

OPINION 6
HISTORIC LEGAL BATTLE
UNFOLDS OVER GYANVAPI

WORLD 8
CLUSTER OF QUAKES
RATTLE TAIWAN

MONEY 10
MARKETS CLIMB FOR 3RD DAY
ON FIRM GLOBAL CUES

Published From
DELHI LUCKNOW BHOPAL BHUBANESWAR
RANCHI RAIPUR CHANDIGARH
DEHRADUN HYDERABAD VIJAYWADA

Late City Vol.19 Issue 112
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

CHANDIGARH, WEDNESDAY APRIL 24, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹2

Established 1864

the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com

PANT'S
CAPTAINCY
UNDER LENS
12 SPORTS



Modi takes Hanuman Chalisa dig at Congress



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated by BJP leaders during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections in Tonk district Rajasthan on Tuesday

it could not fulfil its intention," Modi claimed.

"In 2011, the Congress tried to implement it throughout the country. They played a game of snatching away the rights given to SC, ST and OBC and giving them to others for vote bank politics. The Congress did this deliberately and without caring about the Constitution and B R Ambedkar," he said. Modi alleged when the BJP Government in Karnataka got an opportunity, the first thing it did was to abolish the Muslim quota which was created by snatching it from ST and SC. The Prime Minister said the constitutional limit for reservation was ending in 2020 and he had extended the reservation of Dalit and tribals for another 10 years. The Congress and INDIA Bloc, Modi said, were peeved after he exposed their vote bank and appeasement politics in his recent address in Rajasthan's Banswara.

Attacking the Congress, Modi said, "Even listening to Hanuman Chalisa becomes crime under Congress rule" and referred to an incident in Congress-ruled Karnataka where a shopkeeper was beaten up for listening to Hanuman Chalisa. He said during the Congress rule in Rajasthan, those who pelted stones on Ram Navmi procession were given protection and restrictions were imposed on such procession. However, after the formation of the BJP Government in the State, no one has the courage to question faith.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAIPUR/RAIPUR/NEW DELHI

In his two different election rallies on Tuesday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi continued his attack on the Congress, addressing the current controversy over wealth redistribution, a dispute over forced Constitution in Goa, and alleging that the grand old party never allows the recitation of Hanuman Chalisa and the celebration of Ram Navmi within the Congress-ruled States. In his Rajasthan tour, Modi said the Congress tried to extend

reservation on the basis of religion and give it to Muslims, and once again accused the party of hatching a "deep conspiracy" to snatch people's wealth and distribute it among "select" people. Modi also charged that it is difficult to follow one's faith under the Congress and that even listening to Hanuman Chalisa becomes crime under that party's rule. His remarks come on a day when the country is celebrating Hanuman Jayanti.

Addressing an election rally in Tonk, the Prime Minister said as soon as the Congress formed the Government at the Centre in 2004, one of its first task was to reduce the SC/ST reservation in Andhra Pradesh and give it to Muslims. "Modi is giving you a guarantee with an open heart that reservation for Dalits and backward tribals will neither end nor will it be allowed to be divided in the name of religion," he said. Amid a row over his 'redistribution of wealth'

remarks, the Prime Minister again charged that the Congress will snatch people's wealth and distribute it to select people. Modi said the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had given a speech in which he had said that Muslims have the first right on the resources of the country. "There was a pilot project which the Congress wanted to try in the entire country. Between 2004 and 2010, the Congress tried to implement Muslim reservation in Andhra Pradesh four times but due to legal hurdles and the awareness of the Supreme Court,



Gusty winds swept the national Capital as parts of Delhi received light rain on Tuesday, bringing respite to people
Ranjan Dimri/Pioneer

Asia worst hit by disasters in 2023: WMO report

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Last year, Asia faced the most disasters in the world as 79 events associated with extreme weather, climate, and water-related hazards, affecting over nine million people in the region and claiming over 2,000 lives, a new report by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has said. Thus, underscoring the urgent need for concerted action to mitigate impacts of climate change and protect our planet for future generations. The report 'State of the Climate in Asia 2023' which was released on Tuesday on 'World Earth Day' noted that Asia has warmed faster than the global average and the warming trend has nearly doubled since the 1961-1990 period. The accelerating rate of key climate change indicators such as surface temperatures, glacier retreat and sea level rise will have major consequences for Asia, its economy and ecosystems, the report warned. In India alone, severe heatwaves in April and June resulted in about 110

reported fatalities due to heatstroke in 2023, said the report adding in August, some States in India experienced a record-high monthly mean temperature, as well as an unprecedented rainfall deficit for the month.

Continued on Page 2

Delhi hit by freak weather

NEW DELHI: Strong winds and rains that lashed the national Capital on Tuesday provided much-needed relief for Delhiites, offering respite from the scorching hot weather. The sudden atmospheric change brought down the temperature, even as the weather officials have predicted no heat wave conditions for the next seven days. The Met office has forecast partly cloudy sky with light rain/thunderstorm with hail and squall on Wednesday.



DGCA directs airlines to let kids sit with parents

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has asked airlines to ensure children below the age of 12 are seated with at least one of their parents or guardians who are travelling on the same PNR. The directive comes against the backdrop of instances of children below the age of 12 years were not seated along with their parents or guardians during flights. "Airlines shall ensure that children up to the age of 12 years are allocated seats with at least one of their parents/guardians, who are travelling on the same PNR and a record of the same shall be maintained," the DGCA said. In this regard, the DGCA has revised the Air Transport Circular titled, 'unbundle of services and fees by scheduled airlines' as per which, some services like zero baggage, preferential seating, meals/snack/drink charges, charges for carriage of musical instruments etc. have been allowed. "Such unbundled services are provided on 'opt-in' basis by airlines and are not mandatory in nature. There is also a provision for auto seat assignment to the passengers who have not selected any seat for web check-in before scheduled departure.

Kejriwal given insulin in Tihar jail



SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was administered a "low dose" of insulin on Tuesday in Tihar jail after his blood sugar level spiked. Meanwhile, a Rouse Avenue court on Tuesday extended the judicial custody of Kejriwal and BRS leader K Kavitha in a money laundering case related to the alleged excise scam till May 7. "Kejriwal was given two units of low dose insulin on Monday evening on the advice of AIIMS doctors," a Tihar official said. His blood sugar level reading was found to be 217 around 7 pm, following which the doctors at Tihar looking after him decided to give him the insulin, the official said. The AIIMS specialists, during a video conference with the Chief Minister on April 20, had advised the Tihar doctors that insulin could be given to him if his sugar level crosses a certain

level, officials added. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) welcomed this news received on the occasion of Hanuman Jayanti and said the development was the result of the blessings of the deity. Delhi Cabinet minister Atishi said in a post on X in Hindi, "Jai Bajrang Bali! Good news received on Hanuman Jayanti. Tihar administration finally gave insulin to Arvind Kejriwal. This is the result of the blessings of Hanuman ji and the struggle of the people of Delhi. Even in this time of struggle, the blessings of Bajrang Bali remain on all of us." Meanwhile, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva alleged that the AAP leaders "only political hope" was to "create public sympathy" over the health of Kejriwal in view of the Lok Sabha elections. "No doubt Arvind Kejriwal is a diabetic but his sugar is under control in jail as he didn't raise demand for insulin in the video consultation with the doctors of AIIMS," he said. Rebuking the charges, the CM, in a letter to the jail administration, said he has raised the issue of insulin for 10 days, every day, multiple times. Delhi Cabinet Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj who participated in an event in his constituency to celebrate Hanuman Jayanti. A person dressed as Lord Hanuman was carrying vials of insulin with Bharadwaj carrying a mace ('gada') as they travelled in the area atop a vehicle. Vials of insulin were stuck on the mace.

UNCONDITIONAL PUBLIC APOLOGY

In wake of on going matter before the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India (Writ Petition C. No. 645/2022), we in our individual capacity as well as on behalf of the Company, unconditionally apologise for the non-compliance or disobedience of directions/orders of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.

We unconditionally extend the apology for holding meeting/press conference dated 22.11.2023. We earnestly apologize for the mistake made in publishing our advertisements and it is our whole-hearted commitment that such errors will not be repeated. We undertake to abide by directions and instructions of the Hon'ble Court with due care and utmost sincerity. We undertake to uphold the majesty of the court and comply with applicable laws and directions of the Hon'ble Court of law/relevant authorities.

Sincerely,

**Patanjali Ayurved Limited,
Acharya Balkrishna,
Swami Ramdev,
Haridwar, Uttarakhand**

Two Christian sects not with BJP

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

With hardly four days to go for the Lok Sabha election in Kerala, two prominent Christian sects have come out against the BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre. On Monday, Joseph Mar Gregorios, the head of the Jacobite Church, declared that the followers of his sect would vote en masse for candidates fielded by the CPI(M)-led LDF. "The LDF Government in Kerala have always supported and helped the Church. The CPI(M) has stood with the demands of the Church and hence we are obliged and bound to help them by electing the LDF candidates," said the Jacobite Church. But he was evasive when asked about the Congress candidate Benni Behanan, the



Congress candidate and a member of the Jacobite Church who is pitted against two Hindu candidates fielded by the CPI(M) and the NDA at Chhakkudi constituency. "Let the believers take their own decision after studying the ground realities.

The interests of the Church should prevail," said Gregorios. He also said the Jacobite Church has a lot of issues regarding the control of Churches and it is the CPI(M) that had always stood with the sect. Meanwhile, the Latin Catholic Church, a dominant

section along coastal Kerala declared that it would never support the BJP. The Kerala Region Latin Catholic Council, the apex decision making body of the sect declared on Monday that the Central Government has subverted the missionary works (proselytisation, evangelisation and indoctrination) by holding back the funds meant for the Latin Catholic Church. Even after assuring that the funds meant for the Church would not be held back, the Central Government has withheld two more accounts and this has made missionary works impossible. The training of young pastors and priests too have been stuck because of the delay in releasing the funds," said the KRLCC in a release issued on Monday.



Classifieds

PUBLIC NOTICE

We Sanjay Verma S/o Rajinder Verma and Sapna Verma W/o Sanjay Verma both R/O House No. 23393, Sector -68, Kumbra, Mohali, SAS Nagar, Punjab, declare that Our daughter Anchal Verma is out of our control, therefore we disown her from all our movable and immovable properties. If anybody deals with her will do so at their own risk & responsibility.

We Dhiraj Singh Sajwan S/o Budhi Singh & Pushpa Sajwan W/o Dhiraj Singh Sajwan H.No-1474, Rosewood Estate Phase-2 Tehsil Derabassi Distt SAS Nagar (Pb.) Informat that our Son Siddharth Sajwan is out of our control . So we disown him from our movable /immovable properties. If anybody deals with him at their own risk.

I, Swaran Singh S/o S. Hukum Singh R/O VPO Jansui Distt Ambala, inform that my son Buta Singh & his wife Manpreet Kaur are out of my control. So I disown both of them from my movable and immovable property. I and my family will not be responsible for any kind of transaction or legal or illegal work.

I, Shakuntla Gautam w/o Lt. Krishan Lal Gautam R/O H.No 1697 HBC Sector 24, Panipat, declare that my husband & I's name in our son's (Divyam), 10th std. marksheet is Shakuntla & Kishan Kumar, which is wrong. The right names are Shakuntla Gautam & Krishan Lal Gautam which are also mentioned in our other records & Divyam's 10th std. marksheet should be corrected.

I, Indreep Kaur (PR Card Number 92484810 And Passport Number X9933559) D/O Darshan Singh W/O Satnam Singh Gill (PR Card Number 1104377929 And Passport Number N8770633) Formerly R/O Vpo. Galib Kalan, Ludhiana, Punjab 142036 India And Presently Residing At 18-1920 Hugh Allan Drive, Kamloops, BC, V1S1Y5 Canada Do Hereby Changed My Name From Indreep Kaur To Indreep Kaur Gill With Immediate Effect.

I, Jagdish S/o Omparkash R/O Village Devru, Near Wood Academy, Rishikul School, Sonipat declare that my son Pardeep and his wife Komal both are out of my control. So I disown them from my all movable/immovable property. Any body deal with them at their own risk.

I, Sohan Lal S/o Gehna Ram R/O Village Brass, Sub Tehsil Nissing, Distt. Karnal declare that my son Paras & his wife Richa Verma are my out of control. I evict both of them from my movable and immovable properties. In future the person having dealings and relations with them will himself be responsible. There will be no responsibility for me or my family.

I, No. 15161593P EX NK Gurpreet Singh resident of Vill. Behbawal Chhanian P.O. Nangal Bihalan Teh. Dasuya Distt. Hoshiarpur (PB) declare that name's spelling Amarjit Kaur and DOB 08/02/1986 in my service records. According to her School Certificate and Aadhaar Card correct name's spelling is Amarjeet Kaur and DOB 01/02/1984.

I, Jatinder Kamra S/o Sh. Sohan Lal R/O Nagpal Nagri Malout have declare that change my wife name Jyoti Kamra to Jyoti. My son Vasu name change to Vasu Kamra and his Date of birth written as 5.8.2004 but correct Date of birth 5.8.2005.

I, Girdhari Lal Gupta S/o Brahm Perkash Gupta R/O Flat No C-301, Gillco Parkhills, Sec 126, Airport Road, Kharar (SAS Nagar) declare that in my Passport No. Y1362134 My father's name wrongly entered as Baraham Parkash, but my father's correct name is Brahm Perkash Gupta. So amended my father's name in my passport.

I, No 5351859P Rank Hav (Clerk) Name Rajeshwar Singh Salaria resident of V.P.O- Jangal, Tehsil and District - Pathankot, Punjab declare I have changed my mother name Avdesh Kumari (existing name of mother as per NOK Records/ service documents) to Abdesb Kumari (proposed/adopted new and correct name) vide affidavit No IN-PB0198418942W dated 01.04.2024 before the Executive Magistrate at Pathankot.

I, Manraj Singh S/o Gurpreet Singh R/O 58, Kissan Enclave, Bhattian Khanna Tehsil Khanna (Distt. Ludhiana) declare that my name has been mentioned as Monoraj Singh in Revenue Record. That Manraj Singh and Monoraj Singh is one and same person. That Above said both names are mine.

I Nirmal Singh, Ex No-69348000, Rank- Hav Resident Of Vpo- Dher, Tehsil- Anandpur Sahib, District-Rupnagar, State - Punjab Declare That I Change My Daughter's Name Bajjit Kaur To Bajleat Kaur In Army Records.

I, Harpreet Kaur legally spouse of Jc-511708H Nb Sub Gurmeet Singh resident of H.No.1266, W.No. 08, Street No. 02, Kailash Nagar, Doraha, Distt. Ludhiana, State Punjab- 141421 hereby declare that my date of birth 02-08-1985 erroneously recorded in service record/ documents of my husband. My correct date of birth is 20 Aug 1984 vide Affidavit dated 23/04/2024 before Magistrate Jalandhar.

I, Army No: Jc-588762W, Rank: Sub, Name- Rinchen Tundup Posted At Unit: Ladakh Scouts Regt Centre C/O 56 Apo Have Changed The Name Of My Daughter From Stanzin Stophchen To Stanzin Stobchen Vide Affidavit No 52aa 913486 Dated 23.04.2024

I Rajbir Kaur Mother Of No. 19006454P L/NK R/O Village Sohool Thati, Tehsil Tarn Distt Ram Taran Declare That In My Son Army Record My Dob Is Wrongly Record As 01.01.1973. My Correct Dob Is 01.01.1956

I Jaspal Singh Father Of No. 19006454P L/NK R/O Village Sohool Thati, Tehsil Tarn Distt Ram Taran Declare That In My Son Army Record My Dob Is Wrongly Record As 01.01.1972. My Correct Dob Is 01.01.1953

I, Ishay Dolma Is Legally Wedded Spouse Of Army No: Jc-588762W, RANK: Sub, Name- Rinchen Tundup Posted At Unit: Ladakh Scouts Regt Centre C/O 56 Apo Have Changed My Name From Ishay Dolma To Eshey Dolma Vide Affidavit No 52aa 913487 Dated 23.04.2024

I Kushla Kondal W/O Sh. Wali Singh Kondal R/O House No- 357, Sector- 10 A, Gurgaon, Haryana, Declare That In My Husband Army (Navy) Record My Name Mentioned As Kushla Kondal, But My Actual Name Is Kushla Devi.

I Jagdeep Kumar Batra S/O Avinash Chander Batra R/O # 4066, Chhanuwal Street, Sri Muktsar Sahib, Do Hereby Solemnly Affirm And Declare That In The School Record Of My Minor Son Divyam Batra, My And His Mother Name Wrongly Enter As Jagdeep Kumar And Neha Instead Of Our Correct Name Jagdeep Kumar Batra And Neha Batra All Concerned May Kindly Note.

I Manjeet Singh S/O Jarnail Singh R/O Vill. Phullewala P.O. Rupana Teh. & Distt. Sri Muktsar Sahib State Punjab Pincode 152032, Have Changed Name Of My Son From Yuvraj Singh Bhullar To Yuvraj Singh Vide Affidavit No. Pb05984357255514w Dated 15-04-2024 Before Notry Public Sri Muktsar Sahib (Punjab)

I Rattan Lal Garg S/O Ram Chander Garg R/O H.No- 512 First Floor Sector- 12 Panchkula, Declare That I Disown My Daughter Shikha Garg From My All Moveable- Immovable Properties. Anybody Dealing With Her At Their Own Risk.

I Bharat Singh Bhandari S/O Late Himmat Singh Bhandari R/O H.No- 3968 Mauli Complex Manimajra, Chandigarh, Declare that My Son Sujal Bhandari Is Out Of My Control, So I Disown Him From My All Moveable- Immovable Properties. Anybody Dealing With Him At Their Own Risk And Responsibility.

I, Sahab Singh S/o Gurdial Singh, R/O House No. 283, Street No. 5, Phase 1, Saraswati Colony, Kheri Markanda, Part 378, Tehsil Thanesar, District Kurukshetra, Haryana, have evicted my son Parth from all my movable-immovable properties, as he is out of my control. Anybody dealing with him at their own risk.

I, Balwant Singh S/o Pritam Singh R/O Surmi Tehsil Pehowa Distt. Kurukshetra My son Dharam Singh And his Wife Ravinder Kaur is out of my Control. I, disown them from all my moveable and immovable properties. If Anybody deals with him at Their Own risk.

We, Sukhwinder Singh S/o Sh. Tarlok Singh and Smt. Maninder Kaur W/o Sh. Sukhwinder Singh both R/O House No. 1802, Phase-7, S.A.S. Nagar, (Mohali), Punjab declare that our son Harkirat Singh and his wife Smt. Kanwardeep Kaur are out of our control and have no respect for us. So, we disown them from all our moveable/immovable properties. Anybody dealing with them will do so at his/her own risk.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Parul W/o Amar Sahuwala R/O 15/33/01, Street No. 2, Old Court Colony Sirsa have changed my name from Parul to Parul Sahuwala.

Army No. JC-312663W SUB K Gunasekaran of unit Headquarter Chief Engineer Pathankot Zone declares that his son's name G Dhanush Kumar which is mentioned wrong in his service record. His son's correct name is Dhanush Kumar G vide affidavit no. IN-PB07102414005566 d. 18 April 2024.

