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LUCKNOW, WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 29, 2023; PAGES 12 ₹3



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Rescuers perseverance pays

All 41 workers trapped in Uttarkashi tunnel safely evacuated after 16 days

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE /PTI ■
DEHRADUN/UTTARKASHI

As the workers trapped in the Silkyara tunnel emerged on Tuesday night, a mix of smiles and expressions of gratitude and exhaustion adorned their faces, marking the end of their 17-day ordeal. A collective sigh of relief swept across the nation. Outside the tunnel, loud cheers and slogans filled the air as people welcomed the ambulances transporting the workers to community health centres, and locals took to the streets to share in the jubilation.

Anxious relatives who had been camping in the area were emotional as they were united with the workers after days of uncertainty. Back home, many said they will celebrate Diwali now as the shadow of despair that had fallen on the families disappeared.

"Finally, God heard us. My brother could be rescued. I am with him in an ambulance on the way to hospital," Sunil, who was camping outside the tunnel in Uttarkashi, told PTI in a choked voice.

Sunil's brother Anil was among the three youths from Kherabera in Jharkhand who were trapped in the tunnel.

"All are fine and healthy. I have spoken to a few of them," said a rescue worker as media persons who staked out at the



Jubilation as the trapped workers come out of the collapsed Silkyara Tunnel in Uttarkashi on Tuesday. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and Union Minister of State for Road Transport & Highways VK Singh greet them

PTI

site for over two weeks and others rushed to ask about the well-being of the workers who were emerging from the tunnel where they were trapped since Diwali morning.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded a successful operation that rescued 41 workers

trapped in an under-construction road tunnel in Uttarakhand on Tuesday, asserting that everyone involved in the mission has created an amazing example of humanity and teamwork.

Modi also said the multi-agency rescue exercise has

made everyone emotional.

In a post on X soon after the workers were brought out of the Silkyara tunnel in Uttarkashi, the Prime Minister saluted the spirit of those involved in the operation and said their courage and resolve have given a new lease of life to

the 41 labourers.

"Everyone involved in the mission has created an amazing example of humanity and teamwork. It is a matter of great satisfaction that these friends of ours will meet their dear ones after a long wait," Modi said.

Uttarakhand Chief Minister

Pushkar Singh Dhami and Union minister VK Singh welcomed the 41 workers with garlands, shook hands and embraced them, while the rescue teams and officials clapped.

Families of the workers, most of whom are from Jharkhand and UP, were glued to television and phones after the news emerged that they could be rescued any time. Sweets were distributed and crackers were burst at some places.

"It is like a new birth," said a relative of Dhiren and Benudhar in the Mayurbhanj district in Odisha.

The families of six workers from Shravasti, Uttar Pradesh, lighted candles and lamps around the house.

"We will celebrate Diwali now that my son is safe," said Anju, mother of Akhilesh, from Mirzapur. In Khirabeda, villagers distributed 'laddoos' after the successful rescue. Rajendra, Sukhran and Anil, all in their early 20s, from the village, were among those trapped inside the tunnel for 16 days.

Sukhran's sister Khushboo said that everyone in their village was celebrating.

According to Ram Kumar Bediya, a villager, a group of 13 people, between 18 and 23, had left Khirabeda on November 1 to work at the tunnel. When the disaster struck, three of them were working inside.

Telangana gears up for high stakes polls

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI/HYDERABAD

The curtains came down on the month-long high-pitched poll campaign in five States, with the last day of the campaign in Telangana on Tuesday. The State will go to polls on Thursday. The results, including those from the other four States (Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Mizoram), will be declared on December 3.

The State witnessed an electrified campaign by BRS, a high-powered BJP campaign led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi with several roadshows, and a high-stakes campaign by the Congress, looking forward to forming its first government after the State was bifurcated by the UPA government.

BRS has fielded candidates in all 119 seats. According to the seat-sharing agreement, BJP and Jana Sena are contesting in 111 and 8 seats, respectively, while Congress has given one seat to its ally CPI(M). Asaduddin Owaisi-led AIMIM has put up candidates in nine segments in the city. BRS is trying to retain power for a third consecutive term, while Congress has been fighting tooth and nail to wrest power from it.

The BJP has left no stone unturned to come to power. A total of 2,290 contestants are in the fray for the upcoming elections, including BRS supremo and Chief Minister K Chandrasekhar Rao, his min-

ister-son K T Rama Rao, TPCC president A Revanth Reddy, and BJP Lok Sabha members Bandi Sanjay Kumar, D Arvind, and Soyam Babu Rao. KCR is contesting from Gajwel and Kamareddy and Revanth Reddy is contesting from Kodangal and Kamareddy.

The BJP fielded its MLA, Etala Rajender, from Gajwel, in addition to Huzurabad, where he is the incumbent legislator.

Apart from PM Modi, several Union ministers, including Rajnath Singh and Amit Shah, and Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, campaigned for votes for their respective party candidates. The BRS campaign centred around the failures of the previous Congress regime and ongoing welfare measures for farmers and women.

Rao also highlighted his struggle to achieve Telangana statehood. Congress focused mainly on the alleged corruption of the BRS government while highlighting its "six guarantees." BJP's campaign emphasised the necessity of a "double engine government" and pointed to the "family rule" of KCR, alleging corruption. To the embarrassment of the ruling KCR government, the National Dam Safety Authority gave an adverse report on the sinking of a barrage, which is part of the Kaleshwaram irrigation project, providing ammunition to the Opposition. Over 2.5 lakh staff will be engaged in poll duties for the assembly elections, Chief Electoral Officer Vikas Raj said. **Continued on Page 8**

18 per cent candidates face criminal charges

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 18 per cent of the total 8,054 candidates contesting the elections in Mizoram, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Telangana have criminal cases registered against them. Telangana tops the list among, where major political parties including BRS, Congress, and BJP have fielded candidates with criminal records ranging from 24 to 72 per cent.

According to a report by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), out of the 8,051 candidates analysed in five States who contested the Assembly elections, as many as 1,452 have criminal cases registered against them, while 959 are facing serious charges.

For the 119-member Telangana Assembly, the ADR said it has the highest number of candidates with criminal records. Between 24 per cent and 72 per cent of candidates from all major parties contesting elections in the State have declared criminal cases against them. The political parties have fielded candidates with criminal records ranging from 6 per cent to 72 per cent in Rajasthan.

Of the 2,290 candidates in Telangana, 521 (23 per cent)

have criminal cases against them, while 353 (15 per cent) have serious criminal cases against them, the report said.

It also stated that BRS, which is contesting on all 119 seats in Telangana, has fielded 57 candidates with criminal cases against them, while 34 of them are facing serious criminal cases.

The figures are lowest for Mizoram, where between 3 per cent and 10 per cent of candidates from major parties have criminal records, and none of the candidates have declared cases related to crimes against women, attempt to murder, and murder.

In Chhattisgarh, out of 1,178 candidates analysed, 126 candidates have declared criminal cases, while 72 have serious cases against them.

Out of 2,534 candidates analyzed in Madhya Pradesh, 472 candidates have criminal cases against them, while 291 have declared serious criminal cases. In Rajasthan, the report claimed that out of 1,875 candidates, 326 are facing criminal cases while 236 are facing serious criminal cases.

The report also said that Congress, which fielded 677 candidates, has 268 candidates with criminal cases and 162 with serious criminal cases. **Continued on Page 8**



Commuters during a rainy morning at India Gate on Tuesday

Ranjan Dimri | Pioneer

Gaza truce extended amid hostage release

AP ■ TEL AVIV

A truce between Israel and Hamas entered its fifth day on Tuesday, with the militant group promising to release more hostages to delay the expected resumption of the war and Israel under growing pressure to spare Palestinian civilians when it renews its offensive.

The sides agreed to extend their truce through Wednesday, with another two planned exchanges of militant-held hostages for Palestinians imprisoned by Israel. But Israel

has vowed to resume the war with "full force" to destroy Hamas once it is clear that no more hostages will be freed under the deal.

The Biden administration has told Israel it must avoid "significant further displacement" and mass casualties among Palestinian civilians if it resumes the offensive, and that it must operate with more precision in southern Gaza than it has in the north, according to US officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House.

CIA director William Burns and David Barnea, who heads Israel's Mossad intelligence agency, were in Qatar, a key mediator with Hamas, to discuss extending the cease-fire and releasing more hostages, a diplomat said on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks.

A US official confirmed Burns was in Qatar, speaking anonymously because the director's travel plans are not publicized for security reasons. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is set to visit the region

this week, also with an eye to extending the truce.

Hamas and other militants are still holding about 160 people, out of the 240 seized in their October 7 assault into southern Israel that ignited the war. That is enough to potentially extend the truce for another two weeks under the existing framework brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the US, but Hamas is expected to make much higher demands for the release of captive soldiers. Israel has vowed to end Hamas' 16-year rule in Gaza and crush its military capabilities.

India poised to become second largest egg producer

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The survey report from the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying indicated an upswing in the production of milk, eggs, and meat in the country. According to the report, the total milk production in the country is estimated to be 230.58 million tonnes in 2022-23, reflecting a 3.83 per cent increase over the estimates of 2021-22. The egg production is projected to be 138.38 billion, marking a 6.77 per cent rise compared to the previous year. This may make India the second largest producer of eggs.

Additionally, meat production is expected to reach 9.77 million tonnes, representing a 5.62 per cent increase over the previous year.

The survey report is based on the results of the Integrated Sample Survey (ISS), conducted nationwide in three seasons: Summer (March-June), Rainy (July-October), and Winter (November-February).

India continues to maintain its position as the largest milk-producing country globally. According to the report, the total milk production in the country is estimated at 230.58 million tonnes during 2022-23, reflecting a growth of 22.81 per

cent over the past five years, from 187.75 million tonnes in 2018-19. Furthermore, there has been a 3.83% increase in production during 2022-23 compared to the estimates of 2021-22. In previous years, the annual growth rates were 6.47 per cent in 2018-19, 5.69 per cent in 2019-20, 5.81 per cent in 2020-21, and 5.77 per cent in 2021-22.

The milk production from exotic/crossbred cattle increased by 6.16 per cent, while that from indigenous or non-descript cattle rose by 6.13 per cent compared to the previous year. Additionally, milk production from buffaloes



increased by 4.44 per cent compared to 2021, with indigenous buffaloes contributing 31.58 per cent of the total production, followed by 29.91 per cent from crossbred cattle.

During 2022-23, the highest milk-producing state was Uttar Pradesh, accounting for 15.72 per cent of the total milk pro-

duction, followed by Rajasthan (14.44 per cent), Madhya Pradesh (8.73 per cent), Gujarat (7.49 per cent), and Andhra Pradesh (6.7 per cent). In terms of annual growth rate (AGR), Karnataka recorded the highest AGR at 8.76 per cent, followed by West Bengal at 8.65 per cent, and Uttar Pradesh at 6.99 per cent over the previous year.

The total egg production in the country is estimated to be 138.38 billion during 2022-23, marking a growth of 33.31 per cent over the past 5 years compared to the estimates of 103.80 billion in 2018-19. Furthermore, the production

increased annually by 6.77 per cent during 2022-23 over 2021-22. In the past, the annual growth rates were 9.02 per cent in 2018-19, 10.19 per cent in 2019-20, 6.70 per cent in 2020-21, and 6.19 per cent in 2021-22.

The contribution to the total egg production comes from Andhra Pradesh with a share of 20.13 per cent, followed by Tamil Nadu (15.58 per cent), Telangana (12.77 per cent), West Bengal (9.94 per cent), and Karnataka (6.51 per cent). In terms of the Annual Growth Rate (AGR), the highest growth rate was recorded by West Bengal (20.10 per cent), fol-

lowed by Sikkim (18.93 per cent), and UP (12.80 per cent).

The total meat production in the country is estimated to be 9.77 million tonnes during 2022-23, registering a growth of 20.39 per cent over the past 5 years compared to the estimates of 8.11 million tonnes in 2018-19. Furthermore, the production increased by 5.13 per cent in 2022-23 over 2021-22. In the past, the growth rates were 5.99 per cent in 2018-19, 5.98 per cent in 2019-20, 2.30 per cent in 2020-21, and 5.62 per cent in 2021-22.

The major contribution to the total meat production comes from Uttar Pradesh with

a share of 12.20 per cent, followed by West Bengal (11.93 per cent), Maharashtra (11.50 per cent), Andhra Pradesh (11.20 per cent), and Telangana (11.06 per cent). In terms of the growth, the highest AGR was recorded in Sikkim (63.08 per cent), followed by Meghalaya (38.34 per cent), and Goa (22.98 per cent).

India's wool production rose by 2 per cent to 33.61 million kg during 2022-23, registering a negative growth of 16.84 per cent compared to 2018-19 when output was 40.42 million kg. However, the production increased by 2.12 per cent in 2022-23 over 2021-22.

Infant thrown to ground by drunk father, dies

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A tipsy man allegedly threw his three-month-old girl to the ground in a fit of rage, killing her on the spot in Rajajipuram under Talkatora police station on Tuesday.

As per reports, Saurabh Gautam of Sitapur, who works as a caretaker of a private lawn near Mohan road in Lalnagar, picked a fight in an inebriated state with his wife Mamta over some domestic issue.

As the verbal spat escalated, the accused thrashed Mamta. As she started crying, their three-year-old child Palak also started sobbing. Saurabh picked the child and threw her to the ground with full force.

“She bled profusely and became lifeless in a minute,” her mother told police. The accused took to his heels fearing police action. On the basis of a complaint lodged by the victim’s mother, police registered an FIR under relevant sections of the IPC.

According to the police, the lawn belongs to one Manoj Rastogi. Saurabh Gautam, of Sitapur Dharnag, lived with his wife Mamta and daughter Palak while also looking after the lawn. The police said that the incident took place on Tuesday morning after Saurabh had a fight with his wife Mamta and he beat her up. The police could not explain if Saurabh had consumed liquor in the

Dalit man beaten for drinking water from tap, succumbs

Budaun (PTI): A 24-year-old Dalit man died after being thrashed with sticks by several people allegedly for drinking water from a public tape, police said on Tuesday.

On Monday night, one Kamlesh was beaten with sticks by Suraj Rathore and his accomplice in Sathra village of Ushait Police Station area for drinking from a tap, Additional SP, Amit Kishore

Srivastava said. He was rushed to a hospital, where he died during treatment on Tuesday, he said. Police arrested Rathore and filed an FIR against him at the complaint of the victim’s father Jagdish, he said. Kamlesh’s body has been sent for post mortem and a detailed probe has been ordered in the matter and it will be helmed by Ujhani Circle Officer, Srivastava said.

morning. The police said a case had been registered on the complaint of the infant’s mother and a manhunt had been launched for the accused.

Meanwhile, a 37-year-old man was found hanging from a tree in BBD police station area on Tuesday morning. Identified as Kallu of Khurkhunda village, he was missing from his house since Monday and his brother Lavkush Kumar spotted the body while searching for him.

“Kallu was found hanging from a tree with a rope tied around his neck,” Lavkush was quoted as saying by police. Kallu worked as a labourer.

In another incident, a youth, identified as Krishna Rastogi (27) of Peer Bukhara locality, allegedly ended his life at his house on Tuesday. Police said Krishna was found hanging in the storeroom. His father Ashu Rastogi said he woke up in the morning and did not find Krishna in his room. “I later checked the store room and found it bolted from inside. I broke open its door only to find Krishna hanging,” the deceased’s father said. Police said Krishna assisted his father in running latter’s shop in the locality. The body was sent for autopsy and further probe was underway, a police spokesman said.

Accountant accused of ₹1.37-cr pension fraud

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A female accountant of the treasury office in the district collectorate and her aides were accused of embezzling over Rs 1.37 crore of government money on the pretext of issuance of pension to ineligible beneficiaries.

However, her aides denied their involvement and claimed that their credentials were misused. A case was lodged with the Kaiserbagh police by treasury officer Rahul Singh.

Those named in the case were identified as treasury accountant Renuka Ram of Daliganj in Lucknow and her aides — Vishal of Daliganj, his mother Gulabi, Pratindra

Kashyap of Kaiserbagh, and Ramrati of Daliganj. Vishal is a native of Maharajganj district and is a distant relative of Renuka. The embezzlement was committed between 2014 and 2019 in the name of issuance of pension to Vishal, Gulabi, Pratindra, and Ramrati even though none of them were entitled for pension. Their identity documents were used in preparing a bill for the release of pension, according to the preliminary investigation.

Also, the prime accused could not explain how she verified the certificates for dates of birth and address proof and other credentials of the “beneficiaries”. She also failed to explain if the money was used

by them. “The investigation revealed that the pension (over Rs 22.71 lakh) issued in the name of Vishal was transferred to the bank account of Pratindra Kashyap. In two other cases of embezzlement, it was found that the counterfeit digital documents were prepared for committing the fraud,” officers privy to the investigation said.

Likewise, another sum of Rs 46.96 lakh was transferred to the bank account of Vishal, Rs 42.31 lakh to the bank account of Gulabi and Rs 30.4 lakh to the bank account of Ramrati.

It further surfaced that Ramrati is the mother of Gulabi while prime accused Renuka is

a relative of Vishal, Gulabi and Ramrati. The bank details of Pratindra were used to hoard the money which was withdrawn through ATMs. Vishal was availing two pensions; one for himself and the other meant for family.

The lid was blown off the fraud when assistant accountant Mohit Verma presented the life certificate given to him by Renuka. “The treasury officer asked Mohit to preserve it with the documents of Vishal in the treasury office and the latter told him that the department had no file of Vishal,” the investigators said.

Vishal, who sought to disassociate himself from the crime when served notices,

said Renuka was his relative and he had visited Lucknow 5-6 year ago to work as a domestic help at the house of Renuka, to whom he had also given his academic documents for a job.

He, however, did not appear before the panel which was conducting an internal probe. Also, he was not found at his current residence in Gomti Nagar. It also surfaced that the fraudsters used the PPO number of a retired zila panchayat adhkari.

The police said further investigation was underway. Also, the bank accounts to which the money was transferred had been frozen by banks on the instructions of the government.

Man loses over ₹64,000 in online money transaction

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A man was duped of over Rs 64,000 during an online transaction in Jankipuram police station area on Tuesday. Report said Ram Kishor Kaul of Jankipuram Garden locality was operating netbanking and faced some issue in transaction. He dialled HDFC bank’s customer care number. The caller listened to his problem and told him that his senior would handle the problem before transferring the call.

After a brief talk, Kaul was assured that his issue would be addressed soon. Later, he got calls from different persons, with all introduc-

ing themselves as customer care executives and asking him to share his bank account details and mobile number. A little later, he got a message regarding deduction of Rs 64,399. Kaul lodged a complaint with the police.

Meanwhile, a car theft was reported from the Vibhuti Khand area of Gomti Nagar on Tuesday. The complainant, identified as Deepak Kumar Mehrotra of Vibhuti Khand, stated that he had parked his car outside his house near Kathauta Jheel on November 26 night. He said the car was stolen some time on the intervening night of November 26 and 27.



Shaheed Path engulfed by a thick fog cover on Tuesday morning

Pioneer

CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Due to mistake in my passport my name wrongly written as Mohammad Jawed whereas correct name is Mirza Mohammad Jawed. Please correct accordingly, Mirza Mohammad Jawed S/o Sharif Husain 224/21 K, Chhachhi Kuan Lucknow U.P. 226003

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Farah to Farah Mahmood W/o Najmuzzama Soleja R/o 42/57, Makhaniya Bazar, Kanpur-01. In future I would be known and recognize by this name only.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Najmuzzama to Najmuzzama Soleja S/o Late Mohammad Yousuf R/o 42/57, Makhaniya Bazar, Kanpur-01. In future I would be known and recognize by this name only.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Surendar Bhagat to Surinder Bhagat, Surinder Bhagat S/o Badri Nath Bhagat R/o 104-A /320, Ram bagh, kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SARVARI BEGUM to SHARBARI BEGUM W/o MOHD SAFFIQUI for all future purpose R/o H.No. 97/70, TALAQ MAHAL, Kanpur Nagar, U.P.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Mohammad Mustaqim to Mohd Mustaqeem. Mohd Mustaqeem S/o. Mohammad Shami R/o 132/213-C Babupurwa T.P Nagar Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my name from HAJI MOHD SHAFIQ to MOHD SAFFIQUI S/o HAJI RAHEEM BAKSH for all future purpose R/o H.No. 97/70, TALAQ MAHAL, Kanpur Nagar, U.P.

