED
FROM LEAVING PAK**Islamabad:** Pakistan's former prime minister Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi and more than 600 leaders and former Assembly members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party have been barred from leaving the country, media reports said on Thursday.FISH DEATHS IN DAL
LAKE RAISE ALARM**Srinagar:** Thousands of fish in Dal Lake here have died over the past few days with authorities blaming a sudden fluctuation in temperature in the region. Dal Lake dwellers expressed alarm over such large-scale fish deaths even as authorities said the occurrence was an annual affair.7 more parties ready to
attend new Parl launchAttendees' number increases to 25;
BJP urges Opp to show 'big heart'
as Cong steps up attack on GovtPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a major relief for the BJP-led NDA Government, seven more parties have accepted the invitation to attend the inauguration of the new Parliament building, raising the number of parties scheduled to attend the launch ceremony to 25, even as the Congress-lead Opposition parties have intensified their attack on the Prime Minister and the Union Government. The Congress accused the Prime Minister of being "megalomaniac" and the Government of being "arrogant."

These seven non-NDA parties — BSR, Shiromani Akali Dal, Janata Dal (Secular), Lok Janshakti Party (Ram Vilas), YSR Congress, BJD and TDP — account for 50 MPs in the Lok Sabha, and therefore their participation will help the NDA blunt the Opposition's charge that the inauguration of new Parliament building is just a government event.

As the political row over the opening of the building on May 28 escalated, the BJP hit back alleging the Opposition parties have decided to boycott the inauguration just because it has been built at the initiative of Prime Minister Modi. However, the BJP appealed to

the Opposition parties to attend the "historic day" of its inauguration by showing "big heart". Nineteen Opposition parties, including Congress, Left, TMC, SP, AAP, have come together to jointly announce the boycott of the inauguration ceremony, saying they find no value in a new building when the "soul of democracy has been sucked out".

BSP president Mayawati called the Opposition boycott inappropriate and welcomed the inauguration of the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Modi. She also said the Opposition should have thought about "tribal honour" when it fielded a candidate against Murmu and denied her an unopposed election.

The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) on Thursday said it will take part in the inauguration of the new Parliament building with party chief N Chandrababu Naidu instructing Rajya Sabha MP Kanakamedala Ravindra Kumar to represent the party. The JD(S) supremo and former prime minister Deve Gowda too said he would attend the inauguration.

Congress lashed out at the ruling BJD and its president, Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik for "abiding" with Modi on all occasions, includ-



ing the new Parliament building inauguration. The BJD hit back accusing the Congress of doing politics over a non-issue and raised questions over its role during the presidential election.

They have also protested the decision that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the building, claiming this was an insult to the highest constitutional office of the President of India. Separately, AIMIM chief Asaduddin Owaisi said if Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla does not inaugurate the new Parliament building, his party would not attend the event.

All 18 NDA members — BJP, Shiv Sena, National People's Party, Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party, Sikkim Krantikari Morcha, Jannayak Janata Party, AIDMK, IMKMK, AJSU, RPI, Mizo National Front, Tamil Maanila Congress, ITFT (Tripura), Bodo People's Party, Pattali Makkal Kacchi, MGP, Apna Dal and AGP — are the other attendees.

Plea in SC seeks
inauguration of
new Parliament
by President**New Delhi:** A PIL was filed in the Supreme Court on Thursday seeking a direction to the Lok Sabha secretariat for inauguration of the new Parliament building by President Droupadi Murmu, who is the "first citizen of India and the head of the institution".

The petition says the respondents — the Lok Sabha secretariat and the Union of India — are "humiliating" the president by not inviting her for the inauguration.

The petition by an apex court lawyer comes amid a massive controversy over the scheduled inauguration of the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 28.

PTI

PM inaugurates Khelo
India University Games

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has evolved into a 'sangam' of sportspersons from across the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi stated on Thursday after virtually inaugurating the Khelo India University Games hosted by the Yogi Adityanath government.

Addressing the event, Modi said the 2010 Commonwealth Games scam had demonstrated the approach of the then Congress-led UPA government towards sports.

"Earlier no attention was paid to the development of sports. It was considered that sports was a means only to spend spare time. But today, I am happy that the perception of society and parents has changed in the country," the prime minister said.

He expressed delight that the closing ceremony of the event would take place in Varanasi which was his parliamentary constituency on June 3.

Observing the importance of organising the third edition of the Khelo India University Games when India was celebrating Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the prime minister said that the event had become an excellent medium to inculcate the spirit of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat along with team spirit.

Talking about Uttar Pradesh, the prime minister referred to the expansion of sports facilities in Lucknow, the modernisation of Sriga Stadium in Varanasi and the creation of modern sporting facilities with an allocation of Rs 400 crore. He mentioned the



An impressive and colourful ceremony marked the opening of the Khelo India University Games in Lucknow on Thursday

synthetic hockey field at Lalpur, the multi-purpose hall at Veer Bahadur Singh Sports College in Gorakhpur, the synthetic hockey field in Meerut and the synthetic running track in Saharanpur.

The prime minister said the National Educational Policy proposed to take sports as a subject where it would become a part of the curriculum, and the construction of the country's first National Sports University would further strengthen the cause. In states, the prime minister said, efforts were being made towards sports-specialised higher education. He said that Uttar Pradesh was doing a very commendable job and gave the example of the Major Dhyani Chand Sports University in Meerut.

Speaking on the occasion, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that under the vision and guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, sports was rising to new

heights whether it was Khelo India or FIT India.

"Sports would ensure the vision of Ek Bharat, Shreshtha Bharat and we are proud to host the Khelo India University Games. We were building sports fields in every gram panchayat and providing sports kits to Mahila Mangal Dal in every district. We are also providing jobs to athletes, cash rewards and have reserved positions for those who win medals for the state and the country. We were energising the movement of Khelo India and welcoming all the athletes, officials, and everyone involved in the organising of the games," the chief minister said.

This year, the Khelo India University Games are being held from May 25 to June 3 in Uttar Pradesh. Over 4,750 athletes from more than 200 universities will be competing in 21 sports. The competitions will be organised in Varanasi, Gorakhpur, Lucknow and

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Shah promises justice for all,
appeals for peace in Manipur

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday appealed to the people of Manipur to maintain peace and promised that justice will be ensured to all sections of society.

Asserting that Narendra Modi will become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term after the general elections next year, he claimed that the Opposition Congress will not be able to even secure its present tally in the Lok Sabha.

Shah, while laying the foundation stone of the tenth campus of the National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU) at Changsari in Assam's Kamrup district, said he will travel to Manipur to help resolve disputes.

"I will go to Manipur soon and stay there for three days but before that, both groups should remove mistrust and suspicion among themselves and ensure that peace is restored in



Union Minister for Home Affairs and Cooperation Amit Shah addresses the gathering at the laying foundation ceremony of National Forensic Sciences University (NFSU), in Guwahati on Thursday

PTI

the state," he said.

"The Centre will ensure that justice is delivered to all those who suffered in the clashes in the state, but people must hold dialogue to ensure peace," Shah said.

During the last six years, prior to the recent clashes, there was no blockade or bandh in Manipur and "people must ensure the return of such

a situation again".

"Charcha ke saath hi shanti ho sakti hain (Peace can only be restored through dialogue)," he said. "The Centre is planning to bring changes in the law to make it compulsory for forensic experts to visit the spot for crimes that attract more than six years of imprisonment," he said.

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2 more cheetah
cubs die at KNP

PNS ■ BHOPAL

India's ambitious cheetah population revival programme faced a setback as two more India-born cheetah cubs have died at the Kuno National Park (KNP) in Madhya Pradesh, a forest official said on Thursday.

With this, the number of cheetah cubs that have died at the KNP rose to three, while three of the 20 adult cheetahs translocated from South Africa and Namibia have also died at the park.

A cub's death had been reported in the park on May 23. The two other cubs also died on the same day, on Tuesday afternoon, but their deaths were reported only on Thursday.

The official did not disclose the reason behind not informing about the deaths of these two cubs on the same day. The KNP houses cheetahs translocated from Namibia and South Africa as part of an ambitious project to revive their population in India after the species



became extinct in the country seven decades ago.

As per an official release, after the death of a cheetah cub on May 23, the forest department's monitoring team kept an eye on the movements of female cheetah Jwala and her remaining three cubs.

Jwala, earlier known as Siyaya, gave birth to four cubs in the last week of March after being translocated from Namibia in September last year.

The monitoring team found on May 23 that the condition of her remaining three cubs was not good and decided to rescue them for treatment.

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New feat: MiG-29K performs
night landing on INS VikrantPIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Indian Navy achieved another milestone by undertaking maiden night landing of its MiG-29K fighter jet on indigenously designed and built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant on Wednesday, Navy officials said here on Thursday.

Giving details of the landing in pitch dark conditions considered to be demanding, they said this landing was indicative of Navy's impetus towards "aatmanirbharta". This challenging night landing trial also demonstrates the resolve, skill and professionalism of the Vikrant crew and the naval pilots, they added.

The Indian Navy shared the video of the maiden night landing on Twitter. The all-weather fighter is seen landing on the flight deck of INS Vikrant in pitch darkness.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh congratulated the Navy for undertaking a successful night landing and said, "This



MiG-29K aircraft makes a maiden night landing on INS Vikrant.

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remarkable achievement is a testimony to the skills, perseverance and professionalism of the Vikrant crew and Naval pilots. Kudos to them."

Landing fighter jets on a normal runway is different compared to landing on a flight deck of an aircraft carrier due to the shorter length of the deck. While landing on the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, the pilot lowers the tail hook of the jet and aims for an arresting wire, which traps the aircraft and has the strength to bring its speed from 250 km/hr down to 0.

"Night trap" means landing on an aircraft carrier during night-time and is considered even more challenging for naval aviators as the aircraft carrier is moving at a speed of 40-50 km/hr and the pilots have to keep the jets speed relative to the carrier.

The MiG-29K jet is part of INS Vikrant's fighter fleet. The supersonic fighter jet has a top speed of Mach 2 (two times the speed of sound) and can pull up to 8G (eight times the force of gravity) and can climb to an altitude of over 65,000 feet.

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Dynastic parties reneged on high-speed trains: PM

World looks at India with
great hope, Modi says;
flags off Delhi-Dehradun
Vande Bharat Express

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

While flagging off the Delhi-Dehradun Vande Bharat Express here, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday that parties which ruled the country for many years and made tall claims of introducing high-speed trains could never get out of the constraints of dynastic politics.

He also said the budget for expansion of the railway infrastructure in Uttarakhand now stands at ₹5,000 crore. Before 2014, it was less than ₹200



Prime Minister Narendra Modi flags off the inaugural run of the Delhi-Dehradun Vande Bharat Express train, via a video conference, from New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

crore, he said, addressing the launch event of the first Vande Bharat train for Uttarakhand via video conference.

"India of the 21st century can prosper even faster by modernising its infrastructure. Parties in power for a long time

earlier did not realise this. Their focus was on indulging in scams and corruption. They could not get out of the constraints of dynastic politics. They also made tall claims about high-speed trains but years went by and nothing

happened," Modi said.

He said for the first time, there is a Government in the country which has the intention ("niyat"), policy ("niti") and dedication ("nishtha") required to achieve development.

Referring to his just-concluded tri-nation visit, Modi said the world looks at India with great hope. "The way we have strengthened our economy, battled poverty and dealt with the challenge of Covid-19 raised the world's confidence in India. People from other countries want to come to India and understand it," he said.

"And this is a great opportunity for a beautiful state such as Uttarakhand," the Prime Minister said.

Recalling his remark made in Kedarnath in 2022 in which he had said the decade belongs to Uttarakhand, the prime minister said the Vande Bharat Express train and a plethora of other road, rail and ropeway infrastructure projects are set to drive the state in that direction.

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Vande Bharat in 3 avatars:
Chair car, metro, sleepers

PNS ■ DEHRADUN /NEW DELHI

Amid the ongoing success and popularity with demands across for the new age Vande Bharat Trains, the Centre on Thursday announced for three versions of the semi-high speed trains — Vande Chair Car, Vande Metro and Vande Sleepers — by the end of this fiscal year.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said in the next three to four years, railway tracks will be upgraded to support the maximum speed of 160 km/h of Vande Bharat trains. While the Vande Chair cars will be put on tracks for the same day

end to end journey to cover a distance of 500-600 km one way, the Vande Metro will be used for local rail network services as the name suggest, while the Vande Sleepers will be long distance full air conditioned with all modern specifications on board.

"There are three formats of Vande Bharat — Vande Metro for less than 100 kilometre, Vande Chair Car for 100-550 kilometre and Vande Sleepers for a journey beyond 550 kilometre. These three formats will be ready by February-March (next year)," Vaishnav said after the launch of Dehradun-Delhi Vande Bharat.

On the occasion Vaishnav said every State will get a Vande Bharat train by mid-June. The production of these trains is being expedited, the Minister said. The Vande Bharat indigenous semi-high speed trains, which are being prepped to replace Shatabdis, Rajdhani and local trains, are being made at the Integrated Coach Factory in Chennai.

"Old tracks were designed to support speeds between 70 and 80 km/h. Around 25,000-35,000 kilometre of tracks are being upgraded to support speeds of 110 km/h, 130 km/h and 160 km/h. It will be done in the next three to four years."

No hike in power tariff Chief Minister launches ‘Samarth 2023’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a big relief to electricity consumers, power regulator UP Electricity Regulatory Commission (UPERC) has not hiked the power tariff for the current fiscal 2023-24.

The power regulator has not increased the power tariff for the fifth year in a row. The last revision in power tariff was done in 2018-19.

The development also assumes much significance in the run-up to the Lok Sabha polls due next year.

UP Power Corporation Limited (UPPCL) and its five wholly owned subsidiaries had sought a tariff hike of 18-23 per cent in their annual revenue requirement (ARR) petition filed before the power regulator in January this year.

The new tariff order will come into force as soon as approved by the government and notified by the UPPCL.

In a big relief for the power consumers of Noida, the power regulator has slashed the tariff by 10 per cent in its tariff order for 2023-24 issued on Thursday. The RP Goenka group-owned Noida Power Company Limited is the licensee power distributor in Noida. The maximum power tariff for Noida will be Rs 6.50 per unit.

The power tariff for urban consumers for consumption from 0-150 units per month will remain unchanged at Rs 5.50 per unit. The tariff for consumption of 151-300 units will be Rs 6 per unit and Rs 6.50 for consumption of 300 units and above.

The tariff for the urban BPL (below poverty line) consumers will be Rs 3 per unit for consumption up to 100 units per month.

For the rural area consumers, the tariff for consumption from 0 to 100 units per month will be Rs 3.35 per unit, Rs 3.85 per unit for consumption of 101-150 units, Rs 5 per unit for consumption of 151-300 units and Rs 5.50 per unit for consumption of 300 and above units per month.

There is no change in tariff for unmetered power connection which will be Rs 500 per kilowatt.

The power consumers, especially in the urban areas, will thus continue to pay their electricity bills as per the earlier slabs.

The electricity regulator, which held separate public hearings in all distribution companies, junked the proposal put forth by the UPPCL for a hike between 18 per cent to 23 per cent.

Announcing the tariff, UPERC Chairman RP Singh and commission members BK Srivastava and Sanjay Kumar Singh said that the tariff had not been increased as the UPPCL failed to justify the total expenditure shown by it in the ARR.

The power regulator has also directed the UPPCL to ensure that the electricity meters are installed at the residences of all power employees. Despite the repeated orders of the power regulator for the last over 10 years, the power employees have resisted the installation of meters at their residences.

The UPPCL had proposed a revenue requirement of Rs 92,564 crore for 2023-24. The UPERC however approved Rs 86,579 crore. While the UPPCL in its ARR had projected the requirement of purchase of 141 billion units, the power regulator approved only 133.45 billion units. The regulator also slashed the line loss of 14.90 per cent projected by UPPCL, to 10.30 per cent.

A senior official in the UPERC said that there was no justification for increasing the tariff since the UPPCL was not able to justify any rise in expenses. The official said the reduction in line losses would make a significant contribution to the overall revenue collection by the UPPCL.

Avadesh Verma, member of the state Energy Advisory Committee, said UP was the only state in the country where the power tariff had not been hiked for the last five years.

He said the UPPCL had been demanding the tariff revision every year but the power regulator had rejected the demand.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday launched ‘Samarth 2023’ for the promotion of digital transactions at gram panchayat level during the inaugural ceremony held at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan.

“Uttar Pradesh is a state with limitless possibilities and rapid work is being done on these possibilities. The construction work of the village secretariats is in its final phase, soon every gram panchayat will have its own secretariat. The appointment of computer operators in these village secretariats has already been done, where every individual from the associated village will have the facility to provide their income, residence, caste, birth, and death certificates,” the chief minister said.

“Along with this, under Mission Shakti, programmes related to women’s safety are being conducted by gram panchayats, which will serve as a central point for reviewing revenue and all departments,” he said.

“If we have to eradicate corruption we have to go towards digital transactions. Today, Rs 3.30 lakh crore have been directly transferred to the beneficiaries’ accounts through DBT (Direct Benefit Transfer) for schemes like Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, and Chief Minister Awas Yojana,” he added.

He said with transactions of Rs 3.50 lakh crore, Uttar Pradesh was leading in the field of digital transactions in the whole country.

He further said that there were about 56,000 gram panchayats in the state, out of which the process of selection of BC Sakhi was completed in 55,056 gram panchayats. About 51,000 BC Sakhi were provided the training.

Among them, 41,000 BC Sakhi were actively working, who had conducted transactions of more than Rs 5 crore 57 lakh rupees so far. BC Sakhis had also played a significant role in providing loans to people, along with assisting the elderly in the village.

“BC Sakhis are not only an example of women’s empowerment, but also function as self-mini branches of banks in every village, handling all the banking transactions,” he said.

The chief minister said the aim of good governance was to give the benefit of the schemes of the government to the person sitting at the last rung without any hindrance. This was the concept of Ram Rajya. Today, every citizen in the villages of the country was benefiting from the welfare schemes.

During the event, Union Minister for Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Giriraj Singh, Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and Rural Development Sadhvi Niranjani Jyoti, Deputy CM Keshav Prasad Maurya, Uttar Pradesh Minister of State Vijay Laxmi Gautam were present.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath giving away the appointment letter to a BC Sakhi on Thursday

CM to officials: Give top priority to redressal of public problems

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a high-level review meeting after winning the urban local bodies’ polls, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath directed senior district administration officials to expedite the public hearing programmes and give top priority to redressal of public problems.

The chief minister asked the officials to be sensitive to the public issues and said their conduct formed the basis of the trust of the common man in governance. “The satisfaction of the public will be the standard of excellence of your performance,” he added.

The chief minister gave these directions in a high-level review meeting of the Home department through video conferencing. He gave the necessary guidelines to the senior government officials, as well as senior administrative and police officers posted at the district, range, zone and divisional levels.

According to an official communique, the chief minister asked the officials to make Thana Diwas and Tehsil Diwas more effective and resolve the complaints before the next Thana Diwas/Tehsil Diwas.

“Ensure that the public is aware of these hearing dates. The cases coming up in the meeting should not remain pending at all. Officers posted in the field at every level should take night rest at their posting area only. Do not reside in other areas. Senior officers should make surprise inspections to make sure this arrangement is being followed,” he directed.

The chief minister said all officers having direct contact with the public like divisional commissioners, district magistrates, district police chiefs, DIOS, BSA, and district supply officers should meet the general public in their offices, listen to their complaints/problems and settle them on the basis of merit. He said camp offices should be used only after office hours or on holidays.

The chief minister pointed out that in many districts, the pace of development works was extremely slow and the officers should regularly review the ongoing development works so that the work was completed in a time-bound manner. “The accountability should be fixed by appointing nodal officers regarding development works,” he added.

The chief minister said a few months ago, through dialogue, the government was successful in removing loudspeakers from religious places and this move was appreciated all over the country. Yogi said during recent district visits, he had noticed that loudspeakers were being reinstalled in some districts and this was not acceptable. He asked the officials to immediately contact and make communication with the people concerned and ensure removal of all loudspeakers.

He stressed that illegal taxi stands, bus stands, rickshaw stands should not operate in any district of the state as they encouraged illegal recovery which was used in anti-social activities.

The chief minister said district-level Udyog Bandhu meetings should be held regularly and the district magistrate and district police chief should attend these meetings to solve the problems of entrepreneurs. “Not a single case of entrepreneurs should remain pending. It should be given top priority,” he said.

The chief minister said stringent action should be taken against those elements who molest daughters and women. He asked officials to identify such miscreants and to increase foot patrolling in which senior officers should also participate.

The chief minister stressed on stern action against manufacturing and sale of illicit liquor. He said policemen who were addicted to drugs should not be given any field responsibility and they should be identified and terminated from service.

He said district magistrates and superintendents of police should maintain constant dialogue and contact with the local public representatives. “Pay attention to their suggestions. Their letters should be disposed of quickly on the basis of merit,” he said.

The chief minister asked the officials to strictly prohibit noise pollution and make sure to adhere to the Supreme Court’s directives in this regard. “Establish dialogue with the DJ and music system operators before any function. No one should be allowed to spread chaos,” he said.

The chief minister said all the 17 municipal corporations of the state and Gautam Buddha Nagar had to be made ‘smart’ and ‘safe’ cities.

“Communicate with everyone. Connect CCTV camera to ICCC. Connect the first major municipality and nagar panchayats near the headquarters of every district with the campaign of safe and smart city,” he said. The chief minister asked the officials to start preparations for flood management.

Speaking out at the opposition parties for boycotting the inauguration of the new Parliament building by Prime Minister Narendra Modi scheduled for May 28, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the opposition parties’ statements were “extremely sad”, “irresponsible”, and were going to “weaken democracy”.