I, Hadisa Khatun Mondal am spouse of No 15333799A Rank HAV Name Ruhul Amin Mondal present residing at 16 Engr Br Regt (PMS), Chandimandir Cantt, Panchkula, Haryana have changed my Name from Hadisa Khatun to Hadisa Khatun Mondal vide Affidavit dt 22 Apr 2024 before Attested by Executive Magistrate, Panchkula, Haryana

I, Shobh Ram Panwar S/o Zile Singh Panwar R/O 1107, Sector-23, Sonipat have changed my name to Shobh Ram for all purposes.

I, No. 3992414H MACPS Nb Sub Faqir Singh (Retd) son of Sh. Shri Ram resident of Village Alipur, PO Khanpur, Tehsil Mukerian, Distt Hoshiarpur (Pb), have changed name of my son from Rohin Dadwal to Rohan Dadwal. Concerned note.

I, Jaswinder Singh S/o Karnail Singh R/O Vill. Nangal Isher Distt. Hoshiarpur Pin Code 144208 Punjab have changed my name from Jaswinder Singh to Jaswinder Singh Bariana. Concerned note.

I, Meena Kumari W/o Satnam Singh R/O VPO Manko Distt. Jalandhar Punjab declare that my minor son name Dimanshu Singh. Singh is surname and Dimanshu is given name. Concerned note.

I, Rekha W/o Shamsher Singh Sangwan R/O 909, Munda Majra, Ward No. 9, Jagadhri, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Rekha to Rekha Sangwan.

I, Shamsher Sangwan S/o Mam Chand Sangwan R/O 909, Munda Majra, Ward No. 9, Jagadhri, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Shamsher Sangwan to Shamsher Singh Sangwan.

I, Army No. 3010179P, Rank NK Sunit Manna S/o Anukul Manna presently posting at Duty Company Adm Battalion, R. R. C. Fatehgarh, Farrukhabad, permanent residence Village Sibpur, South 24 Parmanas (West Bengal) declare that in my Sheetroll (Service Record) my wife's name recorded as Moutima Manna. her actual name is Moutima Dinda Manna. Affidavit no. 90AE787354 dated 29.02.2024 before Notary, Fatehgarh-Farrukhabad.

I, Ravi Bhagat s/o Sh. Suka Oron, R/O # 172, Sector 7, Panchkula, Haryana have changed my name from Ravi Bhagat to Guna Oraon.

I, Harminder Singh Walia @ Harminder Paul Singh @ Harminder Pal Walia s/o Ranjit Singh Walia, Baloon Bazar, Dalhousie Tehsil/Distt Chamba Himachal Pradesh have changed my name to Harminder Pal Singh. Concerned note.

I, Balwinder Kumar S/o Jugal Kishor R/O 375, Camp Adarsh Nagar, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Balwinder Kumar to Balwinder Kumar.

I, Aaditya Yadav S/o Milkesh Kumar R/O 144, Friends Colony, Yamuna Nagar have changed my name from Aaditya Yadav to Aditya Kumar.

I, Lakshman Prasad Father of Ranjeet Kumar R/O #1223-B, Sector 47-B, Chandigarh have changed my name from Lakshman Prasad to Lakshman Prasad vide Affidavit Dated 20-04-2024 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Dipak Kumar Maity Father of Chandan Maity R/O #13, Jarnail Enclave, Phase-2, Zirakpur have changed my name from Dipak Kumar Maity to Dipak Maity vide Affidavit Dated 22-04-2024 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, Binrar Bhaskar Tukaram Father of Aaradhy R/O #02, Sec-B, Phase-II, Defence Colony, Ambala Cantt - 133010 have changed my Daughter name from them from all my moveable and immovable properties. If Anybody deals with him at Their Own risk.

I, Payal Sadgir Spouse of Binnar Bhaskar Tukaram R/O #02, Sec-B, Phase-II, Defence Colony, Ambala Cantt - 133010 have changed my name from Payal Sadgir to Payal Bhaskar Binnar vide Affidavit Dated 22-04-2024 before Notary, Distt. Court Chandigarh.

I, hitherto known as Palak Lamba D/O Indeerjeet Lamba W/o Gaurav Maggu, residing at H.No.300, Brahmampuri, Latheri Road, Khanna, District Ludhiana, Punjab-141401, have changed my name and shall hereafter be known as Sanchi Maggu.

I, Jasvir Kaur w/o Sh. Pal Singh R/O 55- Mindha Majra, SAS Nagar, Mohali (Punjab) have changed my namefrom Jasvir Kaur to Jasvir Kaur Gill.

I, Channandeep Singh S/o Sarabjit Singh R/O H.No. 212 Ravya, Baba Bakala, Amritsar, Punjab- 143112 have changed my name from Channandeep Singh to Singh is my surname and Channandeep is my given name.

I, Meena Behal W/o Avnish Kumar R/O 1235, Gali Rajpura, Near Kessar Da Dhaba, Amritsar, Punjab have changed my name from Meena Behal to Meena Rani.

I, Rajni, W/o Sh. Ved Parkash, # 1538/1, Sector 30 B, Chandigarh have changed my name to Geeta.

I, Suraj Prakash S/o Pritam Dass # 879, Sector 47-A, Chandigarh have my name to Suraj Parkash.

I, Suman W/O Ram Babu Mishra # 591, Sector 16-D, Chandigarh have changed my name to Suman Mishra.

I, Sudesh W/o Ashok Kumar Verma r/o #206/6, Khatarwada Mohalla, Shahabad Markanda, Distt. Kurukshetra have changed my name from Sudesh to Sudesh Verma. In future, I will be known as Sudesh Verma.

I, Kamaljeet Singh Billing s/o Nirmal Singh r/o Flat No 206, Block No. 8, Ward No 10, Shivgati Enclave, Baba Apartment, Kharar have changed my name to Kamaljeet Singh.

I, Vandana Khanna W/o Sh. Mandeep Singh R/O Flat No.19, 2nd floor, M.S. Enclave, Near Vetnery Hospital, Dhakoli, Zirakpur Distt. SAS Nagar (Mohali) Punjab, have changed my name to Vandana.

I, Devinder Kaur W/o No. 14380397X Hav (Late) Bhulla Singh R/O Ward No. 10, Bagowal Colony, Mukerian, PO & Tehsil Mukerian, Distt Hoshiarpur (Pb) have changed my name from Devinder Kaur to Davinder Kaur. My correct date of birth is 08.05.1965. Concerned note.

I, Smt. Narinder Kaur W/o 3375979A Ex Nk (TS) Sukhwinder Singh R/O Vill. Khurdan PO Garhiwala Tehsil & Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed my date of birth from 15-06-1966 to 31-05-1959. Concerned note.

I, No. 4478183A Ex L/Nk Raghvir Singh S/o Shri Moti Ram R/O Vill. Dehriyan PO Dharampur Tehsil & Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed the name of my son from Manpreet Singh to Manpreet. Concerned note.

I, Smt. Kishna W/o No. 1514054L Late Hav (Honey Nb Sub) Munsha Singh R/O Vill. Harkhowal PO Dhakowal Tehsil & Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed my name from Kishna to Krishna. Concerned note.

I, Smt. Bimala Devi W/o No. 1554316Y Late Nk (TS) Balbir Singh R/O VPO Ganeshpur Tehsil Garhshankar Distt. Hoshiarpur Punjab have changed my name from Bimala Devi to Bimia Devi. Concerned note.

I, Nirmila Devi W/o Chain Ram R/O Village Upper Baith Post office-Bhadraina Tehsil - Bajjnath, Bheth Upperli Kangra Himachal Pradesh have changed my name from Nirmila Devi to Narmo Devi.

I, No. 14839896A Rank NK/MT Name Harishchandra Kumar Singh R/O Village-Kochha Toili. (Namkum), Po- Namkum, Tehsil- Namkum, District- Ranchi, State - Jharkhand-834010 In My Army Service Record My Mother's Chhoti Devi Date Of Birth Wrongly Mentioned As 04.06.1973 While Her Correct Date Of Birth Is 20.11.1976 As Per Her Aadhar Card. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As 20.11.1976 In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, No. 14839896A Rank NK/MT Name Harishchandra Kumar Singh R/O Village-Kochha Toili. (Namkum), Po- Namkum, Tehsil- Namkum, District- Ranchi, State - Jharkhand-834010 In My Army Service Record My Mother's Eklavya Singh's Date Of Birth Wrongly Mentioned As 24/08/2016. While His Correct Date Of Birth Is 06/02/2019 As Per His All Government Documents. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As 06/02/2019 In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, Sunita Singh Is Legally Wedded Spouse Of No. 14839896A RANK NK/MT Name Harishchandra Kumar Singh R/O Village-Kochha Toll. (Namkum), Po- Namkum, Tehsil- Namkum, District-Ranchi, State -Jharkhand-834010 Have Changed My Date Of Birth From 16/03/1984 To 25/02/1984 In My Spouse Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, Bal Ram Singh Is Father Of No. Jc 405770K Rank Sub Name Ajay Kumar R/O Vpo- Manakpur Adampur, District- Haridwar, State- Uttarakhand-247668 Have Changed My Name From Bal Ram Singh To Balram In My Son's Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, Murti Dabee Is Mother Of No. Jc 405770K Rank Sub Name Ajay Kumar R/O Vpo- Manakpur Adampur, District-Haridwar, State- Uttarakhand-247668 Have Changed My Name From Murti Dabee To Murti In My Son's Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, No.3209100Y Rank Nk Name-Krishan Kumar R/O Village-Rajawas, Po-Mandola, Teshil & District- Mahendergarh, State-Haryana-123029 In My Army Service Record My Mother's Name Wrongly Mentioned As Chhoti Devi. While Her Correct Name Is Chhoti Devi As Per Her All Government Documents. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As Chhoti Devi In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, No.3209100Y Rank Nk Name-Krishan Kumar R/O Village-Rajawas, Po-Mandola, Teshil & District- Mahendergarh, State-Haryana-123029 In My Army Service Record My Mother's Name Wrongly Mentioned As Chhoti Devi. While Her Correct Name Is Chhoti Devi As Per Her All Government Documents. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As Chhoti Devi In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, Sukhvir Singh S/o Sh. Paramjeet Singh R/O 87 Tej Colony, tehsil camp Panipat, Sukhvir Singh and Sukhvir Singh Jabbal both name are of same person.

I, Army Number 14918822- W Rank Ex-NK Rajpal S/o Karam Chand R/O House No 1003, Gali No 2, Shergarh Road, Jind Rd Chungi, Kaitthal, in my service record my son name is mentioned Saban Singh Athwal and DOB 16.02.2008 but his all other documents name is Sawan Athwal and DOB 16.07.2006 which is correct.

I, Army Number 14918822- W Rank Ex-Exp Rajpal S/o Karam Chand R/O Village Serdha, District Kaitthal, in my service record my son name is mentioned Saban Singh Athwal and DOB 16.02.2008 but his all other documents name is Sawan Athwal and DOB 16.07.2006 which is correct.

I, Angrejo Devi W/o Rajpal R/O House Number 1003, Gali No 2, Shergarh Road, Jind Chungi, District Kaitthal, in my son documents my name mentioned Angrejo but in my documents name is Angrejo Devi which is my correct name.

I, No. 14933022L Rank Hav Name Guddu Yadav R/O Vpo-Gulauri, District- Mau, State-U.P. - 221706 In My Army Service Record My Daughter's Name And Date Of Birth Wrongly Mentioned As Ansha Devi (10/07/2010). While Her Correct Name And Date Of Birth Is Anshu Yadav (10/07/2009) As Per Her All Government Documents. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As Anshu Yadav (10/07/2009) In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, No.3209100Y Rank Nk Name-Krishan Kumar R/O Village-Rajawas, Po-Mandola, Teshil & District- Mahendergarh, State-Haryana-123029 In My Army Service Record My Father's Mahender Singh Date Of Birth Wrongly Mentioned As 01.01.1967. While His Correct Date Of Birth Is 27.04.1960 As Per His Aadhar Card. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As 27.04.1960 In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, No.3209100Y Rank Nk Name-Krishan Kumar R/O Village-Rajawas, Po-Mandola, Teshil & District- Mahendergarh, State-Haryana-123029 In My Army Service Record My Mother's Chhoti Devi Date Of Birth Wrongly Mentioned As 04.06.1973 While Her Correct Date Of Birth Is 20.11.1976 As Per Her Aadhar Card. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As 20.11.1976 In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, No. 14839896A Rank NK/MT Name Harishchandra Kumar Singh R/O Village-Kochha Toili. (Namkum), Po- Namkum, Tehsil- Namkum, District- Ranchi, State - Jharkhand-834010 In My Army Service Record My Mother's Chhoti Devi Date Of Birth Wrongly Mentioned As 04.06.1973 While Her Correct Date Of Birth Is 20.11.1976 As Per Her Aadhar Card. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As 20.11.1976 In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, No. 14839896A Rank NK/MT Name Harishchandra Kumar Singh R/O Village-Kochha Toili. (Namkum), Po- Namkum, Tehsil- Namkum, District- Ranchi, State - Jharkhand-834010 In My Army Service Record My Mother's Chhoti Devi Date Of Birth Wrongly Mentioned As 04.06.1973 While Her Correct Date Of Birth Is 20.11.1976 As Per Her Aadhar Card. Now I Am Going To Make It Correct As 20.11.1976 In My Army Service Record Vide Affidavit 23.04.2024 Before Notary Public Hisar.

I, Hitherto Known As Rajesh Kumar Son Of Ramesh Nirdosh Residing At Gali Silver Estate, Near Asha Palace, Sali Road, District Pathankot-145001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Rajesh Sharma

I, Hitherto Known As Vikash Chand Son Of Bramh Dutt Residing At Vpo Dalerpur Tehsil Kalanaur District Gurdaspur-143512 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Vikash Sharma

I, Hitherto Known As Rohit Son Of Anoop Kumar Residing At Village Suchetgarh Po Naushera Majja Singh Tehsil And District Gurdaspur-143518 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Rohit Kumar

I, Hitherto Known As Mandeep Kaur Bedi Wife Of Jaswinder Singh Residing At H.No.696-A, Plot No.81, Guru Nanak Avenue, Phase-3, Back Side Power Colony, Majitha Road, District Amritsar-143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Mandeep Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Manju Wife Of Jaswinder Singh Residing At H.No.51, 100 F T Road, New Gokal Ka Bagh, District Amritsar-143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Manraj Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Neeru Bala Daughter Of Narinder Pal Wife Of Vivek Kumar Residing At H.No.395, Adda Jaintipur, Tehsil Majitha, District Amritsar-143502 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Poonam Sodhi.

I, Hitherto Known As Karanbir Gill D/O Surinder Pal Singh W/O Harpreet Singh Residing At H.No.202, E-Block, Ranjit Avenue, Amritsar-143001 Punjab Have Changed My Name And Shall Hereafter Be Known As Karanbir Kaur.

I, Hitherto Known As Sandhya verma wife of satish babbar resident of h.no 140, near girl school, mohalla julkhri. sujanpur Distt Pathankot have changed my name after marriage and shall hereafter be known as Sandhya Babbar.

I, Kamal Kishore Sharma S/O Brahm Dass Sharma Resident Of H.No. 60-A, New Kangra Colony, Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Kamal Sharma To Kamal Kishore Sharma.

I, Sujjan Singh S/O Gurcharan Singh R/O H.No.L4/1669, Gali No.1, New Tej Nagar, Sultanwird Road, Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Sujjan Singh To Sujjan Singh

I, Gurjit Kaur W/O Harpal Singh R/O Vpo Dhand Tehsil And District Tarn Taran Have Changed My Name From Gurjit Kaur To Gurjeet Kaur

I, Jatinderbeer Kaur Sidhu D/O Gurmeet Singh R/O H.No.6, Street No.3, Professor Colony, 66 Feet Road, Opp Punjabi University, Patiala Have Changed My Name To Jatinderbeer Kaur

I, Subash Chander S/O Brij Lal R/O H.No.40-A, Palam Vihar, Majitha Road, Bye Pass Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Subash Chander To Subhash Chander

I, No. 14937046M Rank Nk Name Pratap Singh Serving In 15 Mech Inf C/O 56 Apo, Have Changed My Son's Date Of Birth From 03 Dec 2012 To 03 Jan 2012 Vide Affidavit No. In-Pb08551813527387W Dated 23-04-2024, Before Notary Public, Amritsar.

I, Rinku Spouse Of No. 14937046M Nk Pratap Singh Residing At Village Kolpura, Po Babra, District Pali, Rajasthan, Have Changed My Date Of Birth From 08 June 1988 To 01 Jan 1987 Vide Affidavit No. In-Pb08550684809579W Dated 23-04-2024, Before Notary Public, Amritsar.

I, Neha Daughter Of No. Jc-422561H Sub Maj Krishna Avatar Singh Residing At Village Fatehpura, Po Jatpur Kalan, District Agra, Uttar Pradesh, Have Changed My Name From Neha To Neha Bhadauria Vide Affidavit No. In-Pb08646212290418W Dated 23-04-2024, Before Notary Public, Amritsar.

I, Alka Spouse Of No. Jc-422561H Sub Maj Krishna Avatar Singh Residing At Village Fatehpura, Po Jatpur Kalan, District Agra, Uttar Pradesh, Have Changed My Name From Alka To Alka Bhadauria Vide Affidavit No. In-Pb0864623425456W Dated 23-04-2024, Before Notary Public, Amritsar.

I, Sadananda Mandal Father Of No. 14934547F L/Hav Pintu Mandal Residing At Village Saheb Nagar, Po Saheb Nagar, Tehsil Tehatta, District Nadia, West Bengal-741156, Have Changed My Name From Sadananda Mandal To Sadananda Mondal And Date Of Birth From 01 Jul 1955 To 03 Jan 1958 Vide Affidavit No. In-Pb08552596867290w Dated 23-04-2024, Before Notary Public, Amritsar.

I, Hardip Kaur Dhillon W/O Balbir Singh Dhillon Resident Of H No. 83, Palah Sahib Road, Ajnala Road, Friends Avenue, B-Block Amritsar, District Amritsar Have Changed My Name From Hardip Kaur To Hardip Kaur Dhillon.

I, Dilbagh Singh S/O. Kartar Singh, R/O. Village Naurangabad, Distt. Tarn Taran Have Changed My Name Dilbagh Singh To Dilbag Singh.

I, Veena Kumari W/o Vinay Chadha R/O # 1902, Sector-15, Panchkula (Haryana) have changed my name from Veena Kumari to Veena Chadha.

I, Hunjan D/o Jai Narayan r/o Harjain Chopal, Barsana, Teh. Pundri, Distt. Kaitthal, Haryana have changed my name from Punam to Punam Devi. In future, I should be known as Punam Devi.

I, Raj Pal S/o Ram Rikh r/o Village Garhi Birbal, Tehsil Indri, Distt. Karnal have changed my name from Rajpal to Raj Pal. In future I should be known as Raj Pal.