सूचना

मेरे मकान नं० 13 बी चन्द्रनगर चकरी रोड लालबंगला हरजेन्द्र नगर कानपुर नगर की रजिस्ट्री जो कि निबन्धन कार्यालय में क्रम सं० 16933 जिल्द संख्या 3840 पृष्ठ संख्या 259 से 262 मुसन्ना नं० 2952 नकल नं० 2921 पर दर्ज है। दिनांक 16.11.2023 को कहीं रास्ते में गिर गयी है जिसकी प्रथम सूचना क्र०सं० 2952 दिनांक 18.11.2023 को दर्ज है। इसका प्रयोग अवैध होगा। उमाशंकर पुत्र स्व० राधेश्याम (50)

Temple purified with ‘gangajal’ after Muslim MLA’s visit

Siddharthnagar (PTI): A temple in Uttar Pradesh’s Siddharthnagar district was ‘purified’ with ‘gangajal’ after a visit by a Muslim MLA of the Samajwadi Party. Doomariyaganj MLA Sayeda Khatoon had on Sunday visited the Samay Mata temple at the invitation of the local people to participate in a ‘Shatchandi Mahayagya.’

After she left, some people not in favour of her visit purified it with ‘gangajal’ amid chanting of mantras. Dharamraj Verma, chief of Badhani Chafa’s Nagar Panchayat where the temple is located, led the purification. The lawmaker was invited by some ‘unrighteous’ people, he said. “Because Sayeda Khatoon is a Muslim and eats cow meat, her visit to this holy place had made it impure,” he said, adding, “after this purifi-

cation, this place has now become completely pure and suitable for worship. Such an act should never be tolerated.”

Sayed Khatoon told PTI from Lucknow that she being a people’s representative would continue to visit places related to all religions and sects and would not be deterred by any such acts. “Many Brahmins and saints of the area are associated with me and had invited me to the ‘Samay Mata temple’ about ten days ago. I honour all religions, I am a legislator for all the people in the area and will go wherever I am invited,” Khatoon, who is known to have got several temples renovated in the area, said.

She said Verma, an elected member, is associated with BJP and Hindu Yuva Vahini, a right wing group started by UP Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath. The pujari of the temple, Sri Krishna Dutt Shukla, said the MLA was invited for the ‘mahayagya’ and she had come there in the evening.

According to Shukla, the MLA remained there for some time and talked about amity in society before leaving. “The next morning Verma and his team came here and questioned me why she had been called and said the temple had become impure because of her presence. They then sprinkled ‘gangajal’ and carried out the cleaning exercise,” Shukla said.

Samay Mata temple is a revered religious site for Hindus located in the Siddharth nagar district on the banks of the Rapti River. Devotees from the neighbouring country Nepal and nearby districts too visit the temple.

‘Sanskriti Utsav 2023’ to be celebrated from Dec 25

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In an attempt to familiarise the world with Uttar Pradesh’s rich cultural heritage and folk art, the Yogi Adityanath government is set to celebrate the ‘Sanskriti Utsav 2023’ from December 25 to January 26, 2024 on a grand scale.

The event, themed ‘Hamari Sanskriti-Hamari Pehchaan,’ aims to offer a platform for local artists in the state to showcase their talents and compete for awards.

In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath’s vision, the

Department of Culture in Uttar Pradesh will organise this festival across the state, featuring different layers of contests at tehsil, district, division and state levels primarily based on classical and semi-classical music and dance as well as diverse forms of folk dances and music.

The ‘Sanskriti Utsav 2023’ will be held in every corner of the state, with competitions scheduled at tehsil headquarters between December 25 and 30, where artists from villages, panchayats, blocks, and tehsils will participate.

The artists selected at the

tehsil level will advance to the district-level competition from January 1 to 5, 2024, and subsequently, a divisional-level competition will take place from January 10 to 15, 2024.

After passing through three more stages, the competition will reach the decisive stage, and the competitions of all three stages will be organised in Lucknow. Selected artists at the divisional level will have the opportunity to participate in the main event, where they will be felicitated.

To make this event successful, widespread participation will be ensured, involving

government and semi-government departments, educational institutions, voluntary organisations, Nehru Yuva Kendra, National Cadet Corps and social activists at various levels. The Information and Public Relations department will also take extensive steps for the publicity of the Utsav.

As part of the event, competitions will be organised in classical singing, including Khayal and Dhrupad, as well as in semi-classical singing, featuring Thumri, Dadra, Chaiti, Chaita, Jhoola, Hora, Tappa. Instrumental competitions will include flute, shehnai, harmo-

nium, sitar, violin, guitar, sarangi, veena, tabla, pakhawaj, mridangam, and ghatam, along with competitions related to indigenous and folk instruments.

Similarly, dance competitions will encompass Kathak, Bharatanatyam, Odissi, Mohiniyattam, and other classical dance forms. Additionally, folk dance competitions will include Dhoobiya, Ahirwa, Karma, Shaila, Domkach, Akheta, as well as competitions in folk drama, including Nautanki, Ramleela, Rasliila, Swang, Bhagat, Bahurupiya, Nukkad Natak, and more.

One killed in brutal attack

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a sensational incident, two friends, who had set out from Naugaon Sadat to Amroha on a motorcycle, were brutally attacked in which one of them, identified as Mohammad Fazil (17) died while his friend Mohammad Muslim alias Raja (28) was seriously injured.

According to reports, Fazil’s father, Nihal Hussain, was an employee at Nagar Panchayat, residing in Mohalla Fakarpura Shafarid of Naugaon Sadat. Nihal Hussain’s brother, Jafar, had passed away a few days ago. On Monday evening, Mohammad Fazil returned home with his family after reciting Fatiha at Jafar’s grave.

He then set out for Amroha with his friend, Mohammad Fazil, to buy flour, but headed towards Bastapur

Kala Nagar road, where unknown assailants brutally attacked Fazil and Raja with knives. After being stabbed, the injured Raja managed to escape from the scene and reached his home.

The family admitted Raja to a private hospital from where he was referred to Meerut after the doctors found his condition to be critical.

Upon receiving the information from Raja, Nihal Hussain, accompanied by his family members, initiated a search for Mohammad Fazil. On Tuesday morning, they found the blood soaked body of Fazil lying in a bush near the cowshed on Bastapur Kala Nagar road. The family immediately informed the police who reached the spot and sent the body for postmortem. The cops also found the bike and two mobile phones from the spot.

COURT NOTICE (CITATION (BY ADVERTISEMENT) (Chapter XXX, Rule-21) IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD ORIGINAL JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY AND INTESTATE JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY CASE NO. 58 OF 2023 IN THE MATTER OF THE GOODS OF Late Lal Chandra Mishra, Son of Late Ram Manorath Mishra, residence of 141- A/3-E/4-A, Chandpur, Salori, Telarganj, Prayagraj - 211004..... Deceased Ajay Mishra Petitioner	
WHEREAS an application has been made by Ajay Mishra, Son of Late Lal Chandra Mishra, residence of 141-A/3-E/4-A, Chandpur, Salori, Telarganj, Prayagraj- 211004 for the probate of the will (or Letters of Administration to the estate) of Late Lal Chandra Mishra, who died at 141-A/3-E/4-A, Chandpur, Salori, Telarganj, Prayagraj- 211004, on 20.12.2022 and AND WHEREAS, the 22nd day of December, 2023 has been fixed for hearing of the said application. THIS CITATION is issued calling upon all persons claiming to have any interest to come and see the proceedings if they think fit before the grant of probate (or Letters of Administration).	
Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 20th day of November, 2023.	
JOINT REGISTRAR HIGH COURT, ALLAHABAD MS. Chhaya Gautam Advocate Counsel for the Petitioner	

CM: Ready for healthy discussion in House

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Tuesday, said that the state government was ready for discussions on overall development, public welfare, issues related to public interest and resolution of public problems during the Winter session of the Uttar Assembly, adding that all the members of different political parties had been invited for a meaningful discussion.

Talking to mediapersons ahead of the session at the Vidhan Bhawan, the chief minister said, "Our government is fully prepared to answer all the questions of the members and is ready to discuss all the issues related to development of Uttar Pradesh."

Emphasising the importance of the House as a crucial platform to address issues concerning the general public and draw the government's attention towards them, the chief minister expressed confidence that all members, considering the sentiments of the common people, would contribute towards making the House a centre for healthy discussions.

He asserted that the government would work towards strengthening the legislature further through meaningful discussion. In this session, along with the supplementary budget, pending legislative work would be completed.

The chief minister further said that over the past six-and-a-half years, the legislature had successfully promoted meaningful discussions on important issues, representing democratic values, much to the curiosity and wonder of people.

"I especially appeal to the members of the opposition parties that it is the responsibility of the ruling party as well as the opposition to hold discussions in a dignified manner in the House. Thereby, let us contribute in maintaining the dignity of the House," he added.



Members of UP Assembly pay tributes to Ashutosh Tandon and other former members, who passed away recently

The chief minister said that government was ready to respond to every question from the opposition. He assured that the government would actively participate in the House with thorough preparation.

On the first day of the Legislature proceedings, the chief minister said, "I heartily welcome all the members and believe that, in accordance with the sentiments of the general public, all members will present their views effectively

in the House." Parliamentary Affairs Minister Suresh Khanna and Transport Minister Dayashankar Singh were present during this interaction.

TRIBUTES PAID TO TANDON, 9 OTHERS

On the first day of the Winter session, the Uttar Pradesh Assembly on Tuesday paid tributes to Ashutosh Tandon, a BJP MLA from Lucknow (East), and nine former members of the House who passed away recently.

Leader of the House and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Leader of

Opposition Akhilesh Yadav and other members recalled the works and personality of Ashutosh Tandon and said that he was a dedicated leader. Tandon died on November 9 at the age of 63.

Adityanath praised his contribution as the minister of different departments from 2017 to 2022. Yadav praised Ashutosh Tandon and said that he not only carried forward the political legacy of his father late Lalji Tandon but also had a reflection of his personality. "He was very popular among the people of Lucknow," he said.

Parliamentary Affairs

Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna paid tributes to Tandon. Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana described Tandon as an ideal MLA.

The entire House observed a two-minute silence as a mark of respect. Apna Dal (S) leader Ram Niwas Verma, Rashtriya Lok Dal's Rajpal Singh Baliyan, NISHAD Party's Anil Tripathi, Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party's Omprakash Rajbhar, Congress leader Aradhana Mishra, Jansatta Dal's Vinod Saroj and BSP's Umashankar Singh also paid tributes to Tandon. The House also paid tributes to nine former MLAs who died recently.

Chief Secy to head UP Education Service Selection Commission

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government has approved the proposal to promulgate Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission Rules, 2023. The decision was taken in a cabinet meeting which was presided over by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday.

The Council of Ministers has authorised the chief minister to make any changes or additions, as required.

Clear directions were given to Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission with a view to selecting competent and qualified teachers/trainers, ensure quality, fairness and transparency of selection, identifying the scope, powers, functions and procedures.

"To provide instructions, there is a need to pass Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission Rules, 2023," an official spokesman said here on Tuesday evening. These rules will be called Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission Rules, 2023, and will come into force from the date of publication in the Gazette.

The chairman and members of the Uttar Pradesh Education Service Selection Commission will be selected by a search committee, whose chairman will be the UP chief secretary.

As per the recommendation of the search committee, the list of candidates to be selected as chairman/members will be presented to the chief minister for approval.

The Commission consists of a secretary, an examination controller, a finance controller, a law officer of judicial service, a finance and accounts officer,

an outsourced computer and IT coordinator and four deputy secretaries appointed by the state government on deputation for a period not exceeding three years. The services of every full-time employee of the Uttar Pradesh Higher Education Service Commission and Uttar Pradesh Secondary Education Service Selection Board will be transferred to the Commission.

Meanwhile, the cabinet approved the revised cost of five piped drinking water projects in Banda in Bundelkhand, Sonbhadra in Vindhya region and Mirzapur under the Jal Jeevan Mission.

There will be a total expenditure of Rs 245 crore more than the sanctioned cost in the projects. Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, water is being delivered to every home through piped drinking water scheme to provide pure drinking water to the rural people. A sum of Rs 814.29 crore was sanctioned for Amlikaur Village Group Piped Drinking Water Project of Banda district. Now, the revised cost has been approved at Rs 879.34 crore.

The cabinet also agreed to transfer 20,241 hectares (50 acres) of land behind Chak Ganjaria City, Ekana Stadium, to the department of technical education, Indian Institute of Information Technology, Lucknow, free of cost. The state government has made provision for suitability of 50 to 100 acres of land for IIIT. Now, the technical education department has given consent to transfer the ownership of this land to IIIT.

Now, those who have passed Intermediate examination with Mathematics as a subject will be able to get the job of pharmacists in Ayurveda

and Unani department. For this, those taking the degree of pharmacists will have to register with the Ayurvedic-Unani-Tibetan Medical System Board. A proposal to this effect was also approved in the cabinet meeting.

This decision will benefit more than 2,000 candidates pursuing Intermediate with Mathematics and taking Pharmacy diploma in related subject. They will be able to participate in the recruitment in the department this year itself.

The cabinet also approved the purchase of vehicles for the Special Task Force (STF) unit in Ayodhya. The STF had demanded vehicles for the operations.

Meanwhile, an approval was also given to select the agency for the Chief Minister Helpline as the contract with the current call centre agency has expired.

The Revenue department has given a 3,200 square-metre land to the Home Guards department for the divisional office.

The cabinet also gave its consent to issue the letter of intent for the establishment of SR University in Lucknow. Other necessary processes related to the establishment of this proposed university will be completed under the Uttar Pradesh Private University Act 2019.

The cabinet also agreed to place in the legislature a replacement bill for the amended ordinance related to the establishment of Varun Arjun University in Shahjahanpur under the private sector. As per rules, after completion of six months of its approval by the cabinet, the amended ordinance should be passed by the legislature.

Revenue officer held for rape attempt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Basti police finally claimed to have arrested the revenue officer accused of attempting to rape his senior colleague. A cash reward of Rs 25,000 had been announced on the arrest of the absconding officer.

Interestingly, controversy shrouded the arrest as the local police claimed to have arrested him from a bus station when he was trying to flee. However, the accused said he surrendered with full faith in the judiciary.

It may be mentioned that a female naib tehsildar had alleged rape attempt by the revenue officer. The woman had released a video and appealed to the chief minister to intervene in the matter and ensure justice was meted out to her.

According to the complainant, a PCS officer of the 2020 batch posted at Sadar tehsil in Basti district, Ghanshyam Shukla, also posted there, allegedly barged inside her room on Diwali night and attempted to rape her.

Two days later when the woman gave a written complaint to the police, the cops allegedly tried to sweep the issue under the carpet, she alleged. As soon as the incident hogged media attention, the police registered an FIR, the woman said.

After the police failed to arrest the accused, the woman officer again released a video appeal seeking the chief minister's intervention in the case.

She demanded that the accused be arrested immediately. The woman said that a fellow officer misbehaved with her and she was forced to run from pillar to post for justice.

Sources said that both the complainant and the accused worked together in the same tehsil and were neighbours.

According to the sources, both of them would often chat on WhatsApp.

Not only the opposition party leaders but also BJP MLC Devendra Pratap Singh targeted the local administration over the incident and the delay in the arrest of the accused.

"If the DM and SP had a daughter in their house, would they not have arrested the accused? Ghanshyam Shukla should be arrested as soon as possible under any circumstances," Singh had said.

SP MLAs sport black kurtas to protest new set of rules

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party MLAs wore black kurtas & shawls to register their protest against the new set of rules prohibiting the members from carrying mobile phones, posters and banners inside the state legislative assembly hall.

Some MLAs had painted anti-government slogans on their back, alleging rampant corruption and deteriorating law and order situation.

Samajwadi Party MLA Zahid Beg arrived at the state assembly on a bicycle with slogans against the state government on his kurta.

As per the new rules which were adopted during the monsoon session of the assembly in August provide that members would not bring mobile phones to the House.

The Samajwadi Party had raised this issue during the all-party meeting convened by UP Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana on Monday. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and leaders of various other political parties had attended the meeting.



The speaker said the members could remain in touch with people of their respective constituencies even during the assembly session.

He said that people could get in touch with them on the phones of their respective legislature party offices.

Samajwadi Party chief whip Manoj Kumar Pandey said that the members should be allowed to carry their mobile phones inside the House as the MLAs might have certain important messages from their constituents.

He said people sometimes depend on the MLAs to get admission to a hospital in case of emergency and the members would not be able to help such people.

Congress leader Aradhana Mishra and Bahujan Samaj Party leader Uma Shankar Singh said the rule banning mobile phones in the House had been unanimously adopted and the members should ensure that their mobile phones did not cause any interference in the assembly proceedings.

Refrain from doing politics in winter session: Mayawati

Lucknow (PTI) BSP president Mayawati on Tuesday urged the Uttar Pradesh government and opposition parties to refrain from doing politics during the winter session of the state assembly, which began here on Tuesday, and asked them to work on issues of public interest.

In a post on 'X', the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) chief asked, "Will the Uttar Pradesh legislative assembly session beginning today prove to be in the interest of the state due to meaningful discussions on issues of public interest and holistic development where it fulfils some of its important responsibilities, or will it remain a mere formality due to other reasons?"

"Being a poor and backward state with the country's largest population of about 25 crore, the central and UP governments have special responsibilities for the equitable development and progress of UP. In such a situation, it would be appropriate if the government and the opposition do less politics and work in a timely manner for public interest and to remove backwardness," she added.

The BSP has one member in the 403-member state assembly.

UPECL creating exclusive web portal for UPNEDA

....TO STREAMLINE BIODIESEL ACTIVITIES

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In line with the Yogi Adityanath government's efforts to promote the use of biodiesel to reduce carbon emission, the UP Electronics Corporation Limited is gearing up to create a state-of-the-art and exclusive portal for the use of Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) in order to simplify the process of production, storage, purchase and distribution of biodiesel in the state.

This portal will be equipped with many features and will act as a one-stop solution platform to do the tasks related to production, distribution, NOC clearance, licence allotment, registration, dispute resolution and payment related to biodiesel.

The proposed web portal will be developed by UP Electronics Corporation Limited, which has invited applications for the selection of the agency to carry out the task through e-tender.

It is noteworthy that the software agency to be selected for developing the web portal will assist in its design, development, implementation and operational training, as well as

during the issuance of NOCs and licences.

According to the work description, this web portal will be quite detailed and operate in both Hindi and English. It will include features such as logins for UPNEDA officials, public officers, and district magistrates, along with a monitoring mechanism. Additionally, the portal will include vital information on the Yogi government's policies on biodiesel and various other important details. The portal will be created in such a way that it can work seamlessly by integrating with 'Nivesh Mitra'. The website will have features like applicant registration, application approval, NOC module, pay-

ment module, renewal module, query submission, reporting module, SMS and e-mail integration, cloud server, security audit, helpdesk module and SSL for web server domain. It will also include a dashboard which will have login interfaces like applicant login, manufacturing unit, and retailer unit. It will be based on 'responsive design technology'.

It will also have a data transfer bandwidth of 1,000 gigabytes per second and back-up storage of up to 500 gigabytes disk-to-disk. Additionally, it will have the feature of live telecasting. This web portal will be user-friendly, enabling a quick dispute-resolution process.

Over 77,000 roads made pothole-free this year

Lucknow (PNS): As part of its pothole-free campaign, the Uttar Pradesh government has rid over 77,000 roads of the state of potholes in 2023-24. Along with fixing potholes, the campaign also involves renovating and restoring the roads.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had earlier directed officials of ten departments to coordinate in order to run a special campaign to fix roads damaged by rain and because of other reasons, fix potholes and ensure repair wherever required.

The state government has set a target of making more than 83,000 roads pothole-free in the year 2023-24. This includes making 49,557 roads pothole-free and re-

novating or restoring 33,727 roads.

As per records, by November 17, the government had successfully repaired a total of 77,489 roads. As many as 48,979 roads were made pothole-free and 28,510 roads renovated/restored. The progress in pothole repair has been 98.8 per cent, while that in renovation/restoration work has been 84.5 per cent of the target. The Public Works Department has repaired the highest number of roads, totaling around 69,983. Among them, approximately 44,045 roads (99.2 per cent of the target) were repaired and made pothole-free while about 25,983 roads (90.9 per cent of the target) underwent renovation/restoration.

Similarly, a total of 1,001 national highways were repaired. As many as 827 roads (92.4 percent of the target) were made pothole-free and 185 roads (97.4 percent of the target) renovated/restored.

Mandi Parishad has repaired a total of 719 roads, including 630 having been made pothole-free and 89 renovated/restored. Similarly, the Panchayati Raj department has worked on 774 roads, ridding 388 of potholes and renovating/restoring 386.