The chief minister said that May 28 was going to be recorded as a glorious moment in the history of independent India.

“Under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the new Parliament, a symbol of India’s democracy, will be dedicated to the country. It will be a proud moment for the entire country,” he said.

“On this occasion, the kind of irresponsible statements issued by the opposition parties are sad and are going to weaken democracy,” he added.

The chief minister said that being the largest democracy of the world, India was referred to as the ‘mother of democracy’.

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi has given a new identity to India’s image and the whole country is watching the attempt of the opposition to denigrate his efforts and will never accept it,” he said.

Speaking of the new Parliament building, the chief minister said that it complies with present-day demands. It was built with a vision for the next 100 years and was a fusion of tradition and modernity. It had been built with a visionary approach, ensuring that every

CM Yogi lashes out at opposition

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Maya supports BJP on new Parl building inauguration

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With several opposition parties announcing to remain away from the inauguration of the new Parliament building, former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh and Bahujan Samaj Party supremo Mayawati on Thursday declared her support to the Bharatiya Janata Party over the said controversy.

Almost all major opposition parties are demanding inauguration of the new Parliament House by President Droupadi Murmu instead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and have declared that they will not attend the function. In a series of tweets on Thursday, the BSP chief claimed that when the Congress was in power at the Centre, the BSP had always supported it irrespective of party politics on issues related to the country and public interest.

Similarly now, when the National Democratic Alliance government is in power, her party continues to support the BJP on issues of public and national interest, Mayawati added. She said that her party welcomed the inauguration of the new Parliament building on May 28.

In her second tweet, the former chief minister of UP said that the boycott by the opposition parties, just because President Droupadi Murmu was not inaugurating the new Parliament building, was unfair.

“The government has built the new Parliament House so it has the right to inaugurate it,” she said, adding that it was unfair to link this issue with tribal women’s respect.

“They should have thought of this while fielding a candidate against her (Murmu) instead of facilitating her victory unopposed,” the BSP chief said.

In her third tweet, Mayawati said, “I have received the invitation for the programme dedicated to the country i.e. the inauguration ceremony of the new Parliament House, for which I thank and extend my best wishes. But due to my pre-scheduled engagement regarding the continuous review meetings of the party, I will not be able to attend that function.”

It may be mentioned here that several opposition parties, including Congress, have launched a campaign to bring all like-minded parties on one platform before the coming parliamentary elections next year to defeat the NDA and stop it from forming government at the Centre for the third consecutive time.

parliamentarian had adequate space and access to all amenities.

This Parliament was giving an opportunity to set a standard for the world because it would serve as a significant forum for hearing the voice of



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inspecting the construction work of Shakumbhari University in Saharanpur on Thursday

NIA raids in terror funding case

Lucknow (PNS): The National Investigation Agency (NIA) conducted searches at two locations in Uttar Pradesh in the Bhopal terror funding case involving the proscribed organisation Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB).

The raids, conducted on Wednesday, were aimed at exposing further the links and conspiracies of the 10 already arrested accused who have been charge-sheeted in the case by the NIA court.

“Six of the arrested accused are Bangladeshi nationals and are active JMB cadre,” the NIA said, adding that they had entered India illegally without any valid document, and had acquired false and forged Indian identity documents with the help of their sympathisers in India.

“Wednesday’s searches at the premises of various suspects led to the seizure of several digital devices (mobile phones), SIM cards, bank passbooks and identity documents. The documents, currently under examination, relate to suspicious transactions related to the transfer of funds by the accused,” the NIA said.

The NIA investigations have revealed that all the 10 arrested accused were involved in influencing, radicalising and motivating vulnerable Indian Muslim youth to take up violent jihad against the democratic system of governance in the country.

“They had been circulating incriminating jihadi literature, inflammatory videos and statements and endorsing, justifying and glorifying the terrorist acts of the various banned terrorist organisations, including JMB, Al-Qaeda and the Taliban,” the anti-terror agency said.

“They were conspiring to align with terrorist organisations to achieve their ultimate goal of establishing a Sharia-based Islamic rule in India through the pursuit of ‘violent jihad’,” the NIA said, adding that they had grand plans of creating a pan-India network to pursue their objective and, along with their co-accused, had successfully established bases in various states, including Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Tripura, West Bengal and Assam.

The NIA registered the case on April 5 last year under various sections of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act and the Foreigners Act of 1946. It was initial-

“They had been circulating incriminating jihadi literature, inflammatory videos and statements and endorsing, justifying and glorifying the terrorist acts of the various banned terrorist organisations, including JMB, Al-Qaeda and the Taliban”

ly registered on March 14 last year by Bhopal Police in the wake of the arrest of six active cadres of JMB from their rented house in the city. “A cache of jihadi literature, digital devices, printer, paper cutting and bookbinding machines and other material were also seized from the house,” the agency said.

Given the ramifications of the case and developments for national security, the NIA had subsequently taken over the investigation and arrested four more accused.

Brij Bhushan to showcase his political clout in Ayodhya rally

Lucknow (PNS): In a bid to showcase his political clout and garner support, Brij Bhushan Saran Singh, the Bharatiya Janata Party parliamentarian from Kaiserganj who is currently facing allegations of sexual exploitation of wrestlers, has announced to organise a public awareness rally in Ayodhya on June 5.

Singh expressed confidence that over 11 lakh people would participate in the rally as his supporters have been entrusted with the responsibility of mobilising the crowd.

“Senior Supreme Court advocates and religious leaders are set to participate in the rally. A target of four lakh attendees has been set specifically for the Gonda district, a region he belongs to,” Singh’s supporter said.

Political pundits claim that by organising this rally Singh wants to show the BJP leadership his political might in the Devipatan division comprising five districts.

“Singh holds sway in at least four parliamentary constituencies in eastern UP and has the potential to influence the polls,” said Sanjay Singh, a political analyst.

Speaking at a preparatory meeting held at Raghukul Vidyaapeeth in Civil Lines of Gonda, Singh said that the rally would be organised by saints and seers, anticipating participation from lakhs of people from the Devipatan division.

He urged his supporters to consider the rally as a sacred offering, drawing a parallel with the significance of a yajna, and emphasised the importance of the ongoing struggle for existence. District panchayat members, block heads, area panchayat members, pradhans, and other influential individuals attended the meeting and were assigned specific targets to mobilise support for the rally. The parliamentarian further disclosed his plans to hold a preparatory meeting in Ayodhya, beginning with visits to rural areas followed by engagements with urban communities. Additionally, on Thursday, he met his supporters from Bahraich district to discuss preparations, and a preparatory meeting was scheduled in Balrampur district on May 26.

**CH. CHARAN SINGH UNIVERSITY, MEERUT**
(NAAC ACCREDITED with A++ Grade)

Admission Announcement : 2023-24
Applications are invited for admission to **M.Ed.** and **LL.M.** (through Entrance Test) and **B.P.Ed.** and **M.P.Ed.** (through Physical Fitness Test) in Ch. Charan Singh University Campus and Affiliated Colleges. Application form and admission rules will be available on the University website **www.ccsuniversity.ac.in** w.e.f. **May 25, 2023 to June 25, 2023.** **REGISTRAR**

New airport terminal building to be inaugurated today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Elaborate arrangements have been made for the inauguration of the new airport terminal building jointly by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia on Friday. Divisional commissioner said this new airport building will help provide good connectivity to different cities from Kanpur, especially because it housed prominent educational institutions, defence establishments, hospitals and prominent corporations. He said this building has come up at a whopping cost of ₹150 crore and could be given a practical shape after a decade.

Informing about the exclusivity of the new terminal building, he said at a time it can accommodate three aircraft



The new airport terminal building ready for inauguration

and keeping in view the future needs it can also accommodate six aircraft as well and for this special provisions have already been made. He said departure side of the airport building can handle 300 passengers and the arrival side

150. He said this terminal building had four conveyor belts.

Dr Shekhar said currently Kanpurites will get the facility of flights to Mumbai and Bengaluru and in the times to come Indigo and

other service provider agencies have expressed their desire to run flights. It was expected that in the next three to six months it will provide services for eight to 10 important cities and will have direct connectivity.

He said top security arrangements were being made for the arrival of VVIPs and better protocol was being arranged. He said as the premises was massive it was planned to convert it into a green patch besides better green plantation, landscaping and sprinkler systems. He added that Rotary Club of Kanpur has agreed to take up the greenery development. He said effort will be made to ensure proper plastic waste management. He said before 50 metre distance of the terminal building huge signages should be put up in the next 15 days.

DGP directs officials to remain alert

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Dr RK Vishwakarma while chairing the review meeting at the Police Lines auditorium here on Thursday said gangsters Vikas Dubey and Atiq Ahmad were a lesson for the police. He said if police keep its leash tightened on criminals at the initial stage operation of such mafia was unlikely to recur in future. In a bid to contain recurrence of such incidents, he directed the officials to remain alert and keep on tightening leash on criminals. During his one-day visit here DGP Dr RK Vishwakarma and Special DG (Law & Order) Prashant Kumar held long-drawn review meeting at the Police Lines auditorium on Thursday. Later, talking to mediapersons, the DGP said some recent incidents were taken as lessons for the police. Officials had been directed to keep a tight leash the criminals to prevent them from becoming Vikas Dubey or Atiq Ahmad. He said there was a drastic decrease in cases of murder, dacoity and other serious crime in the state. However, incidents relating to cyber crime had sharply been increased, he said and added efforts were on to equip the police with latest technology resources and special training to contain operation of cyber criminals.

He was hopeful of getting better results in near future on this front. Earlier, he was extended a rousing welcome at the Circuit House by Police Commissioner BP Jogdand, Joint Police Commissioner Anand Prakash Tewari, IG Prashant Kumar, IPS Shiv Singh and others senior officers with bouquet. This was his first visit to Kanpur after assuming charge as DGP. Thereafter, he inspected the Police Lines and took stock of law and order situation in the review meeting. Officials apprised him about various new systems and arrangements introduced in the city for smooth traffic management through slide presentations. He praised the efforts and suggested to introduce these systems in other districts of the state.

ACCIDENT : A safai karmachari was fatally knocked down by a speeding bike on the highway in Ahirwa under Chakeri police station area on Thursday morning. The kin along with colleagues of the deceased staged an agitation with the body at the office of Zone 2 to press for payment of compensation. The kin were adamant on calling the municipal commissioner on the spot and pressed for early settlement of their demands for payment of ₹10 lakh compensation and service to wife of the deceased. During the agitation, they had

heated arguments with the Nagar Nigam health officer. Rajesh Bharti (40) of Shiv Katra was an outsourced safai karmchari in Ward 11 Safipur. His colleague Bharat said on Thursday when he along with Rajesh were busy cleaning the road near Patel Nagar crossing and the latter, after collecting the garbage, proceeded with the handcart, a speeding bike coming from opposite direction knocked him down. The bike rider is said to be a student of an engineering college. This caused serious injury to Rajesh. Colleague Bharat chased the fleeing bike-borne youth but the latter soon disappeared from the spot. Bharat along with other colleagues took the injured Rajesh to Kashiram Hospital from where he was referred for the LLR (Hallet) hospital where he was declared dead by the doctors. Thereafter, kin along with colleagues reached Zone 2 office and staged a massive agitation with the body demanding ₹10 lakh compensation and service to a family member of the deceased. The Chakeri police also reached the spot. When Health Officer Dr Ajay Sankhwar assured to pay ₹2.50 lakh compensation, kin went berserk and intensified the agitation. They were adamant to call the municipal commissioner on the spot and pressed for early settlement of their demand.

Mission Life drive launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the guidance of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Ramashray Pandey, Mission Life campaign is being run on Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) for environment protection, water and electricity saving. Under this, passengers are being motivated to avoid wastage of water and save electricity. In this direction, a rally and labour donation was organised at Varanasi City railway station on Wednesday to make various steps to adapt the environment and to make the general public aware. Along with this, under the leadership of Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (Enhm) Alok Kesharwani, station superintendent, chief

health inspector, commercial inspector, Railway Protection Force (RPF) personnel and employees, about 200 railway passengers were administered oath to adopt environment friendly lifestyle. The passengers pledged that they would make every possible change in their daily life to save the environment and to educate their family, friends and others about the importance of environment friendly habits and behaviours and they would continuously inspire the people about it. Under Zero Plastic Consumption, an appeal was made not to use plastic bags on foot over bridges, platforms and passing trains of Varanasi City station and the passengers were also given information about the ill-effects of using plastic. The cotton bags were distributed among the passengers

free of cost to create awareness about jute bags instead of plastic bags. With the aim of making the environment green and pure, under the leadership of SDME (Enhm) Alok Kesharwani, the officers and employees planted saplings and offered shramdaan in the Varanasi City station premises. Station Superintendent EH Hashmi, chief health inspector D Narayan, JE (Enhm/Varanasi) Pawan Kumar Singh, health inspector (Enhm) Ajay Dwivedi, ASI Sunil Yadav, section engineer Jitendra Kumar, Anoop Kumar, Deepak Kumar, Shivakant Pandey and the team of railway employees cooperated and requested passengers to make the environment plastic free and destroy the plastic items like bottles, polythene wrappers etc after the uses.

NSI joins hands with leading sugar groups

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The National Sugar Institute (NSI) in pursuit of developing alternate feed-stocks for production of ethanol has joined hands with leading sugar groups, Balrampur Chini Mills Ltd and Dalmia Bharat Sugar Mills Ltd to undertake trials for intercropping of sweet sorghum with sugarcane. The trials of five varieties of sweet sorghum, CSH22SS, SS74, SS84, Phule Vasundhara and ICSSH28 provided by ICAR- Indian Institute of Millets Research, Hyderabad, earlier conducted at institute's farm indicated average yield of sweet sorghum and ethanol production potential to be about 50-55 tonnes per hectare and 45-50 litres per metric ton of sweet sorghum. NSI Director Prof Narendra Mohan said the institute had taken trials for intercropping of sweet sorghum with sugarcane crop between the two rows of sugarcane plantation sweet

sorghum was being grown at Gonda and Shahjahanpur districts with the help of these sugar companies. He said while growing sweet sorghum and sugarcane in the same field this will help sugarcane farmers to get higher income from the same field. It will also be possible to get more ethanol per hectare of land. He said the sugarcane farmer's income per hectare is expected to increase by 35 per cent while the ethanol production potential may also increase by around 30 per cent, he said. Further, although, sugar beet is a crop for cold climatic conditions, yet the institute was exploring the possibilities of growing it in north India during the period November to April when the temperatures were favourable. The NSI had taken trials of three varieties, LS6, LKC2020, IISR COMP at the institute farm. While the beetroot yield has been about 60-80 tonnes per hectare, the ethanol yield has been found much higher than sugarcane

and was of the order of 80-100 litres per ton of beet root. The two crops sweet sorghum and sugar beet were not only short duration crops of four-five months but also require much less water than sugarcane and hence we look forward developing these crops as potential crops for ethanol production. He said the NSI will be able to address various challenges by working with other institutes like ICAR and ICAR-Institute of Sugarcane Research, Lucknow.

SESSION: Oluxi chief trainer and personality groomer Monika Jain while addressing a session on "The skilled diners workshop" said in the present times table manners were highly essential in the upper strata of the society and had trickled down to upper middle class as well. She said now the focus was not on just eating but to understand how to be part of the banquet and enjoy the company and the food served like a gourmet. The workshop was organised by Oluxi Institute, Ratan Orbit.

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY

KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND

NOTICE

Director, Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi invites applications for the following posts on tenure basis for a period of three years. Details of vacant posts are as under:

a) Clinical Psychology Tutor - 02 (Un-reserved)

b) Psychiatric Social Work Tutor - 01 (Un-reserved)

Date of walk-in-interview is **14.06.2023**. Desirous candidates may send their application by post on or before **10.06.2023** or submit it by themselves at the institute in the prescribed format giving full details of academic records and experience along with photocopy of the relevant documents with recent photograph. Details can be seen on the Institute website www.cipranchi.nic.in.

Sd/-Director

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

CENTRAL INSTITUTE OF PSYCHIATRY

KANKE, RANCHI-834006, JHARKHAND

NOTICE

Director, Central Institute of Psychiatry, Ranchi invites the applications for the posts of Senior Residents on tenure basis. Selection will be made through written examination and department assessment. Details of vacant posts are as under.

1. Senior Resident-19 Posts.

i) Psychiatry - 12 (Un-reserved-05) [Reserved (Vertical) ST-01, SC-02, OBC-03, EWS-01 & (Horizontal) PH-1].

ii) Neurology - 03 [Reserved (Vertical) OBC-01, SC-01]

iii)Anesthesiology - 01(Un-reserved)

iv)Neuro-surgery - 02 (Un-reserved)

v) Radio-diagnosis- 01 (Un-reserved)

Desirous candidates may send their application by post on or before 15.06.2023 or submit it by themselves at the institute in the prescribed format giving full details of academic records and experience along with photocopy of the relevant documents with recent photograph. Written examination (MCQ based) will be held on **19.06.2023** from 11:30 A.M onwards. Details can be seen on the Institute's website www.cipranchi.nic.in.

Sd/-Director

Admission task force constituted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has constituted an Admission Task Force in order to effectively manage the admission process for different programmes of the university for the academic session 2023-24. The task force, formed by Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain, will help and assist the Central Admission Committee in the course of admissions. The members of the task force drawn from various institutes/faculties/ centres will act as link between the Central Admission Committee and the respective institutes/

faculties to develop a simple, time effective and practical admission system. Besides, the members will also help the Central Committee in developing postgraduate admission modules as per the specific features and needs of the institutes/ faculties. The faculty members included in the Admission Task Force are Prof Sanjeev Kumar, Prof Rashmi Singh, Dr Manish Arora, Dr KA Chanchal, Prof Nidhi Sharma, Dr Alok Kumar Pandey, Dr SK Padhi, Dr VK Pathak, Prof Ramesh Singh, Dr Pankaj Singh, Dr Binayak Dubey, Dr RS Mishra, Dr Raj Kiran Prabhakar, Dr PC Abhilash and Dr Manjari Gupta.

Existence of Shivpur talab at stake

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the one hand, the government is laying an emphasis to preserve the ponds by rejuvenating and on the other; the existence of the historically important Shivpur talab (pond) is at stake because of the land grabbers are hatching conspiracy to get this talab out of the list of ponds prepared by the Varanasi Municipal Corporation (VMC) with an eye to grab its land to construct buildings for commercial purpose. The VMC has prepared a list of 63 talabs of historical and mythological importance to preserve them and the Shivpur talab is on the 31st number in the list, the former corporator of Shivpur

ward Dr Jitendra Seth informed and added that but in the present time, the property dealers have eye on the land of this talab to construct buildings for commercial purpose. The property dealers are hatching conspiracy to get this talab out from the list of the VMC so that they could grab its land, Dr Seth blamed, adding that the VMC has imposed restriction on any type of construction on the land of this pond and also on the procurement of the land. An FIR had also been lodged at Shivpur police station by the then DM against the illegal grabbers on the land of this pond on April 20, 2008 but despite this, the conspiracy is being hatched by the land grabbers to make their possessions on it.

15 TTEs felicitated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

As many as 15 travelling ticket examiners (TTEs), who contributed in the highest railway revenue in Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) were felicitated at a function held at Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) office premises here on Wednesday by Senior Divisional Commercial Manager (SDCM) Sanjeev Sharma. These TTEs were awarded with a cash award of Rs1,000 each and citation.

Under the direction of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Ramashray Pandey and SDCM Sanjeev Sharma, continuous intensive ticket checking campaigns were organised in different parts of Varanasi Division (NER). As a result, in the year 2022-23, over ₹37.97 crore (total ₹37,97,17,169) were realised from over 5.88 lakh (total 5,88,009) cases of travelling without tickets or on irregular tickets or with unbooked luggage were caught. The total Railway revenue realised in these cases was 27 per cent more than the same of ₹29,89,81,070 collected during the previous year. The realisation of revenue was also 12 percent higher than the target of ₹34 fixed by the Railway Board for this NER's division. To achieve this goal, surprise ticket checking campaigns were organised on the basis of various stations and trains and the ticket checking staff were encouraged to achieve the target, in which the staff showed their understanding and tireless hard work. The



TTEs being felicitated by SDCM Sanjeev Sharma at DRM office in Varanasi on Wednesday.

TTEs who were awarded include Mohd Mahroof Khan, Raghunandan Kumar, SK Mishra, Ravindra Kumar, Pawan Kumar Rai, Abhimanyu Yadav, Naushad Ali Khan, AK Sharma, Jairam Singh, Dheeraj, Reena Srivastava, Rajendra, AK Srivastava, Bipin Bihari Singh and Shiv Shankar Kumar who have contributed more than ₹40 lakhs to railway revenue in the last financial year. On the occasion, SDCM Sanjeev Sharma said in his presidential address that there is a need to work with more hard work and dedication by ticket inspectors in this financial year. Other TTEs of the division, who have given less railway revenue this time, also need to work harder so that they can join the award recipients by making their special contribution next year. Divisional Commercial Manager Rajesh Kumar Srivastava and ACMs Ajay Kumar Suman and Pushkar Singh Rawat were also present. The programme was conducted by ACM Ajay Kumar Suman who also proposed the vote of thanks at last.

Stress on cleanliness

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Under the 'One step towards cleanliness' campaign, the NCC unit of Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Kidwai Nagar, reached the colony located at Gola Ghat as per the instructions of 17 UP Girls BN NCC to convey the message of cleanliness to the residents there. The campaign was carried out by NCC Cadets. As per instructions, the cadets conveyed various messages related to cleanliness through street play and made the residents aware of its importance. This impressed the residents a lot and they ensured their participation in keeping the places clean. Cadets distributed dustbins made by them in the colony houses and shops and residents were requested to put wet and dry garbage in separate dustbins. All the cadets took an oath for cleanliness. In this campaign 45 cadets of the college, NCC incharge Dr Deepali Nigam, senior GCI Suman Arya and Havildar Neeraj Kumar were present.

