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Five teenagers feared drowned

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Taking a selfie in the middle of Hazara canal in Kasganj proved fatal for five youths who were feared dead after they drowned on Thursday afternoon. Three of their friends, however, swam across safely. After hearing the screams, the people around tried to save the teenagers but they could not be traced. On getting information, the police and divers started the rescue. Administrative officials, including District Magistrate Sudha Verma and Superintendent of Police Aparna Rajat Kaushik, also reached the spot. The search continued till Friday but there was no trace of the teenagers hailing from neighboring Etah district who had come to have fun after Eid. The incident took place on

Thursday at around 2:30 pm. After celebrating Eid, eight teenagers of Nagla Pothi in Etah, aged 15 to 18 years, went to bathe in the Hazara canal near Tatarpur in an e-rickshaw. Four of them were bathing in the canal while the four were shooting videos. Suddenly, all the four teenagers who were bathing were swept away in the strong current. A teenager who was making the video jumped into the canal to save them, but he too was swept away in the strong current of water. Seeing this, the three teenagers standing on the bank of the canal started shouting. Hearing their shouts, the people around ran to save the teenagers who were swept away by the strong current. The drowned children were identified as Asim, son of Aqeel Khan of Mohalla Nagla Potha, Etah; Zahid, son of

Mehndi Hasan; Salman, son of Yusuf; Shahid son of Hameed; and Abhishek of Bahattarpur, Etah. In a separate incident in Tilhar area of Shahjahanpur on Friday morning, a Roadways bus of Padrauna depot rammed into a truck parked on the highway, killing a school teacher and a 4-month-old girl. Several others were also injured in the collision and they were shifted to hospital. On Friday at 4:30 am, a Roadways bus (UP 78 HN 3673) suddenly rammed into a truck (HR 58 D 5105) parked on the highway from behind before Sarau over bridge in Tilhar. The collision was so severe that half of the bus on the conductor's side was badly mangled. As it was morning, most of the passengers of the bus were sleeping. On receiving information,

Circle Officer Prayank Jain and Tilhar Inspector Vishal Pratap Singh reached the spot with a heavy police force. Police broke the rear emergency gate of the bus and took out the injured and admitted them to the hospital. After the accident, the Roadways bus driver Rammurat, a resident of Kushinagar, and the truck driver escaped. Injured conductor Ravi Kumar said that the bus was going from Padrauna to Delhi and had 36 passengers. Tilhar Inspector Vishal Pratap Singh said that Anju Rani of Mandore, Daurala, Meerut, died on the spot after getting stuck in the bus. She was posted as an assistant teacher in a school in Kushinagar and was returning home after taking leave. On the other hand, Ompal of Budaun was returning from his

sister-in-law's house in Gorakhpur with his wife Shalu and 4-month-old daughter Diya. His daughter Diya died during treatment, while the condition of his wife remains critical. Meanwhile, a sub-inspector posted at Machhrehta police station in Sitapur district shot himself dead under suspicious circumstances on Friday morning. The police admitted him to Machhrehta community health centre from where the doctors referred him to the district hospital. Sub-Inspector Manoj Kumar posted at Machhrehta police station was originally a resident of Jalala village of Fatehpur district. On Friday, he reached the police station and talked to his family over the phone about something. If sources are to be believed, after the conversation, he shot himself.

Fire dept's awareness drive begins tomorrow

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In view of the increasing number of fire incidents in the state capital, Lucknow fire safety and emergency services are starting a massive awareness drive in the city and suburbs. The department has decided to make a film and use social media as a launching platform to connect the city youngsters with the campaign. "Content creators and social media will now be used for the massive awareness drive to be conducted by the Fire department starting from April 14. We have roped in various celebrities, content creators and radio jockeys to spread awareness among people," Chief Fire Officer (CFO), Lucknow, Mangesh Kumar said. According to the Fire Fighting and Emergency Services, Lucknow, they have used a chain system under which fire vehicles will be stationed in crowded establishments of the city from April 14 onwards. People will be appealed to make at least one rule of fire safety as their tagline and post their selfie or video with the fire fighting vehicle on their social media accounts and tag Lucknow fire department's social media pages @fireserviceklw. Making this initiative more competitive, the person taking part in this campaign and getting the most likes on the selfie or video taken with the fire fighting vehicle will be given five free movie tickets. "We have also produced a video clip, the primary goal of which is to educate people on how to prevent fire accidents or how to contact the fire department in the event of one. We are contacting numerous agencies, including the PVR, the municipality, and the railway, to make this movie more widely accessible. We are also submitting request letters to have their cinema screen and LCDs erected at various train stations, metro trains, and around the city," the CFO added. As per the Fire department, a total of eight teams of awareness spreaders will reach out to all the rural and big societies in their area, one team each under the supervision of a leading fireman from each of the fire stations.

Man forcibly reclaims car seized by police

Lucknow (PNS): A car owner allegedly forcibly reclaimed his vehicle, which had been seized by police from the Hazratganj police station. The incident took place on April 9, and the police registered a case on Thursday (April 11). The car was found abandoned in the Hazratganj area on Thursday. After the owner failed to appear for hours, the traffic police towed it to the police station premises. Senior sub-inspector (SSI) Gopal Sharma filed a complaint against the car owner, accusing him of obstructing police officers from performing their duties and causing harm to a constable who was overseeing the seized car. According to the complaint, traffic head constable Shamsher Saroj had parked the car at Hazratganj police station under the supervision of sentry constable Nakul on April 9. "On Thursday, the police station informed me that the owner of the car with registration number UP32FR6099 forcibly took the car, despite Nakul's attempts to stop him. He behaved improperly with the sentry constable and forcibly took the car while obstructing a public servant from performing his duties," the complainant stated. The SSI then requested

the inspector to file a case. Based on the complaint, the police registered a case against the accused car owner under sections 186 and 332 of the IPC. The police declined to disclose the name of the accused, stating that the case was under investigation. Sources revealed that the case was registered around 7 pm on April 11, although the incident took place on April 9. It was suggested that the police made efforts to recover the car to conceal their lapse and filed a case only after the vehicle remained unrecovered. In another instance of misconduct towards a traffic officer in Hazratganj, an advocate allegedly caused a disturbance on the road after his car was stopped for having black film on the window panes on April 9. As per reports, Traffic Inspector Venkateshwar Singh, along with a team, was conducting checks at Hazratganj crossing when an SUV with black film on the windows passed by the checkpoint. The person in the driving seat, identified as advocate Saurava Kumar Verma, allegedly misbehaved with the traffic police on duty and created a scene, resulting in a traffic jam for hours. The incident took place around 6:40 pm on April 9.

One killed over old dispute

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An old dispute led to a clash after the Eid prayers in Etah, claiming the life of one person and leaving several others injured. Soon after the incident, senior officers rushed to the spot along with force from several police stations to diffuse the tension. Superintendent of Police Amit Kumar Anand said that the body was sent for post-mortem and action would be taken against the accused. The victim's brothers Ayaz Ahmed and Fayaz Ahmed have filed a complaint, alleging murder. The Kotwali police are scanning the CCTV cameras installed around the incident so that the truth of the conflict can be revealed. Reports said that there was a dispute three years back between Ayaz Ahmed, a resident of Mohalla Syedwada, and the families of Zulfiqar and Irshad. Ayaz' brother Fayaz Ahmed said that on April 27, 2021, Zulfiqar and his family killed his nephew by beating him with sticks. He said the trial was going on in the court in this case and the final hearing was to be held on April 18 and the accused party was exerting pressure to settle the matter. According to reports, both the parties clashed over the dispute soon after the Eid prayers on

Thursday. They attacked each other with sticks and rods and also indulged in stone pelting in which half a dozen persons from both sides were injured and shifted to hospital where one of them, Shahwaz, was pronounced dead. Meanwhile, in another incident in Deoria, two girls were attacked with acid by unidentified motorcycle-borne miscreants in the Gauri Bazar area of the district on Thursday, a police officer said. Superintendent of Police Sankalp Sharma said that the girls were attacked with an inflammable substance near Devgaon turn while they were going to Gauri Bazar from their home on bicycle. "While the miscreants managed to escape from the spot, the two girls have been admitted to the hospital by the police," he said. He said that one girl sustained burn injuries on her face and hand. "The matter is being investigated. Three teams have been constituted to nab the miscreants," he said. The SP further said that during a late night encounter with the police, they managed to arrest two of the accused while the third managed to escape and efforts were being made to arrest him. Sharma identified the main accused as Dara Singh and Shekhar as his second accomplice.