The Irrigation department has worked on 448 roads, making 288 roads pothole-free and renovating/restoring 160, whereas the Rural Development department has made all 336 roads pothole-free.

आर्यावर्त बैंक

(भासा सक्कार उत्तर प्रदेश सरकार एवं बैंक अधिनियम का संयुक्त उपक्रम)
क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय महोबा, चतरपुर रोड गांधी नगर महोबा

ARYAVART BANK

(A Joint Undertaking of Govt. of India, U.P. Govt. & Bank of India)
Regional Office Mahoba, Chaturpur Road Gandhi Nagar Mahoba

POSSESSION NOTICE

(For Immovable Property)
(Appendix-IV under the Act Rule-8(I))

Whereas

The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Aryavart Bank under the Securitization 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 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, issued a demand notice dated 11.07.2023 calling upon the **Borrower, Mr. JITENDRA S/O Mr. DEVISHARAN SANI, R/O Village House No. 143, Ward No. 10 Bhagat Singh Nagar Kabrai, Mahoba, Guarantor- 1. Mr. Surendra Kumar S/o Ramesh R/O Bhagat Singh Nagar, Kabrai, Distt-Mahoba, 2. Mr. Suresh Yadav S/o Kishan R/O Ambedkar Nagar, Kabrai, Distt- Mahoba**, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being **Rs. 369760.06 (in words Rs three lakh sixty nine thousand seven hundred sixty rupees and six paise) + interest and expenses** thereon from 31.03.2021 within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The Borrower/Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower/Guarantor and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Sub-Section (4) of Section 13 of said Act read with Rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on this 24th day of November of the year 2023.

The Borrower/Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the Property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Aryavart Bank for an amount **Rs. 369760.06 plus interest and expenses** thereon from 31.03.2021.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of Sub-Section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Description of the Immoveable Property:
A Residential house in the Name of Mr. Jitendra S/o Devsaran Singh situated at House No.143 Ward No.10, Bhagat Singh Nagar, Kabrai, Mahoba, Area- 450.18 Sq. Ft. and bounded as under-
Bounded: (as per Sale Deed)
North: Gabbarwal Baba Temple
South: 15ft Wide Through Way adjoining NH 86
East: House owned by Suresh Sharma
West: Through Way
Area - 450.18 Sq Ft.

(Ashok Kumar Misra)
Authorised Officer
Aryavart bank
Regional Office, Mahoba

Date: 24-11-2023
Place: Mahoba

Bid to increase voter turnout in Lok Sabha elections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Women activists of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are playing a key role to induct new voters in the Sangam city. Under the Voter Maha Chetna Abhiyan, women activists of BJP held camps at 260 shakti kendra and managed to enrol 10,889 new voters with the BLO concerned in first and second phases.

BJP spokesman Rajesh Kesarwani told mediapersons, "Apart from holding special camps at shakti kendra, party workers are also knocking doors of voters to get them enrolled". He, however, said, "As many as 10,889 new voters have filled the form 6 to become new voters". He also claimed that 'toli' (groups) of BJP workers – both men and women – are covering wards to find out new voters and remove faulty names from voters list

respectively.

The BJP leaders said party's voter awareness campaign, organised between October 30 and November 5, had helped party to add over 28,000 new voters at 1,205 booth of the Mahanagar pocket of the district. Leaders, however, claimed party will take up new voter enrolment drive till December 3.

Voter awareness campaign was launched in over 4,100 booths across the district including 1,205 booths of the city. The first phase of voters awareness campaign had undoubtedly helped party new age voters particularly those who have completed 18 years of age.

This campaign was launched to ensure no one was deprived of voting rights. For that BJP workers are taking every step to increase the voter turnout in the LS elec-

tions to be held next year. We are also initiating steps to remove the names of those who have migrated or died or are fake voters", said a leader.

FAREWELL: Advocate General (AG) of Uttar Pradesh, Ajay Kumar Misra accorded farewell to former Chief Justice (CJ) of Allahabad High Court Pritinker Diwaker at his official residence. AG presented flowers to the former chief justice and lauded the exemplary works done by him during his tenure as CJ.

The AG said during Justice Diwaker's tenure as CJ several judicial reforms were introduced and the latest technology was also introduced to provide speedy justice to the litigants. The AG on behalf of all the state law officers expressed best wishes to ex-chief justice Pritinker Diwaker for his post retirement phase.

Overwhelmed by the ges-

ture, love and affection of the AG, who directly reached official residence of the CJ from the airport, the former CJ appreciated the co-operation and assistance given to him on behalf of the state law officers headed by the AG during this entire tenure as judge and thereafter as CJ.

INITIATIVE: A city-based social activist Abhilash Kesarwani has taken an initiative to set up small houses for pets here. Abhilash is setting up shelter house for stray domestic pets at Mutthiganj area and later will take it to other pockets of the city.

Abhilash says, "The motive behind setting up small house for stray animals is to provide them shelter during winter season. Water, meals will also be available at shelter places. There are plans to set up small 'ashiyana' (home) for animals in all 100 wards of the city."

NCR generates 78.8 lakh units of energy using solar power

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The North Central Railway (NCR) generated 78.8 lakh units of energy using solar power in first seven months of the financial year 2022-23 with net revenue saving of Rs 3.27 crore achieved in six months through the use of solar energy. This has led to a reduction of 6,622 metric tonnes of carbon emissions.

In line with the national initiative on solar mission, the NCR has attached top priority to solar energy generation under the leadership of GM Satish Kumar. Under the guidance of PCEE AK Agrawal and due to excellent upkeep, close monitoring of operations of solar power plant and numerous innovative steps taken under Solar Mission-2022-23 by CEE (EEM) KM Singh, along with his team, the NCR generated 125 lakh units of electricity using solar power and a net revenue saving of Rs 5.2 crore in FY 2022-23.

Continuing the momentum this FY 2023-24 from April to October too, 78.8 lakh units of electricity has been generated by NCR in the first seven months of economy. Not



only it is a big leap towards a larger goal of environment protection as solar energy is a greener source of energy it has led to substantial savings in revenue too. Net revenue saving of Rs 3.27 crore has thereby recorded through the usage of solar power.

NCR has a total installed capacity of 11.13 MWp. While 185 kWp has been installed by the Railway, remaining 10949 kWp capacities has been installed by two major Solar Power Developers (SPD) Azure and ReNew on a PPP mode.

Among the major places where roof top solar plants have

been installed are GM and DRM office buildings, station buildings and workshops, besides training schools.

Besides 6,622 metric tonnes of reduction in carbon emissions has been achieved by NCR using solar power in these seven months.

Productivity of solar plants is measured in terms of Capacity Utilisation Factor (CUF). The NCR solar panels have recorded a CUF of 13.8 per cent during April-Oct 2023.

In order to promote solar energy, utmost importance is being given to maintenance of solar plants. Some of the steps

taken are: Monitoring of solar energy generation is being done for each plant, inverter wise. Daily monitoring, instead of monthly of energy and CUF per cent of plants is being done. Defective/ decommissioned plants due to roof repairs, inverters, cables, etc have been put right.

Solar diary introduced to SSEs for systematic documentation and focussed monitoring of energy and other important data in a structured manner.

GM Satish Kumar congratulated the team of officers and staff for sustaining the momentum in this field and called for adopting a focussed approach for augmenting the share of solar energy in its total non-traction electrical energy consumption.

1.34 MWp of roof top solar plants will be installed by NCR in the current financial year. Prayagraj division will be installing 0.75 MWp of solar plants while Jhansi and Agra divisions will add 0.4 and 0.19 MWp to the existing capacity respectively. These roof top solar plants are expected to be commissioned at various locations like railway stations, office/service buildings by December this year.

Work being done in Hindi by offices reviewed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

An inspection meeting was organised for the progress and dissemination of Hindi language by the Parliamentary Official Language Committee (POLC) under the chairmanship of Prof Rita Bahuguna Joshi, convener of the Second Sub-Committee of the Parliamentary Official Language Committee at GM's office, NCR.

The work being done in the official language Hindi by the offices was observed and thoroughly reviewed by the POLC in the presence of senior officials of the ministry and department concerned. In the meeting, GM NCR Satish Kumar presented before the committee a detailed description of the work being done by the GM's office in official language Hindi and expressed his commitment to ensure more use of Hindi in government works.

The GM informed the committee that continuous growth and progress has been ensured in the use and spread of the official language Hindi in the entire regional railway as well as in all the works of the GM's office. He said that station operating rules and gate operating rules etc related to the safety of passengers have been ensured in 100 per cent Hindi-English bilingual form. All work instructions, orders, circulars etc. have been made available to station masters and security related staff in both Hindi and English languages.



The Parliamentary Official Language Committee appreciated the widespread use of Hindi in railway offices and instructions were given to further increase the use of the official language Hindi in various items. The GM assured the committee that whatever instructions have been given by the Committee their compliance will be ensured.

Similarly, the committee reviewed the work being done by the Divisional Railway Manager (DRM)'s office, Prayagraj, in the official language Hindi. During the inspection meeting, DRM Himanshu Badoni presented the details of the work being done by the DRM's office and assured to increase the use of official language Hindi as per the instructions of the committee.

Committee convener and MP Prof Rita Bahuguna Joshi, MP Sushil Kumar Gupta and MP Keshari Devi Patel and senior officers of the Committee Secretariat and Chief Official Language Officer and Principal Chief Security Officer Manish Kumar Gupta, Chief Commercial Manager/Passenger Services Anumani Tripathi, Secretary to

GM Ajay Singh, Additional Divisional Railway Manager /Infra Naveen Prakash, Deputy Chief Official Language Officer Shailendra Kumar Singh, Executive Director/ Establishment of Railway Board Sudhir Kumar, all officials associated with the official language of the head office and DRM's office, including Barun Kumar, were present.

ATTACK CASE: The BTEch student arrested for attacking a bus conductor recently has told investigators that his only intention was to threaten him for the latter's 'religious slur'. However, anger took over and he stabbed him with a chopper.

Lareb Hashmi (20) also told investigators that he had been following the preaching of many foreign-based religious scholars (Barelvi sect) since long on the internet.

Cops, however, said the youth seem to be erratic in nature. A senior cop preferring anonymity said: "The student claimed he didn't plan to attack the conductor and his only intention was to threaten him. But in a fit of rage he attacked him with a sharp-edged weapon. Further investigations are on and cops are probing the

case from all angles." Sources said Hashmi was very upset with the behaviour of conductor Harishkesh Vishwakarma (30), as he often used to pass 'derogatory remark' on him and his religion.

On Friday morning when he was going to his college Hashmi attacked Vishwakarma. Later, he released a video in which he purportedly claimed that he had attacked the conductor for 'insulting Islam'. He also uttered religiously charged sentences. He was also seen brandishing the weapon. He was arrested on Friday evening. When cops took him to the place where he had hidden the weapon he tried to attack the cops. In retaliation, police shot him in his leg. He is currently undergoing treatment at the district hospital. Following his arrest, law enforcement agencies, including ATS (anti-terrorist squad) and IB (Intelligence Bureau), interrogated him and also carried out an extensive search at his house and sent his mobile and laptop for forensic examination. Cops are also checking his social media status which was changed just a day before the attack.

Youth can fulfil whatever dreams they see in any situation: Singh

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

UP Transport Minister Daya Shankar Singh has said that youth can fulfil whatever dreams they see in any situation and added that they should see dreams but not in sleep and rather they should see such dreams which do not let them sleep.

He was on Monday addressing the 15th Tribal Youth Exchange Programme being organised by Nehru Yuva Kendra, Varanasi, in collaboration with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India and the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India at Jai Public School, Karauta Alaudinpur here in which tribal youth from eight districts of four states are participating.

Giving an example regarding this, the Minister said that one was Lord Birsa Munda who paved the way to drive away the British from India by taking on the immense power of the British, while the other was Swami Vivekananda who identified the spiritual strength



UP Minister Daya Shankar Singh honouring youths participating in Adivasi Youth Programme.

of India. India is a country of diversity. When the youths, who came from different districts of the country to take part in this programme, go to their area, they must mention the culture and lifestyle of this place, the Minister added.

He said that the youth makes a way even in times of scarcity and gave the example of the lead actress of the film

Mayuri who broke the record by dancing with wooden feet. He called upon the youth to make a path to make India a developed country when the country celebrates 100 years of independence in 2047 as per the vision of the Prime Minister, he added.

The participating youths also visited the head office of 95 Battalion of CRPF in Pahadia

where the Second Command Nitendra Nath welcomed them and also had an interaction with them. The deputy director of Nehru Yuva Kendra Kapil Dev threw lights on the activities of the camp. The Director of CRPF Yogesh Mohan Dixit reached camp from Delhi and encouraged the youths. Many were present on the occasion.

90 pc of govt staff in favour of strike for restoration of OPS: Unions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Rajya Karmachari Sanyukt Parishad (RKSP) and Purani Pension Bahali Sanyukt Manch (PPBSM) on Tuesday claimed that 90 per cent of employees of the central government and state government are in favour of the strike for the restoration of the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). Both organisations threatened that an agitation could be launched before the 2024 parliamentary election if the OPS is not restored before it.

Talking to the news men on Tuesday the district president of RKSP and district convener of PPBSM Shashikant Srivastava said that the employees of central government and state government have been agitating for the restoration of OPS for the last one decade and the attention of the President of India, Prime Minister and Chief Minister was also drawn towards the demand through the demonstration and dharna



The district president of RKSP and district convener of PPBSM Shashikant Srivastava (second from right) and others talking to the news men.

in Delhi and Lucknow but both the governments paid deaf ear.

Under the OPS, the employees get 50 per cent of the salary at that time as pension after the retirement but under the new pension scheme, the employees get 10 per cent as pension after deducting from

the salary and in the present time, the employees are not getting even this 10 per cent amount, Srivastava said and added that the new pension scheme is not in the interest of the employees.

The attitude of the government at Centre and in the state is not positive and so, the

employees have no option except to go on strike, he said, adding that the signature of the employees was sought on the consent letter maintaining confidentiality of the identity to go on strike for the restoration of OPS and 90 per cent employees gave their consent in favour of strike.

These consent letters were kept in confidential boxes which will be sent to the head office of the organisations in Lucknow, he informed, adding that the state leadership would decide on the strike. The employers of central government and state governments could go on strike together before the 2024 parliamentary election demanding the restoration of the OPS if both the governments fail in meeting the demand.

The office-bearers of RKSP and PPBSM Shyamraj Yadav, Sunil Singh, Subhash Shah, Diwakar Dwivedi, Dipendra Kumar Srivastava and others were present on the occasion.

Induction programme held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences (FSS) Banaras Hindu University (BHU) organised an induction programme for the students of Master of Personnel Management and Industrial Relations (MPMIR) course. Speaking as the chief guest the Director, Institute of Management Studies, BHU Prof SK Dubey shared his vast experience with the newly admitted students of the MPMIR course and stressed grooming corporate ready personality for management students. Apart from this he shared various tips with students regarding communica-

tions skills, analytical skills, problem solving skills, etc. so that students can make themselves valuable for the organisations whom they dream to work with. The second resource person of the day Dr Praveen Singh Rana from the Travel and Tourism Unit, Faculty of Arts, BHU elaborated the history of Varanasi and BHU and shared different aspects of culture, values, and life in Varanasi and BHU as well. Prof Rakesh Kumar Mishra former Head, Department of Humanistic Studies, IIT (BHU) talked about the role of Indian Ethos and Values in developing a complete personality and explained how self can be developed and managed by

following India traditions and culture also with the combination of modern life development. Prof Yogesh Kumar Arya, Department of Psychology, BHU delivered welcome address and Prof Sandeep Kumar, Chairman, Training and Placement proposed vote of thanks.

ELECTED: Dr TP Chaturvedi, Senior Professor and former Dean of Faculty of Dental Sciences, Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) has unanimously been elected as president elect of Indian Dental Association (IDA), UP State Branch. The Indian Dental Association (IDA), UP State branch organised a three days state dental conference at

Prayagraj. During the conference, the annual general body meeting of dental surgeons of IDA UP state was also held in which Dr TP Chaturvedi, Senior Professor and former Dean of Faculty of Dental Sciences was unanimously elected to the post of president elect of IDA, UP State Branch. Dr Chaturvedi also elected as Central council member of Indian Dental Association from UP to represent at national level.

The Indian Dental Association is an authoritative, independent and recognised voice of dental professionals in India, Dr Chaturvedi informed, adding that the association's vision is to improve oral health and quality of life.

Ganja worth lakhs recovered

CORRESPONDENT ■ MIRZAPUR

In an operation with SOG the Dehat Kotwali police arrested two accused of drug smuggling and recovered 62 kg ganja worth Rs 15 lakh.

Giving details to the media at Police Lines Additional Superintendent of Police (ASP/City) Niteshwar Singh said during routine patrolling Station House Officer (SHO) Dehat Kotwali Rana Pratap Yadav on being tipped off by an informer about a car laden with ganja which was on the way near Barkachha on the Mirzapur - Shaktinagar road. Thereafter the SHO informed the authorities and started checking of vehicles. During checking bundles of ganja were found loaded in a car and two persons on it said that they were transporting it from Odisha for sale. The police arrested them. They were identified as Shakir Tyagi of Mustafabad Loni Dehat under Mustafabad police station, Ghaziabad, and Shashi

Bhushan Bhaskar Jaiswal of Taulakpur under Rampur Kharkhana police station, Deoria. After registering the case under Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act the police arrested the accused and recovered

their names included in the voter list a friendly cricket match was organised on the ground of a school located at Bharuhna under SVEEP programme. In the match of 15 overs the team of journalists gave a target of 116 runs to the



Rs 5,200 cash, two mobile phones, ganja and seized the vehicle under MV Act.

FRIENDLY CRICKET MATCH: The Patrakar-11 gave Prashasan -11 a drubbing in a friendly cricket match. To make the eligible voters aware to get

team of the administration. However the administration team could not achieve the target and lost the match. Captain of the Patrakar-11 was Indresh Pandey and captain of administration was Joint Magistrate Alok Prasad. Addressing the

teams and gathering Chief Development Officer (CDO) and in charge of SVEEP Srilaxmi VS appealed to motivate the youth who have completed 18 years of age to become voters and strengthen the democracy by participating in voting.

PRAKASH PARV: The Prakash Parv of Guru Nanak Dev was observed with enthusiasm in the town on Monday. In the series of the day long programmes the morning was dedicated to the service of the destitute and it concluded with 'langar' and 'Akhand Paath'. After Akhand Paath the Raagi Jattha presented the 'kirtan' at Gurudwara Ratanganj. The 'bhajan kirtan' was presented by teams of Sohan Singh and Jasvinder Singh besides the school children.

It was followed by a seminar in which speakers included Bhopendar Singh and Jasveer Singh. The programme was conducted by Hardeep Singh Khurana, secretary, Guru Singh Sabha.

Give peace a chance!

The extended cease-fire in Gaza is a fine opportunity to reach stability in the region

The cease-fire has come as a godsend to the average Palestinian who finally got respite from flying mortar shells and some peace to get ration and medicines, which are luxuries in the conflict zone. The two-day extension of the cease-fire offers them a glimmer of hope and to international community the time to work backchannels for prolonged peace. However, as the Hamas and Israel have tentatively agreed to a break from hostilities, questions linger about the long-term prospects for stability. Will these additional two days lead to meaningful negotiations and a lasting peace, or is it merely a temporary pause before the bloody conflict resumes? The international community plays a crucial role in determining the trajectory of events and fostering an environment conducive to sustainable peace. The decision to extend the cease-fire by two days suggests a willingness on the part of both Hamas and Israel to explore avenues other than bombs, bullets and bloodshed. This respite provides an opportunity for de-escalation and opens a window for negotiations. However, the history of conflicts in the region raises scepticism about the durability of such agreements. The cease-fire extension allows for humanitarian efforts to take place, facilitating the delivery of essential supplies and medical assistance to those affected by the violence. Additionally, the pause in hostilities can pave the way for diplomatic initiatives, fostering an environment where both parties can address underlying issues through dialogue. One of the bigger, though not direct, consequences of the Gaza conflict is the involvement of super powers in the fray. Now that the US and the West are with



Israel, China and Russia are throwing their weight behind the Hamas. This could have ominous consequences for the world; it is, therefore, in the interest of the world and not just of the people of Israel and Palestine that this conflict is made to peter out, at least for the time being. Key stakeholders, including the United Nations, regional powers and other influential nations, should actively encourage both parties to engage in meaningful negotiations, addressing the core issues that fuel the conflict. The international community should work collaboratively to ensure the delivery of aid, medical assistance and reconstruction support to alleviate the suffering of those caught in the crossfire. To prevent a return to square one after the ceasefire extension, sustained diplomatic efforts are required. The extension of the Gaza ceasefire provides a fleeting moment of hope for peace, but the international community must remain vigilant in guiding the path forward. By actively supporting diplomatic initiatives, addressing humanitarian needs and encouraging sustained dialogue, the world community can play a crucial role in ushering in lasting stability in the region. The alternative — resuming hostilities — would only perpetuate the cycle of violence and deepen the suffering of those directly affected by the conflict.