MISHAP DEATH: Two persons were fatally knocked down by a speeding car on Kanpur-Lucknow highway in Unnao on Thursday morning. The incident took place near Navin Mandi in Sadar Kotwali police area around 9.30 am when both the persons were crossing the road on foot. The police launched raids to nail the car rider and efforts were on to contact the kin of the deceased. On the basis of Aadhar card, identity of one of the deceased was ascertained as Nand Kishore (60). After the incident sub-inspector Nasiruddin, posted there in security of the DGP going to Kanpur, sent both the injured to the district hospital on auto where the doctors declared them as brought dead. However, the identity of the other deceased, aged around 30 years, could not be ascertained. Car rider escaped with the vehicle after the mishap. Kotwali Incharge Rajesh Pathak said efforts were on to contact the kin of the deceased.

इंडियन बैंक

Indian Bank

ALLAHABAD

Zonal Office: 92A, Civil Lines, Bank Chauraha, Jhansi - 284001, Email ID: zojhansi@indianbank.co.in; (Phone: 0510-2471922)

POSSESSION NOTICE (Rule 8(1) for immovable Property)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Indian Bank, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act-2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 8 & 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice (details of which have been mentioned hereunder) calling upon the borrowers to repay the amount mentioned in the respective notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Section 8 & 9 of the said rules. The borrowers in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of the Indian Bank for an amount and interest & charges there on as described here in below: We draw attention to the provisions of Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act and the Rules framed there under which deals with borrowers rights of redemption over the securities.

S. No.	Name of the Borrowers	Name of Mortgagors	Description of the Immoveable property	Date of Demand Notice
	Branch	Guarantors		Date of Possession Notice
				Outstanding Amt.
1.	M/s Suhag Traders & Vival Ghar (Prop. Mrs. Kalpana Mishra W/o Anil Mishra)	Mrs. Kalpana Mishra W/o Anil Mishra 1. Mr. Anil Kumar Mishra S/o Daya Shankar Mishra 2. Mr. Sarfaraj Khan S/o Sarbar Khan 3. Mr. Virendra Singh S/o Udal Singh	All that part and parcel of the property situated at Khasra No. 714 GH, at Jawahar Nagar, Madhogarh, Dist. Jalaun, Area 1090 Sq. meter in the name of Mrs. Kalpana Mishra W/o Anil Kumar Mishra, R/o: Moh. Patel Nagar, Madhogarh Dist. Jalaun. Boundaries:- North : Talab, South : Rasta and Plot of Jasoda Maharaj, East : Dev Sthan Baad Chotte Kahar ka Makan, West : Plot of Rustam Singh & Maheshwari	15.10.2019 20.05.2023 Rs. 17,98,858.00 (Rs. Fifteen Lakhs Seventy Thousand Eight Hundred Fifty Eight Only) as on dt. 19.05.2023 with further interest w.e.f. 20.05.2023 charges and other expenses
2.	M/s B S Education Academy managed by 1. Mr. Roopendra Singh S/o Vijay Singh (Manager) 2. Mr. Guru Dutt Shukla S/o Salikram (President) 3. Mrs. Vijay Devi W/o Vijay Singh (Treasurer)	Mrs. Vimla Devi W/o Vijay Singh 1. Mr. Ajit Singh S/o Brijendra Singh 2. Mr. Indrabhan Singh S/o Sultan Singh 3. Mr. Vivek Pratap Singh S/o Rajendra Singh 4. Mrs. Sonvati Devi W/o Rajbahadur Singh 5. Mrs. Indu Singh W/o Ramlakhan 6. Mr. Brijbir Singh S/o Shivratan 7. Mr. Pradeep Singh S/o Prayag Narayan 8. Mr. Ramadhar Singh S/o Surat Singh	All that part and parcel of the property situated at Plot No. 452, at Moh. Tilak Nagar, Madhogarh Dist. Jalaun Area 891 Sq meter in the name of Mrs. Vimla Devi Mishra W/o Vijay Singh R/o : Vill & Post Harauli, Madhogarh through sale deed no. 3672/10 dated 15.09.2010 volume No. 1097, page from 263 to 300 registered at Registrar Office Madhogarh. Boundaries:-North : Plot of Devi Dayal, South : Rasta & House of Raman Mishra, East : Plot of Ramkeshan, West : Plot of Subedar	27.05.2021 20.05.2023 Rs. 17,98,159.00 (Rs. Seventeen Lakhs Ninety Eight Thousand One Hundred Fifty Nine Only) as on dt. 19.05.2023 with further interest w.e.f. 20.05.2023 charges and other expenses

Date : 25.05.2023 Place: Jhansi The Authorized Officer: Indian Bank

LIC registers 10.90 pc increase in TPI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Board of Directors of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) approved and adopted the standalone and consolidated financial results for the year ending March 31, 2023. It released the key highlights of LICs standalone results. The official statement issued on Thursday said for the year ended March 31, 2023, the LIC registered an increase of 10.90 per cent in the total premium income (TPI) at ₹4,74,005 crore as compared to ₹4,27,419 crore for the previous year ended March 31, 2022. In terms of market share measured by First Year Premium Income (FYPI) (as per IRDAI) the LIC has maintained its leadership in Indian life insurance business with a market share of 62.58 per cent for FY 2022-23. Further (as per IRDAI) the total FYPI for LIC grew by 16.67 per cent from ₹1.98 lakh crore in FY 2022 to ₹2.32 lakh crore in FY 2023. The Profit after Tax (PAT) for the year ended March 31, 2023 was ₹36,397.40 crore as compared to ₹4,043.12 crore for the previous year ended March 31, 2022. The profit for FY 2022-23 comprised an amount of ₹27,240.75 crore (net of tax), which is pertaining to the accretion on the Available Solvency Margin, transferred from non-par fund to shareholders account. The Board of Directors have recommended a dividend of ₹3 per share translating to a dividend payout of ₹1,897 crore. On an Annualised Premium Equivalent (APE) basis the total premium was ₹56,682 crore for the year ended March 31, 2023 as compared to ₹50,390 crore for year ended March 31, 2022 representing a growth of 12.49 per cent on year. For the FY 2023, 68.22 per cent (₹38,667 crore) was accounted for by the Individual Business and 31.78

per cent (₹18,015 crore) by the Group Business. The individual business APE grew by 8.70 per cent year on year during FY 2023. Also within the individual business on an APE basis the share of par products and non-par product was 91.11 per cent and 8.89 per cent respectively. For FY 2023 the group APE (₹18,015 crore) grew by 21.57 per cent over the previous year ending March 31, 2022 (₹14,818 crore). For the year ended March 31, 2023, the persistency ratios on premium basis for the 13th month and 61st month were 77.09 per cent and 61.80 per cent, respectively. The comparable persistency ratios for the corresponding year ended March 31, 2022, were 75.59 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively. For the year ended March 31, 2023, the persistency ratios on number of policies basis for the 13th month and 61st month were 64.28 per cent and 49.86 per cent, respectively. The comparable persistency ratios for the previous year ended March 31, 2022, were 63.45 per cent and 49.86 per cent, respectively. Therefore the 13th month persistency has improved both on premium basis and on policy basis while the 61st month persistency has improved on premium basis. The Assets Under Management (AUM) increased to ₹43,97 lakh crore as on March 31, 2023, as compared to ₹40.85 lakh crore on March 31, 2022, registering an increase of 7.65 per cent year on year. The Yield on Investments on policy holders funds excluding unrealised gains was 8.29 per cent for year ended March 31, 2023, as against 8.55 per cent for year ended March 31, 2022. The solvency ratio for the year ended March 31, 2023 is 1.87 (before considering the proposed final dividend of ₹3 per share for FY23) and will be 1.86 (after consideration of the proposed final dividend for FY23) as against 1.85 for the year ended March 31, 2022. The Value of New Business (VNB) (gross) for the year ended March 31, 2023, was ₹11,553

crore as against ₹9,920 crore for the previous year ending March 31, 2022 representing an increase of 16.46 per cent. The VNB margins for the year ended March 31, 2023, were 16.2 per cent (net) as compared to 15.1 per cent (net) for year ended March 31, 2022. The gross VNB of the individual business was ₹7,571 crore and for group business was ₹3,982 crore for year ended March 31, 2023. The gross VNB margins for the individual and group business were 19.6 per cent and 22.1 per cent, respectively. Within the individual business, the par business, non-par business (including Linked business) had gross VNB margins of 14.6 per cent and 70.4 per cent, respectively. The Indian Embedded Value (IEV) of the corporation has been determined as ₹5,82,243 crore as at March 31, 2023 as compared to ₹5,41,492 crore as at March 31, 2022 and ₹5,44,291 crore as at September 30, 2022. Therefore the IEV had grown by 7.53 per cent on a year on year basis.

Chairperson, LIC, Siddhartha Mohanty, said, "Our results demonstrate the resilience of our business, built in every nook and corner of the country, over a period of more than six decades. Our efforts towards enhancing the share of non-par products in the overall product mix are bearing fruits. With the increase in profit, net VNB margin and IEV we are well positioned to continue our growth journey, in the service of the nation and its citizens. The regulatory initiatives towards Insurance for All by 2047 will present opportunities to grow for the sector and we intend to participate in that growth. As we move forward to grow our business further we will endeavour to create superior value for all our stakeholders. Finally we thank all our policyholders, agents, employees and shareholders for maintaining their faith in us".

Stop work in Ravindrapuri Colony: PWD Minister

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

UP Public Works Department (UP) Minister Jitin Prasada ordered for stopping the construction work in posh Ravindrapuri Colony and directed the concerned department engineers to clear the road by removing the construction materials from the spot. He took the action when the matter was raised over the standards of the road being built by the PWD at a height of about three feet by UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal and MLA Saurabh Srivastava and the PWD engineers remained mute spectators at a review meeting held at Circuit House here on Thursday.

Jitin Prasada gave strict instructions to the PWD engineers to complete the repair and construction work of roads on a war footing with quality on time. After on-site inspection of the under-construction roads at Phulwaria four-lane road in the city till late night, he has taken the engineers to task while holding a review meeting.

He instructed the engineers that the under-construction roads should be completed immediately with high quality. "Negligence will not be tolerated at any level in this," he warned, laying emphasis on early completion of the Phulwaria road.

The PWD Minister said that Varanasi is the parliamentary constituency of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi and whatever construction work is done here, it should be of quality and there should not be any kind of negligence and the work should also be completed on time.

While directing, he said



UP PWD Minister Jitin Prasada reviewing progress of construction work in Varanasi on Thursday.

that the work of pending and incomplete projects should be completed by December.

He directed the engineers of PWD, Rural Engineering Department, Rajiya Nirman Nigam and Bridge Corporation that whatever funds have been made available by the government, the benefit of the projects should be made available to the general public by making good use of that amount.

Directing the departmental engineers further, he said that the list of roads to be constructed under the department should be made available to the public representatives of the district so that he can make the information about the achievements of the government available to the general public at the time of public hearing. "If any deficiency is found in the quality of the newly constructed roads, strict action will be taken against the concerned engineers and contractors in every case," he said, adding that the construction

works should compulsorily inspect the progress and quality and also take necessary action against the contractors who do not perform well.

During the review of the Bridge Corporation, he directed the concerned engineers to pay special attention to the quality of the construction work of the targeted bridges and the progress should be reviewed compulsorily in the first week of every month. Encroachment and black spots on the roads and other important points should also be discussed in the meeting. He said that the officers related to the construction work of Lahartara-Phulwaria four-lane road were asked to settle the cases of land acquisition in two to three days so that the road can be made operational within two months.

He clearly made it clear that the deadline will not be extended now and insisted that the temples and tombs coming

in the way should be shifted to another places.

Along with this, PWD and Forest Department officials should speed up the work of cutting the identified trees during road construction by coordinating with each other so that the construction work can be completed on time. All the street lights should be lit in the night otherwise strict action will be taken, the Minister said.

UP Ministers (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal and Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu', Zila Panchayat Chairperson Poonam Maurya, newly-elected Mayor Ashok Tiwari, MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma, MLAs Saurabh Srivastava, Dr Awadhesh Singh, Sunil Patel and Sushil Singh and city BJP chief Vidyasagar Rai, District Magistrate S Rajalingam, Chief Development Officer Himanshu Nagpal and others were also present in the review meeting.

Demand for gold, silver biscuits increases

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

After the announcement by RBI to withdraw Rs 2000 notes from circulation traders associated with all the trade may be shying away from taking pink notes, but this is not the case in the bullion market. People are investing in bullion market to spend pink notes.

In Prayagraj where the average turnover of a day in the bullion market was earlier Rs 12 to 14 crore, now it has increased to above Rs 20 crores. Traders associated with this

profession are also very excited due to the increase in business.

The demand for gold and silver biscuits has increased, especially after the sudden boom in the jewelry business. It is believed that those who had more pink notes here are now buying gold from them. So that any kind of paper works of the bank can be avoided.

Due to this there has been a jump in the prices of gold. The price of silver has also increased by about Rs 1,000 per

kg. Anoop Verma of Shri Ganesh Jewellers said Rs 2000 notes are less with common people but there are many people who do not have shortage of these notes.

Customers are also coming for shopping in the gold shops in the streets of Mirganj and Rani Mandi in Chowk. A businessman said on the condition of anonymity that there are many people who are talking about buying gold biscuits worth Rs 20 to 25 lakh. There is a high demand for gold biscuits of 50 grams and 100

grams.

President of Allahabad Jewelers Association Dinesh Singh said that Rs 2,000 note is legal, that's why traders are taking it. It is true that for the last few days, most of the customers coming to the market are coming with Rs 2,000 notes only. Many people have already made their bookings for the upcoming festive season. At present, the average daily turnover in the bullion market in Prayagraj is estimated to be above Rs 20 crore.

Shaista, Zainab skip visit to grave on *chaliswan* of Atiq-Ashraf

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

As the death of mafia Atiq Ashraf completed 40 days on Thursday it was speculated that Shaista Parveen and Ashraf's wife Zainab, who could not attend Atiq-Ashraf's funeral, attending the 'chaliswan' (the 40th day of the death).

Women and men policemen in plain clothes were deployed from Kasari Masari cemetery in Chakia to Atiq house. Special attention was given to women wearing burkas.

Mafia Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf were shot dead at 10:35 pm on April 15 2023 at Colvin

nel were also on alert at various places.

An alert had been issued in the Police department regarding the possibility of Shaista Parveen and Zainab, who could not attend Atiq-Ashraf's funeral, attending the 'chaliswan' (the 40th day of the death).

Women and men policemen in plain clothes were deployed from Kasari Masari cemetery in Chakia to Atiq house. Special attention was given to women wearing burkas.

Mafia Atiq Ahmed and his brother Ashraf were shot dead at 10:35 pm on April 15 2023 at Colvin

Hospital here.

The police had taken both the mafia brothers to the hospital for a routine check-up. Lavlesh Tiwari, Arun Maurya and Sunny Singh had them gunned down during the live coverage of TV channels.

On April 16 absconding Shaista Parveen and Zainab Fatima were said to attend Atiq's funeral in the cemetery in Kasari Masari.

When the police started questioning Atin, friend of Asad, the third son of Atiq Ahmed, the main accused in the Umesh Pal murder case, he told that Shaista was going to go to the cemetery at

Kasari Masari on April 16 with shooter Sabir. Shaista could not muster the courage to go to the cemetery in view of tight security and guard of the police.

Both stayed at Atin's house for the night, but could not reach the cemetery. Next day Shaista left along with Sabir. Neither the security agencies nor the local police were aware of this move.

Since then even after raids in many states shooter Sabir, Guddu Muslim, Shaista Parveen and Zainab Fatima have been arrested.

BSP expels two in Prayagraj

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

After the defeat in the civic elections, the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) is continuously expelling such office-bearers in Prayagraj who are found involved in anti-party activities. The party has expelled former district president Chintamani Verma from the party. Along with the former district president, party worker Rajkumar Gautam has also been expelled from the party. BSP district president Atul Kumar Titu has also confirmed this by issuing a press release.

He said that two people, including the former district president, have been expelled from the party. Both these

people are accused of indiscipline and involvement in anti-party activities. Thereafter, this action has been taken. Former president Chintamani Verma said he has not been given any notice of expulsion. "What have we done? We have always been dedicated to the party", he added.

The Bahujan Samaj Party is leaving no stone unturned to take action against the responsible officials. Last week the zone in-charge of Prayagraj division and former Rajya Sabha member Ghanshyam Chandra Kharwar were also removed from his post. In his place Dr Vijay Pratap, former member of the Legislative Council of Azamgarh, was

made the chief divisional incharge of Prayagraj divisional zone.

Abhishek Gautam, who was in charge of Ayodhya's divisional zone, was made the zone incharge of Prayagraj division.

This decision was taken following the instructions of former Chief Minister and BSPs supremo Mayawati. The party is busy preparing for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

DEMONSTRATION: Enraged over non-departure of trains from Meja Railway station to Prayagraj, passengers raised slogans and staged a demonstration at the station here on Thursday.

The passengers said that if the movement of trains is not

made smooth till Prayagraj soon, demonstrations will be held at the offices of top officials, including the railway minister.

Reports said that many people work in government and non-government departments from Meja Road railway station of Delhi-Howrah railway route.

Everyday people travel by trains so that they can reach the departments concerned on time.

But for the last one month, local trains are not being taken to Prayagraj by the Railway department due to which the people are facing a lot of problems. Local trains are being running to Chheoki Junction only.

Stage all set for wrestling event in KIUG at IIT (BHU)

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Stage is all set for the beginning of wrestling evening under Khelo India University Games (KIUG) which will be organised at IIT (BHU) here from Friday. The different disciplines of the KIUG are scheduled to be held in four cities of UP including Varanasi and the KIUG has already begun. In the city, all the preparations have been completed as the wrestling event will be held here from May 26 to June 3. Under the KIUG, two sports wrestling and yogasana competitions will be held here. About 350 players from across the country will participate in these sports disciplines.

On the last day of the KIUG held in Varanasi on June 3, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will encourage the players in his own parliamentary constituency. The PM will address the players by connecting through a virtual medium. These sports events, organised under the supervision of the Sports Authority of India (SAI) will be conducted at the Ramesh Srinivasan Student Activity Centre of IIT (BHU). According to the organising committee, Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur was present in the inauguration ceremony of the competition apart from the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. In this national level sports event to be held in Varanasi along with the players, many renowned sports



IIT (BHU) ready for wrestling bouts under KIUG in Varanasi on Thursday.

trainers related to wrestling and yoga will also participate.

For the wrestling bouts which will start from Friday at the Ramesh Srinivasan Student Activity Centre of IIT (BHU), majority of participating teams have already arrived here though their arrivals began a couple of days ago. On Thursday, the weight of the participating wrestlers was taken at the competition venue. All matches will be played on mats according to international rules. A total of 240 wrestlers from various universities will be vying for medals in the four-day long wrestling competition.

The yoga competition will start from June 1. After the

wrestling matches are over, the yoga matches will start here from June 1. A total of 96 players from different universities will show their skills in the three-day yoga competition in different categories. The first batch of players had arrived here on Tuesday night to take part in the KIUG. A total of 17 players reached Varanasi by three different trains. When the first team of eight players arrived at Varanasi Junction (Cantt) railway station where the volunteers present at the help desk of Khelo India received the guest players. The guest players were welcomed by garlanding them with flowers as well as by applying tilak. The

players' contingent was taken to the hotel in a special bus. On the other hand, another team of nine players reached Banaras railway station at 10 pm where also the guest players were given a traditional welcome and were taken to the hotel by bus. Later, the other batches also arrived here by trains and flights. During their arrivals, the representatives of Uttar Pradesh Sports department and SAI were also present. Tight security arrangements were made in the station premises and outside during the arrival and departure of the players. The police teams also escorted the vehicles of the players.

BHU forms task force for IPR

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Intellectual Property Rights and Technology Transfer Cell of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) will work to attract suitable industry partners and facilitate academia-industry interaction in order to take the benefits of innovation and research to the society. Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain has constituted a task force for the Intellectual Property Rights and Technology Transfer Cell, previously known as Intellectual Property Rights Cell. The main objective of the cell is to protect the Intellectual Property

Rights (IPR) of the innovations and transfer the novel technologies/ products to industry partners for societal benefits. The cell will be a single-window system that will manage protection of the innovations and transfer the commercially viable technologies/products to suitable industry partners.

The cell will work for promoting innovations, entrepreneurship and start-ups by helping to create a favourable ecosystem. It will also support ongoing research programmes which have the potential for innovations. It will be conducting workshops and training

programmes to bring awareness and train innovators for protecting their works. The cell has been mandated with safeguarding the interests of inventors, supporting innovators in disclosing the inventions and filing patents and providing legal support to the inventors/innovators as and when required. It will also work for protecting the rights of both industry and academia through mutually agreed agreements. The cell will also frame and review modalities of technology transfer and licensing to industry partners from time to time.

Prof Birinchi Kumar

Sarma, Department of Mycology and Plant Pathology, Institute of Agricultural Sciences, has been named the chairman of the task force. Prof Geeta Rai, Department of Molecular and Human Genetics, Institute of Science, and Dr Rajnish Kumar Singh, Faculty of Law, have been named members. The nominees of the different directors / deans of concerned institutes/ faculties will be the special invitees while Dr Venugopal, Deputy Registrar, Sponsored Research and Industrial Consultancy Cell, has been named the secretary of the newly constituted task force.

Traffic system reviewed

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

DIG Police Vindhhyachal Range RP Singh on Wednesday directed the traffic personnel to take all necessary steps for smooth traffic in the larger interest of the society. Reviewing the traffic system he said removal of encroachments was a must and all vulnerable spots which were the reason behind the congestion should be identified. He asked the officials to take action against illegal parking stands, illegal plying of vehicles etc.