Man thrashed, fired at by group of rivals

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A group of men unleashed a barrage of fire on a fleeing rival in Rajajipuram under Talkatora police station. According to reports, Sooraj Kumar Singh from Deopur Para locality had gone to meet his friend Manjul Yadav, and was waiting for him at a hotel near Lalita Hospital. Suddenly, Sooraj's adversaries, including Samir Khan (owner of a garage), Arif Khan, Rahul Thakur alias Bhoora, Raja Dixit, and 5-6 unidentified men, arrived at the scene on different motorcycles and surrounded the victim. "They assaulted me with iron rods. I fell to the ground and

shielded myself to avoid blows to my chest, head, and abdomen. Eventually, they stopped, seemingly exhausted. As I was fleeing the scene, they fired several shots. Fortunately, I escaped being hit by bullets. Sameer and his accomplices fired continuously at me with the intent to kill," Sooraj alleged. The police registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC and also invoked Section 307 of the IPC for attempted murder against the named accused. Eyewitnesses described the attack as premeditated, with the assailants firing with the aim of killing the victim. "All the firearms they pos-

sessed were discharged at that moment. There was chaos as commuters scattered, fearing for their safety. The miscreants then fled the scene, brandishing pistols and iron rods," they recounted. They expressed astonishment that the police, stationed at various locations for security, did not notice the miscreants traveling on motorcycles without helmets and wielding iron rods. A spokesperson stated that investigative teams were actively pursuing the case and that the culprits would be apprehended soon. He mentioned that the victim had a personal feud with the miscreants.

Dalit girl set on fire, critical

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 23-year-old Dalit girl was set on fire by three persons allegedly over a financial dispute in the Dakshin area of Firozabad district on Friday. Sources in the police said that the girl was having an affair with Prabhat Rathore, a resident of Nai Basti locality, for the last eight years. It has been alleged that during this period Prabhat took Rs 5 lakh from the victim. On

Friday, the victim went to Prabhat's house and demanded her money back which led to a dispute. "It is alleged that as the dispute escalated Prabhat's father Jagdish Rathore and mother Vimla Devi poured some inflammable substance on the girl and set her on fire," the police sources said. On hearing the cries of the victim, the neighbours rushed to the spot, extinguished the fire, and took her to the Trauma

Centre. "Senior police officials visited the spot and enquired about the incident. The victim has been referred to Agra in a serious condition," the sources said, adding that on the complaint of the victim's father, a case has been registered against Prabhat, his father Jagdish, and mother Vimla under relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe Act.

Row over 'priestly' cops in KV temple

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government's decision to deploy police officers dressed as priests at the Kashi Vishwanath temple in Varanasi has stirred a controversy with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav strongly condemning the move. The SP chief cautioned that allowing police officers to dress in attire other than their uniforms posed a big security risk.

"According to which police manual is it right for policemen to be dressed as priests? Those who give such orders should be suspended. If tomorrow any 'thug' (fraudster) takes advantage of this and loots the innocent public, then what will the UP government and administration answer? Condemnable!" Akhilesh Yadav wrote on X. The SP chief shared a news clip showing police officers in traditional clothing, with male officers in dhoti-kurtas and

female officers in salwar-kurtas. Meanwhile, Varanasi's Commissioner of Police Mohit Agarwal defended the controversial measure, citing concerns about crowd management and the well-being of devotees. He argued that the traditional attire of priests helped in fostering a more positive interaction with pilgrims, thereby reducing the risk of unrest or agitation. "The duty in the temple is different from other places as

police have to manage different types of crowd here. The crowd here is not for creating law and order problems. The police are here to ensure easy darshan to people and help and guide them," Agarwal said. "The devotees get hurt if they are being pushed by policemen, if the same thing is done by priests they take it in a positive way. Following no touch policy, policemen are being deployed in priests' attire," he added.

Super specialty ICU for kidney patients inaugurated at RMLIMS

Lucknow (PNS): A new Nephrology Kidney Disease Super Specialty ICU was inaugurated at Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences on Friday. "This 4-bed ICU facility in the nephrology department is crucial for kidney patients who may require ICU care at any stage of treatment. It is the second institute in Uttar Pradesh to offer nephrology ICU services in a government set-up, providing dialysis and ICU services under one roof. With

its inauguration, kidney patients will have access to advanced and specialised treatment," RMLIMS director Dr CM Singh said. Meanwhile, the neurology department organised an awareness campaign on World Parkinson's Day. An awareness campaign and seminar were organised, aimed at educating Parkinson's disease patients about prevention and management. Prof Dinkar Kulshrestha highlighted Parkinson's disease as the second most common

degenerative disease of the central nervous system, characterised by tremors, changes in gait, stiffness, and slowed movement. Meanwhile, the Orthopaedic Super Specialty Centre (OSSC) is set to launch at KGMU within the next two to three months. The construction, completed over two years at a cost of Rs 100 crore, marks a pioneering initiative in Uttar Pradesh. Superintendent Dr Kumar Shantanu explained that three

orthopaedics departments will relocate to this state-of-the-art facility: the core orthopaedics department, paediatric orthopaedics, and sports medicine. The 240-bed hospital will allocate 120 beds to orthopaedics, with the remainder for paediatric orthopaedics and sports medicine. Previously, these departments operated in makeshift arrangements at Shatabdi hospital due to their recent establishment and growing need for space.

Leopardess rescued from Bahraich dies

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A leopardess died at Lucknow Zoo on Friday. Director Aditi Sharma said the leopardess had been rescued from Bahraich in 2017 when she was 5-6 years old. The big cat had eaten some food on Thursday night but she vomited it out on Friday morning. "The leopardess was kept under observation and she looked inactive after which she was transferred to the hospital. She died during treatment. Prima facie she died due

to cardio-respiratory failure. The viscera has been sent to IVRI in Bareilly for further investigations," Singh said. Meanwhile, the zoo attracted a large number of visitors on the second day of Eid-ul-Fitr on Friday. A total of 9,675 people visited the zoo. Looking into the huge rush, five counters, including one exclusively for women, were put at the Narhai entrance and three at the Dalibagh gate. Zoo officials claimed that the visitors did not have to face any problems or inconvenience because of the rush.



The regional office of Punjab National Bank in Lucknow celebrated its 130th Foundation Day on Friday. Regional head Mntyunjay paid tribute to the founder of the bank Laia Lalpat Rai by garlanding his statue at the Lucknow regional office and also praised his contributions. Addressing all staff members, he said PNB is a fully indigenous bank and has been continuously progressing on the path of prosperity since 1894.


Beauty, Wellness Centre to empower women rescued from begging

Lucknow (PNS): Governor Anandiben Patel inaugurated a 'Beauty and Wellness Centre' at Raj Bhawan on Friday to empower women and girls previously involved in begging. Commending the initiative, the governor said, "Today marks the beginning of a noble endeavour. Women transitioning from begging to pursuing opportunities for their families signifies a shift from mere thought to dedicated action, yielding positive outcomes. Early exposure to work leaves a lasting impact." She highlighted the transformative role of self-help groups in empowering women, noting that millions across India are now part of such groups, assuming leadership roles and fostering collective progress. Patel emphasised the importance of family support for women engaged in group activities, citing instances where women, despite initial resistance, joined self-help groups, enhancing not only their own skills but also those of their families. Encouraging women to embrace skill training and self-employment, she urged the upper class to support the lower classes, citing the establishment of initiatives like the 'Saree Bank'.