I, Kamal S/O Ramesh R/O #3409, Brahmnanad Colony, Village Nissing Distt. Karnal, Haryana declared that name of My father is wrongly written as Ramesh in my 10th & 12th marksheet and passport. The actual name of my father is Ramesh Chand.

I, Service No.10468004A Rank Hav. Name Kailash Chander 117, INF BN (TA) The Gaurds, C/O 56APO, Village Sangar, Po-Shahpur Kandi, Tehsil & District

PM Modi to visit Punjab in May end for campaigning

Directions issued to ensure fool-proof security arrangements for his programmes and events

MONIKA MALIK ■ CHANDIGARH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to visit Punjab next month, adding a palpable buzz to the state's political arena, signaling a pivotal moment as preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections gather steam. With the elections slated for June 1 in Punjab, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is revving up its campaign machinery, with the Prime Minister's presence, sometime in May end, set to inject renewed vigour into their electoral strategy in the State where the saffron brigade is struggling amidst the farmers' protest. Also, it is for the first time, after 1966, that the saffron party is entering the poll arena without any alliance.

Preparing for the same, Punjab Government has also issued letters to all department heads, Deputy Commissioners, and police officers regarding security arrangements instructing the

officials concerned to ensure compliance with regulations regarding the PM's security arrangements and to ensure that preparations are completed on time.

The, issued by the General Administration Department's protocol branch, emphasized the importance of stringent security measures. The directives also underscored the need for meticulous adherence to security protocols to ensure the Prime Minister's safety during his engagements in the State.

Security arrangements are expected to encompass a range of logistical considerations, including the deployment of barricades, provision of adequate parking facilities, and the establishment of designated helpads. With the elections drawing near, officials concerned have been instructed to expedite their preparations to meet the stringent security requirements outlined by the authorities.

The Prime Minister's visit holds particular significance against the backdrop of the electoral landscape in Punjab, where political parties are intensifying their campaigning efforts. Elections in Punjab will be held in the last and final



phase.

In parallel, the Congress party's national leaders are poised to commence their campaign visits to Punjab from the next month, adding to the fervour of political activity in the region. With both parties having announced their candidates for a significant number of seats, the stage is set for a spirited electoral contest in Punjab.

Amidst the preparations, the BJP had earlier appealed to the Election Commission regarding security arrangements for the Prime Minister's visit. The appeal underscored the complexities involved in coordinating with multiple security agencies and emphasized the need for seamless coordination between political

party managers and security personnel.

Reflecting on past incidents, concerns regarding security lapses during high-profile visits have come to the fore. Notably, during Prime Minister Modi's previous visit to Hussainiwala in January 2022, demonstrators obstructed his route, resulting in a delay in his convoy's progression.

In response to the BJP's appeal, the Election Commission has also issued directives to the Punjab government, emphasizing the need for enhanced security measures to safeguard the Prime Minister during his upcoming visit. The directives underscored the shared responsibility of state and district authorities in ensuring comprehensive security arrangements for the Prime Minister's engagements, including meetings, roadshows, and rallies.

As preparations intensify and political activity gains momentum, all eyes are on Punjab as it braces for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The Prime Minister's visit is poised to inject further dynamism into the electoral landscape, setting the stage for a spirited contest as political parties vie for electoral supremacy in the State.

Our blood is mixed with this soil: Manish Tewari

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Senior Congress leader and SINDIA alliance candidate from Chandigarh Manish Tewari on Tuesday said that his family's blood was mixed in the soil of Chandigarh and asserted, no matter where he lived, contested elections from, "we live for India, we die for India and we have done that".

Replying to a question on BJP candidate Sanjay Tandon's remark that he was a constituency hopper, Tewari said, although he did not want to react to such a trivial statement, yet he wanted to set the record straight. He pointed out, his father Prof Vishwa Nath Tewari was shot dead by Punjab terrorists in Chandigarh for refusing to compromise on patriotism and nationalism. "My family's blood is mixed with this soil, literally and I am proud of it", he asserted, while adding, he did not want to rake up the issue but reminded Tandon that if this be the argument, then he should question himself first as he belonged to Amritsar as he was born and brought up there.

Tewari reminded Tandon that even his late father Balramji Dass Tandon had "hopped" constituencies from Amritsar to Rajpura. "May be Sanjay Tandon either doesn't know about it or doesn't remember about it", he remarked in a taunting tone.

The INDIA candidate dared the BJP candidate to talk on issues and achievements instead of making frivolous remarks which neither have any basis nor any substance. He pointed out, now that the BJP has been in power for ten years and Chandigarh gave its mandate to the party on both occasions, now the city demands and deserves answers.

"Don't tell us what you are going to do, tell us what you have done", Tewari challenged the BJP candidate, while pointing out, people are asking for answers and not 'jumlas' anymore as they have already had enough.

I am committed to the welfare of all constituents of Chandigarh: Tandon

"Chandigarh is my 'karam bhoomi' and I am committed to the welfare of all its constituents. I am accessible all the time to my city residents and have always worked for upliftment of all communities," said Sanjay Tandon, BJP candidate for the Chandigarh Lok Sabha seat while speaking at a function organised by the Kendriya Arya Sabha at the Arya Samaj Mandir, Sec 7. "I have been associated with the Arya Samaj for a long time, and have great affection for it," said Tandon.

The BJP leader said in his address that he has always worked for social betterment in the city through different fora. These social activities were conducted under his father Balramji Dass Tandon Charitable Foundation. Balramji Dass Tandon was a towering figure in not just the region but even national politics.

Tandon shared that he fulfilled his social responsibility during COVID-19 to the best of his abilities. "During COVID when residents were facing shortage of masks without wasting any time, we created masks out of 'patkas' and got these distributed among people. We were the first to open a COVID Care Center in the city with the help of Bharat Vikas Parishad at Indira Holiday Home," added Tandon. He also explained how he and his team facilitated the travel of migrants to their villages by providing all amenities like food etc.

Tandon added that with his efforts, Union Territory Cricket Association (UTCA) has got recognition from the BCCI which is providing a platform to the players of the city.

Tandon said that he lives in the city, hence he is in constant touch with Chandigarh residents and is always ready to help 24x7. On this occasion, he also made people aware about the right to vote and asked them to vote in favor of BJP to speed up other development works in the city.

BRIEFS

FORMER CONGRESS MLA MET WITH AN ACCIDENT

Chandigarh: Punjab Congress' former MLA Angad Saini Former MLA Angad Saini, aged 33, met with a major accident on Tuesday in Nawanshahr district when his SUV collided with an ambulance. The incident occurred around 10:30 am near Taunsa village, situated between Kathgarh and Nawanshahr, as Angad was en route to Chandigarh. Angad, along with his driver and gunman, was swiftly transported to a private hospital in Mohali. Fortunately, all three individuals are reported to be out of danger, although the driver sustained a fracture in his hand. Eyewitnesses described the accident as severe, resulting in extensive damage to the front portion of the SUV and the activation of all airbags due to the heavy impact. It was revealed that the ambulance driver ahead suddenly applied the brakes, prompting the SUV's driver to maneuver the vehicle, ultimately leading to the collision.

HARYANA ACB ARRESTS EXCISE AND TAXATION OFFICIAL FOR BRIBERY

Chandigarh: The Haryana Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) on Tuesday arrested Excise and Taxation Department (ETO) Bhusan Kumar, peon Manoj, and private person Inderjeet alias Chunnillal on charges of bribery. Peon Manoj was arrested red-handed while accepting a bribe of Rs 5.20 lakh. In this case, a total of Rs 10.84 lakh has been recovered from the accused. The government spokesperson said that the ACB team had received a complaint that Peon Manoj was demanding a bribe of Rs 6.80 lakh through private person Inderjeet at the behest of ETO Bhusan Kumar. Bhusan Kumar was demanding a bribe from the complainant in exchange for reducing the penalty of the vehicle carrying electric motors seized by him. After investigating the facts in the case, the ACB team planned to catch the accused. In this case, the accused Peon was arrested red-handed while taking bribe money from private person Inderjeet. In this case, the house of accused Manoj Kumar was searched and Rs 430,000 was recovered from there. In addition, Rs 1.34 lakh was recovered from the private car of ETO Bhusan Kumar. Thus, a total of Rs 10.84 lakh has been recovered from the accused. A case has been registered against the accused at the Faridabad Anti-Corruption Bureau Police Station and they have been arrested, the spokesperson added.

PROF SAMEER AGARWAL APPOINTED AS PRESIDENT OF ALL INDIA ASSOCIATION OF PELVIC ACETABULAR SURGEONS

Chandigarh: Professor Sameer Agarwal, renowned trauma surgeon, was appointed as the President of All India Association of Pelvic Acetabular Surgeons (AOPAS) at 6th Annual Conference of AOPAS held in Kochi. Dr Agarwal is currently serving as a Professor in the Orthopaedics Department at PGIMER Chandigarh. He also holds the position of Head of the Department of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation at PGI. Additionally, he serves as the Nodal Officer of the Advanced Trauma Centre and the Firozpur Satellite Centre. Dr. Agarwal brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in the field of Trauma Osteosynthesis, serving as the Education Officer of AO Trauma - an international organization for trauma osteosynthesis. He is also the Chairman of International Affairs and Fellowship Committee of the Indian Orthopaedic Association, as well as the Vice President of the North Zone Chapter of the Indian Orthopaedics Association and Faculty Association of PGIMER Chandigarh.

GEMS OF WISDOM OF 90 YEAR OLD AUTHOR RELEASED



Chandigarh: Col (Dr.) Rajinder Singh, MBBS MD released his book titled 'Gems of Wisdom' on Tuesday. This quote collective, launched on World Book Day, distills the essence of a nonagenarian's nine-decade journey through literature, philosophy, and religion. The book was unveiled in the presence of Amar Kulwant Singh, a celebrated social worker, and Vivek Atray, motivational speaker and former IAS officer. The book offers the readers a profound glimpse into the thoughts and musings that have shaped Dr. Singh's life and philosophy.

Ranjit Chautala skips meeting with Hry Speaker on resignation issue, sites 'personal reasons'

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Bharatiya Janata Party leader Ranjit Chautala on Tuesday skipped a meeting with the Haryana Assembly Speaker Gian Chand Gupta who had called him to discuss his resignation as an Independent MLA. The MLA from Rania in Sirsa district had sent his resignation to the Speaker on March 24 and subsequently joined BJP. Currently, Chautala, 78, is con-

testing Lok Sabha Election on BJP ticket from Hisar Parliamentary Constituency.

Talking to Journalists in Chandigarh, Haryana Assembly Speaker said that Chautala phoned him on Tuesday and requested another date for the meeting as he wouldn't be able to come due to "personal reasons." "On April 30, he will have to come to clarify so we can decide (on his resignation). The verification of his signature is

also required for which he must appear in person."

"As Vidhan Sabha Speaker, it is my responsibility that if any member resigns from the Vidhan Sabha, it is for us to verify that the resignation has not been sent under any pressure or compulsion," Gupta had said earlier.

Last month, after BJP replaced Manohar Lal Khattar with Nayab Singh Saini as the Haryana chief minister, Ranjit

Chautala again became the power minister in the Saini-led BJP government. Chautala along with former Congress MP Naveen Jindal joined the saffron party on March 24. Jindal was named a candidate for the Kurukshetra Lok Sabha seat. As an Independent MLA, Ranjit Chautala had extended support to the BJP when it fell short of a majority on its own after the 2019 assembly elections.

BJP stalwart Sampla's nephew joins AAP

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) received a substantial boost in Jalandhar as Robin Sampla, the nephew of BJP stalwart and former National Commission for Scheduled Castes chairman Vijay Sampla, made a momentous decision on Tuesday, Robin, who held the position of vice president in the BJP's Scheduled Caste wing, bid farewell to the saffron party and officially joined the AAP, marking a noteworthy transition in the political landscape of Punjab.

The induction ceremony, graced by the presence of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and MLA Raman Arora, saw Robin Sampla being warmly welcomed into the AAP fold. Known for his influential presence among the youth of Jalandhar, Robin's departure from the BJP represented a sig-

nificant setback for the party, particularly in Jalandhar region, where his departure may lead to a tangible loss in BJP's vote share.

Robin Sampla, addressing the gathering, emphasized the AAP's commitment to the common people, the poor, and the Dalits, reaffirming his belief in the party's inclusive ideology. Expressing his disillusionment with the BJP, Robin highlighted his decision to join the AAP as a volunteer driven by the party's principles and its dedication to serving every section of Punjab without discrimination. His entry into the AAP is expected to bolster the party's prospects in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in Jalandhar.

Robin Sampla's association with the BJP's Scheduled Caste wing and his familial ties to Vijay Sampla, a BJP stalwart and former Union Minister,

added further weight to his decision to switch sides.

Vijay Sampla, who was reportedly disenchanted with the BJP's decision-making process, had previously been denied a ticket for the Lok Sabha elections in Hoshiarpur. Robin's decision to join the AAP comes at a time when the political landscape of Punjab is witnessing dynamic shifts, with parties actively seeking to consolidate their support base ahead of the elections.

Notably, Robin Sampla's involvement in advocating for the rights of SC families affected by house demolitions in Jalandhar last year had garnered attention both locally and nationally. His efforts to bring justice to the marginalized communities underscored his commitment to social justice and equality, values that resonate with the AAP's core principles.

Member of Pak-based terror module held in Punjab

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH/JALANDHAR

Punjab Police on Tuesday claimed to have averted possible target killing planned by cross-border operatives with the arrest of one member linked to a Pak-based terror module.

Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said that the arrested accused has been identified as Lovepreet Singh alias Picho of Udho Nangal village in Amritsar. Police teams have also recovered one .30-bore automatic Chinese pistol along with a magazine and four live cartridges from his possession. DGP Yadav said that acting swiftly on the intelligence and human-intelligence inputs, Police teams from Jalandhar Counter Intelligence laid a special naka (checkpoint) in the area of Rama

Mandi and arrested the accused person after recovering the sophisticated automatic pistol from his possession. He said that the probe revealed that the arrested accused was being handled by Pakistan-based operatives, who tasked him to carry out target killing in the Jammu and Kashmir region to create fear and unrest in the society.

Sharing more details, Jalandhar Counter Intelligence SSP Navjot Singh Mahal said that

the accused has received money in his bank account via Dubai and procured the pistol along with ammunition from the area of Samba in Jammu and Kashmir. Further investigations are going on, he added. A case FIR, dated April 22, 2024, has been registered under section 25 of the Arms Act and section 120-B of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) at Police Station State Special Operations Cell, (SSOC) Amritsar.

Poll Buzz

Punjab retired cop Dalli joins BJP

Jalandhar: Making an entry into the political arena, Punjab Police's retired Assistant Inspector General (AIG) Harvinder Singh Dalli on Tuesday joined the Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP). Dalli, who has served in various districts of Punjab including Jalandhar and Kapurthala, was officially inducted into the BJP by state BJP in-charge and Gujarat's former Chief Minister Vijay Rupani. Notably, Dalli has a long-standing association with the Doaba region, particularly in Jalandhar, where he served in prominent positions such as Additional Deputy Commissioner of Police (ADCP). He is known for his efficient handling of several high-profile cases in both urban and rural areas of Punjab.

Will quit politics if AAP secures 13 seats in Punjab: Warring

Chandigarh: Punjab Congress president Amrinder Singh Raja Warring on Tuesday cautioned AAP and Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, asserting, "AAP's claims of securing all 13 seats might well end in a resounding defeat, leaving them unable to face the public following the results. Such audacious assertions require substantive achievements and work, which AAP has failed to deliver during its tenure in Punjab over the past two years." Warring said: "I am certain that AAP's '13-0' rhetoric, akin to BJP's '400 Paar' predictions, is likely to be met with electoral disappoint-

ment. The absence of tangible progress under AAP governance has only increased the challenges faced by Punjab and its people across various sectors. Punjab's electorate has recognized the detrimental impact of the AAP administration, with the promised 'badlaav' only showcasing negative effects."

Oriya Colony fire incident: BJP Candidate assures to build houses under PMAY

Bathinda: Retired IAS Parampal Kaur Sidhu, BJP candidate from Bathinda Lok Sabha constituency, on Tuesday assured the victims of fire at Oriya Colony that she would try to build houses for them under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. After getting information from people of Oriya Colony about the fire incident, Sidhu rushed to the spot, and immediately made arrangements for their food and temporary accommodation for victims. She also talked to local authorities and urged them to help the people. She assured that she would soon try to arrange for the permanent houses for them under the Prime Minister's Housing Scheme. Lashing out at AAP, Congress and Akali Dal, Sidhu said that after the fire incident, in which two innocent children lost their lives, "neither the local MLA of the Aam Aadmi Party nor the MP of the Akali Dal deemed fit to meet the victims and tried to know their agony".

Mann Govt has not yet provided farmers with compensation: Bajwa
Chandigarh: The Leader

of the Opposition in Punjab Vidhan Sabha Partap Singh Bajwa on Tuesday rebuked Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann and AAP-led State Government for their failure to provide compensation to the farmers after their crops were damaged by the untimely hailstorm. "Before 2022 assembly elections, Punjab CM used to propagate that the farmers would get compensation for their damaged crop even before girdawari is conducted. Meanwhile, it has been around a week since the wheat crops in many areas of the state have been damaged due to hailstorms, however, the farmers haven't been paid," Bajwa added. He pointed out that the farmers continued to protest against Punjab Agriculture Minister and AAP's Lok Sabha candidate from Bathinda Gurmeet Singh Khuddi, and have given the government a week to provide them with compensation. Farmers have threatened to launch a struggle against AAP to get compensation," he added.

70343 arms deposited in Himachal Pradesh

Shimla: To ensure free and fair elections in the State, as many as 70343 out of total 100403 licensed weapons in Himachal Pradesh have been deposited till Monday evening, the spokesperson of the State election department said on Tuesday. He said that the numbers of the arms deposited were 1350 in Baddi, 4913 in Bilaspur, 5603 in Chamba, 3898 in Hamirpur, 12468 in Kangra, 1406 in Kinnaur, 4653 in Kullu, 222 in Lahaul-Spiti, 7281 in Mandi, 3954 in Police district Nurpur, 12111 in Shimla, 5791 in Sirmour, 3877 in Solan and 2816 in Una. Apart from this, since the elections were announced imposing the Model Code of Conduct, 73 complaints were received from across the State through C-Vigil out of which 36 complaints were disposed till Tuesday afternoon, i.e till 23rd April and 37 complaints which were either false or were not found genuine were dropped after scrutiny.

Mann spreading political canard to disturb peace in Punjab: Chugh

Chandigarh: Coming down heavily on Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann for spreading "political canard" in the state for his cheap electoral gains, BJP national general secretary Tarun Chugh on Tuesday said that politically, Bhagwant Mann remains as immature as he could ever be because of his background. "After crossing all limits in corruption, AAP Chief Minister has started talking about democracy... Now,

Belgian orgn to organise Akhand Paath in the memory of Punjabi soldiers martyred in the World War I

PNS ■ CHANDIGARH

In the memory of the Sikh soldiers from Punjab who were martyred for the British Army in Belgium during the World Wars, a three-day long Akhand Paath is being organized in joint collaboration with Belgium based in Flanders Field Museum (Ypres) and Chandigarh based Sikhya Seekers from April 26.