MEETING: Divisional Commissioner Dr Muthukumarasamy B while chairing the meeting of Shaktinagar Special Area

Development Authority on Wednesday directed the officials concerned to complete the works with quality and within time. A discussion on the proposed works for the year 2023-2024 was held and DM Sonbhadra Chandra Vijai Singh was directed to examine the proposed works first and then table it in the board meeting. Member Dharmveer Tiwari suggested to install lightning conductors in the area to save the life of the people as well as cattle during the rainy season. Showing the proposed master plan for area through projector project director Alok Saini gave details of features and sought suggestions from members.

Suggesting few points the DC directed the secretary of the authority ADM Sahdev Mishra to incorporate his suggestions and then table them in the next meeting. District magistrate and additional district magistrate Sonbhadra, chief treasury officer, Mirzapur, Archana Tripathi, deputy director economics and statistics Rajneesh and others were present.

ARRESTED: An accused of cutting the signal wire was arrested on Wednesday. The railway authorities got perturbed on receiving information that two trains were compelled to stop suddenly near Vindhhyachal without any proper reason. On inquiry it

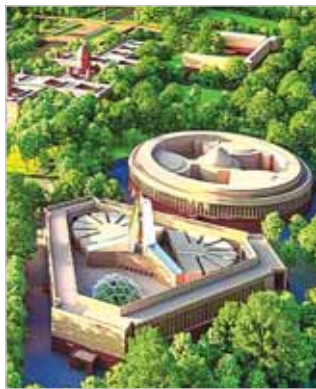
was found that the trains stopped for few minutes on seeing the red signal. The RPF personnel reached the spot along with the railway staff and found that the signal became red automatically because the signal wire had been cut at the place. During the repair of the wire the RPF personnel observed a motion in nearby bushes and raided the place.

One person identified as Lavkush Pathak of Ram Pokhara village under Sunhaan police station, Kaimur district, Bihar, was found hiding in the bushes at Sagara. He was caught along with 2.5 metres of signal wire and taken into custody.

Unedifying

Neither the Oppn nor the Govt has covered itself in glory over the inauguration of new Parliament

By boycotting the inauguration of the new Parliament building, the 20 Opposition parties have not covered themselves in glory, notwithstanding their loud rhetoric. In a joint statement, 19 Opposition parties said that the President is not only the Head of State in India but also an integral part of Parliament as she summons, pro-rogues, and addresses it. "Yet, the Prime Minister has decided to inaugurate the new Parliament building without her. This undignified act insults the high office of the President, and violates the letter and spirit of the Constitution. It undermines the spirit of inclusion which saw the nation celebrate its first woman Adivasi President." While their argument is not without merit, the accompanying bombast—"undignified act," violation "of the Constitution," undermining of "the spirit of inclusion"—is unwarranted and unnecessary. The Opposition's conduct would have been dignified and praiseworthy had it slammed the Government without boycotting the inauguration. After all,



the event is about Parliament and Indian democracy, not about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's participation in it. One has to be viscerally anti-Modi to believe that his Government has disrespected President Droupadi Murmu. We should not forget that she became President during Modi's tenure as Prime Minister. The Opposition is making a mountain out of a molehill. In general, the Opposition—indeed the entire political class—must acknowledge the fact that there are ways of expressing one's displeasure over something other than boycotts and bans.

If the Opposition has not reacted appropriately to the inauguration of the new Parliament building, the Government too has not shown great sagacity in handling the issue. And this is not just about propriety and this particular instance. Its continuously aggressive stance towards the Opposition has generated a great deal of divisiveness in our polity. Till a few years ago, many foreign observers were impressed by the fact that politicians in rival parties had good interpersonal relationships; they would fight fiercely each other in Parliament and in public debates, but remained friends otherwise. Healthy dialogue and good relations are also needed because politicians have to interact and work together all the time. For example, there is considerable interaction between the Centre and States, and often both are run by different parties. Unfortunately, the interparty bonhomie is diminishing rapidly. This has also had an effect on public discourse and political debate, which are increasingly becoming bitter and dirtier. From the Bharatiya Janata Party's perspective, its recent rise in political strength and the concomitant rise in assertiveness seem to be bringing various Opposition parties together. Fear is a very strong sentiment; it can work as an effective glue in politics. It has united 20 parties over the Parliament inauguration issue; it can do more in the foreseeable future.

PICTALK



An employee checks Rs 2000 currency notes given by customers at a petrol pump in Gurugram

PTI

Terrorists are using newer ways of executing their acts

The world is reeling under the shadow of terrorism. Middle East and North Africa were worst hit in 2022, write **SUNIL GOYAL & DIMPLE KHOKHAR**

Since the turn of the millennium, few topics have shaped the global discourse as much as terrorism. Following the 9/11 attacks in New York, on September 20, 2001, the U.S. president at the time, George W. Bush, declared a "War on Terror" and sent America to war with Al-Qaeda. The USA first invaded Afghanistan in 2001 to evict the Taliban regime and to chase Osama Bin Laden. Then, two years later, the country invaded Iraq due to highly disputed claims about the regime of Saddam Hussein positing weapons of mass destruction.

Many commentators argue that, rather than solve the problem, the War on Terror served only to validate the use of terrorist tactics, and that it threw these countries into further chaos. The Global Terrorism Index is an annual ranking produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace. As even the definition of terrorism is hotly debated, it is essential to highlight that the methodologies used to measure terrorism are also contested. The Global Terrorism Index ranks 163



countries on four indicators weighted over five years. These four factors are the number of terrorist incidents per year, the number of fatalities caused by terrorists per year, the number of injuries caused by terrorists per year, and the total property damage caused by terrorism per year. The global terrorism index systematically ranks countries of the world according to their terrorist activity. As per the data released by Statista, in 2022, Afghanistan ranked first on the global terrorism index with a score of 8.82 points, making it the country most affected by terrorism on Earth. The ranking also shows that Afghanistan suffered

from the highest number of terrorist attacks and the highest number of fatalities from terrorist attacks. Although terrorism is a worldwide problem, its victims are highly concentrated in certain areas of the world. The area that saw the highest number of terrorist attacks in 2022 was the Middle East and North Africa. According to Institute for Economics and Peace, the terrorism Index in India decreased to 7.43 in 2021 from 7.67 in 2020. Terrorism Index in India averaged 7.65 Points from 2002 until 2021, reaching an all-time high of 8.12 Points in 2011 and a record low of 7.22 Points in 2004. India Terrorism Index - values, historical data and charts - was last updated in May of 2023. A report based on the Global Terrorism Index noted India has a number of low-level conflicts in some of the border areas but the vast majority of the country's population lives outside of these India was among the 25 worst terror-hit countries but also among 56 of the 120 nations surveyed with no respondents selecting war and terror as the biggest threat to their

daily safety, according to the 10th edition of the Global Terrorism Index (GTI). The international community holds a collective view that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations must be condemned. There cannot be any exception or any justification for any act of terrorism, regardless of the motivations behind such acts. We also recognize that the menace of terrorism cannot be and should not be associated with any religion, nationality, civilization or ethnic group. However, in spite of the progress we have made to tighten the legal, security, financing and other frameworks to combat terrorism, terrorists are constantly finding newer ways of motivating, resourcing and executing acts of terror. Unfortunately, there are also some countries that seek to undermine or subvert our collective resolve to fight terrorism. That cannot be allowed to pass.

(Prof. Sunil is Dean and Chairman of - the Board of Studies at Dr BR Ambedkar University of Social Sciences, Ambedkar Nagar and Dimple Khokhar is a research scholar)

A fairy tale that is The Kerala Story

The Kerala Story has been making waves ever since it opened in theatres but its content is far from reality, it is a fantasy at best

The central theme of the film revolves around three girls who fell victim to "manipulative conversion" to Islam that practically destroyed their lives. The main protagonist is Shalini Unnikrishnan, a convert to Islam. She narrates her ordeal from her prison in Afghanistan, of how she once wanted to become a nurse but was brainwashed and manipulated by religious vanguards, turned into an ISIS terrorist and sent on her way to Syria.

It is loosely based on the accounts of three women from Kerala who converted to Islam and travelled with their husbands to join ISIS in Afghanistan between 2016 and 2018, along with two other women and their husbands. Their husbands were killed in the fighting and these women remain in an Afghan prison. Incidentally, only one of these women, Nimisha Nair alias Fathima Isa, was Hindu and married to a Christian, who subsequently converted to Islam as well. The other two women were Christians before their conversion. The Government of India has refused to repatriate them as they remain hardcore adherents of ISIS philosophy, unlike what has been depicted in the movie.

While it has been alleged there are many more such people in prison in Afghanistan, official records only point to four. The film-makers have also suggested that there are "many girls" who have been manipulated into converting to Islam and in support quote then Chief Minister of Kerala, V S Achuthanandan, who, in 2010, said that fundamentalist Muslim organisations were using "money and marriages to make Kerala a Muslim majority state".

In that context, the issue of "manipulative conversion", commonly termed "love jihad", is concerning and cannot be wished away. Not because of the conversion itself, our Constitution allows us the freedom to practice as we wish, but

because of the motive and the manner such conversions are undertaken. It must be added that such allegations of fraudulent conversions have been made against some Christian denominations as well. Such actions damage the secular fabric of our society, which is why we have stringent laws against it. One estimate suggests about 7000 girls from the State converted to other religions over the last decade and the total number of Indians who joined ISIS was not more than 250, with about 20% from Kerala.

Critics agree that the movie is watchable as a work of fiction, but what detracts and gives weight to allegations that it is nothing more than a propaganda film, is its adverse depiction of all Muslims in general and repeated assertions that there are over 32000 such cases. This is untrue and a Bench of the Supreme Court has reproached the producers of the film for distortion of facts, directing them to add a disclaimer to that effect.

However, this is a theme that resonates greatly with the Hindutva lobby, as we saw from the Prime



TAKEN AT FACE VALUE THIS MAY SEEM TRULY SCARY, BUT THE TRUTH IS IT HAS NO BASIS IN FACT AND IS AIMED AT SPREADING FEAR AND CONSOLIDATING VOTES

Minister's exhortations to the public to see the movie, during his election rallies in Karnataka. Recently, Mr Amit Malviya, head of the BJP IT Cell, wrote on Twitter that "love Jihad is real and dangerous. Our girls are being lured away and used as cannon fodder for radical terror organisations. We can bury our heads in the sand, like an ostrich, at our own peril. It will engulf the rest of us sooner than we think. The Kerala Story is a grim reminder of what lies ahead if we don't act now".

Taken at face value this may seem truly scary, but the truth is it has no basis in fact and is aimed at spreading fear and consolidating votes. Comparison of census data from 2001 and 2011 shows that the Hindu population in Kerala, for example, declined from 56.16% to 54.73%, or 1.43%, while the Muslim population increased from 24.70% to 26.56% or 1.86%. A simple interpolation, at existing growth rates, suggests that the Muslim population would equal that of the Hindu population only by the last decade of this century. Unlikely, as growth

rates overall are on the decline. If anything, in the coming years Kerala's problems will not be about religion, but managing migrants from other states that keep its economy ticking!

Similarly, Mamata Banerjee's ban on the film presently stayed by the Supreme Court, and its "voluntary" non-screening in Tamil Nadu by movie theatres, is over the top and only feeds the long-standing narrative of minority appeasement. We must acknowledge that to be truly secular, breaking the stranglehold of those who benefit by dividing us through religion is inescapable. An essential step in this direction can be the introduction of the long overdue Uniform Civil Code (UCC), which would codify and apply a set of uniform laws related to personal matters such as marriage, divorce, adoption, and inheritance to all citizens, regardless of their religion.

(The author, a military veteran is a Visiting Fellow with the Observer Research Foundation and Senior Visiting Fellow with the Peninsula Foundation, Chennai)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

MANIPUR UNREST CONTINUES

Sir — As per report the house of Manipur PWD Minister Konthoujam Govindas in Bishnupur district was vandalized by an irate mob on Wednesday, claiming that the state government has not taken any sufficient and appropriate steps to protect locals from armed militants belonging to another community. Govindas, who also holds the Youth Affairs and Sports portfolio, is a senior BJP member. The minister and his family members house was attacked by 100 agitated people, mostly women, ransacked the house in Ningthoukhong Bazar area of Bishnupur district and damaged the gate, windows, a furniture, electronic gadgets and vehicles parked at his residence. This is for the first time a minister and a senior BJP leader's house was vandalized after the ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki community people broke out in Manipur on May 3, claiming the lives of at least 71 people and injuring over 300. With this all is not well for the BJP government in Manipur and have to face the anger of the people.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

NEW PARLIAMENT BUILDING IS READY

Sir — The day has finally come when Independent India will have its own, first of a kind Parliament without any colonial influence. May 28th of the year 2023, will be written as a golden day in India's political history as we gave our nation our new Parliament building with more advanced technology, space and improved system. Now that we are almost ready to enter to new building which will be the house of making legislation, relating this to our special history is also very important. The Sengol and all other related aesthetics with are the part and parcel of India's glorified history and rich culture will be put in place on this special occasion.

It is a big day for every Indian, in our 75th year of Independence, we are proudly moving ahead with the spirit of self-reliance and Aatmanirbharta. We are no more in the mortar and brick estab-

Kazi Nazrul: The rebel poet



A part from his literary works on religious harmony with humanitarian lines like 'Are they Hindus? Are they Muslims? Who asks questions so asinine/ O Captain! Pray tell them 'tis your brothers dying, children of your Mother I'; the pen of Kazi Nazrul Islam also used to act as a sword while protesting against atrocities by the British, thereby earning him the epithet of "rebel poet" and also finding himself landed in prison for urging the youth (through his mighty poems) to engage in a revolution against the imperialist force.

In the current communally-vitiated environment in the society, it would not be out of context if we take a look on Nazrul's opinion on religion as practiced in the society :--

"No prophet has said, 'I have come for Hindus/ I have come for Muslims/ I have come for Christians.' They have said, 'I have come for the humanity for everyone, like light'. But the devotees of Krishna say, 'Krishna is for Hindus.' The followers of Muhammad says, 'Muhammad is for the Muslims.' The Disciple of Christ says, 'Christ is for Christians'. Krishna-Muhammad-Christ have become national property. This property is the root of all trouble. The matter which deserves to be noticed is that Nazrul's comments were highly relevant then, extremely relevant now and probable to remain relevant after centuries. It is high time we learn to jump into the waters and save the drowning person by seeing the human being in him/her instead of contemplating whether he/she is a Hindu or a Muslim. After all, at the end of the day, we are all children of that Ultimate Divine!

Kajal Chatterjee | Kolkata

lishment of Britishers. Lutyens and Baker's Parliament is now replaced with domestically made new Central Vista, which reflects the democratic and aspirational spirit of state of the art architecture design. India had come so far and now we are ready to get rid of colonial establishments where laws for modern India are drafted.

Kirti Wadhawan | Kanpur

WOMEN TOPPERS IN UPSC

Sir — Four women Civil Services Examination-2022 aspirants occupying the top four positions, actually underlines the palpable change taking place in the otherwise male dominant scenario in most of the walks of life in the country now, thanks to the Union Public Service Commission's (UPSC) adamant stance keeping the political duress at bay. The icing on the cake, a record over one-third of the successful candidates comprise women- Hats off to Ishita Kishore,

Garima Lohia, Uma Harathi and Smiriti Mishra quad for their perseverance, dedication, grit and indefatigability winning them the laurels on the first four slots respectively. Interestingly, a Delhi Police head constable with 667th rank is also on the UPSC list. I squarely acquiesce with the editorial view that the Union Public Service Commission, a Constitution Body, has been doing its jobs professionally in a country where many an institution has been intruded upon by some political powers that be, adversely affecting the institution's public image of stern rectitude. Thankfully, most of the bureaucrats are impartial bearing no political leanings and keeping this prestigious institution clear of any gender bias as is evident from the record in the last couple of years.

Azhar A Khan | Rampur

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

WORLD IS UNDERGOING TRANSFORMATION

That day is not far wherein every being would be divine and have a purity of character




RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

That day is not far when we would see a world of purity of character and values, where every being would be divine and would coexist in harmony with nature.

Most of the religious scriptures are known to have described heaven, and paradise in detail as a period of peace, prosperity and happiness which is said to have existed thousands of years ago. That is why the whole concept of paradise has fascinated humans for centuries. However, in reality, paradise or heaven is not a different world but rather a period when everything in this world was perfect and harmonious. In the cycle of time, heaven, which is also called the Golden Age, occurs in the very beginning.

It is followed by the Silver Age, which is characterised by a lesser degree of perfection but is still free of negativity. By the time the Silver Age ends, the human souls lose some of their spiritual energy, and as the Copper Age starts, they are no longer soul-conscious and begin to come under the influence of vices. These vices bring sorrow as well as fear, repentance and a longing for a world without suffering, which the souls remember existed in the past.

Hence, in the hope of regaining that lost world of unalloyed joy, humans start remembering or praying to a Supreme entity who they believe can remove all their sorrows. Now, what needs to be understood practically is that – the same souls, who were divine humans, at the start of the cycle of time, end up becoming vicious and with devilish tendencies. It is at this point when one cycle of time is near its end and a new one is about to begin, that Supreme Power descends on earth to uplift mankind and rejuvenate the whole world, including the elements of nature. God explains to the souls about the cycle of time and the law of karma, whereby they realise that vices are at the root of all the suffering and that one can accumulate a fortune by performing elevated actions.




Not many are aware that the much-awaited greatest event of human history has already occurred. But a majority of humans are still in a deep slumber of ignorance and are still looking for God. In Bhagavad-Gita, Almighty Supreme clearly says that humans cannot reach God by prayer, penance, reading scriptures or doing charitable deeds. HE gives HIS introduction to everyone when God comes to this world at the end of the Iron Age when unrighteousness has reached extreme proportions and humanity is experiencing great sorrow.

He also reminds us of our true identity, that we all are eternal souls and not bodies and finally HE teaches us the unique art of Raj Yoga, by which the souls can cleanse themselves of all their sins and become worthy of taking birth in the Golden Age where there is complete peace, purity and happiness.

That day is not far when we would see a world of purity of character and values, where every being would be divine and would coexist in harmony with nature. There will be no form of violence, be it physical, mental or emotional. Every person will be an embodiment of truth and divine virtues. Pure love and respect will form the basis of relationships. They will be completely free from and ignorant of evil, vices and suffering. Materially, they will be living in opulence and abundance. Science will be used for creating perfect technology and comforts that are foolproof, eco-friendly and safe. People will enjoy perfect health, natural beauty, and a long lifespan and there will be no sign of sickness or untimely death. Everybody will be happy and content. There will be lightness, innocence, purity and joy in every action. This process of world transformation is underway right now.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist for publications across India, Nepal & UK)

Who will end the free-run of freebies?



UTTAM GUPTA

Political parties don't want freebies to go. It is their much-cherished tool to harness votes. And they know it works like a charm



In the just concluded assembly elections in Karnataka, the grand old party (GOP) Congress had promised five guarantees viz. Gruha Jyoti, Gruha Lakshmi, Sakhi programme, Yuva Nidhi, and Anna Bhagya in its manifesto.

Having got a decisive mandate to form the government, Congress pledged to approve all the five guarantees in the very first meeting of the Cabinet. The big question is: is it worth spending so much of taxpayers money?

The guarantees are intended to be a welfare scheme. Under it, the government should ensure that (i) the assistance goes to a person who is desperately in need (one who is poor or very poor); (ii) it should be given for a 'limited period' after which she should stand on her own and (iii) the scheme should be funded in a manner such that it doesn't destabilize the budgetary position.

Under Gruha Jyoti, the GOP promises to provide 200 units of free electricity a month for every single household (HH) in the state. The very idea is abhorrent. It presumes that every HH is so poor that it can't afford to pay even Rs 1000 a month being the cost of 200 units of electricity @ Rs 5 per unit.

Further, in the absence of any mention of 'for how long', it is assumed that free supply will continue for the full term of this government i.e. 5 years. The scheme will impose a 'needless' burden on the state exchequer for that long.

It will also strain the finances of power distribution companies which will have to supply zero tariff power to all HHs on behalf of the state government and won't get paid by the latter in time or paid less or not paid at all as is the case in many states who are already supplying power free or at concessional tariff.

Under Gruha Lakshmi, Every Woman head of a house will get two thousand rupees a month. This again is bizarre! Going by the manifesto, even a billionaire woman is eligible. Distributing money in this manner is a sheer waste of scarce resources. The GOP says "We are keeping the money in the hands of women to

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EMBOLDENED BY ITS VICTORY IN KARNATAKA, THE GOP WILL USE FREEBIES EVEN MORE BRAZENLY IN STATE ELECTIONS SLATED TOWARDS THE END OF 2023 AS ALSO DURING GENERAL ELECTIONS IN 2024

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(The writer is a policy analyst)

ensure that they're in control and in charge of their own life".

The idea of empowering the woman is fine. But, we must not forget the context. For schemes like PM Awas Yojna where houses are built for the poor and the ownership is vested with the woman head, this makes eminent sense. But, to give money to all and sundry and then trumpet about women's empowerment looks ridiculous. The Sakhi programme under which free bus tickets for all women to travel in Karnataka are provided too suffers from the same absurdity.

Under Yuva Nidhi, the government will provide support to the Youth of Karnataka for two years by paying Rs 3,000 to unemployed graduates and Rs 1,500 to unemployed diploma holders every month. Prima facie, this may be in sync with the principle of extending support to a person who needs it. But, it can't be divorced from the economic status of the family she belongs to. If an unemployed youth belongs to a rich family which can take care of her during the difficult period i.e. when she remains without a job, there is no need for state support.