PICTALK



Artists perform during the closing ceremony of the annual Camel Fair, in Pushkar

PTI

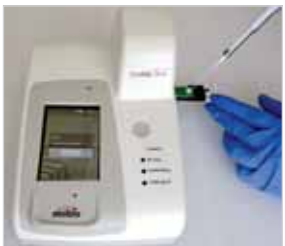
A new hope for Tuberculosis patients

TrueNat is a molecular test that replaces sputum microscopy for TB diagnosis. It is fast and accurate and will help in early detection and treatment

The latest country report on Tuberculosis (TB) indicates that in India, women account for 39.1% of the total cases notified. But missing from these figures are the hundreds of women who remain undetected and uncounted.

Why do women report fewer cases of TB than men? The lack of agency, poorer access to healthcare services, household responsibilities and the stigma associated with TB prevent women from coming forward to seek treatment. They are often reluctant to reveal they might have TB due to potential rejection from their families. Women also delay seeking care because they are hesitant to use family resources, often meagre. They wait until they are severely ill. By then, it is often fatal.

It is not just their lives that are on the line. There is a sixfold increase in perinatal deaths and a two-fold risk of premature birth and low birth weight babies of mothers with active TB. Women living with HIV and TB face a double whammy as their unborn child faces twice the risk of vertical transmission of HIV,



according to The World Health Organisation. All this can be prevented with proper treatment. Data shows that 85% of people recover from TB if treated. However, treatment can only begin when there is a proper diagnosis. An early and accurate diagnosis is key to reducing not just deaths but TB-related life-changing impairment. This is where TrueNat, a new molecular test that replaces the traditional sputum microscopy to diagnose TB, is making a difference. Not only does it enable rapid and accurate diagnosis, it can be taken to the doorstep thanks to its innovative portable technology. So, reaching out to a larger population, particularly vulnerable and marginalised women, is possible. Importantly, correct treatment can begin at the first

point of contact on the same day. Developed in India by the Goa-based Molbio Diagnostic, TrueNat also tests for resistance to the drug Rifampicin in approximately 90 minutes. Endorsed and included in the WHO Global TB Programme for its "high diagnostic accuracy", the Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT) using TrueNat can be conducted in facilities without an air-conditioned lab and in remote centres plagued by power outages as it runs on solar powered battery. Used in tandem with a portable digital X-ray machine, also battery operated, it can save more lives. That it is possible to fully transition from sputum microscopy to rapid molecular diagnosis, as has been recommended by WHO, has been shown by Goa. It is the first state in India to achieve this significant milestone. This shift has led to higher testing, early diagnosis, and boosted chances of recovery. TB being a contagious disease, one of the places where early and accurate diagnosis is direly needed is in prisons. A Lancet study has shown

that prisoners in India are five times more at risk of developing TB than the general population. Consider then the danger of TB infection faced by women prisoners housed in overcrowded jails. The number of women jailed by the end of 2021 was 22,918 but the capacity of the existing 32 women's jails is 6767, according to the latest National Crime Records Bureau report. In fact, only 18% of female prisoners get exclusive women's prison facilities, states the Justice Amitava Roy Committee report on prison reforms. Appointed by the Supreme Court, the committee, which presented its report earlier this year, said "Women in incarceration suffer the brunt of imprisonment far worse than their male counterparts, especially with regard to access to basic facilities, medical care and medical staff." This huge breakthrough means a decrease in price and increased accessibility.

(Swapna Majumdar is a journalist writing on development and gender. The views expressed are personal)



SWAPNA MAJUMDAR

Nepal is recovering from its long annual hangover after celebrating Dussehra and Tihar. It energises Nepal to face the winter and the new year Vikram Sanvat 2080 but with one-third of Nepal in India and abroad with 1500 youth leaving Nepal every day. The rising standards of living and consumption are visible to me who has seen Nepal almost annually since 1959. Still, people are rich or very poor with the middle class small. People are happy except for the victims of the dengue and Jajarkot earthquake. Nepalese are happy with so little. When piped water, electricity, schools and hospitals reached the valleys or near the road network, people descended from the hills to avail man-made facilities, forfeiting nature's gifts to the hills. Hastily carved unmetalled roads have scarred the hills polluting the environment. Scooters, cars, motorbikes, trucks, tractors...anything with an engine moves along dusty tracks. Some people began returning to the hills.

Last week Kathmandu news was dominated by one man: businessman-politician and expelled from CPN UML, Durga Prasain. He threatened to bring into Kathmandu 10 lakh protesters to rally against former PM and CPN UML chief, KP Oli. He is facing legal action for bad debt on loans taken from state banks. The debt, he says, will be repaid when he is solvent. Prasain has roped in King Gyanendra who is patiently waiting in the distant hope that monarchy will be restored. The mood in the country for the return of loyalty is growing given the pathetic track record of the secular, federal, democratic republic of Nepal. It was the Prachanda-led decade-long Maoist civil war that dismantled the monarchy in 2008 which was ratified by the 2015 constitution. Gyanendra attended a Prasain-organised function in East Nepal at which he said: "We never wanted Nepal to become a republic that sends 10 mn youth to the Gulf countries". Gyanendra is on a tight leash from the state although his daughter-in-law Himani is pop-

ularly active, doing social welfare. Gyanendra has met the Chief Minister of UP, Yogi Adityanath twice this year. There's a strong and historic bond between the Shah dynasty and Gorakhnath Peeth of Adityanath. The royalists RPP led by Rajendra Lindgen (both the old leaders Pashupati Rana and Kamal Thapa have been marginalised) has made big electoral gains. People ask me whether India is supporting the formation of Hindu Rashtra and the return of monarchy. I say the decision will be that of the people of Nepal. But Buddhiman Gurung, a Nepali Congress businessman who lives in Lame Ahal, Pokhara where I too reside in Nepal, says emphatically: "Monarchy can never come back". But there is little doubt that support for the royals has grown exponentially. It is a clear reflection of the satisfaction that the current quality of governance provides. Prachanda the awesome leader of the Maoist Party with 32 seats in a house of 275 and whose party's fortunes are declining, has ensured his popularity is rising by attacking corruption frontally. He leads an alliance government that has former PM Sher Bahadur Deuba-led Nepali Congress as the largest party. But such is the electoral dynamic between NC and former Prime Minister KP



GEOGRAPHY IS INDIA'S BIGGEST ASSET IN BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH NEPAL WHICH SHOULD NO LONGER CHOOSE TO BE A YAM BETWEEN CHINA AND INDIA

Oli's CPN UML (the second largest party) that Prachanda is the kingmaker. He will complete one year in power next month and though there is a power-sharing arrangement with Deuba, he has been saying he will rule for all five years, apparently by doing an Oli on Deuba. In the previous Oli-led alliance, Prachanda had a power-sharing agreement with Oli which the latter did not honour. A rash of scams involving politicians and bureaucrats has made people very angry: Gold smuggling from China, human trafficking of Nepalese passed off as Bhutanese refugees for asylum in the US and the Baluwatar land sales scam. These involve former Prime Ministers, ministers, their spouses and sons. Former Water Resources Minister Dipak Gyawali said: "corruption will emasculate Nepal". The other contemporary issue is Transitional Reconciliation and Justice, dating back to the Maoist insurgency 17 years ago. On a visit to Nepal recently, UN Secretary-General António Guterres agreed to help Nepal in finding a resolution emphasising it has to be 'victim-centric'. The victims of the Jajarkot earthquake are still out in the cold as Prachanda goes to Dubai for a climate change summit tomorrow. The ban on TikTok proved

extremely unpopular. Shanti Gurung told me how she and her friends have circumvented it through VPN. TikTok has made celebrities and some people very rich in Nepal. Senior CPC leader of Tibet Affairs Management Executive Committee Wang Junzheng visited Nepal this month as part of regular visits by Chinese leaders.

Prachanda on his visit to China in September did not sign in on BRI 2.0 but Nepal has subscribed to US MCC after years of political wrangling and covert threats by the US. Nepal is exercising its strategic autonomy, but China is a bullying neighbour. Kathmandu wants villages in the 21 Northern districts to patch up with China's Tibet power grid. Chinese-built airports with high-interest loans at Bhairawa and Pokhara are not in business, restricted to domestic flights. Flying over the IAF Jaguar base at Gorakhpur is the problem. But the issue can be resolved. Geography is India's biggest asset in bilateral relations with Nepal which should no longer choose to be a yam between China and India.

(The writer, a retired Major General, was Commander, IPKF South, Sri Lanka, and founder member of the Defence Planning Staff, currently the Integrated Defence Staff. Views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

GOVERNORS ABUSE NORMS

Sir — Raj Bhavans have become centres of inaction and retrogression in the states that are ruled by the opposition. Bills that were passed by the legislatures and sent for assent gathered dust in the governor's office. Raj Bhavans hardly bother to update the status of pending bills. In this context, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala approached the Supreme Court with identical prayers. The Court held that the surplusage expression in Article 200 "as soon as possible" conveys a constitutional imperative of expedition.

Any other reading of Article would leave the Governor in a position to virtually veto the functioning of the legislative domain by a duly elected legislature. It added, "Such a course of action would be contrary to the fundamental principles of a constitutional democracy based on a parliamentary pattern of governance." According to Dr. PK Sen (Bihar), "the question is whether, by interfering, the Governor would be upholding the democratic idea or subverting it. It would really be a surrender of democracy." An appointee who holds office only during the president's pleasure cannot act in a way that is detrimental to the elected governments and people.

Haridasan Rajan | Kozhikode

A SYMBOL HYPOCRISY

Sir — People are amused to see that the role of the Election Commission (EC), once independent under Election Commissioner Tirunellai Narayana Iyer Seshan, has become a symbol of "double standards," favouring Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah-led Bharatiya Janata Party. If not, then why did it hurriedly withdraw the permission previously granted to the Telangana government to provide financial aid to farmers under the Rythu Bandhu scheme at the start of rabi sowing? Whereas the poll panel has not acted on the Congress's complaints against the allegedly incendiary speeches made by PM Modi and Shah in Rajasthan. Not only Modi didn't stop here, even when the Congress objected, saying Modi's

Need speedy judicial system



While the Supreme Court (SC) plays a significant role in delivering justice, a cornerstone of the Indian Judiciary System since independence has had a slow working methodology. Litigants and accused have to wait years for the closure of cases and judgement delivery. In most cases, victims do not get instant judgments, and for this reason, sometimes even victims and their families suffer outages in society. "Justice delayed is justice denied," therefore courts should give due consideration to the claims filed.

The Indian Judiciary holds the highest pendency of cases and lacks a time frame for the disposal of litigation and appeals. At present, there are 79,813 cases pending before the 34 judges of the Supreme Court. That cleared depicts the need for constitutional reforms and revamping the structure of the top court to clear the pendency of cases. The supreme court hears between the centre and the states and between states, rules on domestic and family cases, civil and criminal cases, RTI (right to information) litigation, and provides legal and constitutional advice to the head of the state, i.e., the president. However, it creates burdens on the top court. Distributed or decentralised work mechanisms should be adopted by the judicial authorities for consistency and to ensure better judicial stability. To build the trust of society and its people, apparent and clear-cut constitutional idealism is mandatory.

Dimple Wadhawan | Kanpur

statement was a violation of the poll code, the PM slammed the party at a rally in Damoh, Madhya Pradesh, on November 8, saying, "Let them (the Congress) commit this sin (of objecting to his remarks), I will continue to do good work for the people... Eighty crore people will get free rations for the next five years." Moreover, shouldn't PM Modi and Amit Shah go on political campaigning with their government officials, and the EC remains blind to it? The way Amit Shah and other BJP leaders openly offer the Ram Temple tour promise, they want to know if the poll body has relaxed the Model Code of Conduct. However, these are proofs that the current EC has become a "symbol of hypocrisy" and "double standards."

Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee | Faridabad

RINKU'S TALENT LIES IN T20

Sir — Some very talented batsmen in India have fizzled out due to undue expectations and misplaced priorities. A lot is expected of Rinku Singh, the new Indian T20 bat-

ting star, who has captured the imagination of the cricketing world. Rinku did well in the first two T20 matches against Australia, and what impressed many were the views he expressed in an interview following the first fixture. His focus on remaining calm and modelling himself on that cool customer, MS Dhoni, revealed that Rinku has set himself unambiguous goals. By all accounts, he seems destined to play for the Indian T20 team for some time. At any rate, it may be difficult for him to break into the 50-over one-day side anytime soon, and that's how it should be. Selectors and team management should identify horses for the courses. India's batting ills lie in the fact that some players are nudged to play in all formats. A player like Rinku Singh must be given a long rope in T20 that is tailor-made for him.

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

GOD HAS ALL THE POWER

If we want highest qualities, we must become devotees of God



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

Does it sound unfair? Think about it. Imagine one of us even with a little power. We are inclined to abuse it, especially if there is no fear of punishment. These examples will substantiate. What do despots do? They bring unimaginable pain and suffering to the citizens. What do corrupt policemen do? They victimise the victim, if he is a rich man; they exploit him. What does a bully in a school do? There are innumerable such examples. We, human beings, are incapable of handling power. The creation works on the principle of 'karmaphala', which is, "What you sow you reap." Suppose God did not keep all the powers with Himself, what can someone do with an atom bomb? He can kill innumerable innocent citizens, who don't deserve to die according to their karmaphalas. Don't we have free will? So God had to balance between allowing free will and controlling all actions by everyone in order that the creation can go on. Parallel powers are unworkable. Yes, God empowers His devotees in many ways, as Arjuna was blessed, but these are His devotees, who are highly disciplined, and act as per God's plans. So let us get some idea of absolute nature of God's powers, which are briefly described by Lord Krishna in the verse # 10.41 of the Bhagavad-Geeta, "Whatever there is opulent, effulgent or even energetic, all that you should know as produced from a fragment of My splendour." These famous examples will shed some light about the extent of God's powers. Starting with the light of the sun, what does Lord Krishna state, "I am light of the sun." (7.8) What happened when Arjuna promised to kill Jayadratha before sunset? He was to enter fire if he couldn't. What did Lord Krishna do? He protected his 'nimitta' (instrument) by restoring the setting sun's light. As a result, there was daylight and Jayadratha came out from the protection of Kauravas; Arjuna killed him. Similarly, the Lord says that the heat of fire is from Him. (7.9) So, what happened when Seetaji entered fire in her fire test? She came out unscathed, because the heat of fire was withdrawn by Lord Rama. Another famous example is of Ashwathama using 'Brahmastra' on child Parikshit, who was at that time in the womb of his mother Uttara. What did Lord Krishna do? He simply made Brahmastra harmless by withdrawing its enormous power? He could because nothing is independently powerful, neither a person nor a weapon. If this was not so, there will be parallel power, which cannot be allowed, as this can cause disruption in the creation's functioning. Before I go any further in describing God's unlimited powers, a question must be answered, which is, "Why does God not stop miseries heaped by a strong person on the weak? Does God not have such a power? He does but allows it. Why? Because we suffer due to our karmaphal. Others are just acting as mediums. In those cases, God remains aloof. Continuing about the extent of Lord's powers, Lord Krishna says that He is manliness of men (7.8), which is a traditional quality of being brave and strong. In the verse # 7.11, the Lord repeats this by stating that he is the strength of strong. However, in this verse, the Lord qualifies it by stating that such persons should be devoid of lust and attachment. If they are not, God will withdraw it from them. What happened to the most powerful man because of his lusty behaviour? I am referring to the last US President. Same could be said about Swami Vivekananda, whose brightness impressed one and all, wherever he travelled in the world. Where did this devotee of the highest order get his brightness? From God of course! I can go on, but the message is loud and clear. If we want the highest qualities, we must become devotees of God, otherwise we will always be inferior; God is ready to bestow upon us whatever is cherished by us. Source for everything superior is God only; He has all the powers. (The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Succumbing to the challenges of growth



UTTAM CHAKRABORTY

The removal of founders from the companies they birthed, is a complex and often painful process

British writer and theologian Frederick William Robertson has rightly quoted, "There are three things in the world that deserve no mercy, hypocrisy, fraud, and tyranny." Power is a pervasive and fundamental force in human relations and plays a valuable role in social, political and economic interactions. Power differences in social groups are important in promoting group activities. Most people want power, and power has many benefits. However, power is a corrupting force in several instances. The recent and short departure of Sam Altman from OpenAI and again returning to the company in the same post is a matter of surprise. However, founders being ousted from their organisations have been the larger picture for deliberations. This phenomenon is unfortunate, but not new. History has been witnessed with examples of visionary leaders who found themselves at odds with their boards or stakeholders, resulting in their removal. From the likes of Steve Jobs at Apple to Travis Kalanick at Uber, the stories are as varied as the industries themselves. **The Myth of Invincibility** The myth of invincibility continues. One common thread that ties together the stories of ousted founders is the perception of invincibility that often surrounds them. When a company is in its infancy, the founder is not just a leader but a symbol of the organisation's identity and purpose. However, as the company grows, the demands and challenges evolve, and the skills needed to lead a startup may not necessarily align with those required to steer a large corporation. Founders, especially those with a strong vision and personality, may find it challenging to adapt to these changing dynamics. Sam Altman's exit for some days from OpenAI serves as a case in point. While he played a pivotal role in the organisation's early success, the need for a different leadership style to navigate the complexities of a rapidly expanding enterprise may have become apparent. Boards and stakeholders, driven by a duty to ensure the company's long-term viability, might make the tough decision to part ways with the very leader who brought the company into existence. **The Ashneer Grover Saga** The story of Ashneer Grover, co-founder of Indian fintech giant BharatPe can be thought of in this context. It is another chapter in the book of ousted founders. In his case, the clash was not just about strategic direction but also about clashes of egos and leadership styles. Grover's outspoken and sometimes controversial demeanour, which might have been tolerated or even celebrated in the start-up phase, became a liability as the company matured. This raises a crucial question: How much of a founder's identity is tied to the company they create, and when does that identity start to hinder rather than propel the organisation forward? The removal of founders like Grover suggests that companies may prioritise stability and a more harmonious internal environment over the charisma and idiosyncrasies of their visionary leaders. **The Travis Kalanick Case** The case of Travis Kalanick at Uber is perhaps one of the most infamous



examples of a founder's ousting in history. The ride-sharing giant's rapid ascent was accompanied by numerous controversies, including allegations of workplace harassment and a toxic corporate culture. In this instance, the board's decision to remove Kalanick was driven not just by financial concerns but also by a pressing need to address the company's tarnished reputation. Kalanick's story underscores the importance of accountability in leadership. While founders are often given leeway in the early stages, the moment their actions jeopardise the company's integrity or public perception, boards are compelled to act. This raises questions about the delicate balance between a founder's autonomy and the responsibility they bear to the company and its stakeholders. **Adam Neumann's Fate** WeWork's Adam Neumann is another founder whose grand vision ultimately led to his downfall. Neumann's ambitious plans for WeWork, including its IPO, were marred by controversies surrounding the company's financial health and governance practices. His removal was a necessary corrective measure to salvage the company and protect the interests of investors. The cautionary tale of Adam Neumann serves as a reminder that while visionary leadership is crucial for a startup's success, unchecked ambition and a lack of grounding, in reality, can lead to a founder's undoing. Boards and stakeholders must carefully evaluate whether a founder's aspirations align with the company's long-term sustainability or if they are veering into the realm of fantasy. **Steve Jobs's Tale** In the pantheon of ousted founders, Steve Jobs stands out as a unique case. His departure from Apple in 1985 was a result of internal power struggles and disagreements with the board. Jobs's confrontational style and tendency to make unilateral decisions further fuelled the tensions within Apple. His unwillingness to compromise and his impatience with dissenting viewpoints alienated both colleagues and board members. In 1985, after a series of heated confrontations and a vote of no confidence from the board, Jobs was forced to resign as CEO. However, Jobs' eventual return to Apple in 1997 and the subsequent resurrection of the company's fortunes showcase the rare scenario where a founder is reinstated to lead their creation once again. Job's story is a testament to the enduring impact of a visionary leader and the potential for redemption. However, it is worth noting that Jobs returned to Apple with a tempered approach and a willingness to collaborate, a stark contrast to his earlier stint. This suggests that even in exceptional cases, founders must evolve and adapt to the changing needs of their organisations. **The Bottom Line** The recent and short departure of

Ancient Indian democracy: Lessons for today

In the ancient democracy of southern India, there was zero tolerance for corruption and strict punishment was given to defaulters

Even during kings' reigns democracy was practised and flourished, but even after so many technological advancements in the 21st century, the elections are used for self-gain. Many times it questions whether they run a government or a business. There are no constructive rules for the candidate's section. It leads to less hope in democracy. The state of corruption and its deep Nexus create a worrying stage. At once, Tamil Nadu was teaching democracy and ethics to the rest of the world by inscriptions. Now all the developmental activities are marred by corruption. Most of the funds allotted for various programs and



KS RADHAKRISHNAN

policies are siphoned in the name of Implementation, but the truth is that it goes into the pockets of politicians. The bureaucracy which is well-known for red tape, complicated procedures, and poor transparency in various policies and programs is also responsible for more corruption activities. From the Chola period, we can see a procedural usage of public money for various programs. Now on the contrary, when a new government assumes power, the plants and programs of earlier governments get cancelled out rightly, leading to a waste of public money. It is widely known that people who are prone to corrupt attitudes are escaping the clutches of



law due to the unclear nature of laws and underhand dealings with higher officials. No laws are daring enough to reach the corrupt and put them behind bars. One should think that the country is not only run by technology but also the scope of human resources. In this era of Artificial intel-

ligence youths are taking everything for Granted and are not ready to make the right decision and questioning the state of the world a comfortable life is a primary requirement. Nobody is ready to take responsibility to make the system stand right. As we are from the land of

Swami Vivekananda, his message for the youth of this country is "Let human". He also dwelt on the capabilities of the youth; he wanted the youth to train itself to serve humanity. What he wanted from the youth were 'muscles of iron' and 'nerves of steel'. Today, the youth are exceptionally responsive and they just need to be encouraged. Swami Vivekananda was only the medium; he is himself the message as well for the youth of India. His teachings will always stay relevant. He once said, "The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out the strength of

character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion - is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own." For him, education meant secular learning that built character and instilled human values in students. All these initiatives of the Government require active involvement and support of youth as they are the major stakeholders of the future of this country. As Swami Vivekananda once exhorted, "Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached", let us all unite and work for the country with Purity, patience, and perseverance as the Swami felt long ago that these three are essentials to success. The country, believe it or

not, is in dire need of a revolution and the only hope we have is the youth. With their vision and farsightedness, the youth can bring to the plate not only changes but freshness which the country could use to give itself an image makeover. The Chola administration has become the foundation for modern democracy. We are in the age to revive our electoral pattern as our democratic legacy extends far beyond Athenian democracy and the Roman Republic. (The writer is an activist and a lawyer, the views expressed are personal) This is the second part of the series on ancient Indian democracy **Concluded**

Modi to distribute 51,000 job letters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute more than 51,000 appointment letters to newly inducted employees of different government departments on November 30 via video-conferencing and also address them, the Prime Minister's Office(PMO)said on Tuesday.