The governor urged training organisations to assist the families of trainees, provide necessary materials, and offer support until trainees achieve self-sufficiency. Advisor to the Chief Minister, Awanish Awasthi lauded the governor's innovative efforts for the uplift of women and children involved in begging, emphasising the need for universal employment and education.

COURT NOTICE
(CHAPTER XXX, Rule-21)
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD ORIGINAL JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY AND INTESTATE JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY CASE NO. 10 OF 2024 IN THE MATTER OF THE GOODS OF Late Raj Bahadur Singh S/o Late Sahdev, R/o 281 Bakshi Kala, Daraganj, Tehsil Sadar, District Prayagraj,.....Deceased. Vijay Kumar and 3 others..... Petitioners. WHEREAS an application has been made by Vijay Kumar S/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh, R/o 1547 Kidwai Nagar, Allahabad, Prayagraj, Asha Kumari D/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh W/o Sri Ram Saijan, R/o 4C/3A Ramanand, Allahabad, Prayagraj, Rajendra Kumar S/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh, R/o 281 Bakshi Kala, Daraganj, Prayagraj and Radha D/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh W/o Raj Kumar Yadav R/o 62 A Balrampur House, Post-Subhash Nagar, Tehsil- Sadar, District Prayagraj, for the probate of the will (or Letters of Administration to the estate) of Late Raj Bahadur Singh deceased, who died at 281, Bakshi Kala, Daraganj, Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, 211006 on 19.04.2021 AND WHEREAS, the 20th day of May, 2024 has been fixed for hearing of the said application. THIS CITATION is issued calling upon all persons claiming to have any interest to come and see the proceedings if they think fit before the grant of probate (or Letters of Administration). Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 12th day of April, 2024. DEPUTY REGISTRAR HIGH COURT, ALLAHABAD D.S. Yadav Advocate Counsel for the Petitioner.

COURT NOTICE
(CHAPTER XXX, Rule-21)
IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD ORIGINAL JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY AND INTESTATE JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY CASE NO. 11 OF 2024 IN THE MATTER OF THE GOODS OF Late Kalawati W/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh, R/o 281 Bakshi Kala, Daraganj, Tehsil Sadar, District Prayagraj,.....Deceased. Vijay Kumar and 3 others..... Petitioners. WHEREAS an application has been made by Vijay Kumar S/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh, R/o 1547 Kidwai Nagar, Allahabad, Prayagraj, Asha Kumari D/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh W/o Sri Ram Saijan, R/o 4C/3A Ramanand, Allahabad, Prayagraj, Rajendra Kumar S/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh, R/o 281 Bakshi Kala, Daraganj, Prayagraj and Radha D/o Late Raj Bahadur Singh W/o Raj Kumar Yadav R/o 62A Balrampur House, Post-Subhash Nagar, Tehsil- Sadar, District Prayagraj, for the probate of the will (or Letters of Administration to the estate) of Late Kalawati deceased, who died at 281, Bakshi Kala, Daraganj, Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, 211006 on 24.04.2021 AND WHEREAS, the 20th day of May, 2024 has been fixed for hearing of the said application. THIS CITATION is issued calling upon all persons claiming to have any interest to come and see the proceedings if they think fit before the grant of probate (or Letters of Administration). Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 12th day of April, 2024. DEPUTY REGISTRAR HIGH COURT, ALLAHABAD D.S. Yadav Advocate Counsel for the Petitioner.



NOTICE

I hereby declare that Arun Kumar, Arun Agarwal and Arun Kumar Agarwal all these three names are of same person that is me. In future I will be known by the name Arun Kumar Agarwal only. Arun Kumar Agarwal S/O Late Mahabir Prasad Agarwal R/O House no. 451, Dr. B.D. Kapoor Road, Vijay Laxmi Nagar, Tehseel and District-Sitapur, Pin-261001 (UP)

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Payal Manish Gupta to Payal Gupta W/o Manish Gupta R/o Villa E-511, N R I City Mainawati Marg, Azad Nagar Kanpur

सूचना

मेरा वास्तविक नाम संजय कुमार है जो भूलगुना अथ दस्तावेज में संजय कुमार श्रीवास्तव अंकित हो गया है। निम्नलिखित मे मुझे संजय कुमार नाम से ही जाना - पहचाना जाये। संजय कुमार पुत्र स्व. मेहनत नाम श्रीवास्तव, 965/ 397 ई/6 जी, मौरपुर, प्रयागराज उत्तर प्रदेश - 211003

AUCTION NOTICE

विनांक 24-04-2024 अपरान्ह 12:00 बजे सहायक असुराना ब्यूरो (एस.आई.बी.), 110-माल रोड, लखनऊ में निम्नलिखित वाहनों :- यू.पी. 32- बी.जी.-6358 (मारुति स्वीफ्ट डिजायर), यू.पी. 32-बी.जी.-5869 (टाटा सुनो) एवं यू.पी. 32-बी.जी.-2449 व 2553 (स्लेन्डर लस), यू.पी. 32-बी.जी.-5844 (सुपर स्प्लेन्डर) मोटरसाइकिलों की नीलामी, लिक्वोरिटी रु. 10,000/- चार पहिया एवं रु. 5,000/- टुपहिया वाहनो हेतु नगद जी. एस. टी. फीजीकरण के साथ प्रातः 10:30 बजे - 12:00 बजे तक जमा होगी। आई.ओ.पी. सिंह एण्ड सन्स.

NOTICE

CHANGE OF NAME - I, PREETI AGNIHOTRI WIFE OF NO. 14930360X HAV AKHILESH AGNIHOTRI POSTED AT 5 MECHI INF & R/O VILL. OLD CHINGI CHOWKI BAKARGANJ POST, TEH. & DISTT. FATEHPUR ST U.P. PIN 212601. HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM PREETI AGNIHOTRI TO PREETI AGNIHOTRI. VIDE AFFIDAVIT NO IN-UP18261513190141W DATED 08 Apr. 2024

PUBLIC NOTICE / WARNING

All men to know that house no. 7/127 Tilak Nagar, Kanpur 208 005 is absolutely owned by Shailesh Agarwal S/o Late Ram Swaroop & Prateek Bansal S/o Late Prakash Chandra Agarwal. Any person except the above owners has no right, title and interest in respect & above property to do any act & sale, control, mortgage etc. If anybody does any act that will be illegal and a criminal act and responsible for punishment. Shailesh Agarwal & Prateek Bansal



OPINION 6
A HARBINGER OF JUSTICE
AND EQUALITY

BALLOTS BATTLE 5
SHAH: SIGNIFICANT MILESTONES
ACHIEVED UNDER PM MODI

WORLD 10
HINDU TEMPLE DEMOLISHED
IN PAKISTAN'S KHYBER DISTRICT

LUCKNOW, SATURDAY APRIL 13, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

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Modi promises to restore JK Statehood

PM says his Government will work to realise dream of Viksit Bharat 2047

MOHIT KANDHARI ■
UDHAMPUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday promised early Assembly polls and restoration of Statehood to the people of Jammu and Kashmir at an election rally in Udhampur. The rally was organised to garner support for BJP candidates, Dr Jitendra Singh and Jugal Kishore, seeking reelection for the third consecutive term from the Udhampur-Doda and Jammu-Reasi Lok Sabha seats respectively. Continuing his tirade against the Congress, Modi also roasted the INDIA Bloc partners for allegedly eating mutton during the holy month of Sawan last year. Modi claimed the intentions of “these people” were to tease the people of the country, “just like the Mughals”. Seeking blessings of Maa Vaishno Devi from a distance, Modi, sporting a Dogra turban, said the time is not far when the Assembly polls will be held in Jammu and Kashmir and the Statehood will also be restored. “You have seen the worst, so this looks like a lot to you. You feel good to see development. But Modi thinks bigger. Modi has a great vision. Whatever has happened till now is just a trailer. “I have to get busy creating a new and wonderful picture of the new Jammu and Kashmir. The time is not far when



BJP supporters during a public meeting to be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha election, in Udhampur, on Friday