To mark 325th anniversary of Khalsa Sajna Diwas, the museum management has announced to organize this religious ritual in its museum premises and Sector 34 Gurudwara Shri Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib from April 26 to 28 as an expression of respect and gratitude for the brave demised souls.

Sher Singh, Associate, In Flanders Fields Museum while virtually addressing the media from Belgium at Chandigarh Press Club emphasized that Belgians will always be grateful to those Sikh soldiers who bravely fought against the combined Central Powers of Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire in the First World War. Their bravery helped Belgium to save the nation from the German occupation resulting the Belgian faction of the Allied countries won the WWI.



"Ypres is an vital phase of Indian and Belgian history wherein unfortunately nearly 1.5 lakh Punjabi soldiers lost their lives in two major wars. The tales of their bravery will remain immortal in Belgium. This Akhand Paath is a tribute by the countrymen of Belgium on the holy festival of Baisakhi month," Sher Singh said.

General KJ Singh (Retd), GOC-in-Chief, Western Command, Chandimandir emphasized the importance of Punjabi soldiers in the First World War and lauded that their act of bravery has changed the course of world polity. "After the months of alienages and landing to an avien world for war, Punjabis left no stone unturned to become the real heroes of World War," he said. He stressed upon the need that the time has come not to forget their dedication but should make them a part of

daily remembrance.

In his address, War Veteran Brigadier GJ Singh, while appreciating this initiative, also expressed his concern over the indifference towards the soldiers in two different parts of the world - India & Europe. He recalled that last year, along with Domineik Dendooven, Director, In Flanders Fields Museum, they visited Sultanwind near Amritsar and met the families of martyred Punjabi soldiers. The neglect of these families by the society and the Government and even the abandoned memorials built by the British Government in their respect, now seems to be an insult for demised soldiers. On the other hand, in Belgium, grand monuments have been built in the memory of those soldiers and the mark of respect is given every evening with the retreat. He highlighted that there are thousands of families

in the region who are related to the First World War and to cherish their memories 'Yadgaari Melas' should be organized annually.

War Veteran, Col Perminder Singh Randhawa, the key organizer and Founder of Sikhya Seekers, while tracing down the history of World War I and role of Punjabi soldiers said that when soldiers landed on foreign soil, they were termed as 'Gentlemen from India', who could be the last hope for Allied forces against Germany's aggression. Col Randhawa's grandfather - Surain Singh Randhawa was also part of the same troop who gave tough resistance to his opponents. "Even after a century, the honor being received from Belgium in this form is a testimony of sweet reminiscent of Europe to Indians. 25 years ago, on the occasion of the tricentennial of Khalsa, I was also part of almost the same gesture from Belgians. This overseas gratitude for the departed souls and Indians is heartwarming," recalls Col Randhawa. Last year, when Domineik Dendooven, Director, In Flanders Fields Museum visited India, he gifted two replicas of the theme of 'Coming World Remember Me' made from the soil of Yeperis to the Sikhya Seekers.



www.dailypioneer.com

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

PAPER WITH PASSION

Weather vagaries

It is as bad as predicted: Extreme events of 2023 were triggered by a much warmer climate

The year past us was characterised by a slew of extreme weather events. Now, a new study has shed light on a disquieting correlation: Many of these occurrences were in line with predictions of a warmer world due to climate change. The study, by a team of atmospheric scientists, analysed the unprecedented frequency and intensity of extreme weather phenomena across the globe in 2023: From devastating wildfires to record-breaking heatwaves, and from erratic precipitation patterns leading to floods and droughts to powerful tropical storms. One of the key findings is the undeniable alignment between these extreme events and the long-standing predictions made by climate scientists. As greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, Earth's climate system is being pushed to its limits. While it has long been established that a warming climate exacerbates the intensity and frequency of such events, the empirical evidence underscores the urgency of addressing climate change mitigation. Also, the ramifications of these events extend far beyond environmental concerns, encompassing socio-economic, humanitarian and geopolitical dimensions. Vulnerable communities bear most of the brunt, and disruption of essential infrastructure and supply chains amplifies the challenges. In the face of these sobering revelations, concerted action is imperative to mitigate the impacts of climate change. This entails not only reducing greenhouse gas emissions through transitioning to renewable energy sources and implementing sustainable land-use practices, but also investing in adaptation strategies to cope with the unavoidable effects of a changing climate.



One such initiative is the issuance of tailored advisories by meteorological agencies to assist farmers in mitigating the impacts of climate variability on agricultural productivity. In this regard, the IMD has taken proactive steps, leveraging advanced forecasting techniques and agronomic expertise. By harnessing data-driven insights and employing localised approaches, these advisories offer valuable guidance to farmers regarding optimal planting schedules, irrigation management, pest and disease control and crop selection. The IMD's initiative exemplifies the importance of integrating scientific knowledge with practical solutions to address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change. By empowering farmers with actionable information and tools, such initiatives not only enhance agricultural resilience but also contribute to sustainable livelihoods and food security. As we navigate the complexities of a changing climate and its far-reaching implications, collaboration and innovation emerge as indispensable pillars for building a more resilient and sustainable future. By heeding the warnings conveyed by atmospheric science studies and embracing proactive measures at local, national and global levels, we can strive for a world where the impacts of extreme weather events are mitigated, and communities are empowered to thrive in harmony with nature.

One such initiative is the issuance of tailored advisories by meteorological agencies to assist farmers in mitigating the impacts of climate variability on agricultural productivity. In this regard, the IMD has taken proactive steps, leveraging advanced forecasting techniques and agronomic expertise. By harnessing data-driven insights and employing localised approaches, these advisories offer valuable guidance to farmers regarding optimal planting schedules, irrigation management, pest and disease control and crop selection. The IMD's initiative exemplifies the importance of integrating scientific knowledge with practical solutions to address the multifaceted challenges posed by climate change. By empowering farmers with actionable information and tools, such initiatives not only enhance agricultural resilience but also contribute to sustainable livelihoods and food security. As we navigate the complexities of a changing climate and its far-reaching implications, collaboration and innovation emerge as indispensable pillars for building a more resilient and sustainable future. By heeding the warnings conveyed by atmospheric science studies and embracing proactive measures at local, national and global levels, we can strive for a world where the impacts of extreme weather events are mitigated, and communities are empowered to thrive in harmony with nature.

PICTALK



Devotees arrive at Jakhu temple to offer prayers on the occasion of 'Hanuman Jayanti', in Shimla

Historic legal battle unfolds over Gyanvapi



PRAFULL GORADIA

Amidst the legal wrangling, a deeper narrative emerges, one of contested ownership, religious desecration and the enduring scars of history

The legal hearings, whether in the court at Varanasi or the Supreme Court, over the past many months regarding the worship at Gyan Vapi, carry ethical interest. The statures of the lawyers of both sides in these courts appear to be comparable. It has occurred to neither lawyers nor laymen that one side argues in defence of their clients' rights of worship; the puja in the tehekhana, whereas the opposing side also has argued that they have been the owners of the edifice in question. Also, it has not occurred to the judges, leaders and clients; in fact, no one else that the property is an acquisition by dacoity; i.e., loot in whatever sense. There was no mosque in that vicinity at all, until 17th century Mughal emperor Aurangzeb via a firman (a royal decree) had the Kashi Vishwanath Temple destroyed, except for the western side, which still unmistakably bears the evidence of the structure being originally a temple, in the form of its carved walls.

The fervent followers of the Mughal emperor are not embarrassed that the Hindu devotees of Kashi Vishwanath since the mid-17th century and even in independent India, have to worship in a small temple, because of lack of any more space. For over three centuries then, an illegitimate structure stands, welcoming the followers of Aurangzeb's bigoted ideology. The judges in this case should soon begin trials. It should be declared that this is a trial over a place of worship that was robbed and desecrated, not a dispute between two equals. The law of adverse possession cannot apply here. "The Europeans should clearly understand that this spirit of Mohammedanism is unchangeable and that, if by any mischance, India should again come into the possession of men of this creed, all the churches and colleges and all the Mission institutions, would not be worth a week's purchase". So wrote Reverend Mathew Atmore Sherring, an English official. The Muslims did not harm the Christians of British India. But he was so upset at the vandalism he saw in Banaras that he could not help speaking out.



Reverend Sherring was a devout, maybe slightly bigoted evangelist member of the London Missionary Society, dead against idol worship. And yet he said it would not be difficult to find twenty temples in all Banaras of the age of Aurangzeb (1658-1707). This is the case throughout the whole of northern India. His description of the desecration of temples by the thousand and their blatant conversion into mosques, mausoleums, dargahs, palaces or pleasure houses has to be seen to be believed. In his view, if there is one thing about the Mohammedan period that Hindus remember better than another, it is the insulting pride of the Muslims (sic), the outrages that they perpetrated upon Hindu religious convictions and the extensive spoliation of their temples and shrines. "When we endeavour to ascertain what the Mohammedans have left to the Hindus of their ancient buildings in Banaras, we are startled at the result of our investigations. Although the city is strewn with temples, it is unlikely that there are many which are old". Reverend Sherring continued, that the diminutive size



HERRING WRITES THAT JUST AS MUSLIMS YEARN TO VISIT MECCA AND CHRISTIANS YEARN TO VISIT JERUSALEM, THE HINDU HEART GOES OUT TO BANARAS. IF THE HINDUS REFER TO ANY ONE CITY AS THEIR HOLIEST, IT IS BANARAS

of nearly all the temples in India — except for the south — that exist is another testimony to the stringency of the Mohammedan rule. It seems clear that Mughal emperors forbade the Hindus to build spacious temples and forced them to erect only small structures, of the size of cages, for their idols and those of no pretensions to beauty. The consequence is that the Hindus of the present day, blindly following the example of their predecessors of two centuries ago, commonly build their religious edifices of the same dwarfish size as formerly. These observations speak volumes about the trauma that the Hindu psyche has suffered as a result of the impact of Islam. Sherring writes that just as Muslims yearn to visit Mecca and the Christians, Jerusalem, the Hindu heart goes out to Banaras. If the Hindus refer to any one city as their holiest, it is Banaras. Aurangzeb tried to change its name to 'Muhammadabad'. The temple of Bisheshwar, regarded as the god of all gods, was systematically demolished by Aurangzeb during the 17th century. The new temple was built at the behest of Rani

Ahilyabai Holkar long after Aurangzeb's desecration. As already explained, all the temples built during the Mohammedan rule in Banaras had to be diminutive in size. It transpires that the demolition of temples was inspired not only by a hatred for idolatry or greed for loot but also by a desire to humiliate the Hindus. Or, else, how does one explain that the masjid built by Aurangzeb is bang next to the Gyan Vapi or the well of knowledge? Sherring has also referred to Al Baruni, an important source of Indian history of the medieval period. He came to India with Mahmud of Ghazni. Although Sherring casts doubts on Al Baruni's contention, nevertheless, he mentions that Ghazni reached as far as Banaras during his ninth incursion into India. In 1194 AD, Shahabuddin, better known as Muhammad Ghori, after defeating the Kannauj monarch, Jaichand, marched to Banaras where he is reported to have destroyed a thousand Hindu temples. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WEATHER WOES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "India grapples with erratic weather", published on April 22, this is my response. The recent weather fluctuations across India present a stark reminder of our vulnerability to nature's whims. While Delhi anticipates relief from the scorching heat, Odisha and Himachal Pradesh face contrasting challenges. Odisha grapples with a relentless heatwave, prompting necessary precautions, including school closures. Conversely, Himachal Pradesh reels under heavy rain and snow, causing infrastructure havoc. These extreme conditions underscore the urgency of climate resilience measures. Moreover, the IMD's forecast of above — normal monsoon rainfall signifies hope amid uncertainties. However, the spectre of increasing extreme weather events, as highlighted by recent research, casts a shadow over the future. Regions like the Indus and Ganges plains are particularly at risk, threatening millions of lives. This serves as a clarion call for proactive measures, from robust disaster management strategies to sustainable practices. As citizens, it's imperative to heed warnings, adapt to changing climates and advocate for broader environmental stewardship to mitigate future crises.

Rahul Kapoor | Delhi

POWER PRICING PREDICAMENT

Madam — Apropos the news article, "With power freebies, debt comes calling", published on April 22, this is my response. RK Singh's stance on power pricing echoes a common-sense truth: electricity isn't free. His call for States to bear the financial burden of free power initiatives highlights a critical issue plaguing the sector. The practice of offering free electricity distorts the market, undermines the financial health of distribution companies and ultimately hampers economic growth. The complex dynamics of tariff setting, with subsidies for certain consumer segments, exacerbates the problem. While political parties may win favour with vot-

Kejriwal's health report



Apropos the news article, "Kejriwal stopped taking insulin months back: Tihar", published on April 21, this is my response. The revelations about Arvind Kejriwal's health present a perplexing narrative. On one hand, the Tihar jail administration claims he ceased insulin under a Telangana doctor's advice, contradict-

ing his court Statements. The tug-of-war between AAP and BJP adds political spice. Amidst allegations of a "conspiracy," one wonders about the truth's cloak. If Kejriwal indeed stopped insulin, was it wise? The report's assertion of no alarming sugar levels suggests a balanced picture, yet doubts linger. The stringent dietary restrictions, though, raise eyebrows. Are they necessary or punitive? The bureaucratic tangle over hospital referrals muddles clarity. Amidst these complexities, Kejriwal's medical saga becomes a microcosm of larger political battles. As a concerned citizen, one hopes for transparency and genuine concern for his health above political theatrics. The saga demands more than just a casual glance; it beckons scrutiny and empathy amidst the whirlpool of accusations and counterclaims.

Aisha Khan | Chennai

ers through such measures, the long-term repercussions are dire. Delays and partial reimbursements only deepen the financial woes of discoms, leading to a vicious cycle of debt and inefficiency. The solution lies in structural reforms, freeing discoms from undue State control and allowing market forces to determine pricing. Direct financial support to targeted beneficiaries would ensure transparency and sustainability. Such reforms are essential for fostering a resilient and competitive electricity sector, benefiting both consumers and the economy at large.

Vivek Rao | Mumbai

MENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Brain Wellness", published on April 22, this is my response. The staggering statistics on childhood development and the economic ramifications underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions. The formation of the National Task Force on Brain Health, spearheaded by esteemed professionals, marks a significant step towards bridging critical health-

care gaps. Dr RK Dhamija's insights illuminate the task force's holistic approach, emphasising inclusive healthcare from grassroots to tertiary levels. The task force's focus on equitable access and awareness aligns with global initiatives, acknowledging the profound impact of neurological disorders on society. By evaluating existing infrastructure and policies, the panel aims to catalyse transformative change, recognising the intertwined complexities of brain health and socioeconomic factors. India's healthcare landscape mirrors global challenges, with disparities magnified in rural areas. The task force's mandate to submit actionable recommendations reflects a commitment to prompt action. However, sustained efforts beyond policy formulation are crucial to translating vision into tangible improvements, ensuring every individual has access to quality brain healthcare.

Natasha Reddy | Vijayawada

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



SAHIL CHOPRA

The rising power of nano influencers

Unlike their macro and celebrity counterparts, they embody the authenticity of everyday people, fostering genuine connections with their audience

In the ever-changing world of social media marketing, nano influencers are becoming a significant presence, giving brands a different way to connect with consumers that focuses on being genuine and establishing personal relationships. Nano influencers, who usually have between 1,000 and 10,000 followers, provide a unique mix of community-focused influence and relatability that sets them apart from larger accounts like macro and celebrity influencers. Nano influencers are similar to regular people — they are our friends, family and colleagues who share their lives and interests on social media without the polished image usually seen in professional influencer marketing. This authentic form of influence relies on real connections and trust, characteristics that are becoming more important in a crowded marketplace filled with advertisements and endorsements from celebrities. Authenticity and Engagement is at the core of Nano Influencers. Nano influencers are successful because of their gen-



uine relationships with their followers, who see them as peers rather than distant celebrities. This authenticity makes their product recommendations more effective and trustworthy. By leveraging personal connections, nano influencers can have a significant impact on their audience. Why are Brands Leaning Towards Nano Influencers? Smaller brands are starting to see the benefits of working with nano influencers for a few reasons. To start, nano influencers tend to have much higher engagement rates compared to influencers with bigger audiences. This shows that nano influencers have real and personal relationships with their followers. On top of that, collaborating with nano influencers is usually more affordable, which means brands can get more out of their marketing bud-

gets while still connecting with their target audience. The Pros 1. Hyper-Targeted Marketing: Small-scale influencers typically concentrate on particular niches, enabling brands to reach individuals with specific interests, resulting in more impactful marketing initiatives. 2. Cost-Effectiveness: With reduced hopes for payment, companies have the opportunity to collaborate with numerous nano influencers using the same amount of money they would typically spend on just one macro or celebrity influencer. 3. Higher Quality of Engagement: Nano influencers tend to spark more genuine engagement, resulting in increased levels of interaction such as comments, likes and shares. 4. Authentic Product Endorsements: Recommendations from nano influencers hold the same weight as recommendations from friends and can greatly influence buying choices. 5. Increased Brand Visibility and Community Building: Nano influencers play a cru-

cial role in connecting brands with tightly-knit communities, increasing brand exposure and building a strong sense of connection with potential customers. The Challenges Although there are many benefits to working with nano influencers, there are also some challenges to consider. It is important to find influencers who truly connect with the brand's values and message. Additionally, brands will need to deal with the logistics of working with a larger group of influencers to reach their target audience effectively. Brands are always looking for more genuine ways to connect with consumers and nano influencers are becoming a popular choice. These influencers focus on building real relationships and trust with their followers, creating a more authentic connection. This approach is resonating with consumers who are growing tired of traditional advertising and celebrity endorsements. (The writer is the founder and CEO of iCubesWire; views are personal)



FIRST COLUMN

THE MYSTERIES OF AFTERLIFE

The Upanishads offer profound insights into the enigmatic realm of the afterlife



SWAMI CHARANASHRIT

The Upanishads, ancient philosophical texts that form the foundation of Hinduism, offer profound insights into the nature of existence, consciousness and the ultimate reality. Among the myriad themes they explore, the concept of the afterlife occupies a significant place. Delving into the Upanishadic thoughts on the afterlife unveils a tapestry of ideas, reflecting deep contemplation on the nature of existence beyond the mortal realm.

The Transient and the Eternal: Central to the Upanishadic understanding of the afterlife is the distinction between the transient, ephemeral aspects of existence and the eternal, unchanging essence of the self (Atman). These texts assert that the physical body is subject to birth and death, bound by the cycles of samsara (the cycle of birth, death and rebirth), while the Atman transcends these cycles, being eternal and indestructible.

The Doctrine of Karma: Integral to the Upanishadic worldview is the doctrine of karma, which holds that every action, thought and intention produces consequences that shape one's future experiences. According to this doctrine, the quality of one's actions determines the nature of their existence in this life and beyond. The Upanishads emphasise that the consequences of karma extend beyond the confines of a single lifetime, influencing the soul's journey through successive rebirths.