The programme is being held at 37 locations across the country as part of the 'Rozgar Mela, and recruitment is taking place in various central government departments as well as state governments and UTs supporting this initiative, the PMO said.

The departments they will join are revenue, home affairs, higher education, school education and literacy, financial services, defence, health and family welfare, and labour and employment among others.

"Rozgar Mela is a step towards fulfilment of the com-



mitment of the prime minister to accord highest priority to employment generation.

It is expected to act as a catalyst in further employment generation and provide meaningful opportunities to the youth for their empowerment and participation in national development,"the statement said.

The new appointees with their innovative ideas and role-related competencies will be contributing in the task of

strengthening industrial, economic and social development of the nation, helping realise Modi's vision of developed India, it added.

The new appointees are also getting an opportunity to train themselves through 'Karmayogi Prarambh', an online module on the iGOT Karmayogi portal where more than 800 e-learning courses have been made available for 'anywhere any device' learning format, it said.

'Cost of justice, use of English in higher judiciary obstacles to equal access to justice'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday said here the "cost"and the use of English language in the higher judiciary are among the hindrances in the way of equal access to justice, and emphasised on their removal.

Addressing a conference here, she emphasised on the need to launch an awareness campaign among people, living in rural areas and those from socially disadvantaged groups, to help them make them conscious of their rights and get legal assistance.

Murmu said, equality is not only the foundation of justice, but a necessary condition of it too. "It has been long since the world proclaimed that all human beings are equal, but we need to ask ourselves if we all have equal access to justice,"she said. In practice, it means some people are often unable to seek redressal of their grievances due to several factors, the pres-



ident said.

"Our principal task is to remove those obstacles. The chief obstacle, of course, is often the cost of justice,"Murmu said, addressing the valedictory session of the first regional conference on 'Ensuring Access to Quality Legal Aid for the Vulnerable: Challenges and Opportunities in the Global South' here.

She said access to justice for all has been a theme close to her heart and mentioned several steps taken to help eco-

nomically disadvantaged sections of society to approach legal institutions for remedial action.

Steps taken by the National Legal Services Authority, that is, NALSA, have also played a key role in expanding legal aid, the president said.

"The aim, on the whole, has been to advance 'ease of justice'. But I feel that there is a need to launch an awareness campaign among people not only to make them conscious of their rights, but also to help

them get legal assistance, if such a need arises,"Murmu said. Such an awareness campaign must focus on rural areas and socially disadvantaged groups to dispel the impression that justice is the advantage of the strong, the president said.

There are many more hindrances in the way of equal access to justice, she said. In India, for example, the language of the higher judiciary is English, which makes it difficult for a large section of society to understand the judicial processes, Murmu said.

"However, the Supreme Court of India has started publishing verdicts in various regional languages on its website. Legal aid institutions also help in bridging the language divide,"she noted.

Murmu said technology holds great promise in making access to legal aid more democratic. "It has reduced distances and made justice dispensation easier in many cases... An innovative attitude

in integration of technology in the justice delivery system will make it more inclusive as well as more efficient,"the president said. Murmu said the regional conference focuses on the Global South.

"Due to a variety of historical forces, this group of countries still continues to battle poverty. The task before us is to raise the standards of living for all. Gandhiji used to call it 'sarvodaya', the welfare of all. Access to justice is, naturally, a very important tool to achieve that goal,"she said.

The Global South, then, faces challenges which are quite similar in nature yet they are different from the rest of the world, Murmu said, adding that "we can respond to these challenges by joining hands and by sharing our best practices." "I believe that making legal aid accessible to people in need is the cornerstone of any modern state. It plays a crucial role in shaping a social order which is equitable, just and worthy of trust,"Murmu said.

DAC meet to discuss ₹1.4 Lakh cr Defence acquisition proposals

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Mega proposals worth over Rs 1.4 lakh crore are likely to be discussed on Thursday here during the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) meeting chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. The deals include a Rs 40,000 crore proposal for building the second indigenous aircraft carrier(IAC)and a nod for another 97 Tejas light combat aircraft worth over Rs 55,000 crores and 156 Prachand helicopters(90 for Army and 66 for IAF), sources said here on Tuesday. The DAC is the apex body to clear the acquisition proposals forwarded by the three Services. The Cabinet Committee on Security(CCS)gives the final clearance for the deals.

As regards the second aircraft carrier, sources said the government is set to positively consider the Indian Navy's proposal. The Defence Procurement Board (DPB), a key body of the defence ministry, has accorded in-principle approval to the ambitious proposal signalling the government's readiness to go for the second indigenous aircraft carrier, to be known as IAC II. The DAC is also likely to consider the Indian Air Force's proposal for procurement of an additional batch of 97 Tejas Mark-1A aircraft at a cost of Rs 55,000 crores, sources said.

The Navy has been making a strong push for having the IAC-II with a displacement of 45,000 tonnes which is esti-



mated to cost close to Rs 40,000 crore with the envisaged specifications.

India's first indigenously-built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant (IAC I) was commissioned in September by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Built at a cost of around Rs 23,000 crore, INS Vikrant has a sophisticated air defence network and anti-ship missile systems.

It has the capacity to hold 30 fighter jets and helicopters. At the commissioning ceremony of the vessel, Modi called it a "floating city"and that it is a reflection of India becoming self-reliant in defence.

Sources said the IAC II will be kind of a repeat order of the IAC I.

According to the plan, the IAC II will be built by state-run Cochin Shipyard.

The Navy has been pitching for three aircraft carriers to deal with China's growing naval prowess and its growing influence over the Indian Ocean region.

At present, India has two

aircraft carriers -- INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant. INS Vikramaditya is a Russian origin platform. The INS Vikrant has over 2,300 compartments, designed for a crew of around 1700 people, including specialised cabins to accommodate women officers.

Vikrant has a top speed of around 28 knots and a cruising speed of 18 knots with an endurance of about 7,500 nautical miles.

The IAC is 262 metres long, 62 metres wide and has a height of 59 metres.

On the procurement of additional 97 Tejas Mark 1A aircraft, the sources said the DAC is set to clear it. With the additional fleet, the number of indigenously-developed Tejas aircraft being procured by the IAF would go up to 180.

In February 2021, the defence ministry sealed a Rs 48,000 crore deal with state-run aerospace major Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd for procurement of 83 Tejas MK-1A jets for the IAF.

Centre may introduce legal safeguards for health workers: Panel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A parliamentary standing committee has said the Centre may consider introducing appropriate legal safeguards for healthcare workers, who at times face violence from relatives or attendants of patients. The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs headed by BJP member Brij Lal, which examined the proposed three criminal laws, discussed a memorandum submitted by various medical associations requesting it to introduce provisions under Clause 115 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) to penalise acts of violence against healthcare service personnel.

The committee, in its report, said it was submitted before the panel that unlike in any other professions, healthcare professionals are vulnerable to "violent attacks"by relatives of patients, in cases where patients die during treatment. Such violent attacks against healthcare personnel are prevalent throughout the country and there is a need to provide some legal safeguards for the benefit of healthcare workers, the medical associations told the committee. In its response, the Union Home Ministry said the general penal provisions are applicable to all and no distinction is made in the penal laws for any class of person. Everyone is equal in the eyes of law, the home ministry stressed.

The state is duty bound to protect life all its citizens, including doctors and professionals like media persons,



advocate, bankers, chartered accountants, etc. Making a special provision for doctors and other health care professionals may give rise to similar demands from other professionals like media persons, advocates, bankers, chartered accountants, the home ministry observed.

The home ministry also informed the committee that the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has a proposal to introduce a 'Medical Professionals Act' to provide safeguards to healthcare workers against violent attacks, and that the home ministry would take an update from the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare on the same.

"After considering the concerns of the healthcare personnel, the committee opines that the government may consider introducing appropriate legal safeguards for healthcare workers,"the committee noted.

The Clause 115 of the BNS says: Whoever voluntarily causes hurt, if the hurt which he intends to cause or knows himself to be likely to cause is grievous hurt, and if the hurt which he causes is grievous hurt, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to seven years, and shall also be liable to fine.

2nd edition of Kashi Tamil Sangamam from Dec 17

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Union Education Ministry on Tuesday said the second edition of the Kashi Tamil Sangamam will be held from December 17-30. The sangamam aims at rediscovering, reaffirming and celebrating the age-old links between Tamil Nadu and Kashi two of the country's most important and ancient seats of learning. The first edition was a month-long event organised last year.

"In Phase-2 of KTS it is proposed that around 1400 people from Tamil Nadu and Puducherry will travel by train to Varanasi, Prayagraj and Ayodhya for an eight-day immersive tour, including the travel time,"an official said.

They will be divided into seven groups of around 200 each, comprising students, teachers, farmers, artisans, traders, businesspeople, religious, writers and professionals, he said. "Each group will be named after a sacred river (Ganga, Yamuna, Saraswati, Sindhu, Narmada, Godavari and Kaveri),"the official of the ministry said.

Like the first edition, this edition too is being organised by the education ministry in collaboration with other ministries such as culture, textiles, railways, tourism, food processing, information and broadcasting, and the Uttar Pradesh government.

On the second edition, the official said, "The delegates will see places of historical, tourist and religious interest and interact with people of



Uttar Pradesh from their domains of work."KTS 2.0 would have a crisper format with emphasis on awareness generation and outreach, people-to-people connect and cultural involvement, he said.

"The focus would be on increased engagement and interaction with local counterparts (weavers, artisans, artists, entrepreneurs, writers etc) to get insights into best practices, enhance learning and cross pollination of ideas,"the official said.

Stalls exhibiting art and culture, handlooms, handicrafts, cuisine, and other special products of Tamil Nadu and Kashi will be set up, the official said. "Cultural programmes blending the cultures of Tamil Nadu and Kashi will be organized at Namo Ghat in Varanasi,"he said.

Seminars, discussions, lectures, on various facets of knowledge like literature, ancient texts, philosophy, spirituality, music, dance, drama, yoga, ayurveda, handlooms, handicrafts as well as the

modern innovations, trade exchanges, edutech and other gen next technology will be highlights of the event, the official said.

"Apart from experts and scholars, local practical practitioners from Tamil Nadu and Varanasi will also participate in these exchanges so that a body of practical knowledge and innovations can emerge from the mutual learning in different fields,"he said.

To capitalise upon learnings from the first edition and given their reputation for research, IIT Madras will serve as the implementing agency in Tamil Nadu and the Banaras Hindu University in Uttar Pradesh. "IIT Madras has called for applications on the KTS portal launched today, from people of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry who wish to participate in the programme. The selection of delegates will be done by a selection committee constituted for the purpose,"the official said.

Protocol to train anganwadi workers to help divyang children launched

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The government on Tuesday launched a national protocol to provide for training of anganwadi workers to track and help children with disabilities. This is for the first time that anganwadi workers will spread awareness on the issue, Women and Child Development Minister Smriti Irani said.

"If we look at it from a community perspective, it is a silent revolution in our community,"she said after the launch of the Anganwadi Protocol for Divyang Children.

For the first time, "sisters from anganwadis will spread awareness that disability is not a challenge for society, but an opportunity for society to help a child. The mindset needs to be changed,"Irani said.

She said the National Education Policy-2020 emphasises prioritising integration of divyang students into mainstream schools. "We know 85 per cent of a child's mental development happens by the age of 6. Today our education system has new provisions for divyang children...,"she said.



Irani said grassroots level data about divyang children will become available through anganwadi workers, and the children can be further tracked through the Poshan tracker.

The anganwadi eco-system reaches out to over eight crore children from birth to six years on a daily basis, and is a critical access point for building the base of the country's children, according to a statement issued by the Women and Child Development Ministry.

According to the National Education Policy-2020, integration of divyang students into mainstream schools

should be prioritized, rather than establish segregated educational institutions.

The National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage 2022 further recommends approaches to addressing developmental delays and disability in schools, including advice on signs and symptoms, it said.

In pursuance of these approaches, the Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi programme has adopted the national ECCE Taskforce recommendation for play-based and activity-based learning pedagogy and strongly advocates special and time-

ly support for divyang children, the statement said.

According to the Draft National Policy for Persons with Disabilities (Divyangjan) (2021), one-third of most disabilities in India are estimated to be preventable, if they are detected early enough and adequately addressed.

Through the 'Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi's' targeted focus on strengthening the foundation for India's future generations, 13.9 lakh anganwadi centres will be up-skilled to adopt a multi-sensory and toy-based approach to address the different needs of children.

FROM PAGE 1

STATES GEAR UP FOR HIGH STAKES POLLS

The counting of votes will be taken up on December 3. For the first time in Telangana, a "home voting facility" was provided to persons with disabilities and voters above 80 years. As of November 28, law enforcement agencies have seized cash, gold, liquor, and freebies, among other items, worth about Rs 737 crore in the state since the model code of conduct came into force on October 9, according to an official release. The Election Commission has ordered all private establishments, including IT firms, to declare a holiday on November 30 to enable employees to exercise their franchise.

The grand old party's tallest leader, Sonia Gandhi, who could not be part of the campaign on Tuesday, addressed the audience through a video message. She appealed to the state's electorate to bring about a change by voting her party to power. The results for the polls will be declared on December 3.

"You have given me immense respect by calling me Sonia Amma. You treated me like a mother, and I will always be grateful to you for this love and respect and will remain dedicated to you forever," she said.

Telangana state was formed after bifurcating Andhra Pradesh during the UPA government, and the Congress is seeking to take credit for it.

Meanwhile, setting aside the allegations, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar said that the state government's advertisements about its work in newspapers in poll-bound Telangana do not violate any rules,

STATES GEAR UP FOR HIGH STAKES POLLS

as they did not ask for votes. Shivakumar said the government would respond to the Election Commission's letter on this. The BJP had lodged a complaint with the EC in the matter, alleging that the Congress violated the Representation of the People Act and the Model Code of Conduct, with its government in Karnataka publishing advertisements in Telangana media with an eye on the November 30 assembly polls there.

18 PER CENT CANDIDATES FACE CRIMINAL CHARGES

In the case of the BJP, out of the 654 candidates fielded, 224 are facing criminal cases while 129 are facing serious criminal cases. AAP, the report said, which fielded 210 candidates in the elections, has 60 candidates with criminal cases against them, while 40 of its candidates are facing serious criminal cases.

The report also said that out of the 2,117 candidates of the national parties, 656 candidates are facing criminal cases while 404 are facing serious criminal cases against themselves. It said that out of the 537 state parties' candidates, 154 are facing criminal cases while 100 are facing serious criminal charges. In the case of registered unrecognised parties, out of 2,053 candidates, affidavits of 2,051 candidates were analyzed, out of which 252 are facing criminal cases while 184 are facing serious criminal charges against themselves.

The report also said that out of the 3,347 independent candidates, affidavits of 3,346 candidates were analyzed, and 390 candidates have declared criminal cases against

themselves while 271 are facing serious criminal cases.

Of the total candidates of 8,054 contesting in five states, the report said 22 candidates in five states have declared cases related to murder, while 82 have declared cases related to attempted murder, and 107 candidates have declared cases related to crime against women. "Of the 107 candidates, five have declared cases related to rape," the report said. The report said 12 per cent have declared serious criminal cases while 29 per cent are crorepatris with an average asset worth Rs 3.36 crore, the report added.

CURBS ON VEHICLES LIFTED AS AIR BETTERS

Therefore, considering the disruptive nature of restrictions under Stage-III of GRAP, which impact a large number of stakeholders and the public, and acknowledging the significant improvement in the average Air Quality Index (AQI) of Delhi-NCR, the Subcommittee for the operationalisation of actions under GRAP unanimously decided to roll back Stage-III of the revised GRAP in the entire NCR with immediate effect. Actions under Stages-I to Stage-II of GRAP shall, however, remain invoked and be implemented, intensified, monitored, and reviewed by all concerned agencies in NCR to ensure that the AQI levels do not further slip into the 'Severe' category," the Commission stated in its order. Under Stage-III, the CAQM prohibits several activities that generate dust and contribute to pollution.

Govt disconnects 70 lakh mobile involved in financial frauds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

To check digital frauds, the government has disconnected 70 lakh mobile numbers so far involved in cybercrime or financial frauds, Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi said on Tuesday.

Emerging from a meeting to discuss issues related to financial cyber security and increasing digital payment fraud, Joshi, who chaired the meeting, said banks have been asked to strengthen the system and processes in this regard.

More such meetings would take place, he said, adding the next meeting is scheduled in January. During the meeting, it was noted that 70 lakh mobile connections involved in cyber-crime/ financial frauds reported through digital intelligence platforms have been disconnected so far.

About Rs 900 crore of defrauded money has been saved, benefitting 3.5 lakh victims, an official statement said. With regard to Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS) fraud reported recently, he said states have been asked to look into the issue and ensure data protection.

He also said that there was a discussion with regard to KYC standardisation of merchants.

The meeting chaired by the Financial Services Secretary also deliberated on how to ensure better coordination among various agencies to check cyber fraud.

Joshi said there was a need to create awareness about cyber fraud in society to protect gullible customers from being duped.

The Indian Cyber Crime Co-ordination Center (I4C), Ministry of Home Affairs, made a presentation on the latest statistics of digital payment frauds as reported in the National Cyber Crime Reporting Portal (NCRP), various sources of these financial frauds, modus operandi adopted by the fraudsters, including challenges faced to counter financial cybercrimes, it said.

Further, representatives from State Bank of India (SBI) made a brief presentation on the Proactive Risk Monitoring (PRM) strategy implemented by SBI. Besides, PayTM and Razorpay representatives also shared their best practices which have enabled them to mitigate



such frauds, it said.

The meeting was attended by senior officials of the Department of Economic Affairs, Department of Revenue, Department of Telecom, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and National Payments Corporation of India.