State support should be given only if the unemployed youth is from a poor HH. That apart, while choosing the beneficiary, the government must ensure that she is not self-employed. The manifesto doesn't talk of any of these riders. Finally, under Anna Bhagya, the GOP has promised to give 10 kgs of rice per person per month to BPL families. Such families are already getting 7 kg of food per person per month under the National Food Security Act or NFSA (2013).

Redeeming these guarantees will cost around Rs 62,000 crore a year which is even higher than the States' fiscal deficit or FD (excess

of expenditure over receipts) of Rs 60,500 crore during 2022-23. Unless there is a cut in expenditure under some head or an increase in receipt for an equivalent amount, the FD would be Rs 122,500 crore. Expressed as a share of the state gross domestic product (SGDP) this would go beyond 5 percent against the 3 percent ceiling fixed under Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act.

The guarantees don't follow the cardinal principles of a welfare scheme. These are neither directed to the needy nor have any terminal date and will have a destabilizing effect on the budget. These benefits distributed by Congress using public money for garnering votes are known in common parlance as 'freebies'. The menace has gripped most of the political parties that use freebies as the key to winning elections.

Emboldened by its victory in Karnataka, the GOP will use freebies even more brazenly in state elections slated towards the end of 2023 as also during general elections in 2024. This will force others including the ruling BJP to offer similar or even more tempting allurements (already, BJP top brass has started galvanizing its thought process in that direction). This rat race will have devastating implications for the finances of both states and the Centre.

Is there any way this menace could be reined in?

To get an answer, let us look at a judgment of the Supreme Court (SC) in S Subramaniam Balaji vs the Government of Tamil Nadu & Ors delivered way back in July 2013. It has been observed that the distribution of freebies of any kind influences all people. "It shakes the root of free and fair elections to a large degree." This

would have led any logical person to believe that the SC would give a strict direction to stem the rot. But, what followed was a lame-duck order.

The SC had held that promises in the election manifesto cannot be construed as "corrupt practice" under the Representation of People Act (RPA), or any other prevailing law and, hence, distribution of freebies can't be stopped when the ruling party uses public funds for this purpose through the passage of Appropriation Acts in the state Assembly.

In the same order, it directed the Election Commission of India (ECI) "to frame guidelines that could govern the contents of the election manifesto of all the recognized political parties as when it had acted while framing guidelines for general conduct of the candidates, meetings, processions, polling day, etc". Further "this can also be included in the model code of conduct - under a separate head for guidelines for election manifesto - for guidance of political parties and candidates".

The ECI never came out with any such guidelines.

After a long hiatus, hearing a PIL seeking directions against 'freebies' on January 25, 2022, the SC observed "this is no doubt a serious issue. Budget for freebies is going above the regular Budget. This disturbs the level playing field". Its concern this time was more intense than it was in 2013. But, what about the action?

On August 3, 2022, the SC asked the parliamentarians to enact a law on curbing freebies but only after a committee set up by it examines all pros and cons. But, the majority of political parties don't want freebies to go away. It seems, India will have to live with this menace eternally.

India to be a major player in the multipolar world

A multilateral world would be to India's advantage. It would also be welcome by the Global South which looks up to India for direction and leadership

There is a shift underway in the international system. The ongoing Ukraine conflict, the emergence of the Indo-Pacific as a centre for global politics, and the relentless rise of China have all resulted in a move away from a unipolar or bipolar world order to a multipolar one. This move is also one which suits India very well. As India positions itself globally as the leader of the Global South and a rising power, multipolarity assures India a position as one of the centres of power. This thought was very evident in the address made by External Affairs Minister Dr S Jaishankar at the recently held EU-India Pacific Ministerial Forum in Sweden where he pointed out that,



SIMRAN SODHI

(The author, a Delhi-based journalist and foreign affairs analyst, holds a Masters in International Relations from the US University)

"The more European Union and Indo-Pacific deal with each other, the stronger will be their respective appreciation of multi-polarity. A multipolar world is feasible only by a multipolar Asia."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's rather busy calendar is another indication in this direction. The G7 Summit in Tokyo which also saw a Quad Summit on the sidelines, a visit to Papua New Guinea and then Australia all tie in to this thought. The PM's much-anticipated visit to the United States next month, which is only the third State visit by a foreign leader in US President Joe Biden's tenure, will further cement not only India's growing stature on the world stage but also be a timely pointer towards multipolarity. It is a



stance of India's position.

India has consistently abstained from the United Nations at resolutions brought in by the Western world against Russia. This has helped India retain an old friend. About half of India's military supplies come from Russia. Courtesy of the Ukraine conflict, India's trade

with Russia is at a record high. Despite the never-ending critique, India continues to buy oil from Russia. It is also worth remembering here that Russia used its veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) many times when resolutions on Kashmir were tabled. The fact that India has done this fine balancing act, of maintaining and strengthening ties with both the US and Russia, makes it a unique power centre in itself.

Another point in the study is, of course, the Quad (a grouping of the US, India, Japan and Australia). It would not be an overstatement to say that the Quad today is one of the most influential groupings in the world of geopolitics. It is also essentially a forum to check China. As the politics of the Indo-Pacific take centre stage in the world, India becomes an even more valuable ally not just to the US, but to the entire Western world.

For India, China remains the biggest worry. China's aggressive behaviour at the border and its expansionist agenda in the South China Sea have almost every world leader worried. The Ukraine conflict has also seen another related development and that is the tightening of embrace between China and Russia. And that is unlikely to make India comfortable. That somewhere again takes us back to the argument that for India, censuring Russia over the Ukraine conflict would only result in a closer China-

Russia nexus. Both Russia and China are wary of the West and critical of a world they feel is dominated by Western ideals and nations. The US-China trade wars and the sanctions against Russia by the Western powers have helped consolidate that feeling and what one sees is the beginning of an anti-West Block.

A multilateral world would be to India's advantage and would also be welcome by the Global South. One of the end games of course would be a much-needed change in the structure of the UNSC and a permanent seat for India. That would also be more representative of the present world. The beginnings have been made but it's still quite a long road ahead.

Trip strengthened India's image: PM

Used visit to Japan, Oz, PNG for nation's good, says Modi on return

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday said that he used every moment during his six-day visit across three countries for India's good and his tour was not about his 'glory but India's strength' as BJP workers and supporters accorded him a rousing welcome on his return from Japan, Australia and Papua New Guinea.

Addressing people who had gathered to welcome him outside the Palam airport here, he pointed-out that not only Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and that country's ruling party functionaries but a former prime minister and opposition members were present as well during the Indian community's programme in Sydney where he had spoken.

"This was the atmosphere of democracy that everyone joined in the Indian community's programme," Modi said, lauding this show of 'democratic soul and strength'.

Everyone accorded respect to the Indian representative, and it was not about Modi's glory but about India's strength, he said.

The Prime Minister's comment came against the backdrop of opposition parties, including the Congress and many of those in power in several states, announcing their boycott of the new Parliament building's inauguration by him on Sunday saying the President of India drupadi Murmu should be invited to open the Parliament.

Modi said he speaks confidently of India and its people's strengths abroad and the world



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by supporters gathered at the airport upon his arrival following a three-nation visit to Japan, Papua New Guinea and Australia, in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

lists because people here elected a majority government. World leaders know that what he says is the voice of the 140 crore people of India, the prime minister added.

India, he said, faces the challenges of strengthening its roots while also working its way to a new high as the world expects it to.

"Challenges are big. But it is in my nature to challenge the challenges," the Prime Minister said, exuding confidence in front of a cheering crowd that his government will succeed in meeting these expectations in time.

Global expectations from the country have been rising, he said, adding that the world now wants to know what India is thinking. Modi spoke about the respect accorded by the people of Pacific island countries during the visit, and said they were thankful to India for the Covid-19 vaccines sent to them during the pandemic.

Taking a swipe at his crit-

ics, the Prime Minister said they questioned him for sending the vaccines.

"Remember, it is the land of Buddha, it is the land of Gandhi. We care even for our enemies, we are the people inspired by compassion," he said.

He also asserted that the world is keen to listen to India's story and said Indians should never suffer from a 'slave mentality' while speaking about their great culture and traditions and instead speak with courage.

The Prime Minister added that the world agrees with him when he says any attack on our country's pilgrimage sites is not

acceptable.

Modi had on Wednesday strongly raised with his Australian counterpart Albanese India's concerns over incidents of attacks on temples in Australia.

He lauded the strength of India-Australia relationship.

India's reception of G20 delegates in over 150 meetings held across the country have impressed the world a lot, he said.

"All the leaders and other people I met have been so mesmerised and appreciative of India holding the G20 presidency so excellently. This is a matter of great pride for all Indians," Modi said.

India's stature has increased further with this three-nation tour, says BJP

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Thursday said Prime Minister's three-nation foreign tour was "successful" and it has increased 'India's global stature'.

Addressing a press conference here, senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad described the Prime Minister's foreign tour as "successful" and said there were many instances which indicated that 'India's stature has increased further' with the three-nation tour.

"It is a matter of pride for every Indian and the party especially," he added.

Prasad said India was earning a "new goodwill" in the world under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi.

"An indication of this came when US President Joe Biden, at the G-7 meeting in Hiroshima, said how the requests for participation in the state dinner to be hosted for Prime Minister Modi had outnumbered the tickets available for it," he added.

Referring to newspaper reports, the BJP leader said some US congressmen have requested Prime Minister Modi to address a joint session of the American Congress.

"Their Speaker will take a call now," Prasad said, adding "All these are indications that India is emerging as a very formidable power in the world under Prime Minister Modi's leadership."

Prasad said India is getting

respect from the top leaders of the world under Modi's leadership as is showcasing its achievements in a range of areas from technology, manufacturing and start-ups to export in the defence sector.

"India, which is the world's fifth (largest) economy, is a powerhouse of talents and technology. India is emerging as a big centre of trading, automobile manufacturing, mobile manufacturing, start-up movement and defence export. India is showing achievements to the world in all these areas," he said.

Prasad asserted that above all, India under PM Modi's leadership is seen as a country which cares for everyone.

India under 'double-threat' needs tech-advanced military: Def Min Rajnath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Thursday said here India has to have technologically advanced military and needs to focus on extensive research in this sector as it faces "double threat" on its borders. This note of caution was in apparent reference to ongoing tension at the border in Ladakh with China and frosty ties with Pakistan.

He also urged the industry leaders to come up with innovative solutions to help India become a 'leader' from an 'imitator' in futuristic technologies and stay prepared to deal with challenges emanating from the current global security scenario.

"Today we are one of the largest armed forces in the world, the bravery and valour of our military is praised all over the world. Countries across the world express their willingness to conduct joint exercises with our armed forces. In such a situation, it becomes imperative to have a technologically advanced military to protect national interest. For a country like India, it becomes very important because we are facing double threat on our borders," he said while inaugurating a two day Defence Research and Development



(DRDO) Academia conclave.

Underscoring the significance of the theme of the conclave "DRDO-Academia Partnership - Opportunities and Challenges," Rajnath said, it is dire need that the DRDO and Academia work in partnership with each other to find solutions to the challenges being faced by us in the 21st century.

"The only way for this advancement is research. It is the need of the hour that both DRDO and academia work in tandem," he said adding "the more this partnership grows, I think India's research sector will also grow in the same proportion. Scientists and experts from both the DRDO and academia are sitting here."

Referring to various challenges facing the country, Singh said collective efforts and partnership are needed to confront them effectively.

Octogenarian Howrah Bridge to undergo health check!

PTI ■ KOLKATA

The 80-year-old iconic Howrah Bridge, which connects the twin cities of Howrah and Kolkata over the Hooghly river, will undergo a detailed health checkup after a gap of 11 years, said a top official of Kolkata port that maintains the structure.

The comprehensive health checkup of the cantilever bridge will be done in consultation with IIT Madras, Kolkata port chairman Rathendra Raman said. The proposed exercise will be taken up in addition to the routine maintenance of the bridge, he said. "We have decided to conduct an in-depth study on the health of the Howrah Bridge, which hasn't been done for over a decade. This study will provide us with valuable insights on how to improve the bridge's lifespan," Raman said on Wednesday.

A comprehensive health checkup of the bridge was previously conducted 11 years ago, with the expertise of RITES, another official said. The Howrah Bridge, also known as Rabindra Setu, with 405 metres in length and 21.6 metres in width, is considered a symbol of Kolkata since its inauguration in 1943. The bridge was taken up for construction after a commission under the chairmanship of Sir R N Mukherjee in

1926 recommended a suspension bridge of a particular type to be built across the Hooghly river. The port authorities had already started working to scrap the bituminous road surface on the 80-year-old structure and a new layer would be laid to reduce the bridge's load. The National Technology Centre for Ports, Waterways & Coasts (NTCPWC), a division of IIT Madras, will advise the authorities for the comprehensive study, the port chairman said.

Raman stated that if necessary, another expert consultant would be appointed to assist the port authorities in the initiative. Every day, the Howrah Bridge facilitates the passage of approximately 80,000 vehicles and 400,000 pedestrians, becoming an integral part of their daily lives. Recognising the bridge's immense importance, the Kolkata port, now known as Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port, aims at securing its future and preserving the technological marvel, another senior official said.

The scope of the study is yet to be finalised but experts would closely examine issues such as corrosion and fatigue that the bridge had been facing, he said. "The goal is to identify effective strategies to address these challenges and to ensure the longevity of the bridge," the official added.

DGCA asks Go First to submit op revival plan within 30 days

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) asked Go First to submit its "a comprehensive restructuring/revival plan for a sustainable revival of operations" within 30 days. The airline has been asked to furnish the status of availability of operational aircraft fleet, post holders required, pilots and other personnel, maintenance arrangements, funding/working capital, arrangements with lessors and vendors for sustainable revival of operations, stopped flying on May 3 and is undergoing voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings. In response to show cause notice issued on May 8, the airline has requested that they may be allowed to use the moratorium period to prepare a comprehensive restructuring plan for restarting operations and present the same to DGCA for the requisite regulatory approvals before restarting operations. Accordingly, DGCA has advised the Go First airline to submit a com-



Go First airline aircrafts, formerly known as GoAir, stand parked at the apron of the Mumbai airport on Thursday

PTI

prehensive plan for the revival of its operations, including details about the availability of operational planes and pilots, within 30 days.

Sources said that the revival plan, once submitted by Go First, will be reviewed by DGCA for further appropriate action. DGCA will conduct an audit of Go First's preparedness before approving the resumption of flights, the crisis-hit airline's head of operations has told its staff. DGCA had issued the show cause notice under the relevant provisions of the Aircraft Rules, 1937, for its failure to continue the operation of the service in a safe, efficient and reliable manner.

PCI urges Birla to lift curbs on Parliament coverage by media

New Delhi: The Press Club of India on Thursday urged Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla to lift the restrictions on media covering Parliamentary proceedings that were imposed during the Covid pandemic.

In a letter to the Lok Sabha Speaker, the Press Club of India (PCI) said a large number of journalists were still being denied the opportunity to cover Parliament proceedings despite having permanent press gallery passes.

The PCI said the "superfluous"

restrictions on media have "no logical basis or rationale" as the Covid situation had eased and even the World Health Organization had announced that it was no longer a global health emergency.

"...We strongly feel that these curbs are part of a wider agenda aimed at controlling media and restricting freedom of press in order to impede free flow of independent news stories and information to the people," the PCI said in the letter.

PTI

Vitamin-D deficiency hits developing neurons in Schizophrenia: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Using a new visualisation tool known as false fluorescent neurotransmitters, neuroscientists at The University of Queensland have discovered how vitamin D deficiency affects developing neurons in Schizophrenia, a serious mental health disorder. In a nutshell, the study, which comes a day after World Schizophrenia Day is marked, highlights the importance of vitamin D in brain development and the potential impact of deficiency on the onset of the mental condition.

Schizophrenia is associated with many developmental risk factors, and while the precise neurological causes of the disorder

remain unknown, the mental health disorder is associated with a pronounced change in the way the brain uses dopamine.

Professor Darryl Eyles and his team analysed the functional changes in presynaptic dopamine uptake and release in the presence and absence of vitamin D.

"What we found was that the altered differentiation process in the presence of vitamin D not only makes the cells grow differently but recruits machinery to release dopamine differently," Professor Eyles said. Using the new visualisation tool, the team could then analyse the functional changes in presynaptic dopamine uptake and release in the presence and absence of vitamin D. They showed that dopamine release was enhanced in



cells grown in the presence of the hormone compared to a control.

"This is conclusive evidence that vitamin D affects the structural differentiation of dopaminergic neurons," Professor Eyles concluded.

The team is now exploring whether other environmental risk factors for schizophrenia, such as stress or drug exposure, can also affect the development of dopaminergic neurons.

Founder-director and senior psychiatrist from Manasthali, Dr

Jyoti Kapoor, who is in no way related to the said study stressed on early professional diagnosis and treatment by mental health professionals for managing schizophrenia. "People suffering from the condition are often isolated and stigmatized in society, making it challenging for individuals to feel understood and accepted. When family and community show kindness and compassion towards individuals living with schizophrenia, it creates a supportive environment that can positively influence their well-being."

An official from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD) under the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment too called for raising awareness and

measures to reduce stigma around this mental illness. "It lifts the lid on the challenges that thousands of people with Schizophrenia from all over the world have to encounter on a day-to-day basis," he said. On its part, the DEPwD observed the World Schizophrenia Day, through the institutions associated with it conducted various events at more than 30 places across India.

These included panel discussions by experts, street play, poster making and quiz competitions, webinars on early intervention in the mental disorders with perspectives from a Psychologist and psychiatrist, display of vocational stalls showcasing products made by persons with schizophrenia among a few others.

Praveen Sood takes charge as CBI's new Director

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Senior Indian Police Service (IPS) officer Praveen Sood on Thursday took charge as the new CBI director on Thursday. He will hold the post for two years' fixed tenure.

Sood took charge at the CBI headquarters here from Subodh Kumar Jaiswal who retired from service on Thursday.

Sood is a 1986-batch IPS officer of the Karnataka cadre and was the State's Director General of Police (DGP). He is the senior-most IPS officer in the country after Research and Analysis Wing chief Samant Kumar Goel (1984-batch, Punjab cadre) who is retiring next month after two extensions of job of one year each.

Sood's name for the top CBI job was cleared in a meeting of a high-powered committee comprising Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud and Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury.

Born in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh in 1964, Sood joined the IPS at the age 22 years after completing his civil engineering from the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi.

He also holds post graduate degrees from the Indian Institute of Management, Bengaluru and the Maxwell



New CBI Director Praveen Sood (L) with outgoing CBI Director Subodh Jaiswal, in New Delhi on Thursday

PTI

School of Governance, Syracuse University, New York.

During his 37 years of service, Sood served in various capacities in the Karnataka Police, including Superintendent of Police of Bellary and Raichur districts, Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic), Bengaluru City, Commissioner of Police, Mysuru and Bengaluru City, Additional Director General of police, Principal Secretary (Home), DGP (Internal Security) and DGP (CID), the CBI said in a statement.

He has also worked as advisor to the Government of Mauritius. He has supervised

the investigation of high profile cases involving high net-worth individuals and cases having inter-state and international ramifications besides investigation and detection of crimes including those relating to cyber crime and information technology. Specifically, he worked for strengthening of CCTNS (Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems) and ICJS (Interoperable Criminal Justice System) networks in the Karnataka State along with the judiciary, the CBI said.

After taking over charge, Sood interacted with the officers of the agency.

Cong slams Centre for rolling out fortified rice under PDS

Despite warnings by FSSAI, Niti Aayog, ICMR, the Govt is risking health of 80 cr people, says Cong

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Thursday targeted the Narendra Modi Government over rolling out fortified rice under PDS and accused it of going ahead with the decision without ascertaining the outcome of independent research and the ill effects of such rice on the health of 80 crore poor people.

Congress spokesperson Pawan Khara asked what was the tearing hurry to implement the scheme of providing fortified rice containing prescribed micronutrients and "what relation does the Government have with the foreign conglomerate Royal DSM" which has bagged a major contract to distribute the rice in the country. He also sought to know whether any quid pro quo was involved.

A couple of days ago, the Government said fortified rice was being distributed through ration shops in 439 districts and other welfare schemes so far while asserting that there is enough global evidence of its health benefits.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his Independence Day address in 2021 said the government aims to distribute fortified rice via government schemes by 2024.

Thereafter, a scheme for the distribution of fortified rice, containing prescribed micronu-



trients -- iron, folic acid, Vitamin B12 -- was launched on October 2021 in a phased manner to address the problem of anaemia among women and children.

Khara alleged the Modi government rolled out fortified rice under the Food Security Act despite "failed" pilot projects and multiple warnings by experts, government officials, FSSAI and Niti Aayog advisors.

This was also mentioned by the director general of the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) who called for the need for consultation with a wide range of experts on the effect of fortification of rice on human health before pushing it further, he said.

He claimed that fortified rice, which the government was pushing into the nationwide public distribution system under the Food Security Act, has 20 mg of iron.

"Will 80 crore people pay the price of the ill-conceived imposition of PM Modi's fortified rice? Did the Modi government get enamoured by a foreign conglomerate or were there vested interests involved," the Congress spokesperson asked.

Ukraine war to be on talks agenda during Modi's visit: US State Dept

PNS/AGENCIES ■ NEW DELHI / WASHINGTON

Ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to America, a US State Department spokesperson has said it works with India on its most vital priorities.

Meanwhile, a US expert has said the US administration has decided to play the long game by inviting Prime Minister Modi despite existing challenges in bilateral ties.

"I will say generally that our partnership with India is one of our most consequential relationships. We work with India closely on our most vital priorities," State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters at his daily news conference late on Wednesday. He said he expects US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti to be able to deepen the relationship between the two countries and work on matters of shared concern.

Responding to questions on Modi's trip, Miller said without giving too much of a trip preview, "certainly, the war in Ukraine will be one of the topics that is under discussion".