Assembly elections will be held in Jammu and Kashmir and it will get the status of Statehood. You will be able to share your dreams with your MLA and your Ministers,” Modi asserted. He said Jammu and Kashmir has completely changed



and the biggest thing is that there has been a change of heart as people have moved from disappointments towards hope. “I have been coming to Jammu and Kashmir for the last five decades. I remember the Ekta Yatra in 1992 to unfurl the tricolour at

the Lal Chowk (in Srinagar). We received a grand welcome. In 2014, after offering prayers at the Vaishno Devi temple, I addressed a gathering at this very venue and gave a guarantee of freeing the people who have suffered for generations (due to terrorism),” the Prime Minister said. He slammed the Congress for delaying the Shahpur-Kandi

dam’s completion in Jammu and Kashmir and said “the water of our Ravi river was flowing to Pakistan while our farmers in Samba and Kathua were suffering. Modi fulfilled the guarantee to farmers as thousands of them are going to benefit from the completion of the dam, which will also illuminate the houses here”. The Prime Minister asserted that “all the issues of every section of society” in Jammu and Kashmir will be resolved. He said his Government will work round the clock to realise the dream of “Viksit Bharat 2047”. “This is the guarantee of Modi. In the last 10 years, we have cracked down on terrorism and corruption in the region. In the next five years, we will take this region to new heights of development and progress,” the Prime Minister said. “After decades, this election is taking place without the fear of terrorism, separatism, stone-pelting, strikes, and cross-border terrorism, which are no more election issues. There used to be a concern regarding the security of the Vaishno Devi and Amarnath pilgrimages, but the situation has changed altogether. Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing development and the people’s faith in the government is getting strengthened,” Modi said.

Continued on Page 9

AAP claims Delhi to come under President's Rule soon

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi is heading for a crisis like situation with Delhi Minister and senior AAP leader Atishi hinting on Friday about the possibility of imposition of President’s rule. However, the BJP has rubbished Atishi’s claim pointing out that after Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal’s arrest in the money-laundering case and internal developments in the party, the AAP is nervous. Delhi BJP said the AAP is scared of losing majority in Delhi following some MLAs leaving the party and said it was therefore alleging that President’s rule may be imposed. Atishi claimed that in recent times, several events have taken place that indicate the possibility of the imposition of President’s rule in Delhi. “In the last few months, no senior IAS officer has been posted in Delhi. Posts are lying vacant in departments but no postings have taken place. Bureaucrats have stopped attending meetings called by Ministers, citing the Model Code of Conduct. The Lieutenant Governor has been writing letters to the MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) over the functioning of the Delhi Government,” she said. After Delhi Social Welfare Department Minister Raaj Kumar Anand’s resignation, there is no clarity on how about a half a dozen -odd departments he was handling would function as Kejriwal is in Tihar jail and he has not made it



clear whether he would either like to induct a new Minister to replace Anand or would allocate his portfolios to any minister. Atishi said the BJP already knows that it cannot come to power in Delhi. “The AAP defeated the BJP in the Delhi Assembly elections in 2015 and 2020. That is why they want to topple the Delhi Government. However, the imposition of President’s rule would be illegal since the Delhi Government enjoys a majority. We proved our majority through a floor test on February 17 this year,” she said.



AAP has 62 MLAs in the 70-member Delhi Assembly. After the Enforcement Directorate objected to Kejriwal issuing instructions while in custody, questions are being raised: To whom Anand’s portfolio will be reassigned now.

Continued on Page 9

CAPSULE



Bengaluru blast accused held from Bengal

KOLKATA: In a major success, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Friday arrested two key accused, including the mastermind, in Bengaluru’s Rameshwaram Cafe blast case from West Bengal. The accused, Abdul Matheen Ahmed Taahaa and Mussavir Hussain Shazib, were staying in a lodge near Kolkata under assumed identities, a statement issued by the NIA said. Taahaa was the mastermind behind the planning and execution of the blast while Shazib placed the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) at the cafe, they said. The two accused were on the run since the explosion rocked the IT city of Bengaluru on March 1. Taahaa and Shazib were produced before a special NIA court in Kolkata after their arrest. The court granted three-day transit remand of the accused to the agency. Several customers and hotel staff members were injured, some of them grievously, in the blast that caused extensive damage to the property.

India issues travel warnings over Israel, Iran tensions

NEW DELHI: India on Friday advised its citizens not to travel further notice to Iran or Israel in view of prevailing situation. This caution comes amid reports that Iran is likely to launch direct attack on Israel with the next 48 hours. Issuing note of caution, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also urged all Indians currently residing in Iran or Israel to get in touch with Indian Embassies there and register themselves.

Maharashtra leads in 85+ voters, UP and Bihar follow

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Maharashtra tops the list of 85+ voters followed by Uttar Pradesh and then Bihar while Union Territory Lakshadweep is left with only 109 eligible 85 beyond voters in the list of Election Commission of India (ECI). Maharashtra has over 13.07 lakh voters, Uttar Pradesh has over 10.38 lakh, and Bihar has 6.65 lakh such voters. Similarly, with 12.60 lakh persons with disabilities (PwD) electors, UP tops the list, followed by Karnataka (6.19 lakh) and Maharashtra (6.09 lakh).

As per the EC’s data, there are over 81 lakh 85+ aged voters (33.84 lakh male and 47.27 lakh female) including 2,18,442 electors above 100 years and 90 lakh + PwD voters registered across the country who will cast their vote from home voting facility for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. In Maharashtra, of the 13.07 lakh voters, 5.72 lakh are male and 7.34 lakh female aged 85 and above. There are 4.14 lakh male electors and 6.24 female electors in this category in UP. Bihar has 2.90 lakh male and 3.75 lakh female electors in this category. The Election Commission’s data shows, 85+ voters in Tamil Nadu has 6.14 lakh electors including 2.95 lakh male and 3.18 lakh female, Rajasthan 5.71 lakh including



Representative Image

1.88 lakh male and 3.83 lakh female, Karnataka 5.70 lakh including 2.47 lakh male and 3.22 lakh female, West Bengal 4.78 lakh including 1.95 lakh male and 2.83 lakh female, Gujarat 4.19 lakh including 1.56 lakh male and 2.63 lakh female.

As the first and second phase of polling for the Lok Sabha is approaching, the process for voting from home facilities for such voters have already begun. In Churu, Rajasthan eight PwD voters, all from the same family, exercised home voting facilities underlining the strength of India’s electoral democracy. In Chhattisgarh, 87-year-old Indumati Pandey and 86-year-old Sonmati Baghel, from Bastar and Sukma tribal districts,



exercised their franchise using the postal ballot at home and expressed their gratitude to the Election Commission for the facility. In Maharashtra, ECI polling teams travelled 107 kms to provide home voting facility to two elderly voters in Sironcha town in Gadchiroli district, Left Wing Extremism (LWE) affected area.

BR Mishra from Jaysingh Nagar, Madhya Pradesh, after availing home voting conveyed joy and appreciation. He said, “The duty you have done is commendable, you have done a very good job, I can say the way you discharge your duties is extraordinary, if all of us work like this then we will make our country proud.” The provision of home voting is a progressive measure aimed at empowering voters who

encounter barriers to participating in the electoral process at the polling stations. Specifically, this facility is extended to two key demographic groups: PwDs meeting the 40 per cent benchmark disability criteria and senior citizens. “As India gears up for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the introduction of home voting stands as a testament to the ECs unwavering commitment to upholding participative, inclusive and accessible elections”, the EC said. The procedure to avail this facility is simple yet thorough. Within five days of the election notification, eligible voters must complete Form 12D and submit it to the returning officer. PwD voters submit a baseline disability certificate with their applications. Booth Level Officer (BLO) is responsible for retrieving Form 12D from the elector’s place of residence when the required documentation has been completed. Candidates receive a list of these electors in order to maintain accountability and transparency; if they wish, they can choose a representative to supervise the process. Following this, a dedicated team of polling officials along with security officials visits the voter’s residence to collect their votes.