The meeting took stock of the preparedness of the banks and other financial institutions in tackling the challenges arising from cyber security in the financial services sector, increasing trend of digital payment frauds, and deliberated on a focused approach to mitigate such cyber-attacks and frauds, it said.

Some of the issues deliberated in the meeting included a strategy to tackle the menace of mule accounts by banks and how banks can improve the response time in handling the alerts on online financial frauds received from different agencies. Appointment of regional/ state level nodal officers by the banks and financial institutions to cater to the requirements of law enforcement agencies and whitelisting of digital lending apps through consultation with

relevant stakeholders were also discussed during the meeting.

The meeting assumes significance in view of digital fraud witnessed by UCO Bank and Bank of Baroda in the recent past. Earlier this month, Kolkata-based public sector lender UCO Bank reported erroneous credit of Rs 820 crore to account holders of the bank via Immediate Payment Service (IMPS).

During November 10-13, the bank observed that due to technical issues in IMPS, certain transaction(s) initiated by holders of other banks have resulted in credit to the account holders in UCO Bank without actual receipt of money from these banks. IMPS is a real-time inter-bank electronic funds transfer system without any intervention.

The bank blocked the recipients' accounts and has been able to recover Rs 649 crore of the Rs 820 crore or about 79 per cent of the amount.

The state-owned bank is yet to clarify whether this technical glitch was due to human error or a hacking attempt. However, the bank has reported the matter to the law enforcement agencies for necessary action.



'China slows, India grows': S&P pegs 7% growth for India by 2026

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's GDP growth rate will rise to 7 per cent by 2026 compared to 4.6 per cent for China, S&P Global Ratings said on Tuesday.

In a report titled 'China Slows India Grows', S&P said it expects Asia-Pacific's growth engine to shift from China to South and Southeast Asia.

"We project China's GDP growth to slow to 4.6 per cent in 2024 (2023: 5.4 per cent), edge up to 4.8 per cent in 2025, and return to 4.6 per cent in 2026. We see India reaching 7.0 per cent in 2026; Vietnam, 6.8 per cent (4.9 per cent); Philippines, 6.4 per cent (5.4 per cent); and Indonesia remaining steady at 5 per cent," S&P said.

The US-based rating agency on Monday projected India's GDP to expand at 6.4 per cent in the current fiscal year and in the next. For 2025 it projected growth rate to rise to 6.9 per cent, followed by 7 per cent in 2026.

S&P said with Asia-Pacific's central banks likely to keep interest rates high, the region's borrowers will see costlier debt servicing.

"Concurrently, a widening conflict in the Middle East could drag global supply chains and raise energy costs, fanning inflation. High input costs dilute corporate margins, while high prices weaken demand," S&P said.

Energy and demand shock risk, it said, adding Asia-Pacific's growth is susceptible to energy shocks (widening Middle East conflict) and slower global demand (risk of U.S. Hard landing).

"We lowered our projection for the region's growth (ex-China) in 2024 from 4.4 per cent to 4.2 per cent. The prospects for industries also differ, with export-centric manufacturing faring worse," S&P said.



Sebi for changes in regulatory framework for Special Situation Funds

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sebi on Tuesday proposed changes in the regulatory framework for Special Situation Funds to facilitate the acquisition of stressed loans.

Special Situation Funds (SSFs) are sub-category Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs).

In a consultation paper, Sebi suggested a definition of 'special situation assets', eligibility of investors in SSFs in terms of Insolvency law, restrictions concerning investment in connected entities, minimum holding period, subsequent transfer of loans, monitoring and supervision of such SSFs.

The proposals have been floated after consultations with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which is the principal regulator for the sale and purchase of stressed loans in India.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought comments from the public on the consultation paper till December 27. To enable SSFs to acquire stressed loans, these funds need to be part of a RBI annexure pertaining to the transfer of loan exposure.

In the consultation paper, the regulator has proposed amending AIF norms to make changes to the regulatory framework for SSFs.

Under this, Sebi proposed a definition for a 'special situation asset' that includes securities of investee companies, whose stressed loans are acquired in terms of RBI Master Directions. Further, SSFs having prior investment in securities of

stressed companies should not be disqualified or barred from acquiring stressed loans of the said companies.

In addition, SSFs should not invest in or acquire a special situation asset if any of its investors is disqualified under the IBC rule about such special situation assets. Further, special situation funds should not invest in its 'related parties'.

Also, it has been proposed that SSFs should transfer or sell stressed loans, only to the entities enlisted in the RBI annexure. SSFs who have acquired stressed loans should be subject to a dedicated supervisory framework.

It has been suggested that SSFs should submit information in respect of all investments in stressed loans to a trade reporting platform notified by RBI. This information includes details of units issued, details of investors subsequent changes in unit holdings, resolution strategies implemented, and recoveries effected.

In January 2022, Sebi introduced the framework for Special Situation that will invest only in stressed assets. SSFs were introduced as a sub-category under Category I AIF.

The challenges of stressed loans faced by the Indian financial system requiring significant capital infusion in Banks, Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), etc., necessitated exploring AIFs as a potential source of risk capital to supplement the efforts of Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) in the resolution of stressed loans," Sebi said.

Cybersecurity, customer protection must for digital payments momentum: RBI paper

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Cybersecurity, customer protection, and cost-effectiveness are essential for sustaining the momentum towards digital payments pushed by the Covid pandemic, said Reserve Bank paper on Tuesday.

The transactional use of cash has been on a decline and is increasingly getting substituted with digital modes of payments, even as the store-of-value role of cash remains intact, said the paper titled 'Cash versus Digital Payment Transactions in India: Decoding the Currency Demand Paradox'.

In line with the global evidence, the pandemic led to a transitory uptick in currency demand in India driven primarily by precautionary and store-of-value motives.

To sustain the momentum towards digital payments initiated by the pandemic, concerted efforts are needed to ensure the cost-effectiveness of payment modes and relevant acceptance infrastructure from both the demand (consumers) and



supply sides (merchants and intermediaries); and ensure universal access to enablers, such as smartphones and internet connectivity, it said.

The paper authored by Sakshi Awasthy, Rekha Misra and Sarat Dhal, all associated with RBI's Department of

Economic and Policy Research (DEPR), further said efforts are needed to bolster financial inclusion and literacy; and safeguard cybersecurity and customer protection.

The authors further said that despite the traction observed in digital payments,

cash persists due to a strong inclination of the populace to transact and save in cash. Moreover, cash serves as the de facto foundation for all types of payments.

"It also plays a crucial role in facilitating transactions between the formal and informal sectors as well as with segments of the population that are financially excluded and lack digital awareness," the paper said.

Furthermore, the usage and adoption of digital payments remain concentrated in regions characterised by higher levels of development, it added.

"The success of digitalisation extends beyond mere cash substitution; it has broader implications for economic growth, development of financial markets, financial well-being of households, and effective governance," it said.

Given the ongoing expansion of digital payments and the moderation in the growth of currency demand witnessed post-pandemic, the high cash usage observed during the pandemic may not translate into a permanent shift, the paper said.

Rupee recovers from record lows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee on Tuesday rebounded from record low levels, gaining 6 paise to settle at 83.34 against the US dollar amid positive sentiment in the equity markets and inflow of foreign funds.

Forex traders said a weak American currency against major rivals and crude prices hovering close to USD 80 per barrel level also supported the Indian currency.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.37 and moved in the range of 83.32 to 83.39 against the greenback in intraday trade. It finally settled at 83.34 against the dollar, registering a gain of 6 paise from its previous close.

On Friday, the rupee settled at its all-time low of 83.40 against the American currency. The forex market was closed on Monday on account of Guru Nanak Jayanti.

Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said: "Indian rupee started the week on a positive note as the greenback retreated against major currencies after weak US economic data. However, the month-end dollar demand has contained the gains in the rupee. He said the price action in



USD-INR remained muted and lacked direction. "In the short term, the pair has support at 83.20 and resistance at 83.50."

"Rupee is expected to move in a range of 83.25 to 83.50 tomorrow (Wednesday). Market awaits for US consumer confidence and PCE price index, a data closely watched by (US) FED for inflation purpose, apart from US GDP this month," said Anil Kumar Bhansali, Head of Treasury and Executive Director, Finrex Treasury Advisors LLP.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.02 per cent lower at 103.18.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 1.18 per cent to USD 80.92 per barrel.

On the domestic equity market front, Sensex climbed 204.16 points, or 0.31 per cent, to settle at 66,174.20 points. The Nifty advanced 95.00 points, or 0.48 per cent, to 19,889.70 points. Foreign institutional investors were net buyers in the capital market on Tuesday as they purchased shares worth Rs 783.82 crore, according to exchange data.

Also, the country's forex reserves increased by USD 5.077 billion to USD 595.397 billion during the week ended November 17, the Reserve Bank said on Friday.

Mcap of BSE-listed firms hits record high of ₹331 lakh cr; just shy of entering USD 4-trn club

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The combined market capitalisation of all listed companies on the BSE touched Rs 331,05,425.71 crore, which translates to USD 3.97 trillion at the current exchange rate of 83.34, thanks to a flag-end recovery in the equity market after a highly volatile trade.

At the end of trade, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed companies reached Rs 3,31,05,425.71 crore, which translates to USD 3.97 trillion at the current exchange rate of 83.34, thanks to a flag-end recovery in the equity market after a highly volatile trade.

On May 24, 2021, the market capitalisation of all listed companies on the BSE touched the USD 3-trillion mark.

The 30-share BSE benchmark Sensex hit its all-time peak of 67,927.23 on September 15, this year. While the BSE benchmark Sensex has rallied 5,333.46 points, or 8.76 per cent, so far this year, the market capitalisation (mcap) of all listed firms at its platform has jumped Rs 48.67 lakh crore.

The 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 204.16 points or 0.31 per cent to settle at 66,174.20 on Tuesday.

"After last week's range-bound trend, markets registered gains led by uptick in



power, metal and auto stocks as hopes of strong growth momentum going ahead and receding worries of rate hikes in the US strengthened the mood," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd.

"FIIs turning net buyers of local equities in the last few sessions too has brought some cheers to the market, even as caution could prevail in next few sessions ahead of monthly F&O expiry and exit poll results of five state elections later this week," Tapse said.

Among the Sensex firms, Tata Motors, Bajaj Finserv, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance, NTPC, Bharti Airtel,

Titan and Axis Bank were the major gainers.

ITC, ICICI Bank, Power Grid and HDFC Bank were among the laggards.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.30 per cent while the smallcap index gained marginally by 0.06 per cent.

Among the indices, utilities rallied 3.64 per cent, power jumped 3.47 per cent, oil & gas climbed 3.13 per cent, energy (2.27 per cent), services (2.02 per cent), commodities (1.27 per cent) and metal (1.13 per cent).

FMCG, industrials, telecommunication and capital goods were the laggards.

Ashneer says sorry, HC slaps ₹2 lakh fine over posts against BharatPe

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday imposed Rs 2 lakh as costs on BharatPe co-founder Ashneer Grover in the matter related to his alleged defamatory social media posts against the fintech company even as he tendered an apology for his conduct.

Justice Rekha Palli took on record the apology and the undertaking given by Grover but proceeded to impose costs on him, saying the "court cannot be taken for granted".

The judge, while dealing with a plea by Resilient Innovations Pvt Ltd - which owns BharatPe - against Grover, said the court was 'appalled' to note the 'per-

sistent" and "blatant" violation of the earlier orders and assurances given by Grover in this regard.

The plea forms part of a lawsuit by Resilient Innovations against former managing director Grover and others.

"Taking into account that defendant no 2 is now filing an affidavit specifically undertaking not to post any such defamatory posts in future and is also apologising for his past behaviour, this court is inclined to close the matter at this stage by binding the defendant no 2 to his undertaking.

"This is, however, subject to a payment of costs of Rs 2 lakh," the court ordered.

The court directed that the amount shall be paid to the high

court's clerks' association.

Senior advocate Akhil Sibal, appearing for the plaintiff, argued that in spite of court orders asking the parties not to make offending statements and Grover's undertaking to this effect, he was posting defamatory content against the fintech company on social media.

The senior lawyer said that an earlier application by the plaintiff was also closed after an assurance was given by Grover who was now adopting a 'shoot and scoot' strategy to publish his defamatory posts.

He urged the court to issue an injunction order restraining Grover from posting such content.

The counsel for Grover said



he was tendering an apology and undertaking to not post any offending posts in the future and the present plea may be disposed of. He also suggested that the matter may be placed for mediation.

Last year, Resilient Innovations filed the lawsuit against its former MD Ashneer Grover and his family members to restrain them from making allegedly defamatory statements.

The court had issued summons to Ashneer Grover, his wife and other defendants in the suit filed by the fintech firm which has accused the couple of misappropriating funds.

Grover resigned from the company in March 2022 and his wife was removed from her

post.

In the suit, besides seeking to restrain the defendants from making defamatory statements, the company has also sought direction for payment of over Rs 88.67 crore along with interest towards the recovery of alleged misappropriated funds and damages caused to the reputation of the firm.

The company has earlier claimed before the court that Grover, his wife and other relatives were carrying out a 'vicious and vitriolic' campaign against the company which has a large number of foreign investors.

Besides Grover and his wife, the company has arrayed as defendants Deepak Gupta, Suresh Jain and Shwetank Jain

- all relatives of the couple who were appointed in different posts in the company.

As an interim relief, the company has sought a direction to the defendants to delete or remove within five days all statements, tweets, social media posts, books, re-tweets, hashtags, videos, press conferences, interviews and comments made against the firm.

It also sought liberty to approach social media platforms, media houses, publications and others for deletion of such material.

On May 16, the high court asked all parties to avoid recourse to unparliamentary and defamatory publications against each other.

Israel must work to avoid ‘further displacement’ of civilians in Gaza

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The Biden administration has told Israel that it must work to avoid “significant further displacement” of Palestinian civilians in southern Gaza if it renews its ground campaign aimed at eradicating the Hamas militant group, senior US officials said. The administration, seeking to avoid more large-scale civilian casualties or mass displacement like that seen before the current temporary pause in the fighting, underscored to the Israelis that they must operate with far greater precision in southern Gaza than they did in the north, the officials said, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity under ground rules set by the White House.

Amid mounting international and domestic pressure about the rising Palestinian death toll, the White House has begun to put greater pressure on Israel that the manner of the coming campaign must be “carefully thought through,” according to one of the officials. The Israelis have been receptive when administration officials have raised these concerns, the official said.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has made clear that Israeli Defense Forces will eventually restart military operations after the conclusion of the current, temporary cease-fire that has allowed for an exchange of hostages taken by Hamas for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel. The two sides agreed Monday to extend the truce for an additional two days and to continue swapping hostages for prisoners.

President Joe Biden has said he would like to see the pause — which has also allowed a surge of much-needed humanitarian aid to get into Gaza — continue as long as feasible. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will return this week to the Middle East as the U.S. hopes to find a way to extend the cease-fire and get more hostages released, the State Department said Monday. It will be his third trip to the region since Israel’s war with Hamas began last month.

Family of infant hostage pleads for his release as truce winds down

Tel Aviv (AP): Kfir Bibas has spent nearly a fifth of his life in Hamas captivity. The 10-month-old was abducted from his home in a southern Israeli kibbutz on Oct. 7, when Palestinian militants snatched about 240 people and dragged them to Gaza.

Kfir, the youngest captive, was among about 30 children who were taken hostage in Hamas’ assault. Under a current temporary cease-fire, Hamas has released women, children and teens, but Kfir hasn’t been included on the lists of those set to be freed.

With his red hair and toothless smile, Kfir’s ordeal has become for many a symbol of the brutality of Hamas’ attack. With most other young hostages already released, Kfir’s fate and that of his 4-year-old brother, Ariel, are now a rallying cry for Israelis seeking the speedy release of all the hostages. A demonstration in

support of the Bibas family is being held in Tel Aviv on Tuesday.

“There is no precedent for something like this, for a baby who was kidnapped when he was 9 months old,” Eylon Keshet, Kfir’s father’s cousin, told reporters on Tuesday. “Is baby Kfir the enemy of Hamas?”

Shortly after the Hamas attack, video emerged of Kfir and Ariel swaddled in a blanket around their mother, Shir, with gunmen shouting in Arabic surrounding her. The Bibas children bob around as their mother appears terrified. “No one will hurt her, so she would know that we care about humanity. Cover her and keep her until you take her alive. Let her know,” said one man. “She has children,” said another. “She has children, yes,” the first speaker responds. Yarden, their father, was also taken captive and appears in

photos to have been wounded. Kfir Bibas’ family, like other relatives of captives, has been tormented since Oct. 7. They have received no sign that he is still alive and wonder how such a helpless infant can cope with being in captivity for so long.

“I am mostly trying to understand how they pass an entire day there,” Kfir’s aunt, Ofri Bibas Levy, told The Associated Press in an interview earlier this month. “Is Kfir getting his bottle?” she asked, adding that he was still only crawling when he was seized, but is likely to have reached the stage when he starts using objects to stand up and move around, a joyful milestone he may have hit while in captivity.

Former Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has brought Kfir’s picture to international media studios and brandished it on camera.



This handout photo provided by the IDF on Monday released Israeli hostages Tal Goldstein Almog, 9, left, and his brother Gal, 11 as they return to Israel in an IAF helicopter, after being held hostage by militant group Hamas in the Gaza Strip. AP/PTI

Blinken to return to Israel

AP ■ BRUSSELS

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will return this week to the Middle East as the US hopes to find a way to extend a cease-fire in Gaza and get more hostages released, the State Department said. It will be his third trip to the region since Israel’s war with Hamas began last month. Blinken will travel to Israel and the West Bank after attending Ukraine-focused meetings on Tuesday and Wednesday in Brussels and Skopje, North Macedonia, where foreign ministers from NATO and the Organisation for Peace and Security in Europe are gathering. Israel has agreed to pauses in its military operations in exchange for the gradual release of hostages taken by Hamas during its October 7 attacks on Israel.

The agreement had been due to expire Monday but was extended for an additional two days, meaning the extension will be expiring just as Blinken is arriving in Israel. White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said Monday the US hopes to see the pause extended further,

but it is dependent on Hamas continuing to release hostages.

In Israel and the West Bank, Blinken will “discuss Israel’s right to defend itself consistent with international humanitarian law, as well as continued efforts to secure the release of remaining hostages, protect civilian life during Israel’s operations in Gaza, and accelerate humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza”, State Department spokesman Matthew Miller said in a statement. He said Blinken also will discuss the principles for a post-conflict Gaza, as well as the need to establish an independent Palestinian state and prevent the conflict from widening.

In the occupied West Bank, Blinken is expected to see Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Blinken and other US officials have said they believe the Palestinian Authority should play a significant role in governing post-conflict Gaza. From Israel and the West Bank, Blinken will travel to the United Arab Emirates for discussions with regional leaders who will be in Dubai to attend the COP28 climate summit. Blinken has been

engaged in furious diplomacy to try to prevent the Gaza conflict from spreading, expand the provision of humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians in the territory, secure the release of hostages and arrange for foreigners and dual nationals to leave Gaza overland to Egypt.

On each of his prior two trips, Blinken has travelled to Israel and Jordan multiple times. Between the two trips, he also made stops in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and the UAE.

Blinken will arrive in Israel having just participated in an Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe foreign ministers meeting in Skopje. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said he plans to attend the OSCE meeting, possibly setting the stage for a US-Russia confrontation there over Ukraine. In Brussels, Blinken will attend the two-day NATO gathering, which will include the first foreign minister-level meeting of the NATO-Ukraine Council, a body created by alliance leaders at their last summit to improve cooperation and coordination and help prepare Kyiv for eventual membership.

Sunak cancelled meeting over Elgin Marbles row: Greek PM

London (PTI): British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has reportedly cancelled a planned meeting on Tuesday with his Greek counterpart, Kyriakos Mitsotakis, during a visit to the UK amid a deepening row over the return of the ‘Elgin Marbles’. The ancient Greek sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens are among the controversial historic items which were brought to the UK by British diplomat Lord Elgin in the early 19th century – giving them their English name.

The Parthenon Sculptures now form part of the British Museum’s collection and have long been demanded by the Greeks to complete their series at the Acropolis Museum in Athens.

The latest standoff is reminiscent of India’s demands for the Koh-i-Noor diamond and other historic artefacts taken from India during colonial times. Most recently, the Maharashtra government signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Victoria and Albert Museum for a three-year loan of a set of 17th century ‘Tiger Claws’, or wagh nakh, believed to have belonged to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. It is destined for Mumbai’s Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya (CSMVS) as part of Maharashtra’s 350th anniversary celebrations of the coronation of Chhatrapati Shivaji.