"It has been one of the topics under discussion in previous meetings with Prime Minister Modi, as it is in just about any conversation we have with a world leader at this time, or has been the case for the past year," Miller said.

1 dead, 1 hurt in fresh Manipur riot

PTI ■ IMPHAL

One person was killed and another injured in a fresh violence between suspected militants and a group of people in an area bordering Bishnupur and Churachandpur districts in strife-torn Manipur, police said on Thursday.

Toijam Chandramoni, 30, was shot dead during the violence on Wednesday, and Leichombam Abungnao, aged 22, was injured when suspected militants opened fire at the group of people, mostly comprising those who were displaced during the recent ethnic clashes in Churachandpur and took shelter in a relief camp at Moirang in Bishnupur, the officer said.

There were reports that militants late Tuesday night torched the houses of some villagers at Toronglaobi in Bishnupur district, he said. “The villagers and those living in the Moirang camp were angry over the burning of their houses. As these people came to know that militants could torch a school located in an area near Thamnopokpi in Bishnupur and Kanganthei in Churachandpur, they went to the locality.

“Once, they reached the spot, militants opened fire at them, leaving two persons injured. One of the two succumbed to his injuries when he was taken to a hospital,” the senior police officer said. Following the violence, the authorities clamped curfew for



Closed shops at a market in Imphal on Thursday. Prices of essential commodities such as rice, potato, onion and egg besides LPG cylinders and petrol have skyrocketed after clashes broke out in Manipur after a ‘Tribal Solidarity March’ was organised in the hill districts

PTI

24 hours in the area and reduced the curfew relaxation hours in several other districts. Meanwhile, the house of Manipur PWD Minister Konthoujam Govindas in Bishnupur district was vandalised on Wednesday by a group of people claiming that the government in the violence-hit state was not doing enough to protect locals from militants belonging to another community, an official said.

The minister who is a BJP leader and his family members, however, were not present at the house when the mob, comprising mostly women, attacked

house in Ningthoukhong area and damaged a portion of a gate, windows, a few furniture and electronic gadgets. This was the first time a minister’s house was attacked during the ongoing ethnic violence between Meitei and Kuki community people in state that started three weeks ago.

Army and paramilitary forces have been deployed to control the situation in state. Clashes broke out in Manipur after a ‘Tribal Solidarity March’ was organised in hill districts on May 3 to protest against Meitei community’s demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

The violence in Manipur was preceded by tension over eviction of Kuki villagers from reserve forest land, which had led to a series of smaller agitations.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur’s population and live mostly in Imphal Valley. Tribals — Nagas and Kukis — constitute another 40 per cent of the population and reside in hill districts.

The ethnic clashes claimed over 70 lives and some 10,000 army and paramilitary personnel had to be deployed to restore normalcy in northeastern state.

Congress raps Amit Shah for not visiting troubled State

New Delhi: The Congress on Thursday attacked Home Minister Amit Shah over his Assam visit, saying he goes all the way to Guwahati but does not deem it fit to visit Manipur which has been “burning for 22 days”. Shah is on a day-long visit to Assam to attend three events to mark the completion of two years of the Himanta Biswa Sarma-led BJP government in the state.

Taking a dig at Shah, Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, “The Union Home Minister goes all the way to Guwahati today, but does not deem it fit to visit Imphal when Manipur has been burning for 22 days.”

“This is the same Union Home Minister who held 16 rallies and 15 road shows in Karnataka, but can not find time for the people of Manipur who are suffering a lot due to the ideology and politics of the so-called Double Engine Sarkar,” Ramesh said in a tweet.

The Congress on Wednesday demanded Prime Minister call a meeting of community leaders of Manipur in an effort to bring peace in state.

PTI

DELHI SERVICES-ORDINANCE ROW

Pawar backs Kejriwal in tug of war with BJP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

A day after the Shiv Sena (UBT) extended its support to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in his fight against the Centre’s controversial ordinance, NCP chief Sharad Pawar on Thursday not only announced his party’s support to Kejriwal but he also offered to enlist the support of other non-BJP parties against the Modi government’s ordinance on the control of services in the national capital.

Announcing his party’s decision to support the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) at a news conference he addressed jointly with Kejriwal, Pawar made a strong case for bringing all the non-BJP parties together. “The ordinance brought in by the Modi government is an effort to scuttle Parliamentary democracy in the country. This is not an issue limited to Delhi. We must focus on bringing all non-BJP parties together”.

Pawar said that he would talk to the leaders of other non-BJP parties to muster support for Kejriwal in his fight against the ordinance. “There is a serious threat to democracy in the country. The Modi government is making all-out efforts to deprive the rights of governments elected by the people



NCP Chief Sharad Pawar in a meeting with Delhi Chief Minister and AAP Convener Arvind Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and AAP leaders Sanjay Singh, Raghav Chadha and Atishi Marlena, in Mumbai, on Thursday

PTI

and create hurdles for them. We will support AAP in its fight against the Centre in Parliament”. Indicating that he might speak to the Congress leadership for seeking support to Kejriwal, the NCP chief said: “My thinking is that Arvind should get support by talking to non-BJP parties — be it the Congress or BJD. This is not the time for arguments. Democracy has to be saved”.

Earlier, Kejriwal — while appealing to Pawar to help him garner support among the non-BJP parties against the ordinance — said: “Sharad Pawar sir is one of the tallest leaders of the country today.

While he himself is supporting us, I request him to Help us garner support from other parties of the country”. Slamming the Modi Government for its efforts to destroy the federal structure in the country, Kejriwal said: “Great injustice is being done by the BJP to the people of Delhi.

Even after our 8-year long legal battle in the Supreme Court, the Centre has brought this Ordinance to usurp the state’s rights on appointments of officials. The fight has gone beyond Delhi. It’s a fight to safeguard the federal structure of the country which the BJP is trying to undermine”.

Jain collapses in Tihar, put on oxygen support

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Jailed AAP leader and former Delhi Health Minister Satyendar Jain has been put on oxygen support and shifted to the Lok Nayak Jayaprakash (LNJP) Hospital due to breathing problems on Thursday.

He was admitted to Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Hospital after he collapsed in a bathroom of the Tihar Jail due to dizziness around 6 am on Thursday.

Earlier too Jain had fallen in the bathroom and had a serious spinal injury, the AAP said. Jain, lodged in connection with a money-laundering case in May last year, will undergo all necessary tests as a precautionary measure.

According to AAP sources, Jain has been shifted to an ICU at the LNJP Hospital and he was “critically ill”.

The LNJP Hospital is the largest hospital under the Delhi government. He (Jain) was brought to the emergency department of the LNJP Hospital earlier in the day and doctors examined him, a senior doctor at the city government-run hospital said on the condition of anonymity.

Taking to Twitter, Chief



Minister Arvind Kejriwal hit out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday, hours after his colleague Jain was collapsed in Tihar Jail saying “a dictator is bent on killing that good person”.

“The dictator is hell bent on killing the man who was working day and night to provide good treatment and good health to the public. The dictator has only one principle - he wants to finish everyone, he believes only in his own ego. He cannot see beyond himself,” Kejriwal tweeted.

The Chief Minister further wrote “God is watching all of this, he will do justice when time comes. I pray to God for

Jain’s speedy recovery. May God give him the strength to fight against these adverse circumstances.”

In a statement, the AAP said Jain’s condition had deteriorated after a debilitating injury from a fall in the jail washroom last week, which resulted in a spinal injury leaving him in excruciating pain. The gravity of the situation demands an immediate spinal surgery, as recommended by his attending doctors.

“A closer examination of Jain’s medical condition reveals a troubling array of ailments. He suffers from acute lumbar pain, causing vertigo and chronic lower back pain due to

a slipped disc. The pain radiates throughout his lower limbs, leaving him with a constant tingling sensation and decreased mobility,” it said.

The AAP claimed that Jain has become extremely weak and finds it difficult to walk.

“Due to his religious beliefs, Jain has been living only on fruits and raw vegetables in jail. Suffering from severe muscular loss. Jain has lost 35 kgs while in prison,” the party said.

“Suffering from sleep apnea, he sleeps at night with the assistance of a BiPAP machine which continuously pushes air into his lungs,” the party added. A senior jail official said around 6 am on Thursday, under-trial prisoner Jain slipped in the bathroom of the MI room of the hospital of central jail number-7, where he was kept under observation for general weakness.

He was examined by doctors and his vitals were found normal. Jain was referred to the DDU Hospital as he complained of pain in his back, left leg and shoulder, the official said.

On Monday, Jain was taken to the Safdarjung Hospital as he was feeling unwell.

I-T waiver for retirees’ leave encashment hiked to ₹25L

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

In line with the Budget Announcement, the Finance Ministry on Thursday hiked the tax exemption limit for leave encashment upon retirement for private sector salaried employees to ₹25 lakh. So far, the tax exemption on leave encashment for non-government employees was ₹3 lakh which was fixed in 2002, when the highest basic pay in the government was ₹30,000 per month.

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT), in a statement, said the aggregate amount exempt from income tax under section 10(10AA)(ii) shall not exceed the limit of ₹25 lakh, where any such payments are received by a non-government employee from more than one employer. The increased limit for tax exemption on leave encashment on retirement or otherwise of non-government salaried employees to Rs 25 lakh with effect from April 1, 2023.

Modi will face votebandi in 2024: Abhishek

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress’ second in command Abhishek Banerjee on Thursday said that he would lead lakhs of job-card holders — who had not been paid their MNREGA dues on account of the central government’s refusal to release funds — to Delhi so as to make the BJP Government understand the power of the people of Bengal.

Addressing a Jan Sanyog (reach out) rally at Purulia, Banerjee who is the TMC’s national general secretary said, “lakhs of job card holders who had worked under the 100-days’ work scheme still remain unpaid for their work ... today only Purulia has 12 lakh such “unpaid” job card holders ... I will request at least six lakhs out of them to write a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi — who has stopped funds through remote-control — and ask 2 lakh of them to come with me to Delhi free of cost so as to snatch our rights from the Central Government.

“I will lead the job card



Abhishek Banerjee

holders to Delhi after the end of my two-month long Jan Sanyog Yatra,” he said.

Launching a scathing attack on the Prime Minister Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said “when he came to power he showed us the dreams of Acchey Din (good days) but ended up in giving us inflation, unemployment, social tension and notebandi ... they are again making people to stand in queues for exchanging notes (read Rs 2,000 notes) ... but this time the people will stand in queues not to change notes but to change the government... there will be no notebandi ... now there will be votebandi.”

Alleging that the Centre had blocked all the State’s dues —from MNREGA to PM housing funds — Banerjee said, “enough is enough we will not take their (BJP’s) arrogance and brow-beating ... now the time has come to pay back.” Banerjee who has been under the scanner of the Enforcement Directorate and Central Bureau of Investigation for his alleged role in the multi-crore recruitment scam — apart from coal, cow other scams — said “while the people of the country are starving the Prime Minister is making joy trips to foreign countries”. Saying that the BJP’s defeat in Karnataka Assembly elections would be repeated in the general elections in 2024, Banerjee said, “in 2024 the people will resort to votebandi like they did in Karnataka.” Banerjee has of late been under tremendous pressure both from the judiciary and the central agencies who are trying to find whether he has connections with the recruitment scam that has literally shook the very foundations of the TMC Government.

FROM PAGE 1

EW FEAT: MIG-29K PERFORMS NIGHT LANDING ON INS VIKRANT

Earlier, the naval version of the indigenously-built light combat aircraft successfully landed on INS Vikrant in February as part of the sea trials. LCA Tejas is the first fixed-wing aircraft to land on the flight deck of Vikrant.

The 45,000-tonne aircraft was built at a cost of Rs 20,000 crore and was commissioned in September last year. It will be ready for fighter jet operations in the next few months. INS Vikrant has the capacity to hold 30 fighter jets and helicopters. At the commissioning ceremony of the vessel, Prime Minister Narendra Modi called it a “floating city” and that it is a reflection of India becoming self-reliant in defence.

The flight trials on board INS Vikrant involve the Russian-origin MiG-29K fighter jets that use the ski-jump to take-off from aircraft carrier and are recovered by arrestor wires or what is known as STO-BAR (short take-off but arrested recovery).

Twelve MiG-29Ks are likely to be deployed on Vikrant and it will operate a new deck-based fighter that the navy is looking to buy as an interim measure to meet its requirements before the indigenous fighter jet is ready in a few years. The navy’s other aircraft carrier, INS Vikramaditya, operates MiG-29K fighters. LCA (navy) landed and took off from Vikramaditya for the first time in August 2020.

PM INAUGURATES KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES

Gautam Buddha Nagar.

The university games are part of various schemes launched by the government

to support budding sportspersons and efforts have been put in to strengthen the sports ecosystem in the country.

The mascot of the games is named ‘Jitu,’ which represents swamp deer (Barasingha) —the state animal of Uttar Pradesh.

The official anthem of KIUGUP2022, ‘Khelo India —Har Dil Mein Desh’, composed and sung by renowned singer Palash Sen was rendered by Kailash Kher during the opening ceremony along with other cultural displays.

Union Minister for Youth Affairs Anurag Thakur attended the ceremony virtually. Among other dignitaries present were Minister of State, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports Nisith Pramanik, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, UP Sports Minister Girish Chandra Yadav, Cabinet Minister Rakesh Sachan and Additional Chief Secretary (Sports) Navneet Sehgal.

2 MORE CHEETAH CUBS DIE AT KNP

The daytime temperature then was around 46-47 degrees Celsius, the release said. The cubs were found severely dehydrated. Despite treatment, the two cubs could not be saved, it said.

The condition of the fourth cub was stable, but it too was under intense treatment, it said. Earlier, Sasha, one of the translocated Namibian cheetahs, died due to a kidney-related ailment on March 27, and another cheetah, Uday, from South Africa, died on April 13.

Daksha, a cheetah brought from South Africa, succumbed to the injuries following a violent interaction with a male during a mating attempt on May 9 this year. The four cubs of Siyaya/Jwala were the first to be born in the wild on Indian soil after

the last cheetah was hunted in Korea district of present-day Chhattisgarh in 1947.

This fastest land animal species was declared extinct in the country in 1952. Five female and three male cheetahs brought from Namibia were released into enclosures at the KNP at an event attended by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 17, 2022. Another 12 cheetahs were brought from South Africa in February 2023 and housed in a quarantine enclosure.

DYNASTIC PARTIES RENEGED ON HIGH-SPEED TRAINS: PM

He said these would change Uttarakhnad’s fortunes in the coming years by boosting tourist influx and creating employment opportunities. Modi mentioned the Rs 1,300-crore Kedarnath-Badrinath reconstruction projects, the Rs 2,500-crore ropeway projects for Kedarnath and Hemkund Sahib, the Manaskhand Mandir Mala Project for upliftment of ancient temples of Kumaon region, and homestay promotion scheme among others.

Projects involving the development of 16 eco-tourism destinations, expansion of health facilities, the Tehri lake development, development of Rishikesh and Haridwar as centres for adventure tourism and yoga, and the Tanakpur-Bageshwar rail line also found mention in the prime minister’s speech. “More than Rs 16,000 crore are being spent on the Rishikesh-Karnaprayag rail project, which will be completed in two-three years,” Modi said, adding, “Work on the Tanakpur-Bageshwar rail link project will also start soon.”

The Prime Minister also mentioned the efforts underway to upgrade the facilities for Char Dham pilgrims.

“Char Dham Yatra is already breaking records every year. There are few states in the country that draw such a large number of pilgrims every year. It is a blessing and a challenge too. In order to make tackling this challenge easier, infrastructure projects are being launched in Uttarakhand,” he said.

In his address earlier, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said a modern train like the Vande Bharat Express, which is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, is a big gift to the people of Uttarakhand and reflects the prime minister’s love for them.

The Vande Bharat Express reduces the journey time between Dehradun and Delhi to four-and-a-half hours from the six hours and 10 minutes it takes on the Shatabdi Express.

The Vande Bharat has eight coaches, all of them chair cars with 360-degree swivel seats. The train is equipped with CCTV cameras, Divyangian-friendly washrooms, seat numbers in braille script, passenger information and infotainment systems in every coach among others.

Eighteen such trains are operational in the country at present.

SHAH PROMISES JUSTICE FOR ALL, APPEALS FOR PEACE IN MANIPUR

“Modi has plans to bring about changes in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and the Evidence Act in the spirit of the Constitution to increase the conviction rate which will help in the delivery of criminal justice,” he added.

Policing can be divided into three parts: law and order situation, crime investigation and ensuring justice by punishing the guilty, the Home Minister said. “This is not the age of using third-degree measures or force on the accused but there

are scientific ways of collecting evidence through psychology, fingerprints and DNA profiling and we need experts for these,” he said.

The conviction rate in the country is low at 50 per cent and this is mainly due to lack of evidence or witnesses turning hostile which creates hurdles for the police in submitting chargesheets in the court, he added.

“We have decided to strengthen the forensic infrastructure, upgrade and modernise the laboratories, set up regional forensic laboratories and also district-level mobile forensic laboratories,” Shah said.

This will require manpower and generate employment opportunities while research and development in this sector will be intensified and implemented at the grassroots level, he said. The state-of-the-art institute, which will be built over a 50-acre campus, will provide training to the police, judiciary and forensic scientists of neighbouring countries. Around 3,000 to 5,000 graduates and postgraduates from the institute will emerge in different branches of forensic science, wildlife forensics, cyber security, narcotics, digital forensics, drone forensics, forensic psychology and forensics justice and law, he said. The first phase of the NFSU campus is expected to be completed by 2026 and the second by 2030 while classes will start this year at the temporary campus on the premises of the Gauhati Medical College and Hospital (GMCH).

Shah also launched an interactive web portal, the ‘Seva Setu’, of the Assam Police, developed jointly with the Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL). It will enable people to lodge FIRs, missing persons reports and complete verification of tenants, paying guests and domestic helps without having to visit the police station.

Later in the day, while addressing a public meeting here after ceremoniously distributing 44,703 appointment letters to

successful candidates for Assam government jobs, the senior BJP leader alleged that the Congress has a “negative attitude” and charged it with doing politics by boycotting the scheduled inauguration of the new Parliament building.

“Modi will become the PM again next year with over 300 seats. The Congress has lost the opposition party status and will not be able to even secure the number of seats it has presently in the Lok Sabha,” he said.

“The Congress has a negative attitude. The PM will inaugurate the new Parliament building on May 28 but the Congress is doing politics by boycotting it, giving an excuse that the President should inaugurate it,” he said.

He claimed that there have been instances in Congress and opposition-led states where foundation stones of new assembly buildings were laid by respective Chief Ministers and Congress leaders such as Sonia and Rahul Gandhi instead of the respective Governors. “The Congress does not allow the PM to speak inside Parliament. Indian people have given Modi the mandate to speak. Not respecting the PM is like insulting the people’s mandate,” he said. “I want to tell the other parties who are joining the Congress now that your condition will also be like the Congress if you continue to be with them,” he added. Shah said that the BJP had promised to provide one lakh government jobs in Assam before the 2021 assembly polls and within two-and-half-years, 86,000 jobs have been given and the rest will be given within the next six months. He alleged that during the tenure of earlier governments, only the followers of the ruling party used to get jobs in the State. “The BJP has brought in a transparent system, in which even the poor people’s sons and daughters are getting jobs on the basis of their merit and talent. There is no favouritism or nepotism now,” he added.

‘Imran, wife can’t leave Pak’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Former prime minister Imran Khan, his wife Bushra Bibi and more than 600 leaders and former assembly members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party have been barred from leaving the country, media reports said on Thursday. Khan and several top leaders of his party are facing cases following the violence after he was arrested on May 9 in a corruption case. Citing sources within the Federal Investigation Authority (FIA), the Geo News reported that the names of the PTI leaders and its party chief have been added for their involvement in the May 9 violence and desecration of martyrs' monuments.

However, there was no official confirmation on the development from Khan's party. The names have been added to the FIA's Provincial National Identification List (PNIL) to prevent them from going abroad, the sources said.



The sources claimed that some of the PTI leaders and office bearers tried leaving the country in the last three days, however, they were stopped at the airports.

The list includes Murad Saeed, Maleeka Bokhari, Fawad Chaudhry, Hammad Azhar, Qasim Suri, Asad Qaiser, Yasmin Rashid and Mian Aslam Iqbal.

Fawad Chaudhry has already quit the party but his name has been listed among those who cannot fly out of Pakistan.

PTI's Secretary General resigns

Islamabad (PTI): Ousted Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan suffered another jolt as the head of his economic team and one of his close aides Asad Umar resigned from all party positions, amid the government's crackdown on the opposition over the May 9 violence.

Umar, who was Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's Secretary General, announced stepping down from all party positions shortly after he was released from Adiala Jail on Wednesday. "Not possible for me to lead the party under these circumstances. I am resigning as Secretary General and core committee member of PTI," he said at a press conference.

Earlier, Samaa News channel reported that the federal government has decided to add the names of 80 people, including Khan and his wife, to the no-fly list.

The names of all the PTI leaders were put in the list on the recommendation of the "institutions concerned", the news channel reported. It said that the police department, National Accountability Bureau and the anti-corruption department had requested the Ministry of Interior to include these names to the no-fly list. The no-fly list is maintained by the Ministry of Interior and officials deployed at airports or other land exit routes are provided the names of individuals who cannot go out. Pakistan authorities maintain different categories of people who are banned from leaving the country for various reasons, including those who face corruption cases.

‘Undeclared martial law in Pakistan’

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's beleaguered former prime minister Imran Khan on Thursday filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the deployment of the army to aid the civilian administration in some provinces, terming it as "undeclared martial law" in the coup-prone country.

Khan moved the Supreme Court of Pakistan against Shehbaz Sharif's government that invoked Article 245 in several provinces including Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Islamabad - the Federal Capital Territory.