The Journey of the Soul: The Upanishads envision the soul's journey through samsara as a process of spiritual evolution aimed at realising its true nature and attaining liberation (moksha) from the cycle of birth and death. This journey is characterised by the accumulation of karma, which propels the soul through various life experiences and incarnations. Each lifetime presents opportunities for growth, learning and self-realisation, ultimately leading the soul closer to its divine source.



The Concept of Rebirth: Rebirth, or reincarnation, is a fundamental tenet of the Upanishadic philosophy. It is believed that the soul undergoes multiple births, inhabiting different bodies and experiencing diverse life circumstances based on its past actions. The Upanishads describe the process of rebirth as governed by the law of karma, wherein individuals are born into specific situations that reflect the consequences of their previous deeds. Liberation from the cycle of rebirth is attained when the soul transcends its attachment to worldly desires and realises its essential unity with the divine.

The Ultimate Goal: Moksha: At the heart of the Upanishadic teachings on the afterlife lies the concept of moksha, or spiritual liberation. Moksha represents the culmination of the soul's journey, wherein it breaks free from the cycle of samsara and merges with the ultimate reality, known as Brahman. Achieving moksha involves transcending the ego, relinquishing attachments and realising the eternal truth of one's identity as Atman, identical to Brahman. In this state of liberation, the soul experiences eternal bliss, beyond the confines of time, space and individual identity. **Conclusion:** The Upanishads offer profound insights into the nature of the afterlife, presenting a holistic worldview that encompasses the transient nature of earthly existence and the eternal essence of the self. Through the exploration of concepts such as karma, rebirth and moksha, these ancient texts provide a framework for understanding the soul's journey beyond mortality and its quest for spiritual realisation. Ultimately, the Upanishads invite us to contemplate the deeper mysteries of life and death, guiding us towards the realisation of our divine nature and the attainment of ultimate liberation.

(Writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

A timeless inspiration for India's reform agenda

Amidst the jubilant celebrations of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, the legacy of Jyotirao Phule, a pioneer in social reform, resonates deeply



RENU PANDEY



India has had a rich treasure of social reformers who contributed immensely to bringing about change in the lives of the people, especially the subaltern class. Jyotirao Phule is one of them who was born in Maharashtra on 11th April and is remembered as a social reformer, author and activist. Though he was born in the 19th century his ideas are still relevant in the 21st century. Throughout his life, he worked tirelessly to bring change in the lives of deprived groups, especially women, Shudras and Dalits. He was a visionary par excellence who realised very early that for a nation to progress, the marginalised groups need to be given due recognition.

As Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav is being celebrated, it is high time to take a pause and introspect as to what initiative has been undertaken to realise the dream of reformers like Phule. In recent years, the Government has initiated a series of welfare measures like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Balika Samridhhi Yojana, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan etc. and a series of direct benefit transfer schemes meant for the poorer segment of the population. These schemes are the furtherance of Phule's ideas as he visualised long back that these groups/communities need to be made self-reliant. He cudgelled his brain to find the solution to remove the inequalities based on caste, class, gender and religion from society. He understood very early in life that people were kept in the dark and they had been dragged into following the vacuous customs and norms without adequate understanding. He envisioned the furtherance of everyone's rights through social empowerment. Phule's philosophy was conceptualised against the backdrop of the polity and society in pre-colonial Maharashtra, which was in a deteriorated state. His critique of the Brahminic religion, scriptures and theories, the founding of



PHULE REVAMPED THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY AND MARRIAGE SYSTEM AND REFUTED THE HACKNEYED VIEWS ON THE PRESCRIBED TYPECAST ROLES OF MAN AND WOMAN. HE SUPPORTED CONTRACT MARRIAGE AS, FOR HIM, MARRIAGE IS NOT A HOLY SACRAMENT BUT A HOLY CONTRACT

Satyashodhak Samaj (truth-seeking society) for the upliftment of the downtrodden to the 'new moral community' and his radical writings which pioneered a reformation movement in Hindu society deserve special attention. He gave the people a voice and a vehicle by establishing the Satyashodhak Samaj which was the first of its kind for social empowerment. It promoted caste equality and was devoted to securing social justice and human rights of low-caste people. Throughout his life, he fought to emancipate women from the clutches of rigid patriarchal order and found education as a tool to address such evils. He rejected the system of regressive hierarchy which engineered divisions and schism among the oppressed Hindus.

Undoubtedly, the action against all age — long traditions was the result of the hard work, grit, determination and tenacity of Phule. Phule's dour expression and laconic persona had a long-lasting effect on people's minds. It is palpable that Phule in his writings had discussed the eclectic range of ideas and concerns about the socio-cultural milieu additionally, giving the solution of establishing an alternative model of Hindu Social order, which was earlier brimmed with hierarchies and pluralities. He engineered the strategy to free society from myriad inequalities, with elan and consequently, influencing the upcoming reformers in the offing. Phule revamped the traditional family and marriage system and refuted the hackneyed views on the prescribed typecast roles of man and

woman. He supported contract marriage as for him; marriage is not a holy sacrament but a holy contract. Additionally, he also rejected the priesthood system. He was far ahead of his time as he opened an orphanage for helpless widows who got pregnant. He left an indelible impression in the field of women's education as he found it a 'remedial whipcord' for 'nauseating wrong done to the women'. He insisted on compulsory and free primary education and persuaded the British Government to make education compulsory till the age of 12 years. He was also the pioneer of the language formula in schools which was ultimately adopted by the Indian Government after independence. He opined that mother tongue (local language); Hindi and English were the three languages that every person should know. He also suggested that schools should provide education based on vocational skills. He believed that such a course would attract students and help them in gaining employment.

To maintain the high quality of education, he thought that the curriculum of primary education should meet the needs and requirements of society. The same is also emphasised in the New Education Policy, 2020. Even the United Nations has advocated inclusive, equitable and quality education which Phule emphasised long back. His ideas and thoughts will remain relevant in the 21st century as he always believed in establishing an egalitarian social order which is the core of any substantive democracy.

The same is being emphasised by the Government through its various welfare policies. It would be a befitting tribute to him if his ideas of inclusion of those who are at the periphery like women; and marginalised groups were given adequate attention. As seats are reserved for women from Panchayat to Lok Sabha still they are lagging far behind men in terms of their representation. To put it succinctly, it can be said that mainstreaming the periphery should be the motto of Government and by doing so it can fulfill the dream of Mahatma Phule.

Phule's establishment of the Satyashodhak Samaj provided a platform for social empowerment and caste equality. His advocacy for women's education and rejection of regressive customs reshaped societal norms. Phule's foresight extended to educational reforms, advocating for vocational training and multilingual education, ideas that resonate with modern policies like the New Education Policy, 2020. In today's pursuit of an egalitarian society, Phule's principles remain indispensable. Prioritising the inclusion of marginalised groups, especially women, aligns with his vision of social justice. As we honor Phule's legacy, let us commit to mainstreaming the periphery, ensuring that every citizen's voice is heard and valued. In doing so, we honor the spirit of Mahatma Phule and pave the way for a truly inclusive society.

(The writer is Assistant Professor in Department of History Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University; views are personal)

Jallianwala Bagh: A turning point in India's freedom struggle

The aftermath of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre not only claimed the lives of over 1,000 innocents but also ignited a fervent spirit of resistance

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre or the Amritsar massacre, a peaceful socio-political gathering of the native population dealt with a violent administrative response on 13th April 1919 by the then British Government killing above 1000 children, women and men firing 1650 gunshots, received strong criticism and gave the Indian freedom movement a clear direction for complete freedom from the foreign rule. The incident underlined the secular and all-inclusive character of the freedom movement. While in other parts of India, there were religious conflicts, in Amritsar the Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs had decided to celebrate their religious days (eid ul-fitter on April 01, Ram Nowmi on April 08 and



SUKHDEV SINGH

Baisakhi on April 13) together to communicate the message of united freedom struggle against the foreign rule. The dead bodies of those, including Hindus, killed by the police while they were protesting against the arrest and deportation of the two local leaders Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr Satyapal to some unknown place, according to the local narratives, were kept in the Khairuddin mosque

before their final funeral rites. Earlier on the occasion of Ram Nowmi on April 9, 1919, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims drank water using the same tumbler. These events caused fear among the British rulers. In the background of what happened on April 13, 1919, was the rising unrest among the people caused by the post-world-war inflation, heavy taxes and other repressive policies of the British Indian Government. During the world war between 1914 and 1917, though the British forces were supported by the British-India Government and principalities, the Gadhries in Punjab had planned a mutiny by the Indian soldiers serving in the British Indian Army for February 1915 on the lines of

1857 mutiny, opposing the colonial Government anti-people policies which due to weak planning could not succeed. Yet, given a strong and colonial-Government atmosphere in Punjab and Bengal, in particular and in India, in general, on ardent advocacy by the then Lieutenant Governor of Punjab, Michael O'Dwyer, the British India Government passed a 'Defence of India Act 1915' curtailing the civil and political liberties. In 1918, suspecting revolt with support from Russian Bolsheviks, the Government appointed a committee headed by Sidney Rowlatt to assess the German and Bolshevik links to the militant movement in India, especially in Punjab and Bengal. On the committee's recommendation, the

Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act of 1919, popularly called the Rowlatt Act, was passed on 21st March 1919 further limiting civil liberties and granting special powers to the Government enabling up to 2 years' detention of purported political agitators without trial. Breaching their promise for post-war political reforms in exchange for India's resources the Government hurriedly passed the Act, ignoring opposition by the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council, who all resigned in protest. Muhammad Ali Jinnah wrote to the Viceroy: "I, therefore, as a protest against the passing of the Bill and the manner in which it was passed tender my resignation ... a Government that passes or sanctions such

a law in times of peace forfeits its claim to be called a civilised Government". The Act, seen as a betrayal, enraged the Indian leaders and citizens. Mahatma Gandhi gave a call for Satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act urging for a peaceful participation in Hartals (strikes), economic boycott and non-cooperation. The anti-Rowlatt Act sentiment was so strong in the whole country, especially in Punjab, that in response to the Satyagraha call on April 6 "practically the whole of Lahore was on the streets". Following the events on April 9 and the detention of the local leaders Dr Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr Satyapal on April 10, 1919, a large crowd gathered to demand the release of Dr Satyapal and Dr Kitchlew. In

the protest, 20-25 Indian and four British were killed while others were injured. The atmosphere in Amritsar was so tense that on April 11, Marcella Sherwood, an elderly English missionary was attacked by an angry mob in the Kucha Kurrichhan. Although she was rescued by some residents in the same street, enraged at the assault, Brigadier General R.E.H. Dyer, ordered every Indian passing through the street to crawl its length on his hands and knees as a punishment. He also authorised the indiscriminate public whipping of locals. The local leaders of the freedom movement, in a meeting held on April 12 at the Hindu College, planned a peaceful public protest gathering on April 13, the day of Baisakhi, in Jallian Wala Bagh

spread over 6-7 acres of vacant land surrounded by residential buildings. By April 13, most parts of Punjab under put under martial law. Civil liberties were curtailed and the assembly of more than four people was banned. The orders of banning public meetings and gatherings were not being widely and properly communicated. After celebrating Baisakhi many people relaxed in the Bagh, waiting to join the peaceful protest against the arrest and deportation of Dr. Satya Pal and Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew. Rest as they say is history.

(The writer is retired professor of Guru Nanak Dev University Amritsar and member, governing council, INTACH, New Delhi; views are personal)

Cluster of quakes rattle Taiwan

AP ■ TAIPEI

A cluster of earthquakes struck the island republic of Taiwan early Tuesday, the strongest having a magnitude of 6.1, according to the US Geological Survey. There were no reports of casualties in the quakes, although there were further damages to two multi-story buildings that had been evacuated following a magnitude 7.4 quake that hit the island earlier this month, killing 13 people and injuring over 1,000. That earthquake was centred along the coast of the rural and mountainous Hualien County. It was the strongest earthquake in the past 25 years in Taiwan and was followed by hundreds of aftershocks. According to the USGS, Tuesday's quake of 6.1 magnitude had its epicentre 28 kilometres south of the city of Hualien, at a depth of 10.7 kilometres. The half-dozen other quakes ranged from magnitude 4.5 to magnitude 6, all near Hualien. Taiwan's own earthquake monitoring centre put the magnitudes of the initial quake at 6.3. Such small discrepancies are common between monitoring stations. The largest among them were two earthquakes of magnitude 6.0 and 6.3 that occurred at 2:26 am and 2:32 am Tuesday, respectively, according to the Taiwan centre. Numerous of the scores of aftershocks could be felt on the upper floors of apartment buildings in the capital Taipei, about 150 kilometres across steep mountains to the northwest. The Full Hotel in downtown Hualien partially collapsed during the quakes and was left leaning at a severe angle. However, it had been undergoing renovations and was unoccupied at the time. The nearby Tong Shuai Building was also empty, having been marked for demolition after



In this image from a video, roads in Hualien, Taiwan are cordoned off after a cluster of earthquakes struck the island early Tuesday. AP/PTI

being heavily damaged in the April 3 quake. Schools and offices in Hualien and the surrounding county were ordered closed on Tuesday as hundreds of aftershocks continued to strike on land and just off the coast in the Pacific Ocean, the vast majority below magnitude 3. Taiwan is no stranger to powerful earthquakes yet their toll

on the high-tech island's 23 million residents has been relatively contained thanks to its excellent earthquake preparedness, experts say. The island also has strict construction standards and widespread public education campaigns about earthquakes. In 1999, a magnitude 7.7 earthquake in Taiwan killed 2,400 people.

metres across steep mountains to the northwest. The Full Hotel in downtown Hualien partially collapsed during the quakes and was left leaning at a severe angle. However, it had been undergoing renovations and was unoccupied at the time. The nearby Tong Shuai Building was also empty, having been marked for demolition after

UK pledges \$620 million in new military aid for Ukraine

AP ■ WARSAW

The UK on Tuesday pledged an additional \$620 million in new military supplies for Ukraine, including long-range missiles and four millions rounds of ammunition, at a time when Ukraine is struggling to hold off advancing Russian forces on the eastern front line of the war, now in its third year. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke with Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on Tuesday morning to confirm the assistance and "assure him of the UK's steadfast support for Ukraine's

defence against Russia's brutal and expansionist ambitions," Sunak's office said. Sunak was travelling to Warsaw later Tuesday to meet with Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg for talks about further aid for Ukraine. Ahead of the visit, the UK government said Sunak would announce 500 million pounds (\$620 million, 580 million euros) in new British military supplies, including 400 vehicles, 60 boats, 1,600 munitions and 4 million rounds of ammunition. The shipment will include British Storm Shadow long-

range missiles, which have a range of some 150 miles and have proved effective at hitting Russian targets. "President Zelenskyy thanked the Prime Minister for the UK's continued support, saying the new military assistance would make a material difference to ordinary Ukrainians fighting on the front line to defend their country," Downing Street said. The announcement comes three days after the US House of Representatives approved \$61 billion in aid for Ukraine, as American lawmakers raced to deliver a fresh round of US support to the war-torn ally.

However, Downing Street did not indicate whether the aid would be immediately available for delivery. Zelenskyy has repeatedly pleaded for greater international assistance, warning that his country will lose the war without it. Ammunition shortages linked to the aid holdup over the past six months have led Ukrainian military commanders to ration shells, a disadvantage that Russia seized on this year — taking the city of Avdiivka and currently inching towards the town of Chasiv Yar, also in the eastern Donetsk region.

2 Indian students killed in traffic collision

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Two Indian students in the United States were killed on the spot in a head-on traffic collision near Lake Pleasant in Arizona, according to police. The victims, reportedly from Telangana, have been identified as 19-year-old Nivesh Mukka and 19-year-old Goutham Parsi. The two Indians were enrolled as international students at Arizona State University. According to the Peoria Police, officers responded to a report

of a collision around 6:18 pm on April 20 on Castle Hot Springs Road, just north of State Route 74. The multiple-vehicle collision involved two vehicles — a white 2024 Kia Forte and a red 2022 Ford F150 — that had collided head-on. Preliminary investigation shows that the driver of the red F150 was travelling southbound on Castle Hot Springs Road while the white Kia Forte was travelling northbound. Mukka and Parsi "died from their injuries on (the) scene",

while the driver of the car in which they were travelling was transported to a local hospital with serious injuries and has since been released. The other car's driver, the sole occupant of the vehicle, was also taken to a local hospital with serious injuries and has been released, the statement said. The area was closed for several hours during the investigation but was reopened for normal traffic Sunday morning. "The cause of this collision is still being investigated," the

police said. "Our thoughts are with the victims, their families, and everybody who rendered aid during this tragic incident," the Peoria Police Department said. The Arizona State University said the International Students and Scholars Centre is working with the dean of students, counselling services and housing representatives to identify the student groups, friends and roommates of the victims so that they can offer any needed support.

Russian strike on Kharkiv's TV tower part of intimidation campaign: Zelenskyy

AP ■ KYIV

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said a Russian missile strike that smashed a television tower in Kharkiv was part of the Kremlin's ongoing effort to intimidate Ukraine's second-largest city, which in recent weeks has come under increasingly frequent attack. The strike sought to "make the terror visible to the whole city and to try to limit Kharkiv's connection and access to information," Zelenskyy said in a Monday evening address. The northeastern Kharkiv region straddles the approximately 1,000-km (600-mile) front line where Ukrainian and Russian forces have been locked in battle for more than two years since Moscow's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The front line has changed little

during a war of attrition, focused mostly on artillery, drones and trenches. Since late March, Russia has stepped up the pressure on Kharkiv, apparently aiming to exploit Ukraine's shortage of air defense systems. It has pounded the local power grid and hit apartment blocks. On Monday, a Russian Kh-59 missile struck Kharkiv's 250-metre (820-foot) -high TV tower, breaking it roughly in half and halting transmissions. A Washington think tank said Russia may be eyeing a ground assault on Kharkiv. "The Kremlin is conducting a concerted air and information operation to destroy Kharkiv City, convince Ukrainians to flee, and internally displace millions of Ukrainians ahead of a possible future Russian offensive operation against the city or elsewhere in Ukraine," the

Institute for the Study of War said in an assessment. The expected arrival in Ukraine in coming weeks of new military aid from its Western partners possibly has prompted Russia to escalate its attacks before the help arrives, the ISW said, adding that trying to capture Kharkiv would be "a significant challenge" for the Kremlin's forces. Instead, the Russian military command "may attempt to destroy Kharkiv City with air, missile, and drone strikes and prompt a large-scale internal displacement of Ukrainian civilians," it said. The US Senate was returning to Washington on Tuesday to vote on \$61 billion in war aid to Ukraine after months of delays. Zelenskyy said US President Joe Biden assured him the aid would include long-range and artillery capa-

bilities. "Four priorities are key: defense of the sky, modern artillery, long-range capacity, and to ensure that packages of American aid arrive as soon as possible," Zelenskyy said. Also Tuesday, Britain pledged 500 million pounds (\$620 million, 580 million euros) in new military supplies for Ukraine, including 400 vehicles, 60 boats, 1,600 munitions and 4 million rounds of ammunition. The shipment will also include British Storm Shadow long-range missiles, which have a range of about 150 miles (240 km) and have proven effective at hitting Russian targets, the British government said. British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak spoke with Zelenskyy on Tuesday morning to confirm the new assistance. He was due to announce the aid later Tuesday.