UK raises family visa income requirement

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a possible upsetting development for Indians wishing to secure a visa and sponsor their families to migrate to the UK, it has substantially hiked the minimum income threshold by nearly 55 per cent. It means those who earn less than 29,000 pounds, will not be able to sponsor a family member’s visa in the country. Part of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak’s plans to cut down immigration levels, the order was passed on Thursday and became effective immediately. Income benchmark has been increased from 18,600 pounds to 29,000 pounds - an increase of more than 55 per cent - with a subsequent increase to 38,700 pounds slated for early next year.

“Today’s change comes as the Home Secretary meets his commitment to implement his major package of reforms to the immigration system within weeks of announcing them - which came following the unveiling of measures to tighten the student visa route in May 2023,” the UK Government said in a statement. Immigration is one of the key poll issues ahead of general elections in the UK this year, with surveys indicating that Sunak’s party, the Conservatives, is heading for a heavy defeat. The new regulations are part of Sunak’s plan to “cut unsustainable and unfair levels of migration, and ensure those arriving here do not burden the taxpayer”.

UK’s Interior Minister James Cleverly, explaining the rationale behind the latest policy change, said it is important to mitigate the strains posed by mass migration. “We have reached a tipping point with mass migration. There is no simple solution or easy decision which cuts numbers to levels acceptable to the



British people,” he said.

Cleverly stressed the UK Government’s commitment to safeguarding British workers and wages while ensuring that those relocating to the UK do not become reliant on public funds.

The revised income requirement seeks to ensure that families seeking to reunite in the UK show self-sufficiency, with provisions allowing for various means of meeting the threshold, including savings and income from employment.

“I promised action and we have delivered at remarkable speed. We’ve acted to cut unsustainable numbers, to protect British workers and their wages, to ensure those bringing families to the UK do not burden taxpayers, and to build an immigration system fit for the future - and one the public can rightly have confidence in,” Cleverly added.

In addition to the alterations in income thresholds, the UK Government also implemented stringent regulations on student visas, alongside a substantial 66 per cent escalation in the health surcharge for foreign nationals accessing the National Health Service (NHS). With current immigration figures hovering at 745,000, the UK Government aims to cut it down to 300,000.

Continued on Page 9

Soldier’s severed hand stitched back in airlift mission

RAHUL DATTA ■ NEW DELHI

Swift action by IAF in coordination with the Army managed to save the severed hand of a soldier as he was airlifted from Ladakh to New Delhi for the critical surgery. The injured soldier was brought to the Capital after a “dark night airlift” by a C-130J aircraft as the crew used night vision goggles. The entire rescue operation was undertaken within a span of four hours thereby saving the soldier. Giving details here on Friday, officials said the

soldier’s hand was severed while operating a machine at a unit located in a forward area on Wednesday. He was first evacuated to Lej air base and from there the C-130J plane brought him to Palam air force base in Delhi. The jawan underwent an emergency surgery at the Army’s Research Referral (R&R) Hospital here, and his severed hand was stitched back, they said. From the time he was brought to the Leh air base to the time he was brought to Delhi, “the span was about four hours,” and this “superior coordination”



An Indian Army personnel, who severed his hand while operating a machine, poses for a photo with medical personnel after a successful surgery in New Delhi on Friday

PTI

between the Army and the IAF ensured the injured jawan’s critical surgery

could be performed in time to stitch back his severed hand.

On Friday morning, the Indian Air Force posted on X about the emergency

airlift and also shared a photo of the patient recuperating at the hospital. “An Indian Army personnel severed his hand while operating a machine, at a unit located in the forward area. Given a window of 6 to 8 hours for emergency surgery to save his appendage, an IAF C-130J aircraft was launched within an hour to move the jawan for surgery at the R & R hospital in Delhi,” it posted. The IAF official said it was a “dark night airlift” and NVGs (night vision goggles) were used. “The injured personnel

received medical attention promptly due to the dark night airlift on NVGs from Ladakh sector by #IAF. A dedicated team of medical personnel carried out a successful surgery and the jawan is now on his path to recovery,” the IAF wrote in its post.

In April 2023, the IAF, as part of an operation to rescue a batch of people from strife-torn Sudan, had carried out landing and takeoff of a C-130J aircraft from a degraded airstrip there, with its air crew using night vision goggles on a practically dark night.

NDA will get more than 400 seats: Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) National President Jagat Prakash Nadda was given a rousing reception by the party workers at the Prayagraj airport here on Friday. While going for a public meeting in Madhya Pradesh, Nadda stopped there for some time. Mayor Ganesh Kesarwani, Mahanagar president Rajendra Mishra, BJP Phulpur Lok Sabha candidate Praveen Patel and Allahabad candidate Neeraj Tripathi along with others welcomed him.

On the occasion Nadda said this time Narendra Modi is going to become the prime



minister of the country for the third time. The BJP will get 350 more seats and the NDA will get more than 400 seats.

Nadda was going to address a public meeting in Chhindwara, MP. His plane landed at Prayagraj airport.

On receiving information a large number of leaders arrived to welcome him. Nadda met everyone. After staying for some time, he left for Chhindwara by helicopter.

Under the leadership of Mahanagar president Rajendra Mishra, Nadda was welcomed on his arrival. He congratulated BJP Allahabad parliamentary constituency candidate Neeraj Tripathi, Kaushambi candidate Vinod Sonkar and Phulpur parliamentary constituency candidate Praveen Patel. Motivating the workers, he told them that this election will give new energy to the resolve of a developed India.

On the occasion former Cabinet Minister Narendra Kumar Singh Gaur, Kavita Yadav Tripathi, MP Vinod Sonkar, MLA Praveen Patel, district president Gangapur Kavita Singh Patel, district president Yamunapar Vinod Prajapati, Allahabad Lok Sabha in charge Manoj Jaiswal, Phulpur Lok Sabha in charge Balendu Mani Tripathi, MLA Harshvardhan Bajpayee, MLA Guru Prasad Maurya, former MLA Sanjay Gupta, Rajesh Kesarwani, Varun Kesarwani, Kiran Dwivedi, Neeraj Pandey, Pushparaj Singh, Prashant Shukla, Lucky Sahu, Amit Malviya etc were present.

BJP working with aim of big victory: Patel

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Regional president of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Dilip Patel reviewed the Lok Sabha election preparations for 14 seats of Kashi region. He was presiding over the meeting of Regional Election Management Committee at party's Rohania office here on Thursday. He expressed confidence of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA)'s victory on 80 seats of Uttar Pradesh, including 14 seats of Kashi region. "The voting will be held in the fifth, sixth and seventh phase in 14 Lok Sabha constituencies of 16 organisational districts falling under the Kashi region of the party and to monitor the election related programmes to be held in these 14 Lok Sabha constituencies, an Election Management Committee has been formed at the regional level," he said.

He added that the party is working with the aim of a big victory on all the 80 seats in the state under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and the hard work of the workers. "The party workers are continuously communicating and contacting the public regarding the public welfare works of central and state governments," Patel said, adding that as per the instructions of the state leadership, the Regional Election Management



Committee has been divided into 13 departments and the responsibilities of these departments have been assigned to senior and experienced regional officials and everyone's responsibilities have been fixed. Patel said voting for the last phase of Lok Sabha elections is on June 1. "If added from today, we have 50 days left. In these 50 days we have to discharge our responsibilities with complete devotion and honesty," he said, adding that everything from booth management in all the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies of Kashi region to the arrangements and management of meetings and programmes of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah, National President JP Nadda, Defense Minister Rajnath Singh, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath etc are being made. "Monitoring the planning and giving guidelines from time to time is an important responsibility of the Regional Election Management Committee which will do all the monitoring work from BJP regional office Rohania," he

said. The meeting was conducted by regional general secretary Ashok Chaurasia and the vote of thanks was proposed by regional general secretary Santosh Patel. In the meeting, regional general secretary Shri Tripathi, Nagendra Raghuvanshi, Rakesh Sharma, Ashish Baghel, Rajesh Rajbhar, Pradeep Agrahari, regional media incharge Navratan Rath, co-media incharge Santosh Solapurkar, Anil Srivastava, Nandji Pandey, Jai Singh, Vijay Gupta, Arvind Pandey, Dr Ashok Rai, Sandeep Keshari etc were prominently present. Meanwhile, Patel distributed voter slips door to door in booth No 130 Sunderpur of Ravidas Mandal under Varanasi Cantt assembly of Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency. During this, he discussed public welfare works of the central and state governments. He said that under the leadership of the PM, the pride of Kashi along with India has increased in the whole world and there is a world of difference between the Kashi of before 2014 and the Kashi of today.