Under Article 245 of Pakistan's Constitution, the army can be called in to aid the civil administration to defend the country. In his petition, the 70-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief urged the court to take notice of the martial law-like situation in parts of the country and the ongoing aggressive crackdown on his party. Khan said that the arrests, investigations and trials of citizens under the Army Act 1952 were "unconstitutional and void and of no legal effect and amounts to negation of the Constitution, the rule of law and independence of the judiciary."

"The dictated exercise of this power by the federal cabinet in the absence of objective conditions for the exercise of that power is clearly violative of the fundamental rights," the petition said.

3 dead in central Japan attack

AP ■ TOKYO

Three people including two police officers were killed in Nagano in central Japan on Thursday and a suspect with a rifle and knife was holed up inside a building, according to police and media reports.

A witness told NHK public television that a woman fell while being chased by the suspect, who then stabbed her with a knife and shot at two police officers as they arrived at the scene in a patrol car in Nakano city in Nagano prefecture. The witness said he asked the suspect why he attacked her, and he replied that he wanted to kill her, NHK said.

The three victims were taken to a nearby hospital, where the woman was later pronounced dead, police said. The two police officers also died, according to NHK. A fourth person who was injured could not be rescued because he was near the suspect, Kyodo News agency reported. Video on NHK



Police officers stand guard on a street leading to a building where a man is holed up in Nakano, central Japan on Thursday.

showed police wearing bullet-proof vests and carrying shields, with an ambulance nearby. The area is in a quiet farming neighbourhood.

Police described the suspect as a man wearing a camouflage outfit, a hat, a mask and sunglasses, Kyodo News said. City officials urged those in the area to stay home. No other details, including about the suspect and

the motive, were immediately known.

Violent crimes are rare in Japan. It has strict gun control laws and only a handful of gun-related crimes annually. But in recent years, there have been some high-profile cases involving random knifings on subways and arson attacks, and there is growing concern about home-made guns and explosives.

S Korea launches first commercial-grade satellite

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea successfully launched a commercial-grade satellite for the first time Thursday as part of its growing space development program, as rival North Korea is pushing to place its first military spy satellite into orbit. The two Koreas, technically in a state of war, have no military reconnaissance satellites of their own and

both are eager to possess them. The South Korean launch on Thursday will likely assist its efforts to develop a space-based surveillance system.

The domestically built three-stage Nuri rocket lifted off from a launch facility on a southern island with a payload of eight satellites, including a main commercial-grade satellite whose mission is to verify

radar imaging technology and observe cosmic radiation in a near-Earth orbit.

Science Minister Lee Jong Ho later told a televised news conference that the launch was successful, saying it proved the rocket's reliability and South Korea's potential to operate various satellites and explore space.

Lee said seven of the eight

Dar hints at end of IMF loan programme

Islamabad (PTI): Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has hinted that the IMF loan programme to Pakistan may expire on June 30 due to the "restricted time" for its revival but asserted that the cash-strapped country would not default, a media report said on Thursday.

Pakistan is in acute need of the USD 6.5 billion loan facility by the Washington-based International Monetary Fund (IMF) to stabilise its economy.

While speaking to a delegation of a regional business body on Wednesday, Dar said, "Our efforts are aimed at completing the second IMF programme in the country's history, although time has been restricted and the programme is ending on June 30," The Express Tribune newspaper reported.

He stressed that the delay was "unfortunate" and the review should have been completed earlier. Since 1958, Pakistan has signed 22 IMF programmes but failed to complete all, barring the 2013-16 facility, thanks to nearly 18 waivers from the global lender.

Islamabad signed the current 36-month USD 6 billion Extended Fund Facility in July 2019, which, on request of the then-finance minister, Miftah Ismail, was extended by the IMF by nine months to June 30, 2023, and its size increased to USD 6.5 billion. Over the past almost four years, the programme has been derailed at least four times, including on two occasions during the tenure of the current coalition government, and the failure to complete it will further widen the trust deficit between the country and the financial world, the report said. The government has not yet come up with a credible alternative plan, which has created panic in markets as the Pakistani Rupee is trading in the range of PKR 308 to PKR 313 to a dollar in the open market.

South Korea, US troops hold large live-fire drills

AP ■ SEOUL

The South Korean and US militaries conducted large live-fire drills near the border with North Korea on Thursday, despite the North's warning that it won't tolerate what it calls an invasion rehearsal on its doorstep. The drills, the first of five rounds of live-fire exercises through mid-June, mark 70 years since the establishment of the military alliance between Seoul and Washington. North Korea typically reacts to such major South Korean-US exercises with missile and other weapons tests.

Since the start of 2022, North Korea has test-launched more than 100 missiles, but none since it fired a solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile in mid-April. It says the tests are a response to expanded military drills between the US and South Korea, but observers say North Korea aims to advance its weapons development and then wrest greater concessions from its rivals in eventual diplomacy.

The US-South Korean firing exercises, called "Combined annihilation firepower drills," are the biggest of their kind. The drills have been held 11 times since they began in 1977, according to the South Korean Defence Ministry.

The drills involved 2,500 troops and 610 weapons systems such as fighter jets, attack helicopters, drones, tanks and artillery from South Korea and the United States, according to the South Korean Defence Ministry. The most recent exercises in 2017 drew about 2,000 soldiers and 250 weapons assets from both countries.

The drills simulated artillery and aerial strikes on front-line North Korean military facilities in response to an attack. The troops later practiced precision-guided attacks on simulated targets in the rear areas to "completely annihilate" North Korean military threats, according to a ministry state-



The South Korean army's K-2 tanks fire during South Korea-US joint military drills at Seungjin Fire Training Field in Pocheon, South Korea on Thursday.

ment. It said South Korea will seek to establish "peace through overwhelming strength" to counter North Korean threats.

North Korea didn't immediately respond to the start of the drills. Last Friday, its state media called the drills "a typical North Korea-targeted war rehearsal," saying it "cannot but take a more serious note of the fact" that the exercises are a few kilometres from its frontier. The North's Korean Central News Agency said the US and South Korea would face unspecified "corresponding responses" to the drills.

Earlier this year, the South Korean and US militaries conducted their biggest field exercises in five years. The US also sent the nuclear-powered USS Nimitz aircraft carrier and nuclear-capable bombers for joint exercises with South Korea.

Moon Seong Mook, an analyst for the Seoul-based Korea Research Institute for National Strategy, said North Korea could use the South Korea-US drills as a pretext to resume testing activities. He said domestic issues such as North Korea's push to increase agricultural production during the rice-planting season could still affect its decision on weapons tests.

"North Korea can't help feel some burdens over the South Korea-US joint firepower drills being held for the first time in six years and in the strongest manner," Moon said.

In a meeting last month, US President Joe Biden and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol announced steps to reinforce their deterrence capabilities such as the periodic docking of US nuclear-armed submarines in South Korea, strengthened joint training exercises and establishment of a new nuclear consultative group. Biden also issued a blunt warning that any North Korean nuclear attack on the US or its allies would "result in the end of whatever regime" took such action.

Kim Yo Jong, the powerful sister of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, said the Biden-Yoon agreement revealed the two countries' "most hostile and aggressive will of action" against the North.

She threatened to further strengthen her country's nuclear doctrine, saying, "The pipe dream of the US and South Korea will henceforth be faced with the entity of more powerful strength."

Worries about North Korea's nuclear program grew after the North last year passed a law authorising preemptive use of nuclear weapons.

Chinese minister to hold talks amid disputes over tariffs

AP ■ BEIJING

China's commerce minister will hold talks with officials in the US this week amid sharpening disputes over tariffs and technology, his ministry said on Thursday. Wang Wentao will meet with Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo and Trade Representative Katherine Tai while in the US to attend the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum trade minister meetings on Thursday and Friday in Detroit, Michigan.

In announcing Wang's visit, Commerce Ministry spokesperson Shu Jueting denounced a decision by Japan, a fellow APEC member, to join the US and Holland in barring Chinese access to leading-edge computer chip technology. "This is the abuse of export measures and the departure from free trade and international economic and trade rules," Shu said.

"This will severely damage the interests of Chinese and Japanese enterprises and the trade cooperation between China and Japan."

China has long been reliant on Japanese technology, but now needs machines available only from a single Dutch company, ASML Holding NV, that etch microscopic circuits on

next-generation chips.

Without that, the ruling Communist Party's efforts to develop advanced chips for smartphones, artificial intelligence and other applications are stalled.

In what was seen as retaliation, China's cybersecurity watchdog on Sunday announced a ban on products from US memory chipmaker Micron Technology Inc. in some computer systems.

The Cyberspace Administration of China said Micron products have unspecified security risks but gave no details.

The trade disputes have brought supply disruptions and caused billions of dollars in lost sales but are seen as necessary by the West to prevent Beijing from accessing technology with military applications.

China has stepped up its threats to invade self-governing Taiwan, increased its military presence in the South China Sea to back its claims to the strategic waterway, and provided diplomatic and economic backing to Russia over its invasion of Ukraine. Their political differences, trade between China and the US topped USD 690 billion last year, while an estimated 295,000 Chinese students are enrolled in American colleges and universities.

Russia signs deal to deploy tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus

Tallinn (AP): Russia and Belarus signed a deal on Thursday formalising the procedure for deploying Russian nuclear weapons on Belarusian territory. Control of the weapons will remain with Moscow. The move formalised the deal agreed on earlier by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Putin previously announced in March that his country planned to deploy tactical, comparatively short-range and small-yield nuclear weapons in Belarus. The inking of the deal comes as Russia braces for Ukraine's much-anticipated counteroffensive. Both Russian and Belarusian officials framed the step as driven by hostility from the West.

"Deployment of nonstrategic nuclear weapons is an effective response to the aggressive policy of countries unfriendly



Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, left, and Belarusian Defense Minister Viktor Khrenin exchange documents on Thursday

to us," Belarusian Defence Minister Viktor Khrenin said in Minsk during a meeting with his Russian counterpart, Sergei Shoigu. "In the context of an extremely sharp escalation of threats on the western borders of Russia and Belarus, a decision was made to take countermeasures in the military-nuclear sphere," Shoigu added.

Belarus's Ministry of

Defence said the agreement refers to a "special storage facility on the territory of the Republic of Belarus."

No detail was announced regarding when the weapons would be deployed in Belarus, but Putin previously said that the construction of storage facilities for tactical nuclear weapons in Belarus would be completed by July 1.

Germany eco shrinks, signalling recession

AP ■ BERLIN

The German economy shrank unexpectedly in the first three months of this year, marking the second quarter of contraction that is one definition of recession. Data released Thursday by the Federal Statistical Office shows Germany's gross domestic product, or GDP, declined by 0.3 per cent in the period from January to March. This follows a drop of 0.5 per cent in Europe's biggest economy during the last quarter of 2022.

Two consecutive quarters of contraction is a common definition of recession, though economists on the euro area business cycle dating committee use a broader set of data, including employment figures.

The Republicans, she said, "want the American people to make an impossible choice: devastating cuts or devastating debt default."

Weeks of negotiations between Republicans and the White House have failed to produce a deal — in part because the Biden administration never expected to be having to negotiate with McCarthy over the debt limit, arguing it should not be used as leverage to extract other partisan priorities. McCarthy is holding out for steep spending cuts that Republicans are demanding in exchange for their vote to raise the nation's borrowing limit. The White House has offered to freeze next year's 2024 spending at current levels and restrict 2025 spending, but the Republican leader says that's not enough.

‘Republicans pushing debt ceiling talks to the brink’

AP ■ WASHINGTON

House Republicans are pushing debt ceiling talks to the brink, displaying risky political bravado as they prepare to leave town on Thursday for the holiday weekend just days before the US could face an unprecedented default that could hurl the global economy into chaos. Speaker Kevin McCarthy said he's directed his negotiating team "to work 24/7 to solve this problem."

Arriving at the Capitol, McCarthy, R-Calif., said that "every hour matters" in talks with President Joe Biden's team as they work toward a budget deal. Republican are demanding spending cuts the Democrats oppose, and McCarthy said a deal could come together "at any time."

But it's clear the Republican speaker — who leads a Trump-aligned party whose hard-right flank lifted him to power — is now staring down a potential crisis. Lawmakers are tentatively not expected back at work until Tuesday, just two days from June 1, when Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has said the US could start running out of cash to pay its bills and face a federal default.

Fitch Ratings agency placed the United States' AAA credit on "ratings watch negative," warning of a possible downgrade because of what it called the brinkmanship and political partisanship surrounding the debate over lifting the debt ceiling. "This is a battle between extremism and common sense," said Democratic Rep. Katherine Clark of Massachusetts, the minority whip.

HK-flagged vessel blocks Suez Canal

AP ■ CAIRO

A Hong Kong-flagged ship briefly blocked Egypt's vital Suez Canal on Thursday morning, authorities said, the latest such incident in the busy waterway. According to Leth Agencies, a canal services company that oversees the waterway, the Xin Hai Tong 23 ran aground before dawn at the southern entrance to the canal, blocking four vessels. The ship was refloated by the Suez Canal Authority a few hours later, the company said, and normal traffic was restored.

However, Egypt's state-run Suez Canal Authority said the



vessel had broken down during its transit through the canal due to engine failure. It said the ship was towed away from the area by three tug boats.

The two conflicting accounts as to how the incident unfolded could not be reconciled. The bulk carrier, measur-

ing about 190 metres (625 feet) by 32 metres (105 feet), had set off for Suez from the Saudi Red Sea port of Dubai. Later in the day on Thursday, it was at sea about 3.2 kilometres (2 miles) south of the canal, according to Marine Traffic, a vessel tracking firm.

Thursday's incident is the latest in a flurry of ships running aground in the Suez Canal or getting stuck in the crucial waterway over the past few years.

In January, a vessel owned by Greek firm Primera Shipping Inc. broke down at the 38 kilometre (24-mile) mark of the canal, near the

Egyptian city of Qantara. In March a Liberia-flagged ship ran aground in the two-lane part of the waterway. Both vessels were refloated hours later.

The most prominent case was that of the skyscraper-sized container ship, the Panama-flagged Ever Given, which ran aground in a single-lane stretch of the canal in March 2021, blocking the waterway.

A massive salvage effort by a flotilla of tugboats, helped by the tides, freed it six days later, ending the crisis and allowing hundreds of waiting ships to pass through the canal.

FINAL CALL ON ASIA CUP VENUE TO BE TAKEN AFTER IPL FINAL: BCCI SECY

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A decision on Asia Cup's fate will be taken on the sidelines of the IPL final, which will be attended by a host of top Asian Cricket Council (ACC) dignitaries, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said on Thursday.

Pakistan have the hosting rights for this year's Asia Cup but with BCCI deciding against sending its team to the neighbouring country without government permission, PCB chairman Najam Sethi had proposed a 'hybrid model' where they will organise at least four games on home soil and India will play their matches at a neutral venue.

It couldn't be confirmed whether Sethi has been formally invited for the IPL final.

"As of now, the decision with regards to hosting of Asia Cup hasn't yet been finalised. We are busy with IPL but the top dignitaries of Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), Bangladesh and Afghanistan Cricket Board are coming to watch the IPL final. We will have a discussion and take a final decision in due



course," Jay Shah told PTI.

It has been learnt from ACC sources that Sethi's proposed hybrid model looks like a feasible solution although ACC had made no formal statements. According to the model, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal and Afghanistan play

four preliminary matches in Pakistan and India would play all their games at neutral venues.

The two India-Pakistan games will also be held in Sri Lanka although the PCB wants them in Dubai. The weather in UAE in September is not at all

conducive for 50- over games although to make the 'hybrid model' work logistically, UAE is a far better option for the Asian Cricket Council.

"ACC head Jay Shah will summon an executive body meeting where a formal announcement will take place.

The PCB doesn't mind playing India at a neutral venue. "PCB would prefer Dubai because it would lead to more gate receipts but it is open to playing in another country (read Sri Lanka) provided the ACC matches the gate receipts amount (USD 0.5 million) that Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) received in 2022 from the Indo-Pak games in Dubai," an ACC source privy to development told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

The window for the Asia Cup this year is between September 1-17.

FORMAT AND OTHER MODALITIES

The six teams in the Asia Cup are India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Nepal.

One group will have India, Pakistan and Nepal while the other group will comprise Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

According to ACC sources, if the 'hybrid model' goes ahead, then Pakistan would like to host the following four games in their country.

These games are Pakistan vs Nepal, Sri Lanka v Bangladesh, Bangladesh vs Afghanistan and Afghanistan vs Sri Lanka.

As per the format, the top two teams from each group will constitute Super Fours where they again play against each other. After the Super Four round robin phase, the top two teams will play the final.

The Super Fours will ensure that at least two Indo-Pak encounters are guaranteed, which is profitable for the host nation, broadcaster as well as ACC.

If India and Pakistan qualify for the summit clash, then it will be three matches between the arch-rivals.

"Sethi has said that in preliminary round, Pakistan is only playing Nepal. His proposal is to make it six games with two Super four non-India matches, involving Pakistan to be played in Pakistan," the ACC source added.

As far as final is concerned, even if India doesn't qualify, the ACC will conduct it at a designated neutral country — Sri Lanka or UAE.



MI face IPL champ GT in Qualifier 2

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Akash Madhwal's breathing bowling performance against Lucknow Super Giants in the Eliminator would have given five-time IPL champions Mumbai Indians wings and they would be fancying their chances against defending champions Gujarat Titans in Qualifier 2 to be played in the world's largest stadium here on Friday.

Mumbai Indians, riding on magical figures of five for five produced by Madhwal at the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai on Wednesday night, knocked out LSG from the race to the final with an 81-run win.

The massive MI victory was a warning to the rivals that they could lift their game according to the occasion even in the absence of star pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Jofra Archer and batting mainstay Tilak Varma.

MI pride themselves on thriving when the odds are stacked against them, something they have done throughout the season. Having finished last in the previous edition, Rohit Sharma's team has ground it out this season to remain in contention for a sixth IPL title even with limited resources.

The likes of Cameron Green, Suryakumar Yadav and Tim David have responded well to the challenges and now form the backbone of the batting department with the young Nehal Wadhwa too making a huge impact, and the opening pair of Rohit and Ishan Kishan doing a fair job.

It will be a stern test for the 'Titans' bowling attack, led by Mohammad Shami (26 wickets in 15 matches), to get the better of MI's bat-

ting, which has improved drastically towards the business end of the tournament.

Madhwal has been a revelation with the ball. The right-arm bowler returned a dream spell of 3.5-0-5-5 against LSG to put his side into the virtual semifinal after a three-wicket burst that set up victory in their crucial last league game against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

Veterans Piyush Chawla (21 wickets in 15 matches) and Jason Behrendorff (14 wickets in 11 matches) have also been impressive, while an otherwise expensive Chris Jordan also enjoyed a fine outing of 2-1-7-1 in the Eliminator.

Gujarat Titans, outclassed and outgunned in Qualifier 1 by Mahendra Singh Dhoni's Chennai Super Kings, will have one last chance to gather themselves up and put their best foot forward in familiar conditions here in order to qualify for their second IPL final on the trot.

It will be imperative for the defending champions that their batting clicks in unison, since Shubman Gill and Vijay Shankar have done bulk of the heavy lifting with the bat in the last few games.

Gill might have had an off day against CSK but his two centuries in the closing stages of the league round make him the biggest threat for Mumbai Indians.

With 722 runs in 15 matches at an average of 55.53, including two centuries and four fifties, the India batter has 421 runs more than the second-best GT batter — Shankar with 301 runs in 12 matches — and is also just eight runs short of going past RCB's Faf du Plessis to finish with most runs in this IPL.

Indian batters' poor show, strange decisions led to LSG's downfall

SHALABH SAXENA ■ LUCKNOW

The inconsistent run of Lucknow Super Giants finally ended in the Indian Premier League-2023 as Mumbai Indians thrashed the Lucknow team by 81 runs in the eliminator at Chennai on Wednesday.

Playing only their second season, LSG managed to make it to the playoffs yet again but they never looked like a champion side. The performance of the team, which looked promising on paper, was marred by the non-performance of the Indian batters and strange decisions by the management. However, the bowlers performed well throughout the season.

The Indian batsmen failed miserably to score big runs. The top Indian run-getter for LSG was skipper KL Rahul, who piled up 274 runs in nine innings, before he was forced to quit the tournament following a thigh injury during a match against Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Ayush Badoni showed some promise (238 runs), but he was not given a proper batting order to bat on. He batted on almost all the batting slots available, making it difficult for him to settle and score big



Deepak Hooda

runs. But the biggest failure came from the bat of Deepak Hooda. With no reliable batsman available on the bench, the LSG management was forced to field Hooda in 12 matches despite his dismal form. Hooda scored 84 runs at the average of 7.64, with his highest being 17 runs.

The LSG even tried Manan Vohra, Karan Sharma and Prerak Mankad, but only Prerak managed to play an anchor innings of unbeaten 64 runs against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

The LSG were blessed to have big-hitting foreign batsmen – Marcus Stoinis, Nicholas Pooran, Kyle Mayers, Quinton de Kock – who clicked all the time to make sure their team reached the playoffs.

Stoinis scored 408 runs in 15 innings at an average of 31.38 and with a strike rate of over 150. He was

14th in the orange cap list. The West Indians duo of Kyle Mayers and Nicholas Pooran were 19th and 22nd in the orange cap list. Mayers scored 379 runs in 13 innings at an average of 29.15 and strike rate of over 144 while Pooran scored 358 runs at an average of 29.83 and a strike rate of a whopping 172. He even hit the third-fastest half-century of the IPL history.

In the bowling department, Ravi Bishnoi was the standout performer for LSG as he picked 16 wickets. Yash Thakur and Naveen-ul Haq also bowled brilliantly, picking up 13 and 11 wickets, respectively. Yash got the wickets in just nine innings while Naveen's wickets came in seven innings. The England speedster, who marked his arrival in this season with a five-wicket-haul against Delhi Capitals claimed 11 wickets, before leaving for home to be with his pregnant wife.