2 Malaysian military helicopters collide and crash while training, killing 10

AP ■ KUALA LUMPUR

Two Malaysian military helicopters collided midair and crashed during a training session on Tuesday, killing all 10 people on board, the navy said. The helicopters were rehearsing at a naval base in northern Perak state for the navy's 90th anniversary celebration next month when the accident occurred, the navy said in a brief statement. "All victims were confirmed dead on site," it said, adding that the remains have been sent to the hospital to be identified. A video circulating on social media showed several helicopters flying low in a formation. One of the aircraft veered sideways and clipped the rotor of another helicopter, causing both to plunge and crash. A local police officer who declined to be named because



he isn't authorised to speak to the media confirmed that the video footage is genuine. The choppers were mangled beyond recognition. Rescue workers sifted through the debris to find the bodies. The victims included three women and seven men, police said. Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said the nation mourned over

the "heart and soul-wrenching tragedy" and that the navy will immediately carry out an investigation to determine what caused the accident. Seven crew members were aboard the AW139 maritime operation helicopter, the navy said. That aircraft is produced by AgustaWestland, which is a subsidiary of the Italian defense

contractor Leonardo. Three other crew members were on a Fennec lightweight helicopter, manufactured by European multinational defense conglomerate Airbus. Local media reported that the AW139 crashed at a sports complex at the naval base, while the Fennec hit a nearby swimming pool.

Musk accuses Australia of censorship

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Tech billionaire Elon Musk accused Australia of censorship after an Australian judge ruled that his social media platform X must block users worldwide from accessing video of a bishop being stabbed in a Sydney church. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese responded Tuesday by describing Musk as an "arrogant billionaire" who considered himself above the law and was out of touch with the public. X Corp., the tech company rebranded in 2023 by Musk after he bought Twitter, announced last week it would fight in court Australian orders to take down posts relating to a knife attack on Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel in an Assyrian Orthodox church as a service was being streamed online on April 15. The material was geoblocked from Australia but available elsewhere. But the regulator that made the

orders, Australia's eSafety Commission, which describes itself as the world's first government agency dedicated to keeping people safer online, successfully applied to the Federal Court in Sydney for a temporary global ban on sharing the video of the bishop being stabbed. In an after-hours hearing Monday, Justice Geoffrey Kennett suppressed the footage from all X users until Wednesday, when an application for a permanent ban will be heard. Hours later, Musk posted on his personal X account a cartoon that depicted a fork in a road with one path leading to "free speech" and "truth" and the other to "censorship" and "propaganda." Musk cited Albanese telling reporters Monday that other social media platforms had largely complied with the regulator's orders to take violent content down. "I'd like to take a moment to thank the PM for informing the

public that this platform is the only truthful one," Musk posted. Albanese berated Musk in several television interviews Tuesday. "We'll do what's necessary to take on this arrogant billionaire who thinks he's above the law, but also above common decency," Albanese told Australian Broadcasting Corp. "The idea that someone would go to court for the right to put up violent content on a platform shows how out of touch Mr. Musk is. Social media needs to have social responsibility with it." Albanese told Sky News, "This is a bloke who's chosen ego and showing violence over common sense." "This isn't about censorship. It's about common sense and common decency. And Elon Musk should show some," Albanese told Seven Network. The regulator's lawyer, Christopher Tran, had argued Monday in court that geoblocking Australia did not meet the definition of removal of the footage under Australian law.

Tran said the footage was a "graphic and violent video" that would cause "irreparable harm if it's continuing to circulate." X's lawyer, Marcus Hoynes, said he was unable to get instructions from his San Francisco-based client because it was early Monday morning in the United States. Musk has described eSafety Commissioner Julie Inman Grant as the "Australian censorship commissar." Albanese said on Monday that social media posts, misinformation and dissemination of violent images had exacerbated suffering from the church attack, which the two clerics survived, as well as a knife attack at a Sydney shopping mall two days earlier that killed six people. X's Global Government Affairs team said Saturday that Inman Grant ordered it to remove some posts that commented on the church attack, but it said the posts did not violate X's rules on violent speech.

X said the Australian regulator had demanded the platform "globally withhold these posts or face a daily fine of USD 785,000." "X believes that eSafety's order was not within the scope of Australian law and we complied with the directive pending a legal challenge," the Global Government Affairs account said. "While X respects the right of a country to enforce its laws within its jurisdiction, the eSafety Commissioner does not have the authority to dictate what content X's users can see globally." "We will robustly challenge this unlawful and dangerous approach in court," it added. The live feed of the church attack and social media posts that followed attracted a crowd of 2,000 people and fuelled a riot against police, who barricaded the young suspected attacker inside the place of worship. The rioting injured 51 police officers and damaged 104 police vehicles, officials said.

German EU lawmaker's aide held on suspicion of spying for China

AP ■ BERLIN

A man who works for a German lawmaker in the European Parliament has been arrested on suspicion of spying for China, German prosecutors said Tuesday. The detention came less than 24 hours after three people were arrested for spying for China in a separate German case. The suspect, identified only as Jian G in line with German privacy rules, was arrested Monday in the eastern German city of Dresden, federal prosecutors said in a statement. They said that he has worked for a German lawmaker in the European Union's legislature since 2019. The statement didn't specify which lawmaker employed him, but German news agency dpa reported, citing unidentified security sources, that he works for Maximilian Krah of the far-right party Alternative

for Germany. Other German media also linked the suspect to Krah, who is the party's top candidate in the European Parliament election in early June. Jian G, a German national, is accused of working for a Chinese intelligence service and of repeatedly passing on information on negotiations and decisions in the European Parliament in January. Prosecutors allege that he also snooped on Chinese dissidents in Germany. German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said the spying allegations were "extremely serious." "If it is confirmed that there was spying for Chinese intelligence from inside the European Parliament, then that is an attack from inside on European democracy," Faeser said in a statement. "Anyone who employs such a staff member also carries responsibility," she added. "This

case must be cleared up precisely. ... All the connections and background must be illuminated." News of the arrest came a day after three Germans suspected of spying for China and arranging to transfer information on technology with potential military uses were arrested in a separate case. Also on Monday, British prosecutors said a former researcher working in the UK Parliament and another man were charged with spying for China. Asked in Beijing about the latest arrest in Germany, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said that "the recent reports in Europe about Chinese spying are all hyping up with an aim to smear and suppress China." Beijing urges "the relevant parties to stop spreading disinformation about China's spy threat and stop political manipulation and malicious smears against China," he added.

Poll outcome shows Maldivians want to preserve sovereignty & freedom: President Muizzu

PTI ■ MALE

Armed with a 'super majority' in the parliamentary polls, Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu has said the international community will now understand where the Maldivians stand, especially on the issue of sovereignty and freedom. The pro-China Maldivian president's statement came at a celebratory event on Monday, a day after the People's National Congress (PNC), led by him, won 68 out of 93 seats in Sunday's polls and its coalition partners Maldives National Party (MNP) and Maldives Development Alliance (MDA) won one and two seats, respectively,

taking the total to more than two-thirds in the People's Majlis. A majority in Parliament would mean that Muizzu's party has control not just over lawmaking but also over the legislature which ratifies the laws; which till now had two opposing coalitions and saw several instances of a conflict between the government and the legislature. The PNC's "super majority" in parliamentary elections is being seen as a strong endorsement of his pro-Beijing foreign policy, as both India and China closely watched the outcome of the polls in the strategically-located archipelago nation in the Indian Ocean. Muizzu, 45, rode to power last year on the 'India Out' plank and since

assuming office in November 2023, has visited China and cemented Male's ties with Beijing, including in the defence sector. Ahead of the parliamentary elections, the main opposition Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP), led by pro-India former president Ibrahim Mohamed Solih had advocated restoring ties with India. The MDP, however, won only 15 seats. Muizzu, who has forced the repatriation of 88 Indian military personnel manning three aviation platforms gifted by India to the Maldives, two of the three batches have already left, said, "We are a proud nation that loves sovereignty and freedom, which we have

shown to the international community as well." The parliamentary election result was also to prove that the Maldivians want "autonomy in choosing their future, without foreign coercion," President Muizzu

said, without naming any country, according to the Sun.mv news portal. "It has also become evident for those with other hidden agendas, what the Maldivians want. So, I urge them to let go of dissidence, now that the elections are over," the president said. "To everyone outside of Maldives ... To everyone in the international community It must be clear now. That we want to decide our own matters by ourselves," he was quoted as saying by Adhadhu.com. Even when he did not name any country during the victory speech, in the run-up to Sunday's polls, Muizzu and other leaders from the PNC had repeatedly claimed that India influenced internal affairs in

the past. The President said he and his team "would use the majority in Parliament to fulfil the demands of the people and fulfil the pledges made by the government," the portal said. Muizzu also "very respectfully" called on political leaders and all parties to move forward with the work of developing the nation; said the country belongs to all Maldivian citizens, and said he would work harder than in the past five months. "These past five months were nothing. You would now have to stay awake for 24 hours. I'm saying seriously. I want to bring development as the public wanted," Adhadhu.com said on Tuesday

quoting the President as saying while addressing the newly elected lawmakers, cabinet ministers, and senior officials of state-owned enterprises. During Monday's celebratory event, Muizzu also claimed that the election outcome is proof that the Maldivians want to uphold and sustain the Islamic faith and its guiding principles as a core identity in shaping the country's future. Meanwhile, Speaker Mohamed Aslam has announced that the new members elected to Parliament in Sunday's election will be sworn in on May 28. Speaker Aslam, who has served four consecutive terms in the Majlis, failed to defend his seat.



Nothing will stand in way of Rwanda flights: PM Sunak

PTI ■ LONDON

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Tuesday welcomed the passage of his government's controversial Safety of Rwanda Bill by Parliament overnight and pledged that nothing will stand in the way of illegal migrants being flown out to the African country. A day after he revealed a time-frame between 10 and 12 weeks for the first flights taking off from an undisclosed airfield via chartered planes lined up, Sunak described the passage of his "landmark" bill as a "fundamental change" in the handling of global migration. On Monday night, the House of Lords finally gave way to the legislative primacy of the Commons at the end of a lengthy back and forth demanding amendments on a bill drafted to prevent legal challenges. "The passing of this landmark legislation is not just a step forward but a fundamental change in the global equation on migration," Sunak said in a statement issued by Downing Street. "We introduced the Rwanda Bill to deter vulnerable migrants from making perilous crossings and break the business model of the criminal gangs who exploit them. The passing of this legislation will allow us to do that and make

it very clear that if you come here illegally, you will not be able to stay," he said. "Our focus is to now get flights off the ground, and I am clear that nothing will stand in our way of doing that and saving lives," he added. The government is banking on bringing down soaring illegal migration numbers as a result of the "deterrent effect" of the bill, which will become law after Royal Assent from King Charles III. Under the law, migrants arriving illegally on UK shores would be deported to Kigali for their asylum claims to be processed. It came as French media reported on Tuesday morning that five people have died attempting to cross the English Channel towards the UK from an area near the town of Wimereux in France. The French coastguard has said they could not say how many people were involved but that there were several "lifeless bodies". Sunak has made stopping such boats from making dangerous journeys across the Channel one of his priorities ahead of a general election expected later this year. In a Downing Street press briefing on Monday, he declared there were "no ifs, no buts" about using the Rwanda legislation "come what may" to ensure such migrants can be deterred once the message goes

5 dead while crossing English Channel

AP ■ PARIS

At least 5 people have died while crossing the English Channel, according to French media, hours after the UK approved the migrant deportation bill. The Voix du Nord newspaper said the bodies were discovered at the Wimereux beach in northern France on Tuesday. The rescue operation is ongoing and helicopters and boats have been deployed, according to the regional newspaper. About 100 migrants have been rescued and placed aboard a French navy ship. They will be taken to the port of Boulogne, the paper said. This came only hours after British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's latest effort to send some migrants on a one-way ticket to Rwanda finally won approval from Parliament.

The UK government plans to deport some of those who enter the country illegally as a deterrent to migrants who risk their lives in leaky, inflatable boats in hopes that they will be able to claim asylum once they reach Britain. Human rights groups have described the legislation as inhumane and cruel. Both the United Nations refugee agency and the Council of Europe called on the UK Tuesday to rethink its plans for fears they could damage international cooperation on tackling the global migrant crisis. Migrants trying to cross the busy English Channel face drownings and sinking among other deadly incidents, often aboard crowded boats. An estimated 30,000 people made the crossing in 2023, according to UK government figures.

out that they would not be able to stay on in the UK. "These flights are going to Rwanda. We are going to deliver this indispensable deterrent, so that we finally break the business model of the criminal gangs and save lives," he said. Without going into "operational details", the British Indian leader said his government was prepared for the next steps with increased detention spaces to house around 2,200 such migrants and 200 trained dedicated case-workers lined up to process the paperwork. To deal with any

legal cases "quickly and decisively", the UK judiciary have made available 25 courtrooms and identified 150 judges who could provide over 5,000 sitting days. "I can confirm that we've put an airfield on standby, booked commercial charter planes for specific slots and we have 500 highly trained individuals ready to escort illegal migrants all the way to Rwanda, with 300 more trained in the coming weeks. This is one of the most complex operational endeavours the Home Office has carried out. But we are

ready. Plans are in place," he declared. He also ruled out any foreign court intervention, implying that the UK was ready to reconsider its membership of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) if required. The law has come under fierce criticism from Opposition parties, senior peers and rights groups who fear the impact on torture survivors and at-risk refugees who seek asylum in the UK and question the country's approach towards international law.

Human rights groups condemn deportation

AP ■ LONDON

Britain's plans to send some asylum-seekers to Rwanda were swiftly condemned by international humanitarian organisations after Parliament approved legislation allowing the deportation flights to begin later this year. Both the UN refugee agency and the Council of Europe on Tuesday called for the UK to rethink its plans because of concerns that the legislation undermines human rights protections and fears that it will damage international cooperation on tackling the global migrant crisis. "The new legislation marks a

further step away from the UK's long tradition of providing refuge to those in need, in breach of the Refugee Convention," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said in a statement. "Protecting refugees requires all countries – not just those neighbouring crisis zones – to uphold their obligations." The statement came just hours after Britain's House of Lords dropped its attempts to amend the legislation, paving the way for it to become law. Michael O'Flaherty, the Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, criticised the legislation for pre-

venting asylum-seekers from asking the courts to intervene when they are threatened with being sent back to the countries they are fleeing. "The adoption of the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immigration) Bill by the UK Parliament raises major issues about the human rights of asylum seekers and the rule of law more generally," O'Flaherty said in a statement. "The United Kingdom government should refrain from removing people under the Rwanda policy and reverse the bill's effective infringement of judicial independence." The number of migrants arriving in Britain on small

boats soared to 45,774 in 2022 from just 299 four years earlier as people fleeing war, famine and economic hardship paid criminal gangs thousands of pounds to ferry them across the channel. Small boat arrivals dropped to 29,437 last year as the government cracked down on people smugglers and reached an agreement to return Albanians to their home country. Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson first proposed the Rwanda plan more than two years ago, when he reached an agreement with the East African nation to accept some asylum-seekers in return for

millions of pounds (dollars) in aid. Implementation has been held up by a series of court challenges and opposition from migrant advocates who say it violates international law. The Rwandan government welcomed approval of the bill, saying it underscores the work it has done to make Rwanda "safe and secure" since the genocide that ravaged the country 30 years ago. "We are committed to the migration and economic development partnership with the UK and look forward to welcoming those relocated to Rwanda," government spokesperson Yolande Makolo said.

Iran Prez Raisi & Pak Army chief Munnir discuss border issues

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi and Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munnir discussed regional peace, stability and border security, months after the two neighbours carried out tit-for-tat air strikes against alleged terrorist hideouts on rival lands. Gen Munnir called on Raisi, the first head of state of any country to visit Pakistan after the February 8 general elections, and emphasised the need for "improved coordination" against the terrorists, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan Army said. General Munnir described the Pakistan-Iran border as the "border of peace and friendship", emphasising the need for improved coordination along the border to prevent terrorists from jeopardising the longstanding brotherly relations between the two neighbouring countries, it said. The statement said that the discussion between the two dignitaries focussed on matters of mutual interest, notably regional peace, stability, and border security. "Both sides concurred on the necessity to bolster bilateral cooperation while jointly striving for regional stability and economic prosperity," said the ISPR

statement. The Iranian President on Tuesday morning arrived at Lahore's Allama Iqbal International Airport and was received by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. The Foreign Office had stated earlier that Raisi would visit Lahore and Karachi and meet with the provincial leadership. On Monday, Raisi was welcomed by Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister House. Both the leaders held wide-ranging talks and agreed on joint efforts to eradicate terrorism and discussed ways to promote bilateral ties at political, economic, trade and cultural levels. During their talks, President Raisi and Prime Minister Sharif agreed on joint efforts to eradicate terrorism, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. The two leaders also held discussions to increase trade and communication links between their countries. In the presence of Raisi and Sharif, the Iranian and Pakistani officials signed eight documents for promoting cooperation in various fields. Addressing a joint press conference, President Raisi said that Iran and Pakistan have decided to increase the trade volume to USD 10 billion.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM seeks peace with TTP militants

PTI ■ PESHAWAR

Contrary to Pakistan's federal government policy of not holding "meaningful dialogue" with the banned Pakistani Taliban, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur of the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province has called for negotiations with the dreaded terrorist group to maintain lasting peace in the restive region. After the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) called off its ceasefire in November 2022, Pakistan has been hit by a wave of terrorism, mostly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but also in Balochistan and Punjab, which borders the province. Terror attacks have also reached as far as Islamabad and Karachi. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, Gandapur said talks with the militants are necessary for ensuring peace in the province and a viable strategy at the national level should be evolved to halt further damage to the region. "We fully support meaningful dialogue with the militant organisation to improve the law and order situation in the province," he said. Evolving a national-level strategy is a must to end the menace of terrorism.

Dialogues with the militant outfit should be held within the parameters of the outlined national security strategy to end the problem on a sound footing, the chief minister from jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, said. Formal talks were held with the TTP leadership when Imran Khan was in power. Many delegations from Pakistan visited Kabul for talks. However, all efforts remained inconclusive. After the regime change in Islamabad in 2022, the government led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif discontinued the talk process with TTP and decided to go for military operations against the terrorists. In 2023, Pakistan decided not to support the Afghan Taliban's case at the international level or extend any other assistance following Kabul's failure to neutralise the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terror group. The TTP, which has ideological linkages with the Afghan Taliban and is also known as the Pakistan Taliban, was set up as an umbrella group of several militant outfits in 2007. Its main aim is to impose its strict brand of Islam across Pakistan.