CSJMU to start distance learning courses

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The CSJM University (CSJMU) will start the distance learning courses in 12 subjects and online studies for different vocational courses, including BCA and BBA, from the ensuing academic session starting in July. After completing his three years' stint and getting six months' extension, Vice-Chancellor Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak told mediapersons that the university will also start organising the placement drives in its colleges from the ensuing academic session. He said the formalities for launching the distance learning and online studies were being completed rapidly. Prof Sandeep Singh was appointed the Director of Dronacharya School to spearhead both these modes. Initially, seven subjects of BA and five subjects of MA had been covered in distance learning. Likewise, under the online studies, BCA, MCA, BBA, MBA and BCom will be taught. He said in a bid to provide employment avenues to passouts, placement drives will be organised in affiliated colleges. In order to promote research and startups in affiliated colleges, the university will extend financial assistance also. Enumerating the achievements

during his three years' regime, he said number of students in the university campus had increased to 10,000 from 3,500 with a target to make it to 15,000 in the coming sessions. In the NAAC assessment, the university had been awarded the A++ rank from B Grade. Now it targets to be ranked in NIRF and QS Asia Rankings. He said with the expansion of sports facilities with an investment of ₹40 crore, students were able to excel in Khelo India competitions. Pro Vice-Chancellor Prof Sudhir Awasthi, Registrar Dr Anil Yadav, CDC Prof Rajesh Kumar Dwivedi, Dean Academic Prof Vrishi Mitra and Director of Business School Prof Anshu Yadav were also present.

SUICIDE: A youth committed suicide by hanging himself under mysterious circumstances in his house in Ashok Nagar under Akbarpur Kotwali police station area in Kanpur Dehat late on Thursday night. The police probed the issue and sent the body for an autopsy. Manish Gupta (25) of Ashok Nagar was a grocery item vendor and had set up his shop in Punkhrayan. He was running upset for the past few days. Late on Thursday night, he went to sleep in his room. He hanged himself late at night.

IIT (BHU) excels in QS ranking

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Indian Institute of Technology (Banaras Hindu University) Varanasi has achieved notable position in the Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Subject Ranking 2024 released recently, showcasing excellence on both international and national fronts. Based on the data collected by QS in the previous year, three prominent programmes—Electrical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Chemistry—secured impressive global positions, marking the institute's debut in the QS Subject Ranking. Electrical Engineering and Mechanical Engineering claimed positions between 501-530, while Chemistry secured a commendable rank between 601-650. The institute has been ranked first time under subject ranking for any academic programme. The IIT (BHU) is hoping for improved ranking and awaiting the release of the QS World University Rankings 2025 in June 2024 for which data is already submitted. IIT (BHU) has already secured a global position of 571 and ranked 13th among Indian universities in the QS World University Rankings 2024 released in June 2023. Notably, the institute also excelled in the Citation Per Faculty (CPF) category, securing the 78th global

rank and the 7th rank among Indian institutions assessed by QS. Additionally, the institute claimed the 59th spot in the Asian University Rankings.

In the QS Sustainability Ranking 2024, IIT (BHU) attained the 684th global position and ranked 7th among IITs. Impressively, the institute secured the 303rd position globally in knowledge exchange and the 336th position in good governance. These rankings mark the institute's debut in the prestigious sustainability ranking, highlighting its pivotal role as a global knowledge-sharing hub and its adherence to robust governance structures. Under the leadership of Director Prof Pramod Kumar Jain, the institute has initiated various academic and research collaborations with international universities and organisations, aiming for even higher global rankings in the upcoming QS World University Rankings 2025. At the national level, IIT (BHU) continues to excel. In the Indian Institutional Ranking Framework (IIRF), the institute secured the 8th position among "Best Engineering Colleges in India (Government)" in the IIRF Engineering Ranking 2023. Prof Jain expressed his satisfaction with the institute's remarkable positions globally and domestically, attributing the success to the collective

research contributions and pursuit of academic excellence. He emphasised the institute's commitment to global knowledge sharing and its ambition to further improve its position in regional and global rankings. Prof Jain congratulated the institute fraternity for consistent dedication of faculty and staff members as well as students in establishing the institute as a frontrunner in the global academic landscape. Prof Vikash Kumar Dubey, Dean (R&D), has expressed his optimism in further advancing the institute's position in regional and global rankings.

SESSION: The Skill Development Council in collaboration with the Wellness Council, organised an impactful session titled 'Workshop On Management: Lessons From Ramayana' to guide students about the management skills that they can learn from our holy epic 'Ramayana' and can incorporate these lessons in their lives. The Student Counselling Services, also known as SAKHA at the Indian Institute of Technology (BHU) Varanasi is a dedicated student-faculty body committed to the holistic advancement of students at campus. The distinguished guest speaker for the session was Sundaramaram Ramamurthy, currently holding the position of MD and CEO at BSE and Sameer Patil.

Bid to provide relief to patients from heat at DDU Hospital

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Medical Superintendent of Pt Deen Dayal Upadhyay (DDU) Government Hospital Dr Digvijay Singh said that in view of the heat arrangements for water coolers along with ROs have been made for the patients in different places in the hospital, including the emergency ward, surgical ward,

medical ward, general ward, private ward, Ayushman ward, trauma centre, women's hospital and OPD. Besides, adequate arrangements have been made for coolers and fans, which are in working condition. Apart from supplying generators for power backup, inverters have also been installed everywhere. At present the water cooler of the medical ward is in working condition. Dr Digvijay Singh

said ACs have also been installed in the OPD, Emergency Ward, Trauma Centre, Operation Theatre, Ayushman Private Ward of the hospital. At present the ACs of all the wards are in working condition (repair work of ACs of three rooms of private ward is being done). To provide pure drinking water to the patients, two RO plants have been installed, which are functional. There are nine water coolers, 18 ACs, nine cassette ACs installed in the hospital apart from centralised ACs in the operation theatre, which are functional. Apart from this, where there is no AC, adequate arrangements have been made for air coolers and fans for the patients.

CONFERENCE: The Personnel Management and Industrial Relations, Department of Psychology, Faculty of Social Sciences, BHU is organising the 10th National Conference on Current Human Resource Management Practices, 2024 along with the XVIIIth Annual Meet of the BHU-PMIR Alumni Association on April 13-14. It will be inaugurated by the chief guest and Director-HR and Legal, EFFCO, New Delhi, RP Singh at 10.30 am on Saturday in the MM Sinha Memorial Hall.

Shops gutted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A grocery shop caught fire on Aaudhakpur Road, Deen Dayal Puram, under Sen Pashchimpara police station area early on Friday morning. Due to the explosion in gas cylinder, it assumed an ugly turn and engulfed four other adjacent shops. On hearing the loud explosion and seeing the fire, residents informed the control room and attempted to extinguish the fire. But all the five shops were gutted in fire. Shop owners alleged the involvement of some unidentified people in the incident. Vishwas Dixit of E-3 Colony owned a temporary grocery shop near Nihalbaba temple, Deen Dayalpuram. An LPG cylinder and a stove were also kept in the shop for preparing tea. Around 3 am on Friday, the shop suddenly caught fire. After the explosion in the gas cylinder, the fire gutted the entire shop. Thereafter, it also spread up to other adjacent shops of Satish Kumar Saini (auto service centre), Shobhraj (vegetable), Rajkumar (cycle repairing) and Pramod Kumar Gupta (salon). All the five shops were gutted in fire.

SHO Rakesh Kumar Singh said the incident took place due to burst in gas cylinder. Action will be taken against the guilty after probe, he said.