Avesh Khan, Amit Mishra, Krunal Pandya bowled decently but did not produce breakthroughs at important junctures.

Returning from serious injury, Moshin Khan bowled a match-winning over against Mumbai Indians, defending 11 runs in the last over.

'Individuals showed lot of character to reach successive WTC finals'

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Captain Rohit Sharma feels all individuals showed a lot of character and stepped up when needed to take India to the World Test Championship final for the second consecutive time, especially after losing in the inaugural edition in 2021.

India will take on Australia at The Oval in the 2021-2023 cycle WTC final, starting June 7.

"After the World Test Championship (2021 final) in Southampton, we quickly had to regroup and get ready for the next cycle," Rohit said in a video posted by BCCI on its website.

"I thought in that cycle we played some really, really tough cricket. We were challenged a lot of times and I thought to come out of that was obviously going to take a lot of character from not just a few individuals, but everyone." Rohit was full of praise for the fighting character of his teammates after the disappointment of losing the inaugural WTC final to New Zealand in 2021.

"Look, it's a cycle of two years and we play a lot of Test matches during that period. Lot(s) of players have played in that cycle," he said.

"Different individuals have stepped up, putting the performances that we

were looking for from the individual."

In the upcoming WTC final, India will be without the services of three key players – Rishabh Pant, Shreyas Iyer and Jasprit Bumrah. While Bumrah and Iyer are down with injuries, Pant is recovering from a horrific car crash earlier in the year.

Besides Rohit, Pant and Iyer were the only two Indian batters to average over 40 in the inaugural WTC, scoring more than 500 runs, while Bumrah picked up 45 wickets from 10 Tests during that period.

Senior India batter Cheteshwar Pujara said the team should recognise the contributions of the trio.

"There have been many players who have contributed to the team. Some of them are not part of this squad currently, but it's important that we recognise all the players that have contributed in this cycle," Pujara said.

"It's been a great team effort... The team management, captain, everyone has been looking forward to this moment where we qualify for the WTC finals and the guys are really excited to play at The Oval. We've got some good memories playing against England in UK. Overall, if I look at the last couple of years, it's been a very good journey for the Indian Test team."

I am not Bumrah's replacement: Madhwal

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Akash Madhwal, who engineered Mumbai Indians' comprehensive 81-run win over Lucknow Super Giants in the IPL Eliminator, doesn't consider himself as Jasprit Bumrah's replacement and is happy to fulfil the responsibility entrusted on him by the team.

Madhwal, an engineer from Uttarakhand, returned impressive figures of 5 for 5 in 3.3 overs as MI inched one step closer to the IPL summit clash on Wednesday night.

"I am trying my best to fulfil the responsibilities given to me by the team. I am not Bumrah's replacement but I'm trying my best to do what I can," Madhwal told reporters after the match.

Though the MA Chidambaram Stadium in Chennai has not benefited the pacers much this season, Madhwal spoke about what worked for him.



"The wicket at Chepauk was good. As you saw, the ball was not gripping but skid-

ding. I am a swing/sling bowler, and I pitched my deliveries in hard lengths

aiming for wickets," he said.

Madhwal said skipper Rohit Sharma knew his strengths and how to use him.

"Rohit bhaiya knew that yorkers were my strength but during the nets and practice matches, he also found that I can bowl well with the new ball," he said.

"So he had an idea as to how to use me as the situation warranted. I'm also very chilled out and relaxed and I'm having fun because I'm pursuing my passion."

Meanwhile, LSG bowler Naveen-ul-Haq said he enjoyed the "Kohli, Kohli" chants at the stadium on Wednesday as it gave him the passion to play well for his team.

During the league stage of the ongoing IPL, Naveen-ul-Haq had a heated chat with Royal Challengers Bangalore star Kohli. After the RCB-LSG game, the Afghan even posted Instagram stories

about mangoes whenever the Bangalore-based outfit did not perform well in their matches.

"I enjoy it. I like everyone in the ground chanting his (Virat Kohli) name or any other player's name."

"It gives me passion to play well for my team," he said after his brilliant spell of 4/38 against MI, albeit in a losing cause.

"Well I don't concentrate on the outside or the noise from outside or anything else. I just focus on my own cricket and my own process. Crowd chanting or anyone saying something doesn't affect me."

"As professional sportsmen you have to take this in your stride. When you don't do well for your team, fans are going to give it to you. And when you do good for your team, (the) same people are going to chant your name. Basically this is part and parcel of the game," he added.

Bharat would be obvious choice to go with in WTC final: Shastri



PTI ■ DUBAI

Former India chief coach Ravi Shastri feels KS Bharat would be the "obvious choice" of the team management for the wicketkeeper's role in the World Test Championship final against Australia to be played in England next month.

With India's first-choice wicketkeeper Rishabh Pant recovering from a horrific car crash and his back-up KL Rahul recuperating from a surgery on his right thigh, the

Indian team management is in a dilemma on who to select between Bharat and Ishan Kishan as its first-choice gloveman for the WTC final at The Oval starting June 7.

Shastri said since Bharat had kept wickets during the Border-Gavaskar series earlier this year, he expected the 29-year-old to get the management's nod ahead of Kishan.

"You have to see who's a better keeper. Is it Bharat or Ishan Kishan? Now, the fact that Bharat was given a run against Australia, where he played all the Test matches, I think he would be the obvious choice to go with," Shastri said on the ICC Review. While Bharat gave a good account of himself behind the stumps, he was below-par with the bat, managing just 101 runs from six innings on turning tracks.



MI peaking at right time: Cameron Green

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Cameron Green is finally justifying his Rs 17.5 crore billing just when Mumbai Indians needed him the most and is happy that his team after initial struggles is now a step away from the IPL summit clash.

Having pummelled Lucknow Super Giants by 81 runs in the Eliminator, MI will face defending champions Gujarat Titans on Friday in the second Qualifier to decide Chennai Super Kings' opposition in Sunday's final.

Green in fact said even skipper Rohit Sharma told newcomers in dressing room that the five-time champions are slow starters.

"Obviously, all experience that he (Rohit) has got for India and in IPL, he kind of knows. I think MI never won the first game of IPL and he tries to mention that to us," Green told Star Sports after having scored 40 odd and effecting two run-outs in LSG innings.

Jason wants to renegotiate ECB contract in order to play MLC T20 in US

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Opener Jason Roy is mulling over renegotiating his contract with the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) in order to take up lucrative offers to play in the first season of the upcoming Major League Cricket (MLC) in the United States of America.

With global cricket ecosystem witnessing an increasing loyalty shift towards franchise-based T20 leagues, a lot of English cricketers like Roy would be sought after in every

league and it might make them think about the amount of time they want to devote in national duty.

Six players from England - Roy, Topley, Harry Brook, Dawid Malan, Matthew Potts and David Willey - have incremental contracts with the ECB. The report informed that these contracts are worth around GBP 66,000 per year and act as a 'top-up to County salaries'.

Apart from the right-handed opening batter Roy, who recently played for the two-time Indian Premier



League winners Kolkata Knight Riders, fast bowler Reece Topley is also considering making the same move.

However, Topley's decision could be influenced by his fitness status following a surgery to his shoulder, reported ESPNcricinfo.

Topley was also last seen in the IPL, wherein he played a few initial matches for the Royal Challengers Bangalore.

The report added that England players, who are full central contracts, are not likely to feature in the MLC this

year but Roy has an incremental deal with the ECB, is planning to terminate it, which would help him to take up a role in the league to be played in the US.

The MLC is slated to be held from July 13-30 this year at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Texas.

The league has considerable backing from India and Australia, with four IPL team owners investing in as many MLC franchises and Australia's Cricket Victoria and Cricket New South Wales have stakes in

the remaining two teams.

The MLC's first edition is also set to clash with the English summer as the semifinal and final of the T20 Blast will be on July 15, whereas two County Championship games will also be in the same duration. Additionally, the ECB's Hundred starts on August 1.

Due to these fixtures, ECB will not issue NOCs which would enable their contracted players to take part in the MLC. While the fully-contracted players will not be able to negotiate a release with the

ECB, those who have incremental contracts are in a position to do so.

Meanwhile, Surrey are expecting Roy to play the MLC, most likely for LA Knight Riders, which will be between the end of the T20 Blast and the beginning of the Hundred.

Australia's Marcus Stoinis, South Africa's Quinton de Kock, Sri Lanka's Wanindu Hasaranga, South Africa's Anrich Nortje and New Zealand's Glenn Phillips have been revealed as the overseas signings in the MLC.

KIIT, Chandigarh University enter rugby semis

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

KIIT, Bhubaneswar secured a place in the semi-finals by thrashing Calicut University 22-5. Meanwhile, Chandigarh University defeated Mumbai University 28-12, and Bharati Vidyapeeth, Pune beat Shivaji University 29-0 to enter the last four. Lovely Professional University, Punjab also entered the semi-finals by defeating Lalit Narayan Mithila University 33-7.

In the women's rugby quarter-final matches held at Guru Govind Singh Sports College, GNLU, Amritsar crushed Patliputra University 20-0, while Mumbai University defeated Chandigarh University 17-12 to book semi-final berths. In another match, KIIT, Bhubaneswar blanked KIIT, Odisha 20-0 for the last four slots.

In the women's table tennis, Babu Banarsi Das Badminton Academy witnessed the brilliance of universities from North and East India. Among the eight teams reaching the quarterfinals, six are from North and East India, while only two teams are from South



group matches, Punjab University, Patiala won against Bharathiar University, Coimbatore with a score of 3-0 (25-14, 25-22, 25-15), while



Sindhu, Srikanth, Prannoy enter quarterfinals of Malaysia Masters

PTI ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Star Indian shuttlers PV Sindhu, HS Prannoy and Kidambi Srikanth booked their places in the quarterfinals of the Malaysia Masters Super 500 tournament with contrasting wins over their respective rivals here on Thursday.

While double Olympic medallist and sixth seed Sindhu disposed of Aya Ohori of Japan in straight games in women's singles, Prannoy had to dig deep to get the better of Shi Feng Li of China in a tough three-game men's singles contest. Later in the day, Srikanth prevailed over India Open champion and eighth seed Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand.

Taking the court first, world No. 13 Sindhu extended her domination over Ohori, ranked 28th, taking just 40 minutes to beat the Japanese 21-16, 21-11 in the round of 16. It was her 13th win over the Japanese in as many meetings.

Sindhu will face China's Yi Man Zhang in the quarterfinals.

World No. 9 Prannoy then overcame a game deficit to beat world No. 11 and reigning All England champion Li 13-21, 21-16, 21-11 in one hour and 10 minutes to book his berth in the last-eight stage.

KHELO INDIA UNIVERSITY GAMES

India. The quarterfinal matches scheduled for Friday will see Chitkara University facing Punjab University, and SRM University against Chandigarh University.

In another matches, Adamas University will compete against Madras University, while Calcutta University will take on Delhi University.

In the women's volleyball

Mangalore University defeated Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University 3-0 (25-21, 25-15, 25-20). In another match, SRM University, Chennai won against Sri Krishnadevaraya University with a score of 25-11, 25-15, 25-10, while Adams University defeated Mahatma Gandhi University, Kerala with a score of 3-1 (22-25, 25-19, 25-18, 25-



India veterans Atwal, Jeev to tee off at Senior PGA Championship



PTI ■ FRISCO (TEXAS)

Veteran Indian golfers Jeev Milkha Singh and Arjun Atwal will tee off at the USD 3.5 million Senior PGA Championship here.

The Senior Majors are for 50-plus golfers.

Jeev, who has playing rights on the Senior Tours in Europe and Japan, got a special invite and so did Atwal, India's first and only PGA Tour winner. Atwal was on the waiting list less than a week ago.

"Fields at the Seniors are very strong. They have players who have won Majors on the PGA Tour not too far back.

"Names like Padraig Harrington, Darren Clarke, Ernie Els and the whole bunch of PGA stars, who are now on the Champions TOUR, as it is called, are good to give many a run for their money in any event," said Atwal.

Jeev, who made his debut at a senior major at the PGA Championships last year, is thrilled to be back in Texas, where he played college golf.

"I've been granted a special invitation to the 83rd Senior PGA. I cannot wait to get back to Texas, where I played all my college golf. This really is a huge honour," said Jeev.



Diksha, Amandeep, Tvesa among five Indians in Belgium

PTI ■ WANZE (BELGIUM)

India's Diksha Dagar, who is showing signs of getting back to form, will hope for a good outing when she leads a squad of five Indians in the Belgian Ladies Open, which is taking place at Naxhelet Golf Club for the second consecutive year.

Diksha and Tvesa Malik got in late into the field, which also comprises Amandeep Drall, Vani Kapoor and Seher Atwal as the Ladies European Tour (LET) returned to Europe at the Naxhelet Golf Club for the summer run of events after a trip to Florida.

While Diksha is slowly getting back to form, Tvesa and Vani, who missed the cut last week, will be looking to making amends as will Amandeep Drall, who last year came within a whisker of winning the Hero Women's Indian Open for her maiden LET success at home.

Seher, who earned the status through the LET Qualifying School, is looking to translate her home success on the LET.

This season India's flag has been flown by Aditi Ashok, who is leading the LET's Race to Costa Del Sol, but this week she is playing on the LPGA, where

her last two starts have seen her finish T-2 and T-5.

Seher Atwal will be among the early starters, teeing off in the second group of the day with Emma Grechi and Emie Peronin of France, while Vani Kapoor is the very next group with two other French stars, Camille Chevalier and Agathe Sauzon.

Just as Vani tees off from the first, Amandeep will play alongside Germans Sophie Witt and Laura Fuenfstueck at the same time from the 10th.

Diksha plays with England's Chloe Frankish and Swiss golfer Kim Metraux from the first in the afternoon wave, and then Tvesa will be among the last few groups from the first with Thailand's Mim Sangkapong and Slovakia's Michaela Vavrova.

Home star Manon De Roey will be teeing it up once again in her home tournament after she finished in a tie for seventh place in 2022. The Antwerp native had a solid start to the LET season with three top-10 finishes, including T3 at the Aramco Saudi Ladies International. Last year, Cara Gainer secured her best-ever finish on the LET by coming second at the Belgian Ladies Open after rounds of 71 (-1), 67 (-5) and 64 (-8).

Aditi falters in opening tie of match play in Las Vegas

PTI ■ LAS VEGAS

India's Aditi Ashok led for most part against French golfer Perrine Delacour but lost the last two holes to go down in the first set of matches at the Bank of Hope LPGA Match-Play here.

It was a closely fought battle, where Aditi led for most part of the match. Aditi had five birdies and so did Delacour, but the latter added a sixth winning birdie on the 18th to outgun the Indian. There are 64 players in the field who will be in action in three days of round-robin play. The winner from each of the 16 groups will advance to the knockout stage on the weekend.

Aditi, who has been in Top-5 in her last two starts, was never in deficit till the 17th as her rival kept fighting back. Aditi opened smartly and went 2-up in the first three holes, with birdies on the first and the third. The Frenchwoman rallied to win the fourth and eighth to tie the match.

Aditi again started the back nine with a birdie and won the 10th hole only to see Delacour get back the hole on 11th. Aditi again won the 13th and lost the 14th and yet again won the 15th.

With the 16th being halved with a bogey from both players on the Par-5, So, Aditi was 1-up with two to play. Once again the gritty Delacour won the 17th



and then won the last hole to upstage the Indian.

Aditi will meet Caroline Inglis, who upset Jennifer Kupcho 4&3 in the other group

match. Aditi will need to win to keep her hopes of advancing to the knockout stage.

Lilia Vu and Brooke Henderson, the two top 10 ranked

India look to continue Pro League supremacy under new coach Fulton

PTI ■ LONDON

A rejuvenated Indian men's hockey team will look to carry on its fine form from the home leg and maintain its supremacy at the top of the standings when it begins the Europe sojourn of the FIH Pro League against Olympic champions Belgium here on Friday.

During the European leg of the tournament, India will also take on the Netherlands and Argentina in Eindhoven, the Netherlands.

India overcame a disappointing World Cup campaign earlier this year to climb to the top of the 2022-23 Pro League against world champions Germany and mighty Australia.

The Indians secured three outright wins from the Rourkela

leg, while also winning a shootout bonus point in the fourth match against the Kookaburras.

India are currently leading the table with 19 points from five outright victories from eight matches and two from shootouts.

The Harmanpreet Singh-led side will look to carry on with their winning momentum when it takes on Belgium on Friday and Great Britain on Saturday in the Lee Valley Stadium here.

Hosts Great Britain will be riding on their recent success in Christchurch, New Zealand where they won 5-2 and 6-1 against New Zealand, and also beat Australia 2-1 and 3-3 (4-2 SO) to gather 19 points from eight games with four outright wins and three from shootouts.

After being blanked by Australia, India women lose to A team Down Under



PTI ■ ADELAIDE

The Indian women's hockey team put up a fighting show against Australia A before going down 2-3 here on Thursday.

Salima Tete (40') and Sangita Kumari (54') netted a goal each for India after Alice Arnott (18') and Ruby Harris (20', 35') had put the hosts in front. India dominated Australia A in the first quarter, earning a penalty corner in the 10th minute but was unable to capitalise.

The hosts then won a couple of penalty corners, but

India's defence held strong to prevent them from taking the lead, and the first quarter ended goalless. India focused on maintaining ball possession in the second quarter, but Australia A took the lead when Arnott (18') scored a field goal. Harris (20') doubled the hosts' lead moments later as she was free at the far post, allowing her to easily put the ball in India's goal.

With the scoreline stacked against them, India began to play aggressively and even made some good attacks, but couldn't find the back of the net as Australia A went into the half-time break with the 2-0 lead.

Australia A extended their lead early in the third quarter when Harris (35') scored her second goal of the game to make it 3-0 for the hosts.



Neeraj's Finland training proposal gets approval

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Olympic champion javelin thrower Neeraj Chopra's training proposal in Finland was on Thursday approved in the lead up to his multiple World Athletics — Gold Level events in June. According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, the Tokyo Olympic champion intends to train at Kuortane Olympic Training Centre in Finland during this time.

Chopra, who recently became the first Indian javelin thrower to become World Number 1, had followed a similar training plan in the year 2022 as well. Among other proposals, the Mission Olympic Cell also approved paddler Payas Jain's proposal for an advanced training camp in Taiwan.

Senior paddlers Manika Batra and Sathyan Gnanasekaran's proposals to take personal coaches Aman Balgu and S Raman respectively for multiple events were also approved by the MOC. While Manika and Aman Balgu will head to WTT Contender, Zagreb and WTT Star Contender, Ljubljana, Sathyan and Raman will head to Tunis in addition to the above-mentioned events.

The financial assistance will cover their air travel expenses, camp expenses, boarding and lodging cost, medical insurance and out-of-pocket allowance, among others.

French Open 2023: Alcaraz, Djokovic on same half of draw Swiatek-Gauff could be in quarterfinals

AP ■ PARIS

Carlos Alcaraz and the man he just replaced atop the rankings, 22-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic, were placed in the same half of the French Open field in Thursday's draw and could face each other in the semifinals.

Alcaraz is seeded No. 1 at a Grand Slam tournament for the first time and was automatically placed in the top section of the bracket. Djokovic is No. 3 and so could have ended up on either half - had he landed in the bottom, he and Alcaraz only could have met in the final at Roland Garros, where 14-time champion Rafael Nadal will be missing for the

first time since he made his debut at the clay-court major in 2005. Play begins Sunday.

Typically, the previous year's singles champions are invited to appear at the draw, so 2022 women's winner Iga Swiatek was present Thursday. Nadal, of course, was not. Still, he was the first player mentioned at the outset of the ceremony by French Tennis Federation president Gilles Morreton, who noted, "Unfortunately, he cannot play the tournament this year."

Swiatek did not appear to show any ill effects from the hurt right thigh that caused her to stop playing in the third set of her quarterfinal match in Rome last weekend.

She indicated almost immediate-



ly that the issue would not prevent her from competing in Paris, where she has won two of her three major trophies. "It's like my favorite tournament in the whole year, so I'm always excited to come back," said Swiatek, who has been ranked No. 1 for more than a year. "Before the tournament, I get this extra motivation to practice harder, to make everything better."

The draw put her in a potential quarterfinal against No. 6 Coco Gauff in what would be a rematch of last year's French Open final.

Alcaraz, who just turned 20, and Djokovic, who just turned 36, have played each other just once previously, in the semifinals of the Madrid Open in May 2022. Alcaraz won that one 6-7 (5), 7-5, 7-6 (5) — a day after beating Nadal in the quarterfinals, becoming the first player to defeat both Djokovic and Nadal at the same clay-court tournament. Alcaraz went on to collect the title there with a straight-set victory over Alexander

Zverev in the final. It was Zverev who ended Alcaraz's 14-match winning streak in the French Open quarterfinals last year. That was also the round where Nadal stopped Djokovic in a four-set, four-hour thriller.

This time, the men's quarterfinals by seeding would be Alcaraz, the reigning U.S. Open champion, against No. 5 Stefanos Tsitsipas, a two-time Slam finalist; Djokovic against No. 7 Andrey Rublev; No. 2 Daniil Medvedev, the 2021 U.S. Open winner, against No. 8 Jannik Sinner; and No. 4 Casper Ruud, runner-up at the French Open and U.S. Open last year, against No. 6 Holger Rune.

Other women's matches in that round could be No. 4 Elena Rybakina, the reigning Wimbledon champion, against No. 7 Ons Jabeur, a two-time major finalist; No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, who won the Australian Open in January, against No. 5 Caroline Garcia; and No. 3 Jessica Pegula vs. No. 8 Maria Sakkari.