Imran's party alleges 'blatant rigging' in bypolls

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Jailed former Pakistan premier Imran Khan's party has alleged that "blatant rigging" took place in the recently held by-elections in which the ruling PML-N got the lion's share, as it announced a plan for countrywide protests, a media report said on Tuesday. By-elections were held on Sunday to 21 national and provincial assembly seats amidst tight security and suspension of cellular and internet services in specific districts of Punjab and Balochistan to maintain law and order. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won at least two national and 10

provincial assembly seats, according to the unofficial results on Monday. Leaders of 71-year-old Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Monday said that April 21 will be remembered as a "black day" in the history of Pakistan, as "open and blatant violations of law" of a magnitude never observed in the country's history were witnessed, the Dawn newspaper reported. "[The] day of election is considered an accountability day, and people cast their votes with great zeal. However, on April 21, open and blatant violations of law were observed. The magnitude of the rigging and violation of law has never been observed in the history of Pakistan, party Chairman

Barrister Gohar Khan said. "Gates of polling stations were closed, and at some polling stations, more votes were polled than the total registered votes," Gohar said, addressing a press conference. He alleged that the "mandate thieves" resorted to shameful tactics to manipulate the electoral process, including stuffing ballot boxes before voting even began and coercing people as well as officials to rig the by-polls in the presence of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) representatives. The Express Tribune newspaper reported. Gohar said such actions were unheard of even in the darkest days of dictatorship. The party urged the ECP to withhold the notifications of

results and announced a series of protests starting Friday. Gohar said that he and party leader Omar Ayub visited various polling stations and witnessed flagrant rigging firsthand. He said that even after the electoral watchdog was informed about the rigging incidents in Gujrat, no action had been taken despite 24 hours passing, the report said. "The Constitution, democracy, and the rule of law were virtually suspended in the country," he was quoted as saying in the report. Addressing the press conference, Ayub said that pre-poll rigging began with the suspension of the internet, alleging that Prime Minister Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam

Nawaz did not "believe in transparency". On Saturday, the federal government announced that cellular services would remain temporarily suspended in specific districts of Punjab and Balochistan during the by-elections. Ayub said police officials told them that intelligence agencies were not allowing voters to enter polling stations. He said that Sunday's by-elections could not be called transparent as it was a complete farce in which only taxpayers' money was wasted on a futile exercise. Claiming that Sharif got fewer votes during the general elections than the candidate contesting on the PML-N ticket in the by-election, Ayub said, "This is beyond comprehension."

Abortion returns to spotlight in Italy 46 yrs after it was legalised

AP ■ PARIS

Italian Premier Giorgia Meloni's far-right-led government wants to allow anti-abortion groups access to women considering ending their pregnancies, reviving tensions around abortion in Italy 46 years after it was legalised in the overwhelmingly Catholic country. The Senate on Tuesday was voting on legislation tied to European Union COVID-19 recovery funds that includes an amendment sponsored by Meloni's Brothers of Italy party. The text, already passed by the lower Chamber of Deputies, allows regions to permit groups "with a qualified experience supporting motherhood" to have access to public support centres where women considering abortions go to receive counselling. For the right, the amendment merely fulfil the original intent of the 1978 law legalising abortion, known as Law 194, which includes provisions to prevent the procedure and support motherhood. For the left-wing opposition, the amendment marks a chip-

ping away of abortion rights that opponents warned would follow Meloni's 2022 election. "The government should realise that they keep saying they absolutely do not want to boycott or touch Law 194, but the truth is that the right-wing opposes women's reproductive autonomy, fears women's choices regarding motherhood, sexuality, and abortion," Cecilia D'Elia, a Democratic Party senator, said at a protest this week against the legislation. Under the 1978 law, Italy allows abortion on request in the first 12 weeks of pregnancy, or later if a woman's health or life is endangered. It provides for publicly funded counselling centres to advise pregnant women of their rights and services offered if they want to terminate the pregnancies. But easy access to abortion isn't always guaranteed. The law allows health care personnel to register as conscientious objectors and refuse to perform abortions, and many have, meaning women sometimes have to travel far to have the procedure. Meloni, who campaigned on a

slogan of "God, fatherland and family," has insisted she won't roll back the 1978 law and merely wants to implement it fully. But she has also prioritised encouraging women to have babies to reverse Italy's demographic crisis. Italy's birthrate, already one of the lowest in the world, has been falling steadily for about 15 years and reached a record low last year with 379,000 babies born. Meloni's conservative forces, backed strongly by the Vatican, have mounted a campaign to encourage at least 500,000 births annually by 2033, a rate that demographers say is necessary to prevent the economy from collapsing under the weight of Italy's aging population. Meloni has called the left-wing opposition to the proposed amendment "fake news," recalling that Law 194 provides for measures to prevent abortions, which would include counselling pregnant women about alternatives. The amendment specifically allows anti-abortion groups, or groups "supporting motherhood," to be among the volunteer groups that can work in the counselling centres.

N Korean leader leads rocket drills that simulate a N-counterattack

AP ■ SEOUL

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised salvo launches of the country's "super-large" multiple rocket launchers that simulated a nuclear counterattack against enemy targets, state media said Tuesday, adding to tests and threats that have raised tensions in the region. The report by North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency came a day after the South Korean and Japanese militaries detected the North firing what they suspected were multiple short-range ballistic missiles from a region near its capital, Pyongyang, toward its eastern seas. Analysts say North Korea's large-sized artillery rockets blur the boundary between artillery systems and ballistic missiles because they can create their own thrust and are guided during delivery.



The North has described some of these systems, including the 600mm multiple rocket launchers that were tested Monday, as capable of delivering tactical nuclear warheads. KCNA said Monday's launches represented the first demonstration of the country's nuclear-weapons management and control system called "Haekbangshoe," or "nuclear trigger." The report described the drill as aimed at demonstrating the strength and diverse attack means of North Korea's nuclear forces amid deepening ten-

sions with the United States and South Korea, which it portrayed as "warmongers" raising tensions in the region with their combined military exercises. State media photos showed at least four rockets being fired from launch vehicles as Kim watched from an observation post. It said the rockets flew 352 kilometres before accurately hitting an island target and that the drill verified the reliability of the "system of command, management, control and operation of the whole nuclear force."

Dubai Airport operating at full capacity again: CEO

PTI ■ DUBAI

The Dubai International Airport, the world's busiest for international travel, is operating at full capacity, authorities announced on Tuesday, a week after unprecedented torrential rains lashed the Arabian Peninsula and flooded many areas in the UAE. Starting last Tuesday evening, tens of thousands of air passengers were stranded at the waterlogged Dubai International as it became impossible to move from or towards the airport as roads turned into massive rivers due to the unprecedented floods. "After the heaviest rainfall the UAE experienced in 75 years Dubai Airports is making remarkable strides in restoring and normalising operations at Dubai International Airport (DXB)," a statement from Dubai Airports said. Dubai Airports owns and manages the operation and

development of both of Dubai's airports - Dubai International (DXB) and Dubai World Central (DWC). Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said since Monday, ahead of its recovery schedule, DXB returned to its normal flight schedule and is back to operating around 1,400 flight movements a day. "With roads in and around the airport 100 per cent clear of water accumulation, our manpower, logistics and facilities are operating as usual again. To have the airport back up and running is no small feat. 2,155 flights were cancelled and 115 were diverted," he said. "It has been the most challenging adverse weather event we've had to navigate, and our people and partners worked tirelessly to keep the operation running and to assist our guests," Griffiths added. He said that 31 flights were diverted to Dubai World Central (DWC), and by April

19, all guests at the airport were successfully supported and continued onwards to complete their travel plans. "Guest welfare remained a key priority throughout the disruption and although there were initial challenges in transporting supplies with road closures around DXB and DWC, over 75,000 food packs were delivered across both airports," the statement added. Extremely heavy rainfall starting on April 15 (Monday) drenched Dubai and other parts of the UAE with 20 mm rainfall. It intensified through April 16 (Tuesday) and by the end of the day, it was over 140 mm in 24 hours, far more than the average yearly rains of 94.7 mm at the Dubai International Airport site. Experts say that the rainfall Dubai received from April 15 to April 16 surpassed "anything documented since the start of data collection in 1949."

Baltimore leaders accuse ship's owner, manager of negligence

AP ■ BALTIMORE

The owner and manager of the massive container ship that took down the Francis Scott Key Bridge last month should be held fully liable for the deadly collapse, according to court papers filed Monday on behalf of Baltimore's mayor and city council. The two companies filed a petition soon after the March 26 collapse asking a court to cap their liability under a pre-Civil War provision of an 1851 maritime law — a routine but important procedure for such cases.

A federal court in Maryland will ultimately decide who's responsible and how much they owe in what could become one of the most expensive maritime disasters in history. Singapore-based Grace Ocean Private Ltd. owns the Dali, the vessel that veered off course and slammed into the bridge. Synergy Marine Pte Ltd, also based in Singapore, is the ship's manager. In their filing Monday, attorneys for the city accused them of negligence, arguing the companies should have realised the Dali was unfit for its voyage and manned the ship with

a competent crew, among other issues. A spokesperson for the companies said Monday that it would be inappropriate to comment on the pending litigation. The ship was headed to Sri Lanka when it lost power shortly after leaving Baltimore and struck one of the bridge's support columns, collapsing the span and sending six members of a roadwork crew plunging to their deaths. "For more than four decades, cargo ships made thousands of trips every year under the Key Bridge without incident," the city's complaint reads.

India leads in GenAI adoption, says report

Investment trends likely to rise in coming years: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India leads globally in adopting GenAI technologies as a vast percentage of organisations incorporate GenAI in operations, and a majority of the populace expects increased investments and budget allocations towards Gen AI in the next 2-3 years, according to a recent report. Search analytics firm Elastic on Monday released the Generative AI Report that gathered insights from 3,200 IT decision-makers and influencers across sectors in the US, Europe, and Asia-Pacific. In the Asia Pacific and Japan region, 1,200 were surveyed, including 300 from India. According to the report, 81 per cent of Indian organisations have already implemented GenAI, making India the leader in adopting generative artificial intelligence technologies. The study also predicted promising investment trends in near future, with about 94 per cent of respondents anticipating increased investments and budget allocations towards GenAI initiatives in the next 2-3



years. However, most all of the respondents expressed concerns about processing and using their data. "As many as 99 per cent of respondents expressed concerns about processing and using their data, highlighting the need for organisations to work with GenAI providers who can help safeguard sensitive information. The report further observed that 73 per cent of respondents in India were confident that conversational data search capabilities would significantly enhance operational efficiency. "The disruptive potential of

GenAI has captured the imaginations and budgets of India's IT and data leaders, as seen by India's lead in GenAI adoption," said Karthik Rajaram, area vice president and general manager, India, Elastic. "However, while the commitment of many organisations to quickly harness the transformative opportunity of GenAI to drive innovation and efficiency is exciting, it's businesses that addit search-powered GenAI grounded by business context that will lead and uncover the insights needed to securely innovate, build more efficient businesses, and pioneer new customer experiences."

Markets climb for 3rd day on firm global cues

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty closed higher for the third session in a row on Tuesday, following gains in telecom, tech and consumer durable shares amid a firm trend in the global markets. After rallying over 400 points, the 30-share BSE Sensex ended 89.83 points or 0.12 per cent higher at 73,738.45. During the session, it jumped 411.27 points or 0.55 per cent to 74,059.89. Trimming most of its early gains, the NSE Nifty ended



31.60 points or 0.14 per cent up at 22,368. During the day, it climbed 111.15 points or 0.49 per cent to 22,447.55.

Heavy selling pressure in index heavyweight Reliance Industries, mainly due to profit booking, dragged

market indices lower. Reliance lost over one per cent to end at Rs 2,918.50 per scrip. From the Sensex basket, Bharti Airtel, Nestle, Maruti, Tata Motors, HCL Technologies, NTPC, Asian Paints and State Bank of India were the major gainers. Sun Pharma, Reliance Industries, Mahindra & Mahindra, JSW Steel, Tech Mahindra and Bajaj Finance were among the laggards. In Asian markets, Tokyo and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory while Seoul and Shanghai ended lower. European markets were trading with gains. Wall Street ended in positive territory on Monday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.41 per cent to USD 87.36 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,915.23 crore on Monday after a day's breather, according to exchange data. The BSE benchmark climbed 560.29 points or 0.77 per cent to settle at 73,648.62 on Monday. The NSE Nifty went up by 189.40 points or 0.86 per cent to 22,336.40.

Reliance Industries shares climb nearly one per cent post earnings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Reliance Industries Ltd on Tuesday climbed nearly 1 per cent after the company's annual earnings hit a record high. The stock advanced 0.85 per cent to Rs 2,986.05 on the BSE. At the NSE, it climbed 0.92 per cent to Rs 2,987 apiece. The company's market valuation stood at Rs 20,07,346.55 crore. Reliance Industries Ltd on Monday reported an almost flat March quarter net profit,

while its annual earnings hit a record high on the back of a recovery in core oil and petrochemicals business and sustained momentum across the consumer-facing telecom and retail businesses. The oil-to-telecom-and-retail conglomerate's consolidated net profit stood at Rs 18,951 crore, or Rs 28.01 per share, in January-March quarter of the 2023-24 fiscal, compared to Rs 19,299 crore, or Rs 28.52 a share, a year ago, according to a company's stock exchange filing.

The profit was, however, higher quarter-on-quarter when compared to Rs 17,265 crore in October-December period. For the full fiscal FY24 (April 2023 to March 2024), Reliance posted a record net profit of Rs 69,621 crore, as compared to Rs 66,702 crore earnings in the preceding financial year. Reliance also became the first Indian company to hit Rs 10 lakh crore turnover in FY24 when revenue from operations rose 2.6 per cent from Rs 9.74 lakh crore in 2022-23.

Rupee rises 3 paise to close at 83.33 against \$



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee appreciated by 3 paise to close at 83.33 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday on positive domestic markets and a soft American currency. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.37 against the greenback. The unit hit an intra-day high of 83.28 and a low of 83.39 against the greenback. The domestic unit finally settled at 83.33 (provisional) against the dollar, 3 paise higher from its previous close. On Monday, the rupee appreciated by 8 paise to close at 83.36 against the US dollar. "Indian rupee appreciated on Tuesday on weak US dollar and positive domestic markets. However, a recovery in crude oil prices and FII outflows capped sharp gains," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.01 per cent lower at 106.06, on easing tensions between Israel and Iran. Brent crude futures, the

global oil benchmark, advanced 0.29 per cent to USD 87.25 per barrel. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on improved global risk sentiments and easing of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East," Choudhary said. Easing dollar on strong euro and pound amid mixed to positive PMI data from Europe also supported the rupee. "However, any fresh aggressions in the Middle East may cap sharp upside. Traders may take cues from PMI data from US. Investors may remain cautious ahead of inflation data from US later this week. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.10 to Rs 83.50," Choudhary added. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex advanced 89.83 points, or 0.12 per cent, to settle at 73,738.45 points. The Nifty rose 31.60 points, or 0.14 per cent, to close at 22,368.00 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Monday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,915.23 crore, according to exchange data.

Karnataka, Gujarat lead India's clean energy transition race: Report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Karnataka and Gujarat continue to lead the race to clean energy transition, but states like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh need to step up efforts, according to a new report released on Tuesday. The joint report by research organisation, Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA), and clean energy think tank Ember evaluates the clean electricity transition preparedness at the sub-national level. The report's authors said Karnataka and Gujarat continue their strong performance across dimensions, effectively integrating renewable energy sources into their power sectors, making strong strides in decarbonisation. But states like Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal and Uttar Pradesh need to improve. While these states are in the early stages of their transition, they now need to focus on increasing renewable energy deployment, enhancing short term market participation and strengthening their distribution companies. The report launch coincides with a spell of intense heat wave sweeping parts of India, leading to the Ministry of



Power preparing for a projected peak power demand of 260 gigawatts. Harsh summers also offer the chance to utilise more clean energy like solar power. Although, this requires preparedness of states to transition to clean sources of electricity. "Cyclical weather conditions coupled with faster economic activity is pushing India's peak electricity demand higher every year. While the central government is taking steps to integrate more renewable energy into the grid, states, too, need to be prepared to do so. Gauging sub-national progress now

requires constant monitoring of several parameters at the state level. A purely national overview can often overshadow subtle intricacies at the state level, which may stymie the country's electricity transition," the report's contributing author, Vibhuti Garg, Director, South Asia, IEEFA, said. While the national-level progress towards electricity transition is progressing well, it is far more uneven at the state level. "Some states have developed progressive steps, such as boosting decentralised renewable energy deployment, promoting solar

pumps for agricultural needs, and enhancing storage solutions to ensure more renewable energy in their electricity systems. But, the transition to clean electricity is still in its infancy in many states. "These states should look to accelerate efforts to access benefits of a transition to clean electricity and to ensure they are not left too far behind the better-performing states," the report's contributing author, Aditya Lolla, Asia Programme Director, Ember, said. One of the striking findings from the analysis for the 2024 report is that several states are exhibiting preparedness to embrace electricity transition. They perform well in the "Readiness and Performance of the Power Ecosystem" and "Market Enablers" dimensions but need to improve in the "Decarbonisation" dimension. "Delhi's power system is well-prepared for decarbonisation, while Odisha has robust market enablers to support decarbonisation in the power sector. However, their actual decarbonisation progress so far does not match their strengths in these aspects, highlighting the importance of performing well in both dimensions to effectively

achieve decarbonisation goals," co-author Neshwin Rodrigues, Electricity Policy Analyst, Ember, said. The report also notes that state-level decarbonisation can be further accelerated by strengthening the power ecosystem and having right enablers. Some states that are decarbonising well also lack the right market enablers, others struggle with the readiness of their power ecosystems. Kerala, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab and Maharashtra all exhibited considerable progress in certain aspects but also lower performance in other aspects. For example, Kerala and Punjab need to improve when it comes to market enablers for decarbonisation, while Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra need to focus on the readiness of their power ecosystems, according to co-author Tanya Rana, Energy Analyst, IEEFA. "Despite achieving relative success in decarbonising the sector thus far, states must address deficiencies in readiness and market enablers to sustain their momentum," says Saloni Sachdeva Michael, Energy Specialist, India Clean Energy Transition, IEEFA. The report recognises the considerable efforts that states are making towards

transitioning to clean electricity and recommends some key steps to accelerate the pace of transition. "We recommend the strengthening of state-level regulatory ecosystems. This not only ensures compliance but also promotes growth, data tracking and monitoring, and a conducive environment for business," Michael said. "India has formulated many central and state-level policy schemes to reinforce its goal of energy independence by supporting various reforms and regulatory interventions across the value chain. However, actual implementation has not been adequate and transparent," she added. The report also calls for a need to shift focus from national-level to state-level studies to understand the nuances of the electricity transition in India fully. "Each state faces unique challenges in decarbonising its power system, necessitating tailored policy interventions. By tracking decarbonisation progress, assessing the power system's readiness for transition, and monitoring the advancement of market enablers, state-specific challenges and potential interventions can be better understood," Rodrigues said.