The UK-Greece standoff seems to have erupted after Downing Street claimed that it had been agreed that the issue would not be raised during any bilateral between Sunak and Mitsotakis, a claim denied by the Greeks.

On Sunday, the Greek Prime Minister told the BBC that having some of the Parthenon treasures in London and others in Athens was like cutting the ‘Mona Lisa’ painting in half. That seems to have triggered the row, as Mitsotakis then told reporters on Monday evening that he was “deeply disappointed by the abrupt cancellation” of his meeting with Sunak, which had been planned for Tuesday afternoon. “Those who believe in the correctness and justice of their positions are never hesitant to engage in constructive argumentation and debate,” said the Greek Prime Minister.

S Korea delays its spy satellite liftoff

AP ■ SEOUL

South Korea has postponed the planned launch of its first military spy satellite set for this Thursday, officials said, days after rival North Korea claimed to put its own spy satellite into orbit for the first time.

Under a contract with SpaceX, South Korea is to launch five spy satellites by 2025, and its first launch using SpaceX’s Falcon 9 rocket had been scheduled to take place at California’s Vandenberg Air Force Base in the United States.

The South Korean Defence Ministry said in a brief statement on Tuesday the launch was delayed due to weather conditions. Ministry officials said the launch was tentatively rescheduled for this Saturday but it wasn’t a fixed date.

South Korea currently has no military reconnaissance satellites of its own and partially resorts to US spy satellites to monitor moves by North Korea.

After two launch failures earlier this year, North Korea said it successfully placed its “Malligyong-1” spy satellite into orbit on November 21. South Korea said it has confirmed that the satellite entered orbit, but said it needs more time to verify whether it is working properly.

North Korea said on Tuesday leader Kim Jong Un reviewed imagery taken by the Malligyong-1 satellite of the White House and the Pentagon in Washington and US aircraft carriers at a navy base and a shipyard in Virginia. North Korea earlier said the satellite also transmitted photos of US military facilities in Guam and Hawaii and key sites in South Korea.

North Korea hasn’t yet released those satellite photos. Outside experts remain skeptical about whether the North Korean satellite can



send high-resolution imagery and perform proper military reconnaissance.

The North Korean launch invited strong condemnations from South Korea, the US, Japan and others. It violated UN Security Council resolutions that ban any satellite liftoffs by North Korea because they are considered disguised tests of the country’s long-range missile technology.

Kim has said spy satellites would allow his country to better monitor its rivals and enhance the precision-strike capability of its nuclear-capable missiles.

The satellite launch flamed animosities between the rival Koreas, with both nations taking steps to breach their previous military agreement meant to ease frontline military tensions.

Spy satellites were among the high-tech weapons systems that Kim has publicly vowed to introduce.

Since last year, North Korea has conducted about 100 ballistic missile tests in part of efforts to modernize its arsenal of weapons targeting South Korea and the United States.

In response, South Korea and the United States have expanded their military training and enhanced “regular visibility” of US strategic assets such as aircraft carriers, nuclear-capable bombers and a nuclear-armed submarine to the Korean Peninsula.

Haley: Trump causes too much chaos

Bluffton (US) (AP): Nikki Haley argued former president Donald Trump causes too much chaos to be successful in a second White House term, reiterating her argument about the GOP front-runner at a large town hall in her home state of South Carolina.

The former governor and United Nations ambassador on Monday drew the largest crowd of her primary campaign so far as she tries to close the gap with Trump just weeks before the Iowa caucuses kick off the Republican nominating calendar.

Haley invoked her former boss saying, as she has before, that she believes Trump was “the right president at the right time” but that the time is now right for a new generation in US leadership. “I agree with a lot of his policies, but the truth is, rightly or wrongly, chaos follows him,” Haley said. “We have too much division in this country, and too many threats around the world to be sitting in chaos once again.”

About 2,500 people attended the event at a satellite campus of the University of South Carolina along the state’s southern coast. Half that number watched her event from video screens outside the venue after it reached capacity. Hours ahead of Monday’s start time, the line for attendees wrapped around the venue, which the campaign said had to be changed from its original location due to demand.

Her staff has cast her campaign as being on a rising trajectory and pointed to growing crowds in recent weeks as she gets new attention from voters and donors looking for a Trump alternative.

Haley remains among a pack of candidates competing for a distant second place with Trump, who has led the GOP field since kicking off his third presidential campaign last year. Later this week, Haley will head back to New Hampshire, where she has stumped heavily.

Dubai prepares to host COP28

AP ■ DUBAI

Dubai prepared to host the COP28 climate talks on Tuesday as world leaders including US President Joe Biden signalled they would not be attending the negotiations that come during the ongoing Israel-Hamas war roiling the wider Middle East.

Workers under a still-scorching November sun stapled up bunting and decorated Dubai Expo City’s iconic Al Wasl Dome with trees and other green foliage ahead of the summit, scheduled to start Thursday in the United Arab Emirates. Armed United Nations police patrolled about half the area of Expo City where the delegates will debate, while the other half will host other climate events. Airport-style security screenings greeted those coming into both areas.

The two-week meeting of international leaders aims to assess where the world stands



when it comes to limiting emissions to slow global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared with pre-industrial times. Emirati officials said on Tuesday they expect over 70,000 attendees at the talks, including heads of state.

Britain’s King Charles and Pope Francis will be among the leaders to attend the talks, even as the 86-year-old Francis battles a lung inflammation. However, some have said or otherwise signalled they won’t be attending the Conference of the Parties — where COP gets

its name.

They include the 81-year-old Biden, who attended both COP26 in Scotland and COP27 in Egypt.

The president has been very much focused on the conflict between Israel and Hamas over the last month or so,” said John Kirby, a spokesman for the White House’s National Security Council, on Monday. “He was working the phones over the course of Thanksgiving weekend. And I suspect that he’ll continue to work the phones in coming days.”

US Navy removes fuel from plane that overshot Hawaii runway

Kaneohe Bay (US): The US Navy said Monday that it has removed nearly all of the fuel from a large plane that overshot a Hawaii runway and landed in an environmentally sensitive bay, but it doesn’t have a timetable for when it will get the aircraft out of the water. Rear Adm. Kevin Lenox said there was an estimated 2,000 gallons (7,500 liters) of fuel on board the P-8A.

“The team extracted all the fuel that they could get out of those tanks. This process was completed successfully without any fuel being released into the bay,” Lenox said at a news conference. Removing the fuel will reduce the risks for the rest of the salvage operation, he said. There were no injuries to the nine people who were on board when the plane landed Nov. 20 in shallow water just offshore of Marine Corps Base Hawaii at Kaneohe Bay. The base is about 10 miles (16 kilometers) from Honolulu.

Cmdr. Mark Anderson, who is leading the Navy’s mobile diving and salvage unit working at the site, said the plane was sitting on a mixture of coral and sand. The left engine is resting on coral. The plane rises a little with the tide, so the full weight of the plane is not on the coral, he said. Kaneohe Bay is home to coral reefs, an ancient Hawaiian fishpond and a breeding ground for hammerhead sharks. There may have been some minor damage to the coral but there didn’t appear to be “massive chunks missing,” Anderson said. Still, the focus currently is on stabilizing the plane and developing a plan to move it, he said. AP

France to ban smoking on beaches

Paris (AP): France will ban smoking on all beaches, in public parks, forests and some other public areas as part of a national anti-tobacco plan presented by the health minister on Tuesday.

Tobacco products cause 75,000 avoidable deaths a year in France, Minister of Health and Prevention Aurelien Rousseau said on BFM television. The government will introduce legislation at the start of next year to enlarge the scope of places where fines can be levied for smoking, he said.

“Beaches, parks, around schools -- lots of places had started these experiments and now, it’s true, we’re heading to a general rule to show our determination,” he said.

Rajesh Agrawal steps down as UK Dy Mayor

London (PTI): Rajesh Agrawal, the Indian-origin Deputy Mayor of London for Business, is stepping down from the role to focus on the city of Leicester, from where he will be contesting to be elected a member of Parliament in the next general election. The 46-year-old Indore-born entrepreneur-politician was recently selected as the Labour Party’s candidate from the constituency of Leicester East for an election expected next year. He announced his departure from the London Mayor’s office on social media on Monday evening after serving two terms in Mayor Sadiq Khan’s team in charge of the UK capital’s business and investment policies.

“After my recent selection as the Labour Party’s parliamentary candidate and careful consideration, I have made the

difficult decision to step down as Deputy Mayor of London to focus on campaigning in Leicester East,” said Agrawal.

“It has truly been an honour and a privilege to serve Londoners in this capacity for past seven and a half years – and I have given it my all. Like millions of other people, I arrived in this country with very little and made it my home. As I worked just above the minimum wage, I knew that there is a thin line between failure and success,” he said.

“This country gave me the opportunity, and with hard work and perseverance, I did well. But I never imagined that I would get the privilege to serve one of the greatest cities on earth as its Deputy Mayor – not once, but twice.

For that I will be forever grateful,” he added.

Rise in sports activities result in surge in medal tally: Yogi

INAUGURATES SYED MODI INDIA INT'L TOURNAMENT

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Tuesday, said that under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, sports activities in the country had experienced a notable surge, adding, "Naturally, as sports thrive nationwide, how can the state not be a part of this momentum in this field?"

Inaugurating the Syed Modi India International Badminton Tournament 2023, the chief minister highlighted the remarkable performances of athletes from Uttar Pradesh in the Asian Games.

"We have all seen this miracle in the Asian Games. Sixteen per cent of the country's population resides in Uttar Pradesh, but when it comes to medals, 25 per cent of the medals in the Asian Games have been won by players from Uttar Pradesh."

He underscored that beyond motivating players, this global badminton competition served as a crucial platform for the talented athletes of Uttar Pradesh. Uttar Pradesh Badminton Association chairman Viraj Sagar Das presented a memento to the chief minister.

Reflecting on the surge in sports activities across India, Yogi Adityanath highlighted the tangible impact of initiatives like the Khelo India Khelo campaign, the Fit India Movement, and the promotion of sports competitions at the rural level. He emphasised that these efforts had led to substantial increase in the number of medals won by the Indian players in the Olympics compared to previous years.



Speaking on the recent achievements in sports, Yogi expressed pride in the fact that Indian players surpassed the 100-medal mark for the first time. He also applauded the brilliant performance of Indian athletes in the Para Asian Games, where they won over 100 medals for the country.

Yogi assured that both the Central and State governments are committed to providing all necessary assistance to ensure a bright future of the players.

Paying tribute to Akhilesh Das, Yogi said, "There was a pressing need for a quality badminton centre in Uttar Pradesh, that would serve as a hub for player training and hosting national and international competitions. Former Union Minister Akhilesh Das took the initiative and developed a facility spanning 10 acres. This area has now emerged as a central point, not just for player development but also for the organisation of various National and International Championships for badminton players within Uttar Pradesh. On this occasion, I also pay my humble tribute to Dr Akhilesh Das."

Yogi extended a warm welcome to both the participating players and sports enthusiasts attending the competition, shedding light on the significance of the event.

Uttar Pradesh Badminton Association President Navneet Sehgal, Principal Secretary Home Sanjay Prasad, Sports Secretary Suhas LY and Sports Director RP Singh were present.

REDDY DUO ENTERS PRE-QUARTERFINALS

The Indian pair of B Sumit Reddy and N Sikki Reddy entered the last 16 of the mixed draw with a win on the first day of the main draw matches of the Syed Modi India International Badminton Championship HSBC World Tour Super 300 on Tuesday.

In the championship being played at BBD UP Badminton Academy, India's pair of Rohan Kapoor and Ashwini Ponnappa also made it to the pre-quarterfinals in mixed doubles.

In the round of 32 of mixed doubles, B Sumit Reddy and N Sikki Reddy defeated Chinese Taipei's Wu Hsun Yi

and Yang Chu Yun 21-14, 21-14 while Ponnappa and Kapoor won against Chan Peng Soon and Chi Yi See of Malaysia 21-12, 21-18.

In the men's singles category, Chirag Sen prevailed a tough challenge from Ravi to enter the main round, winning 21-7, 12-21, 21-17 in three closely contested games. Sen also teamed up successfully with Dhruv Rawat against Vimalraj Annadurai and Navin Prasanth Eswaramoorthy to enter second round of men's doubles, after winning 22-24, 21-13, 21-17.

Meanwhile, in the round of 32 in mixed doubles, seventh seeded Singapore's Hee Yang Kei and Tan Wei Han defeated India's Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crastro 21-16, 18-21, 21-18 and Japan's third seeded K Yamashita and Naru Shinoya defeated India's Satish Kumar and Adya Varyanath 21-14, 21-16, Germany's Mark and Isabelle beat India's Dingku and Priya 21-12, 21-13, Chinese Taipei's Chang Ko Chi and Lee Chieh Yen tipped India's Nitin and Anagha 21-17, 21-13 and secured a place in the last 16.

Ronaldo rejects penalty awarded

AP ■ RIYADH

Cristiano Ronaldo's honesty helped to nullify a penalty he was awarded as his 10-man Al-Nassr side held on to draw with Persepolis of Iran 0-0 in the Asian Champions League.

Ronaldo went down in the box in the opening moments on Monday and the referee pointed to the spot, but Ronaldo joined Persepolis players in disputing the penalty. Referee Ma Ning checked the pitchside monitor and overturned his decision.

Al-Nassr defender Ali Lajimi was sent off in the half for a dangerous challenge on Milad Sarlak, and Ronaldo gave his Saudi Arabia team a late scare

when he exited with a neck injury.

But Al-Nassr had already qualified for the knockout stages as the Group E winner and advanced unbeaten. The Riyadh team came into the game having won 18 of its previous 19 games in all competitions.

In the same group, Qatar's Al-Duhail earned its first win after defeating Istiklol of Tajikistan 2-0. Prolific Kenyan striker Michael Olunga scored both goals.

Earlier in Group C, Argentine coach Marcelo Gallardo picked up his first win since being appointed by Al-Ittihad this month after the Saudi Arabian champion defeated AGMK of Uzbekistan 2-1 to move into the

knockout stages.

Two goals in four first-half minutes from Moroccan striker Abderrazak Hamdallah gave Al-Ittihad the lead after Karim Benzema missed chances.

Late in the game in Tashkent, Martin Boakye pulled a goal back for AGMK.

"We had to work hard from the first whistle but we kept trying to get forward as much as we could and Hamdallah came good with two well-taken goals," Gallardo said.

The top team from each of the 10 groups of four in the tournament, which is divided into two geographic halves until the final, advances to the round of 16 along with the six best-placed runners-up.

Barcelona looks to secure return to Champions League knockout stage

AP ■ MADRID

A win against Porto will be enough to put Barcelona back in the knockout rounds of the Champions League after two consecutive group-stage eliminations.

It may not be enough, though, to ease the pressure on coach Xavi Hernández, who has struggled to get his team to play well recently.

Barcelona is coming off a stretch that includes a 1-0 loss to Shakhtar Donetsk in its last Champions League game, and a 1-1 draw at Rayo Vallecano in its previous Spanish league match. The team has even produced lackluster performances when winning recent matches.

"Things did not go as expected lately," Xavi said Monday.

"Against Rayo it was better, but we have lacked continuity. Tomorrow is a great opportunity for us. It can be a turning point. I really believe we will be playing better again. If I didn't, I wouldn't even be here."

Barcelona will advance with a win, or with a draw if Shakhtar doesn't beat Antwerp in the other Group H match on Tuesday. The Catalan club failed to reach the knockout stage in the two seasons after Lionel Messi left the club.

"There's always pressure at Barça," Xavi said.

"It's always been like this and that won't change. You have to win at this club."

Xavi said he feels the full support from the club despite the recent struggles.

"We all believe in the project and there is total trust," he said.

Barcelona has the same nine points as second-placed Porto, which is coming off a win against last-placed Antwerp. Shakhtar is third with six points.

"We will be up against a highly technical team, with a coach in Xavi who has plenty of experience in this competition," Porto coach Sérgio Conceição said.

"A victory would mean a great night for us, and we will need to be at our absolute best. There is always pressure, but we can use that pressure in a positive manner."



India seek to open women's junior hockey WC campaign on winning note against Canada

PTI ■ SANTIAGO (CHILE)

India will look to take confidence from their past success against Canada when they meet each other in their opening match of the FIH women's junior hockey World Cup here on Wednesday.

India had beaten Canada in all their previous three games.

The Indian team, which had secured a fourth place in the 2022 edition, has been placed in a tricky Pool C, along with Germany, Belgium and Canada this time.

Moreover, India's title triumph at the women's junior Asia Cup in Kakamigahara, Japan, earlier this year will boost their confidence.

The Indians are aiming to secure their maiden women's junior World Cup title. India's best finish in the prestigious tournament came in 2013 when they finished third.

"We are entering the tournament with determination and

focus. Our team's preparation has been intense, and we're keen to translate that into our performance on the field," team captain Preeti said.

"Playing against Canada in the opener is a chance for us to set the momentum for our campaign."

Coach Tushar Khandker said the team was well-prepared for the tournament.

"Our players have trained rigorously and are mentally prepared for the challenges ahead. We respect every opponent and are looking forward to a strong start against Canada," he said.

The top-two finishers in each pool directly qualify for the quarterfinals.

After Canada, India will face a formidable Germany on November 30, followed by a crucial encounter against Belgium on December 2.

The quarter-finals, semi-finals and the final of the tournament will take place on December 6, 8 and 10 respectively.

Chauhan stuns India No. 1 Dhiraj to make men's recurve final

PTI ■ AYODHYA

Jharkhand's Mrinal Chauhan stunned India No 1 Dhiraj Bommadevara in the shoot-off to advance into the final of the men's recurve section at the ongoing Senior Nationals, here on Tuesday.

From a tied 5-all, Chauhan stepped up in the shoot-off with a perfect to edge out the world No 15 Dhiraj by one point. The men's recurve final will be between Tushar Shelke of All India Police Sports Control Board and Chauhan.

Shelke defeated Atul Verma of Goa 6-4 in a one-sided final.

On the other hand, Sanjeeta set up a gold medal clash against Ridhi Phor in an all-Haryana gold medals clash in the women's recurve section.

Amisha Chaurasiya of Uttar Pradesh clinched the bronze medal with a 6-2 win over Nikki Sharma of Rajasthan.

Meanwhile, Uttar Pradesh and AIPSCB clinched the top honours in the men's and women's team events respectively in the Indian round.

The gold medal winning men's team was represented by Shivam Vaidwan, Ujjwal Mudgal, Manish and Abhay Kumar Patel.

Tutumoni Boro, Huidrom Rajpriyari Devi, Moirangthem Aruna Devi and Swati Maurya were part of the gold medal-winning women's team.

AIPSCB also won the mixed team event with Arun and Tutumoni winning over their Assamese counterparts 6-0.

39-member core group named for hockey camp

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hockey India on Tuesday named a 39-member core group of players for the men's national camp to prepare for the upcoming five-nation tournament in Spain, even as head coach Craig Fulton seeks a "fresh perspective" for next year's Paris Olympics. The Indian men's hockey team, which qualified directly for Paris Olympics after winning the gold medal in the Hangzhou Asian Games, will feature in the five-nation tournament in Valencia starting from December 15. World champions Germany, France, Belgium and the hosts Spain are the other teams in the tournament. The men's national coaching camp begins at the Sports Authority of India (SAI) Centre in Bengaluru from Wednesday. "It was a long break from national camp after a successful outing in the Hangzhou Asian Games. Most of the play-

FULTON SEEKS 'FRESH PERSPECTIVE' FOR OLYMPICS PREPARATION



ers from the team played the National Championship in Chennai, and I too got a chance to watch some of the young and upcoming players closely," Fulton said.

"We will now assemble in SAI, Bengaluru, with a fresh perspective to our preparations for the Paris Olympics. "As I have

Singh said, "The past few weeks were great, as we got to spend quality time with family and also had a great outing playing for our home state at the National Championship in Chennai. Now, we return to the camp yearning to be a better team."

List of players in the core-probable group:

Goalkeepers: Krishan Bahadur Pathak, Sreejesh Parattu Raveendran, Suraj Karkera, Pawan, Prashant Kumar Chauhan.

Defenders: Jarmanpreet Singh, Surender Kumar, Harmanpreet Singh, Varun Kumar, Amit Rohidas, Gurinder Singh, Jugraj Singh, Mandeep Mor, Nilam Sanjeev Kess, Sanjay, Yashdeep Siwach, Dipsan Tirkey, Manjeet.

Midfielders: Manpreet Singh, Hardik Singh, Vivek Sagar Prasad, Moirangthem Rabi-chandra Singh, Shamsher Singh, Nilakanta Sharma, Rajkumar Pal, Sumit, Akashdeep Singh, Gurjant Singh, Mohd Raheel Mousene, Maninder Singh.