Growth in housing prices may moderate this fiscal to five per cent annually: India Ratings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Housing demand and prices are likely to moderate this fiscal on a high base effect with sales expected to rise 8-10 per cent and rates by around 5 per cent annually, India Ratings and Research (Ind-Ra) said on Tuesday. The rating agency has maintained a neutral outlook for the residential real estate sector for the 2024-25 fiscal. "Absorption and prices are likely to be supported by affordability and stability of interest rates. However, given the high base of FY24, the growth rates are likely to taper down," Ind-Ra said in a statement. The residential real estate market registered a strong performance during the first nine months of the 2023-24 fiscal where the sales growth exceeded 25 per cent year-on-year (Y-o-Y) for the top eight real estate clusters, despite price increases and sticky interest rates. "With most regions witnessing a surge in prices, Ind-Ra expects the pre-sales growth to moderate to 8 to 10 per cent yoy in FY25. Inventory levels have also



risen over FY24 in the premium and luxury segment, as launches increased encouraged by the sharp rise in sales and realisations," said Mahaveer Shankarlal Jain, Director, Corporate Ratings, Ind-Ra. The rating agency said the prices have been higher 22 per cent Y-o-Y at the end of FY24 and would be subdued at around 5 per cent Y-o-Y for FY25, due to the base effect and large amount of new launches planned. "With most of the old-stock cleared and existing inventory largely liquidated along with a continued pick-up in demand and a spike in commodity prices due to geopolitical tensions, prices surged by

almost 14 per cent Y-o-Y in FY23 along with an increase in land prices and rental yields," it said. Ind-Ra noted that demand is getting shifted towards mid and Upper-mid income segments from luxury and premium segments. While the premium and luxury segments witnessed sharp demand growth in the first nine months of the last fiscal, Ind-Ra said the demand would cool down due to the high base as the unsold inventory levels remain elevated and are the highest over the past five years. The rating agency also expects tier II and III cities to report significant growth.

Razorpay announces UPI Switch in partnership with Airtel Payments Bank

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Fintech company Razorpay on Tuesday launched its own UPI infrastructure with 'UPI Switch', a cloud-based innovation in partnership with Airtel Payments Bank, and said the solution is geared to ensure smoother and faster transactions. Boosting success rates by 4-5 per cent, the solution is designed to handle up to 10,000 transactions per

second (TPS) at any given time, according to a release. The 'UPI Switch' will also enable 5 times faster access to UPI (Unified Payments Interface) innovations for businesses, it added. "Today, Razorpay launches its own UPI infrastructure with UPI Switch, a next-generation cloud-based innovation, in partnership with Airtel Payments Bank," according to a release. Khilana Haria, Head of

Payments Product at Razorpay, said India has always been at the forefront of innovation in the digital payments ecosystem and its possibilities have compounded in the last few years, with the versatility of UPI. "This venture into UPI infrastructure marks a strategic move to manage the end-to-end merchant experience and provide the industry's leading stack.

"With latency below 100 milliseconds, a 4-5 per cent increase in success rates, and features customised to suit business needs, our switch is crafted to enrich the payment experience and ensure that businesses can now manage the surge in UPI transactions on any sale or non-sale day," Haria said. Ganesh Ananthanarayanan, Chief Operating Officer of Airtel Payments Bank, said the integration with

Razorpay's UPI Switch, a cloud-based infrastructure for the most advanced UPI Stack, ensures 99.99 per cent uptime and enables up to 10,000 transactions per second. "As UPI transactions continue to surge, our collaboration sets a new standard for business payments, aligning perfectly with the vision of a digital India," Ananthanarayanan said.

None of G7 economies on track to meet 2030 mitigation targets

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

None of the G7 members are on track to meet their existing emission reduction targets for 2030, according to a new analysis released on Tuesday. The analysis by Climate Analytics, a global climate science and policy institute, comes ahead of the G7 climate, energy, and environment ministers' meeting in Venaria Reale, Italy, during April 28-30. The G7 collectively aims to achieve a 40-42 per cent

emission reduction by 2030 but existing policies suggest that it will likely achieve only 19-33 per cent by the end of this decade, the analysis showed. This is at best around half of what is needed and would lead to greenhouse gas emissions in 2030 exceeding a 1.5 degrees Celsius compatible level by around four gigatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Such a shortfall in ambition does not provide the leadership signal needed from the world's richest countries,

making up around 38 per cent of the global economy and responsible for 21 per cent of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2021, the researchers said. The G7 economies need to slash their emissions by 58 per cent by 2030 compared to the 2019 levels to do their part to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, they said. "These economies, who make up 38 per cent of the world's GDP, are not pulling their weight: they have both the technology and the finance to up their game."

Tata Power Delhi Distribution appoints Gajanan Kale as CEO

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Tata Power Delhi Distribution Ltd on Monday announced the appointment of Gajanan S Kale as its new Chief Executive Officer, effective April 19. Before joining Tata Power-DDL, Kale served as the Chief Executive Officer of Tata Power Western Odisha Distribution Limited (TPWODL) since 2021. He also served as the CEO of Tata Power Ajmer Distribution Ltd (TPADL) from 2018 to 2020, a company

statement said. Kale, an M-Tech in Integrated Power Systems from NIT-Nagpur, has been with Tata Power group since 2003, it said. Praveer Sinha, CEO & MD, Tata Power, said, "With his (Gajanan S Kale) extensive experience in the distribution domain, I am confident that he will lead Tata Power DDL to new heights of success." Tata Power Delhi Distribution Limited (Tata Power-DDL) is a joint venture between Tata Power and the Government of NCT of Delhi. It distributes electricity in North Delhi and serves a populace of 7 million.

Serie A title, second star and derby

Inter takes it all with win over Milan

AP ■ MILAN

Winning the derby ended up being the cherry on top of a special night for Inter Milan. Holding off AC Milan 2-1 on Monday clinched for Inter the Serie A title that had been sign-posted for weeks, and earned a coveted second star on its jersey for winning a 20th Italian league title, breaking a tie with its fierce city rival.

"I told the guys, We find ourselves in a situation that's never happened before," Inter captain Lautaro Martinez said. "We needed to take advantage of this opportunity, because look around, the entire stadium is ours now."

Not even the pouring rain could dampen the spirits of the Nerazzurri and their fans. Francesco Acerbi and Marcus Thuram scored and, although Fikayo Tomori's late goal for AC Milan threatened to delay the celebrations, Inter held on for the win that stretched its lead to an insurmountable 17 points over second-placed Milan, with five rounds remaining.

At the final whistle, a beaming Lautaro and teammate Federico Dimarco climbed onto the top of the goal frame at San Siro. Flares and fireworks were set off in the stands, and the Inter players danced raucously in front of their fans. A banner was unfurled saying in Italian: "Repeat it to the Madonnina, who are the champions and who the crybabies." The Madonnina is the statue on top of Milan cathedral that overlooks the city, and which



the derby is named after. After winning eight other trophies, Simone Inzaghi claimed his first league title as a coach.

"Winning the league with five matches left - more or less won with nine matches left, today making it mathematically certain - in a derby, with Milan the home team, that is something that will remain with us," Inzaghi said.

"Everyone gave their very valuable contribution so that we could reach goals like this."

A star is awarded for every 10 Serie A titles. Only Juventus has won more, with a record 36 and thus three stars on its jersey.

Despite the rain, the stars aligned for Inter to wrap up Serie A, another star and the Derby della Madonnina on one night at San Siro, the stadium both teams share. Inter was technically the away team and only one end of the stadium was reserved for its black-and-blue-clad support. Inter had won the past five derbies, including both legs of the Champions League

semifinal last year and a 5-1 humiliation of Milan earlier this season in Serie A. And the Nerazzurri went in front in the 18th minute when Benjamin Pavard nodded on Federico Dimarco's corner for an unmarked Acerbi to head in from close range.

Lautaro should have doubled Inter's lead seven minutes later when he was also left woefully unmarked but the league's top goal-scorer inexplicably fired over the bar from point-blank range.

Milan seemed to draw confidence from that miss

and Rafael Leão had a great chance to level following a rapid run on the counterattack from Tomori, but he fired straight at Inter goalkeeper Yann Sommer. It was end-to-end action and Milan captain Davide Calabria also forced a great save from Sommer at the end of the first half.

But clinching the crown seemed inevitable less than four minutes after the restart when Thuram ran onto a long Alessandro Bastoni ball over the top and feinted around his

marker to cut in from the left along the edge of the area and drill into the near bottom corner.

The finale became tense when Milan pulled one back 10 minutes from time. Sommer did brilliantly to parry Mattia Gabbia's header onto his post but Tomori nodded in the rebound. Tomori grabbed the ball and gestured frantically to teammates as he raced back to the center circle, desperate to get the equalizer that would prevent Inter from securing the title.

As tempers flared, a scuffle broke out in stoppage time

and Milan's Théo Hernandez and Inter defender Denzel Dumfries were sent off. Calabria was also shown a red card five minutes later following another scuffle.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE RACE
Bologna consolidated fourth place with a 3-1 win at Roma to inflict Daniele De Rossi's second league defeat as coach of the capital club.

Bologna moved seven points above fifth-placed Roma and eight above Atalanta - both of which have a game in hand.

Spanish women among top Laureus winners and Djokovic is world sportsman of the year

Madrid, Apr 23 (AP) Spain's first Women's World Cup triumph last year earned two more major plaudits at the Laureus World Sports Awards on Monday.

Spain was chosen world team of the year for 2023 and midfielder Aitana Bonmati was picked as the best sportswoman.

Novak Djokovic received the sportsman of the year at the ceremony in Madrid, and American gymnast Simone Biles was given the comeback of the year award.

Real Madrid forward Jude Bellingham earned the breakthrough prize, and Rafael Nadal won the sport for good award thanks to his foundation.

The Spanish women's World Cup breakthrough last August in New Zealand and Australia was tarnished in the following weeks because of an unwanted kiss of forward Jenni Hermoso by

then-federation president Luis Rubiales after the final. Laureus rewarded Spain as the first all-female team to win the team award.

Before the World Cup, Bonmati also helped Barcelona win a second Women's Champions League. She's the first female soccer player to win the Laureus, after also receiving the Ballon d'Or and FIFA best player award.

"I want to thank all my teammates and the staff of my club and national team who have helped me a lot, and because of them I am here today," Bonmati said.

Djokovic won his record-equalling fifth Laureus sportsman award - tying Roger Federer - after titles at the Australian Open, French Open and U.S. Open to reach a record 24 Grand Slam singles triumphs. NFL great Tom Brady presented Djokovic the award.

Biles made a record-breaking return to competition last year when she won four gold medals at the world championships, including a record sixth all-around title.

Nadal's foundation was rewarded for helping more than 1,000 vulnerable young people in Spain and India, according to Laureus.

Teenager Arisa Trew won the action sportsperson award after becoming the first female skateboarder to land a 720 in competition.

Dutch wheelchair player Diede de Groot was selected as the sportsperson of the year with a disability after winning her third straight calendar tennis Grand Slam.



Sreeja surpasses Manika as India number one TT player

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

CWG mixed doubles champion Sreeja Akula on Tuesday became the top-ranked Indian woman table tennis player after rising to career-high rank of 38 in latest ITTF Chart, replacing Manika Batra.

Sreeja climbed a spot while Manika who had been India's number one TT player for a while now, slipped two places to 39 in the latest update.

The 25-year-old Sreeja has enjoyed a good run this year, winning the WTT Feeder Corpus Christi and WTT Feeder Beirut titles in January and March respectively besides reaching the quarterfinal of the WTT Star Contender in Goa.

Sreeja had won the mixed doubles gold medal at the 2022 Commonwealth Games

alongside veteran Sharath Kamal.

Yashaswini Ghorpade and Archana Kamath held on to their 99th and 100th spot in the rankings.

Sharath continues to be the top-ranked male player, occupying the 37 spot in the rankings while G Sathiyana and Manav Thakar have interchanged places to be 60th and 61st respectively.

National champion Harmert Desai, who was the top ranked Indian a couple of months ago, descent continues as he dropped to the 64th spot. India has already qualified for the team events at the Paris Olympics.

Two singles entries in men's and women's singles will be decided by the Table Tennis Federation of India by May 16 after considering the world rankings at the time.

ISL final to be played at home ground



PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Indian Super League (ISL) on Tuesday said that the 2023-24 season final, scheduled on May 4, will be played at the home ground of the higher-ranked team in the league among the finalists.

Mohun Bagan pipped Mumbai City FC in a thriller on April 15 to win the League shield, with FC Goa finishing third.

Kolkata, Mumbai and Goa are therefore in contention to host the ISL final. Tickets for the match will go on sale once the venue is confirmed.

Odisha FC and FC Goa emerged victorious in their knockout matches against Kerala Blasters FC and Chennaiyin FC respectively, securing their places in the ISL 2023-24 semi-finals.

The semi-final action kicks off with Mohun Bagan Super Giant facing Odisha FC in Bhubaneswar on April 23. The following day, on April 24, Mumbai City FC will clash with FC Goa in the first leg of their semi-final matchup in Goa.

Shotgun shooter permitted to compete in national trials despite not meeting criteria

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The national shooting federation, which is fighting a court battle to uphold its selection criteria in the ongoing trials for Paris Olympics, seems to have bent the rules for one marksman recently, allowing him to participate despite lower-than-requisite scores.

Trap marksman Karan missed the National Rifles Association of India's (NRAI) criteria for shotgun selection trials by two points but was allowed to compete, while several others, who shot identical scores during last year's National Championships, were not considered.

A letter issued by NRAI in November announcing "Selection Trials as per Shotgun Selection Criteria 2024 & Olympic Selection Criteria 2024 for Shotgun event" states that shooters with a score of 110 in senior men's trap during the 66th National Championship (October-November, 2023) were eligible for the exercise held between December, 2023 and March 2024.

Karan, an Army marksman, shot 108 in the National Championships but his was the only recommendation accepted by the NRAI, while the same exception was not made for a dozen more shooters, who shot identical



scores. The shooter competed in a series of four selection trials and is currently ranked 15th, thus failing to make the national squad.

NRAI secretary Rajiv Bhatia told PTI that since Karan is a "budding" shooter and his "recommendation had come from the Army", an exception was made for him.

"We did give an exception as he is a budding, good shooter. There was a difference of just two points and he has been shooting good scores. That's why we introduced him in the trials for selecting the teams for World Cups, World Championships, everything (including Olympics)," said Bhatia.

"We cannot simply go by the rule book (lakeer ke fikeer nahin ban sakte). There was a recommendation from the Army to allow him (for national trials) because he had shot very well at the National Games (in Goa).

Karan, representing Services Sports Control Board, was the first to be eliminated in the trap finals at the National Games in Goa, finishing sixth.

The NRAI, ironically, is locked in a legal battle with some Olympic aspirants in the Delhi High Court, where it is insisting that no more than top five shooters in rifle and pistol would be allowed in the ongoing trials.

The process has come under criticism from no less than former national coach and legendary pistol shooter Jaspal Rana, who has said that the federation is not following international norms.

Asked why the trials were not opened for marksmen who shot identical scores at the Nationals, Bhatia said, "I think we allowed him under a special criteria because of his previous scores." Bhatia added that giving an exception in trials didn't mean he was selected in the national squad for

international competitions like the World Cups and World Championships.

"So, was he selected for the World Cups? No, we just gave him an opportunity," he said.

"Every state recommends shooters to be included (in trials), and we go by the merit. A marksman can shoot a bad score in a competition. One day you can shoot a bad score." Asked what NRAI would have done had he topped the trials, Bhatia said, "If somebody is performing, then why not (name him in the Olympic squad). How can we not consider him (for Olympics if he had performed)? Aim is to select the best athlete.

"But he is not going for any competition. As on today, he is nowhere in the national ranking. I think his ranking is very low (after the trials). But if he had beaten the field, he would have been (in contention)."

He added that an exception had also been made for the shooter to promote shotgun shooting as it is not as popular as pistol and rifle.

"Shotgun, we have to promote as (the numbers are very less) compared to pistol rifle and other categories... It was a recommendation of the Army Marksmanship Unit, which is an affiliate unit of the NRAI. "It was only one case, we did not open it for everybody. Just one time exce



Man City vs Man United FA Cup final time confirmed

AP ■ LONDON

The FA Cup final between Manchester City and Manchester United will kick off at the traditional time of 3 PM (14.00 GMT) on May 25, the Football Association said Tuesday.

In a repeat of last year's final, holder City will play rival United at Wembley Stadium.

The FA said the kick-off time had been agreed with both clubs, the local authority, safety advisory group and broadcasters.

It is the second straight year that the final will start at 3 PM. In recent years, it has had an early evening time slot.

City beat Chelsea 1-0 on Saturday to secure its place in the final.

Meanwhile, United needed penalties to overcome second-tier Coventry on Sunday after blowing a 3-0 lead to draw 3-3 through extra time.

Olympic gold medallist Gray hopes to be part of US 3x3 team in Paris Games

AP ■ SPRINGFIELD (US)

Alisha Gray is glad to be back playing 3x3 for USA Basketball with an eye towards being a member of the team at the Paris Olympics this summer.

She's the only player returning from the foursome that took home the gold at the Tokyo Games three years ago. That was the inaugural appearance of the sport at the Olympics.

"To be the first team to do it and it being the first time in the Olympics, it was amazing," Gray said.

"It's great to be back and get back into the groove of things."

Gray was one of eight players selected from the 15-person training camp over the weekend to participate in a 3x3 tournament in Springfield, Massachusetts at The Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame. She's on a team with Dearica

Hamby, Cameron Brink and Linnae Harper.

Brink and Harper helped the US win the 2023 FIBA 3x3 World Cup. Hamby made her 3x3 debut winning the gold at the Women's AmeriCup the same year.

The other US team in the tournament features Cierra Burdick, Rhyn Howard, Lexie Hull and Hailey Van Lith. Burdick and Van Lith were also on that World Cup team last year. Howard has the least 3x3 experience, only playing in USA Basketball nationals in 2019. She's also in the Olympic 5-on-5 national team pool.

"I think 3x3 is more intimate and it really tests your patience a little bit because you have to think about what you're doing in order to get good looks," Howard said.

"You don't have a lot of people to help you get open so you have to create for yourself a lot."



Hull began her 3x3 career in 2016 and also medalled in the sport in 2022 and 2023.

The Americans will eventually choose the four player roster for Paris. Two of the players must be in top 10 for points accumulated for the U.S. The other two players on the team either have to also be in the top 10 or have played in at least one official FIBA 3x3 competition between January 1, 2023 and June 24, 2024.

National team coach Jennifer Rizzotti said that the selection committee will have a tough job picking the four players to compete in Paris.

"What makes it hard is there are also some women who have committed to this game for four years," she said.

"They've earned the points for the US and earned the points for themselves. They've done all the groundwork and laid the

foundation for us to be able play in the Olympics and not all of them will get to go. We tried to find a way to make them know that they are part of the process and you try to keep them here as long as you can."

The 3x3 game is played on a half court with a 12-second shot clock and the winner is the first team to score 21 points or to be leading at the end of a 10-minute period. Baskets inside the arc are worth one point and shots outside it are worth two. Rizzotti said USA Basketball had a 3x3 camp last May that featured a lot of the college players who were playing the game for the first time. She's seen a lot of growth from them. "It's impressive to see in a short amount of time and limited repetitions of playing that they've picked things up," she said.

"Made us really have a competitive camp in a way that I wasn't really expecting."