Forwards: S Karthi, Mandeep Singh, Lalit Kumar Upadhyay, Abhishek, Dilpreet Singh, Sukhjeet Singh, Simranjeet Singh, Shilanand Lakra, Pawan Rajbhar.

Thapa, Panghal make winning start in National Boxing Championships

PTI ■ SHILLONG

Six-time Asian Championships medallist Shiva Thapa (63.5kg) and World Championships silver medallist Amit Panghal (51kg) on Tuesday made a winning start to their campaign in the Men's National Boxing Championships here. Assam's Thapa, who was made to work hard for his 4-3 split decision win by Abhinash Jamwal from Himachal Pradesh, will now take on Haryana's Santosh HK in his round of 16 clash.

Up against Shivaji from Maharashtra, SSCB's Panghal emerged a one-sided winner through a 5-0 unanimous decision. He will face



Jayshandeep Singh from Punjab in the round of 16 match.

Meanwhile, Tokyo Olympian Ashish Kumar (80kg) from Himachal Pradesh defeated Punjab's Arshdeep Singh and set up a pre-quarterfinals clash against Nitish Kumar from Chandigarh. Railway Sports Promotion Board's Govind Sahani (48kg), also an Asian Championships 2022 bronze medal winner, emerged victorious in his contest against Tripura's Sayan Lodh. Govind started with an aggressive approach and surprised his opponent who was caught off guard and could never really recover. Govind will now take on Vishal from Himachal Pradesh in pre-quarterfinals.



'Champions League prices best in Germany and worst in Scotland'

AP ■ NYON (SWITZERLAND)

When charging travelling

fans for Champions League tickets, German clubs give the best value to away teams and Scottish clubs the worst. Celtic and Rangers routinely charged visiting fans 70 euros (USD 77) — the UEFA-mandated maximum for the away section at Champions League games — last season while Bayer Leverkusen asked for just 15 euros (USD 16.50), according to research published Tuesday by Football Supporters Europe. The FSE, UEFA's official fan liaison group, claimed safe standing areas for away fans at European games were key to driving down prices.

The average cost for fans to stand was 28% lower than at Champions League games seated areas.

The average price for an away ticket in the Champions League was 47 euros (USD 51.50) last season. Prices had peaked at 119 euros (USD 130) five years ago

before the Union of European Football Associations capped the ticket price for away fans.

German clubs had four of the five lowest average away prices. Bayern Munich was the exception of the five German teams in the 2022-23 competition.

The FSE wants UEFA to keep up the pricing pressure next season when clubs are set to get more prize money and overall match revenue when the Champions League expands from 32 to 36 teams, with each playing eight games instead of six.

"It is FSE's firm position that clubs have a responsibility to reward the loyalty of travelling fans and to facilitate affordable pricing, especially considering the increase of revenue for all clubs," Football Supporters Europe Executive Director Ronan Evain said in a statement.

The price cap for away fans in the Europa League last season was 45 euros (USD 49) and the average cost was 29 euros (USD 32).

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A fresh date date for Wrestling Federation of India's (WFI) long-pending elections is likely to be announced on Wednesday after the Supreme Court set aside the stay imposed by Punjab and Haryana High Court, a member of the IOA-appointed ad hoc committee said.

An SC bench of justices Abhay S Oka and Pankaj Mishal on Tuesday vacated the stay of the high court. The ad-hoc panel appointed by the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) had moved the apex court against the September 25 order of the HC. "I have spoken the returning officer appointed by the IOA to conduct the elections and he is waiting for the SC order. It is up to him to take a decision on when the election process will start again," ad hoc committee member Bhupender Singh Bajwa told PTI.

Returning officer likely to take decision of WFI poll date on Wednesday: Ad hoc panel's Bajwa

"I think most probably, he (returning officer) will take the decision (on election date) by Wednesday," Bajwa said.

"As far as the ad hoc committee is concerned, we are ready."

The IOA had on April 27 appointed an ad-hoc committee to run wrestling following protests by seven wrestlers, including Olympic medallists Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik and Asian Games gold medallist Vinesh Phogat, who alleged that WFI president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh had sexually harassed female grapplers.

The ad-hoc panel was supposed to hold elections within 45 days.



The world body UWW had on April 28 also warned that it could suspend WFI if the deadline to hold elections was not honoured. UWW carried out the threat by suspending WFI on August 24 for not conducting elections on time.

Former Jammu and Kashmir High Court Chief Justice Mahesh Mittal Kumar was on June 12 appointed as returning officer to hold WFI elections. He had originally set July 11 as the date for the polls.

But the Assam association moved the Gauhati High Court and succeeded in getting a stay on the polls on June 25.

However, the Andhra state

association challenged the decision in the Supreme Court which quashed the Gauhati High Court decision on July 18, paving the way for the conduct of the polls.

The Returning officer then declared August 12 as the new poll date but a day before the elections, Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed the process on an application moved by Haryana Wrestling Association (HWA), which was led by Deepinder Singh Hooda before being suspended by WFI.

HWA had challenged the move to allow Haryana Amateur Wrestling Association to cast votes in the WFI polls.

AUSTRALIA BEAT INDIA BY FIVE WICKETS

OZ reduce margin to 2-1 to stay alive in T20I series

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

Glenn Maxwell's fiery unbeaten hundred carried Australia to a five-wicket win over India in the third T20I here on Tuesday. With this win, Australia managed to cut India's series lead to 2-1 in the five-match rubber. Maxwell made 104 off 48 balls (8x4, 8x6) as the Aussies went past India's 222 for 3 in the last ball of the match. Skipper Matthew Wade remained not out on a crucial 28 off 16 balls. Leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi took two wickets for India. Earlier, Ruturaj Gaikwad's maiden international hundred was the cornerstone of India's big total. Gaikwad made a rollicking unbeaten 123 off 57 balls. Ruturaj Gaikwad displayed brute power and wonderful technique in equal measure with a maiden hundred that propelled India to a commanding 222 for 3 against Australia in the third T20 International here on Tuesday. Gaikwad slammed a career-best 123 not out off just 57 balls



with 13 fours and seven sixes, a first ton by an Indian batter against Australia in T20 Internationals. The 30 runs that Gaikwad took off Glenn Maxwell in the 20th over could prove to be a game-

changer. Skipper Matthew Wade's decision to give a part-time off-spinner 20th over of the innings backfired big-time. On a wicket that had some extra bounce and swing, India had a

shaky start losing their both their in-form batters Yashasvi Jaiswal (6) and Ishan Kishan (0) cheaply after Matthew Wade opted to bowl to make use of the dewy conditions. Skipper Suryakumar Yadav (39;

29b) looked set for a big knock with two sixes and five boundaries before debutant pacer Aaron Hardie dismissed him with a short ball just after the halfway mark. With run-rate not an issue --

eight per over -- they needed someone to anchor their innings, and the Indian vice-captain Gaikwad played the role to perfection. From 13 off 15 balls, the right-hander with orthodox technique, who often drew flak for his slow starts, switched gears after Surya's dismissal, displaying the wide array of shots in his repertoire. His knock was not just about classical drives in the V but also a testament to his brute power. He packed a lot of punch in his pulls and an inside-out maximums. It was a different Gaikwad on display during last six overs. Once he got his furst 50 off 32 balls, he then went berserk, taking another 20 to bring up his maiden triple digit score in the last over of Maxwell. Gaikwad muscled Maxwell over wide long to to bring up his century with a six as he smashed two more in the same over that yielded 30 runs as India amassed 200-plus totals in each of the three T20Is so far. **Brief scores: India:** 222 for 3 in 20 overs (Ruturaj Gaikwad 123 not out, Suryakumar Yadav 39, Tilak Varma 31 not out; Jason Behrendorff 1/12) lost to **Australia:** 225 for 5 in 20 overs (Glenn Maxwell 104 not out, Matthew Wade 28 not out, Ravi Bishnoi 2/32) by 5 wickets.



When Kohli's wicket fell, stadium was quiet like library: Cummins

PTI ■ SYDNEY

Australian captain Pat Cummins couldn't believe his ears when he found a near 100,000 people at Narendra Modi Stadium go pin-drop silence after Virat Kohli's dismissal giving the vibe of a "quiet library" during the World Cup final against India.

Australia won their sixth title beating India by six wickets but many believe that Cummins getting India's No. 1 batter played on, became the turning point of the match. "We're in a huddle after the wicket of Kohli in the final & (Steve) Smith says, Boys, listen to the crowd." And we just took a moment of pause, and it was as quiet as a library, 100,000-plus Indians there & it was so quiet. I'll savour that moment for a long time," Cummins told 'The Age' during an inter-action.

Late, he spoke to reporters and said that to hold the Trophy, it took a lot out of him and his team. "To hold one trophy takes a lot. But, to hold them across formats really shows our amazing coaching group and also the squad of players," Cummins told reporters here on Tuesday during a World Cup event. "You can't do that with 11 players. You need 25 really good players. So, it shows the strength of Australian cricket at the moment and the appetite of the guys to compete whenever they play."

"Everything takes a lot out of you, but the guys keep rocking up and performing, which is as pleasing as anything else."

WORDS LIKE REST AND ROTATIONS GET THROWN AROUND: Workload management might be in vogue in world cricket for start few years but Cummins believes that words like "rest" and "rotation" are loosely thrown around when reality is nobody likes to miss a Test if he is fully fit. Cummins, who has led the Australian team to World Test Championship and ODI World Cup glory in 2023, said that despite a long season, his unit is raring to go during the coming Australian Summer which starts with Test series against Pakistan on December 14.

"Realistically, the word rest and rotated gets thrown around a lot, but you never miss a Test if you are fully fit,"

"While over the last couple of years, we might have been rested from the odd game, the bulk of work we've been able to do is because of those small gaps. If we are fully fit, we won't be resting."

He recalled that as pacers, the players are bound to feel some niggle somewhere or the other but they should not be bogged down by it.

"You are always dealing with something as a bowler. When your hamstring starts to feel, then you feel a pain somewhere else, then you wake up the next day, and it's moved somewhere else," Cummins continued.

Currently, a second-string Aussie squad is currently competing in a five-match T20I series in India.



NZ offspinner Phillips takes 4 wickets to reduce Bangladesh to 310-9 after Mahmudul's 86

AP ■ SYLHET (BANGLADESH)

Offspinner Glenn Phillips claimed 4-37 in only his second match as New Zealand reduced Bangladesh to 310-9 on day one of the opening test on Tuesday. Phillips' haul helped the visitors gain an edge after Bangladesh won the toss and opted to bat first on a pitch ideal for batting.

Bangladesh made a good start with opener Mahmudul Hasan playing serenely to put the side in the driving seat in the first session but his teammates' rash shots undermined his effort. Mahmudul made a team-best 86 off 166 balls with 11 boundaries. He shared stands of 39 for the first wicket with Zakir Hasan and 53 for the second with Najmul Hossain Shanto as Bangladesh made steady progress. Shanto, who led the home team in the absence of Shakib Al Hasan, was dismissed just before lunch after playing an attacking 37 off 35 deliveries. He was particularly harsh on left-arm spinner Ajaz Patel (2-76), hitting him for three sixes to entertain the sparse crowd. Patel, one of only three bowlers ever to take 10 wickets in a single test innings, gave the visitors an early breakthrough when he dismissed Zakir Hasan for 12 in the 13th over with a delivery that turned sharply to rattle the stumps. Shanto targeted Patel and opened with a six over mid-on.

And he used his feet effectively to dominate New Zealand's other spinners — Ish Sodhi and Glenn Phillips. But he paid for his aggressive batting when he charged a full toss from Phillips and skied a catch to Kane Williamson in the deep, making the score 92-2.

Mahmudul and Mominul dug in to defy the New Zealand bowlers who were relentless in attack and Mahmudul raised his fourth test fifty, driving Patel for a boundary through cover off 93 balls. As the innings seemed to turn in Bangladesh's favour, Phillips made the crucial breakthrough when Mominul's attempted cut resulted in a catch behind the wicket, ending the 88-run partnership. Mominul scored 37 off 78 with four fours. Mahmudul fell in the next over. After playing with soft hands throughout his stay, he went after legspinner Shodi, only to be caught by Daryl Mitchell at slip.

With Bangladesh at 184-4, the onus was on veteran Mushfiqur Rahim to lead the side but he needlessly charged Patel to be caught by Williamson at deep mid-off for 12.

Debutant Shahadat Hossain appeared to be solid against the spinners but the rash shots of Mehidy Hasan against pacer Kyle Jamieson (2-52), further deepened Bangladesh's crisis. Shahadat was undone by a slower delivery from Phillips as he chipped straight to short mid-wicket after adding 24.

PCB in deadlock with ACC on compensation for flights during Asia Cup

PTI ■ KARACHI

Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) was on Tuesday caught in a deadlock with the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) for demanding additional compensation on organising chartered flights between Pakistan and Sri Lanka during the Asia Cup, which it co-hosted in August-September.

The Asia Cup 2023 was organised in a hybrid model in Pakistan and Sri Lanka after the ACC accepted PCB's hybrid model, with majority of the matches organised in the island nation. A reliable source in the PCB informed PTI that apart from seeking the tournament hosting fees - around \$250,000 - as well as shares from ticketing and sponsorship fees, they have also demanded additional compensation.

The source said, "The additional money is for expenses incurred on renting chartered

flights for teams between Pakistan and Sri Lanka and other extra expenses like additional hotel and transport fees, which were not included in the initial budget for the Asia Cup."

The source, however, informed that the ACC is not willing to pay additional expenses to the PCB since it believes that Pakistan had agreed for matches to be held in Sri Lanka under its hybrid model, in return for hosting four games of the Asia Cup at home.

A Sri Lanka-based company named Classic Travel was paid \$281,000 for arranging four chartered flights to and from between Pakistan and the island nation - something that PCB's Cricket Management Committee (CMC) was not comfortable paying upfront as advance.

The tournament was moved to a hybrid model after India refused to play in Pakistan citing security reasons.

PTI ■ MUMBAI

A promising bunch of India Women's 'A' players will look to utilise the most of the opportunity when they face their counterparts from England in a three-match T20 series, starting here on Wednesday.

The second and third matches will be played on December 1 and 3. All the three matches will be held at the Wankhede Stadium here. The three matches between the 'A' sides of India and England will be followed by a three-match T20I series and a one-off Test between the senior women's teams of the two countries. All the matches between the seniors sides will also be held in Mumbai, beginning with the first T20I on December 6.

It is, in fact, going to be a busy season for the Indian women cricketers. The contests against the Englishwomen will be fol-

lowed by a long tour of Australia women to India, comprising a one-off Test, three ODIs and three T20Is.

With the India women's senior squad yet to be announced, the 16-member India A side, led by Kerala's Minnu Mani, will have extra motivation to do well in order to push for their selection in the senior team.

The 24-year-old all-rounder Mani has been given a huge responsibility, considering that she only made her international debut four months ago during India's tour of Bangladesh in July.

Fans to get free entry for India women's cricket team's matches in Mumbai

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Fans have been spared the hassle of running around for match tickets during Indian women's cricket team's upcoming fixtures against England and Australia at the Wankhede Stadium and DY Patil Stadium as the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) on Tuesday made the entry free for all those matches.

The cricket fest here will start with India Women's A team taking on their England counterparts in a three-match T20 series from Wednesday, with all matches to be played at the Wankhede Stadium on November 29, December 1 and 3 from 1:30pm.

India women's senior team will then take on England in a three-match T20I series starting on December 6, and the second and third match will be played on December 9 and 10 respectively at the Wankhede Stadium. These games will have a 7:00pm start.

"MCA president Amol Kale and the apex council unanimously passed the decision to encourage support for women's cricket," said secretary Ajinkya Naik.

"Unlocking the gates for free entry not only fills the stadium but also opens the door to a world of empowerment through women's T20 cricket," added Naik.

India and England will then engage in a one-off Test to be played at the DY Patil from December 14-17.

India will begin their home series against the Australian Women's team with a one-off Test to be played at the Wankhede Stadium from December 21 to 24, followed by a three-match ODI series.

While the first ODI will be played on December 28, the second will be on December 30 and the third ODI will be on January 2, 2024 with the Wankhede Stadium serving as the host for all these matches, starting at 1:30pm.

India Women's A team look to utilise most of opportunity against England counterparts



Mani also played for Delhi Capitals in the inaugural Women's Premier League. The focus will also be on

future India prospect, Karnataka's Shreyanka Patil who had a promising run in the WPL earlier this year and also became

the first Indian player ever to sign up for the Women's Caribbean Premier League.

Among those to watch out for will be the young and dashing Punjab batter Kanika Ahuja, who delivered an all-round show — 30 runs and two wickets — in the final of the ACC's Women's Emerging Teams Cup.

Mannat Kashyap's progress as a young off-spinner will also be under watch and among batters, the likes of G Trisha, Dinesh Vrinda and Gnanananda Divya will be expected to deliver the goods. While the visiting England A are yet to announce their squad for the series against

India A, they are coming here after a training camp in Oman.

Among those who featured in the camp were exciting young fast bowler Mahika Gaur, Charlie Dean and Lauren Ficker, who took a handful of wickets for England against Sri Lanka in their recent series.

India Women's A: Minnu Mani (c), Kanika Ahuja, Uma Chetry (wk), Shreyanka Patil, G Trisha, Vrinda Dinesh, Gnanananda Divya, Arushi Goel, Disha Kasat, Rashmi Kanojiya, Mannat Kashyap, Anusha Baredy, Monica Patel, Kashavee Gautham, Jintimani Kalita, Prakashika Naik.

Don't keep so much hopes that people end up with broken hearts: Kapil

PTI ■ GURUGRAM

Excess hype often leads to broken hearts and hence it is always necessary to strike a balance, legendary Kapil Dev said on Tuesday in context of India's six-wicket defeat at the hands of Australia in the World Cup final earlier this month. The 1983 World Cup winning skipper said that the Indian fans should refrain from creating too much pressure and treat cricket just as another sport.

"Don't keep so much hopes that people end up with broken hearts. We need to keep a balance. Other teams also came to India to compete in the World Cup. We shouldn't create so much hype. We need to look at sports

as sports only. Whoever plays good on the day, we need to respect that. We are too emotional," Kapil said on the sidelines of the inaugural tee off ceremony of Kapil Dev Grant Thornton Invitational golf tournament here.

India won 10 games, most of which were lopsided as contests, before Australia turned the tables on them at the Narendra Modi Stadium on November 19.

For past 10 years, India have lost seven knock-out games out of eight ICC tournaments that they took part between 2014 to 2023. Kapil doesn't know if the pressure of occasion gets to them.

"I think today's players can answer

how much pressure they feel. We can only feel," he said. However there are shortcomings which needs to be taken care of, Kapil stated, without specifying what they were.

"If they (India) win it feels really good. There are shortcomings which we need to address. It is not that you won't have shortcomings after a win. What's most important is to rectify them," the 63-year-old said.

He urged fans to celebrate what India achieved rather than what they missed out. "They (India) won 10 matches in a row. Is it not enough? We should look at other teams as well. We shouldn't compare anyone. What is important is to see whether they played good cricket or not. We



played very good cricket. Final day was not ours so be it," the 1983-World Cup-winning captain added. Kapil cited the examples of South Africa and defending champions England to prove his point.

"We should look at performance of other teams as well like, South Africa, England who were the defending champions, they finished last (seventh)." Kapil also lauded Prime Minister Narendra Modi's gesture to visit the Indian dressing room and console the players after the final loss in Ahmedabad on November 19.

"If the Prime Minister doesn't encourage, who will? He is the No.1 man in the country and if he supports, it feels good," he said.

The former all-rounder also refrained from commenting on Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma's future in T20 Internationals.

"This is selectors job and we should leave it to them. It is not good to comment on everything. They are responsible and what they feel good, they should do," he said.

The second edition of the Kapil Dev Grant Thornton Invitational golf tournament, sanctioned by Professional Golf Tour of India, will have prize purse of Rs 2 crore this year, double the amount from last year.

Title holder Varun Parikh will try to defend his title in the tournament beginning on Wednesday at the DLF

Golf and Country Club here.

Kapil said some former cricketers including Murali Karthik, Madan Lal, Yuvraj Singh, Harbhajan Singh are expected to be present on the final day of the event on December 3.

He also said he would request Sachin Tendulkar to grace the occasion.

"Already the prize money has been doubled. It feels good that some former cricketers will be coming for the event. Why can't cricketers play other sports?"

"If we can support other sport apart from cricket, why not? In India, there is not just one game," said the man, who has been an amateur golfer since his retirement.