Seminar on sustainability of ethanol production

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

An all India seminar on "Sustainability of Ethanol Production in the Present Scenario" was organised at the National Sugar Institute (NSI) here on Friday. The event was jointly organised by the NSI and Sugar Technologists' Association of India (STAI), New Delhi. Chief executive officers, general managers and senior level officials of sugar mills and distilleries located in major sugar producing states of the country participated in this seminar. In the inaugural session of the seminar, Director of the Institute Professor D Swain and President of STAI Sanjay Awasthi, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Radico Khaitan Group Amar Singh and Head of Department of Biochemistry Section Professor Seema Paroha, Alok Saxena (Executive Director-Gobind Sugar Mill) shared the stage. While addressing the seminar, Prof Swain explained



how global warming can be reduced through balanced use of ethanol in petrol. Additionally, ethanol can be produced sustainably in India using various sugary, starchy and cellulosic non-food feedstocks. The government has decided to achieve the target of 20 per cent ethanol blending in petrol by 2025. The food situation in India has slowed down the production of ethanol, thereby limiting the ethanol blending programme. STAI president Sanjay Awasthi explained about the efficient process of producing ethanol from maize and the ethanol related policies of various states and central government.

Veteran industrialist Amar Singh emphasised on sustainable production and profit making from production of ethanol at the distillery through various feedstocks. Professor of Biochemistry Dr Seema Paroha said the beetroot crop is ready in just five-six months and from one ton of beetroot 90-100 litres of ethanol can be obtained. Sugar beet is the best alternative crop to make India's E20 programme successful, creating a win-win situation for every stakeholder. She said this will not only help in producing ethanol as per requirement but its cultivation will also prove helpful in doubling the income of farmers.

Eight pithy research papers were presented in the seminar on varieties of feed stock, economical process of production, various methods of energy saving, state and central government policies, zero liquid effluent (ZLE) in distillery effluent treatment process and environmental protection issues. The seminar discussed diverse issues and concluded that "alternative feedstock arrangements especially non-food feedstock and efficient production processes can sustain the Ethanol Blending Programme (EBP) and even accelerate it in the future".

Anurag Goyal, Dr Anant Lakshmi, Assistant Professor Biochemistry, Kiran Dangwal, T Giri Kannan, Sandeep Chhikankar, Swapnil Sharma, Binu Panicker, Suraj Sasi, Arisha Srivastava, Dr Ravi Srinivasan, Swapnil Sharma etc. discussed ethanol production as well as presented research papers related to increasing it.

Stress on scientific approach for resolving real life issues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Pharmacy department of SHUATS conducted guest lectures as Scientific Social Responsibility (SSR) under a Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) sponsored project. Dr Purim Jarujamru from Ubon Ratchathani University (UBU) of Thailand and Dr Sameer Srivastava from Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology (MNNIT) delivered guest lectures at this event here on Friday. Dean Faculty of Health Sciences and Principal Investigator of the SERB-sponsored project Prof Amita Verma welcomed all the guests and participants. Dr Purim Jarujamru elaborated on the recent development of nitrogen-doped carbon dots on microfluidics paper-based analytical devices for diagnosis and monitoring purposes. Dr Sameer Srivastava encouraged participants to acquire a scientific approach to resolving various issues of real life. Concluding remarks and a vote of thanks were proposed by Joana G Singh. Dr Danish Ahmed, Dr Vandana Gupta, Dr Udaya P Singh, Dr Pushpraj

Gupta, Dr Vikas Kumar, Dr Deepika Singh, Dr Dinesh Kumar Patel, Mr Anup Masih, Dr Mahfoozur Rahman, Mr Mohd Ibrahim Khan, Vinay Kumar Yadav, Kanika Patel and all faculty members were also present. The students of Pharmacy department, Ankita, Divyansh, Abhyansh, Gaurav, Subhash, Manish, Parul and Sameeksha coordinated the event.

CLONE SPECIALS: The railway administration has decided to run two clone special trains from Anand Vihar, Delhi. A special train will also be run from Chhapra to Panvel of Navi Mumbai. It will also run via Prayagraj Junction. The North Central Railway (NCR) administration has released the timetable here. Senior Public Relations Officer (PRO), NCR, Dr Amit Malviya said that superfast Clone Special from Patna to Anand Vihar will operate daily via Prayagraj Junction.

SUICIDE: A 27-year-old nursing student committed suicide by hanging himself in Badi Bagiya locality. According to Colonelganj police, the family members could not tell the reason for suicide. No suicide note was found from the spot.

Workshop in BLW on Safe Motherhood Day

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A workshop was organised on the occasion of National Safe Motherhood Day at Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) on Friday in the auditorium room (seminar hall) of the Central Hospital. The day is on April 11 but due to Eid holiday, it was observed during the day. Inaugurating the programme on this occasion, Principal Chief Medical Officer (PCMO) Dr Devesh Kumar said that all the mothers in the medical care need special awareness about the challenges of pregnancy like side effects, risks of delivery and access to quality health care so that they can get relief.

The PCMO said that the hospitals and society can provide prenatal medical care by skilled birth attendants so that the health of the women can be maintained even after delivery. Efforts should be made to provide good nutrition, regular check-ups and necessary information and facilities for healthy delivery and their motherhood should be appreciated and respected for their invaluable contribution to the society, he



added. In this health programme, Additional Chief Medical Superintendent, Administration Dr SK Sharma, Senior Divisional Medical Officer (Gynaecology and Obstetrician) Dr Madhulika Singh, Senior Divisional Medical Officer Dr SK Maurya apart from nursing sisters Anita Chandra, Kamla Srinivasan, Sita Singh, Sanjula Gautam, Aarti, Nitir Puri, Ahilya Singh, Chandrakala Rao, Usha Jaisal, Anjana Tod, hospital attendants Phula Devi, Shakutala Devi, Sanjay Kumar, nursing teacher of Popular Nursing College, Pooja Giri Goswami along with other trainees presented a programme on this occasion. A good number of women attended the programme and took advantage of the health programme.

CENTRUM
Corporate & Registered Office : Unit No. 801, Centrum House, CST Road, Vidyanagri Marg, Kalina, Santacruz (East), Mumbai - 400098.
CIN No. U65922MH2016PL2273826

POSSESSION NOTICE
(As per Rule 8(1) of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002)
Loan Account No. - VNSVN21006279
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Centrum Housing Finance Limited, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued a demand notice dated 10-07-2023 calling upon Ved Prakash Srivastav as Borrower Romi Srivastav, as the Co-borrower to repay the outstanding amount mentioned in the notice being Rs. 868188/- (Rupees Eight Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand One Hundred Eighty Eight Only) along with contractual interest, penal interest, charges, costs etc. within 60 days from the date of the said notice.
The borrower, having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower, in particular and the public, in general, that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 10th day of April 2024.
The borrower, in particular, and the public, in general, are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be situated to the charge of the Centrum Housing Finance Limited, for an amount of Rs. 868188/- (Rupees Eight Lakh Sixty Eight Thousand One Hundred Eighty Eight Only) along with the contractual interest thereon and penal interest, charges, costs etc.
The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.
DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
In the rights, piece and parcel of immovable property Arazi No. 705 situated at Mauza Basahi, Adm. 607.5 Sq. ft., Tappa - 84, Pragana Kanit, Tehsil - Sadar, Dist. - Mirzapur, Mirzapur - 231001, Uttar Pradesh. **Boundaries:** East : 10 ft wide road, West : Boundary of Dalmi Premshaw, North : Parvati devi Plot, South : House of Sudheshwar Shukla
Date : 10.04.2024 Place : Varanasi Authorised Officer, Centrum Housing Finance Limited

यूनियन बैंक
ऑफ इंडिया
एक विश्व बैंक

Union Bank of India
A Government of India Undertaking

Regional Office : 117/H-1/240, Pandu Nagar, Kanpur
Head Office : 239, Vidhan Bhawan Marg, Nariman Point Mumbai

SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES | Date of e-Auction : 30-04-2024
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable assets under the securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 Read with Proviso to Rule 8 (6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rule, 2002.
Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower(s) and Guarantor(s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor, the constructive possession of which has been taken by the authorized officer of **Union Bank of India** (Secured Creditor), will be sold on "**As is Where is,**" "**As is What is,**" and "**Whatever there is**" on the date mentioned below, for recovery of dues as mentioned hereunder to Union Bank of India from the below mentioned Borrower(s) & Guarantor(s). The Reserve Price & the Earnest Money Deposit or also mentioned hereunder.
Branch Name : Sadar Bazar, Jhansi • Address : 341-G, Sadar Bazar, Jhansi, Branch Head : Shri Naresh Ratnakar • Mob. : 9506849123
Borrower : Smt. Jayanti Devi W/o Shri Hari Shankar and Shri Hari Shankar S/o Shri Panna Lal, Both R/o : House No. 396 Isai Tola, Krishna Nagar, Jhansi and Also at House on Arazi No. 2952, Krishna Colony, Gariya Gaon, Abadi Khara, Jhansi, **Guarantor : Shri Roop Kishore S/o Shri Narendra Mohan,** R/o : House No. 73-A, Isai Tola, Khati Baba, Jhansi,
Property : Land & Building on Arazi No. 2952, Gram Gadiya Gaon, Abadi Khara Jhansi. Owner of Property : Smt. Jayanti Devi W/o Shri Hari Shankar, Area : 984 Sq. Ft., **Bounded-North :** Rasta 10 Ft., **South :** Plot of Seller, **East :** Rasta 10 Ft., **West :** Plot of Seller
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 3,12,104.16 + Intt.+Others Charges, Date & Time of E-Auction : 30-04-2024 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm, Reserve Price : Rs. 14.31 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 1.44 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/en/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>
Branch Name : Jhansi Main, Jhansi • Address : Elite Chauraha, Civil Lines, Jhansi, Branch Head : Shri Shiv Sen • Mob. : 9649578999
Borrower : Mohd. Iqbal S/o Mohd. Ismail and Mohd. Ismail S/o Shri Dulle Khan, Both R/o : 1045, Out Side Datia Gate, (Out Side Ali Goal) Distt. Jhansi. **Guarantor : Mohd. Kamal** R/o : 1062/1-A, Out Side Datia Gate, Distt. Jhansi.
O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 15,30,089.80 + Intt. + Other Expenses
Property : Residential House situated at Arazi No. 3531, Mauza Jhasi Khas Abadi Out Side Datia Gate, (Out Side Ali Gola Khidki) Tehsil & Distt. Jhansi. **Owner of Property : Mohd. Ismail** S/o Shri Dulle Khan, Area : 1247 Sq. Ft., **Bounded-** North- Plot Asif, South : Plot Anwar, East- Plot of Hafiz Akhtar, West : Rasta 23 Ft., **Date & Time of E-Auction : 30-04-2024 at 11.00 am to 4.00 pm**
Reserve Price : Rs. 14.40 Lac, Earnest Money to be deposited Rs. 1.44 Lac. For detailed terms and condition of the sale, please refer to the link provided in <https://www.unionbankofindia.co.in/en/english/TenderViewAllAuction.aspx>
For Registration and Login and Bidding Rules visit <https://www.mstcecommerce.com/auctionhome/ibapi/index.jsp>
Date : 12-04-2024 Place : Jhansi Authorized Officer, Union Bank of India



Shah: Significant milestones achieved under PM Modi



Union Home and Cooperation Minister Minister Amit Shah being presented a memento at an election meeting in Moradabad

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Rallying for Bharatiya Janata Party's 'Abki Baar 400 Paar', Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah said that the victory of the BJP in western Uttar Pradesh would ensure that the party wins all the 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP and over 370 seats across India. Shah addressed a public meeting in Moradabad where he emphasised the BJP's developmental efforts. He highlighted the contrast with the Congress' alleged failures in driving development and its entanglement in corruption during its tenure. Shah urged the electorate to support Prime Minister Narendra Modi for a third term, rallying for the BJP's 'Abki Baar 400 Paar' campaign. Shah asserted the certainty of BJP's victory in Moradabad, aiming for a sweep of all 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh. He stressed the pivotal role of western UP in securing BJP's

success across the state and urged all sections of society to support the party, highlighting the importance of voting for BJP candidates. The Union home minister touted Prime Minister Modi's leadership in elevating India's economy and achieving significant milestones such as the Ram mandir's inauguration in Ayodhya and the revitalisation of various religious sites. Shah commended Modi's efforts in preserving India's cultural values, contrasting BJP's stance with the Congress' neglect of Kashmir during its rule. He praised the decision to abrogate Article 370 and lauded the prime minister's actions against terrorism and Naxalism. Addressing concerns of infiltration and terrorism, Shah highlighted the shift in the government's response under Modi's leadership, citing surgical strikes and airstrikes as examples. He outlined various developmental initiatives under

Modi's governance, including provisions for food grains, sanitation, housing and healthcare, particularly in Uttar Pradesh. Shah credited Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for improvements in law and order and significant infrastructure projects undertaken in the state. Shah warned against the return of the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, pointing to their divisive agendas, and urged the public to vote for Bharatiya Janata Party candidates to ensure inclusive development under Modi's leadership. Highlighting Modi's initiatives benefiting sugarcane farmers, Shah appealed for continued support to secure a third term for the prime minister. At the event, several BJP leaders, including party state president Bhupendra Chaudhary, Moradabad candidate Thakur Sarvesh Singh, Sambhal candidate Parmeshwar Lal Saini, Ramesh Bidhuri, and others were present.

'Previous govts inflamed religious fanaticism'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath campaigned for the Kairana and Saharanpur Lok Sabha seats on Friday, addressing public gatherings in favour of National Democratic Alliance candidates contesting from both these constituencies. Chief Minister Yogi lamented that Saharanpur, which had the potential to become the 'Kashi of the West', had been turned into a hotbed of religious fanaticism by previous administrations. He also said that the work of spreading chaos and anarchy was done here through fatwas. The chief minister urged the public to be wary of individuals who, despite denying the existence of Lord Ram in the Supreme Court, were now chanting his name for electoral gains. The chief minister said that work was being done to confiscate the property of the ancestors of those who were playing with the future of the youth and distribute it among the poor. He emphasised the progress made in rooting out the influence of mafia in Uttar Pradesh, remarking, "Kuchh mafia jail mein hain, kuchh jahannum chale gaye hain." (Some mafia are behind bars, while others have gone to hell). Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath first addressed a public meeting in Kairana. He said, "Our government has given riot and curfew-free Uttar Pradesh. We have fostered a peaceful and harmonious environment by suppressing those who incite riots and enforce curfews. Let us not allow them to thrive again, as they will only provoke further disturbances through caste-based politics." He further remarked, "This poses a threat to the safety of our daughters and the prosperity of our businessmen, constituting a conspiracy to hinder development. We must transcend this and take action. To achieve this, we must not allow rioters, corrupt individuals, anarchists, and those who endanger the lives of our daughters, mothers, farmers, and youth to thrive again, regardless of their status." The chief minister said that playing with the future of the



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath campaigning for BJP-RLD joint candidate Pradeep Chaudhary in Kairana

youth was intolerable. He warned that anyone attempting such actions would face the confiscation of their ancestral property, which would then be distributed among the underprivileged. "The vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is our mission. We will work together with his vision and mission to build a new India," he said. He urged the public to vote in support of Bharatiya Janata Party and Rashtriya Lok Dal's joint Lok Sabha candidate Pradeep Chaudhary. Addressing a public gathering in the Saharanpur Lok Sabha constituency, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath likened the mafia to the mythical demon Raktbeej, stressing that they must not be allowed to thrive again under any circumstances. He remarked, "Congress and Samajwadi Party used to capitulate to them, but today 'kuchh mafia jail mein hain, kuchh jahannum chale gaye' (some mafia are behind bars, while others have gone to hell). Their influence has been completely neutralised." He highlighted the clear division in this election between

two opposing ideologies. On one side are those driven by caste divisions, while on the other are individuals dedicated to nationalism, he pointed out. "On one hand, there are those who are intent on tearing apart the social fabric, while on the other hand, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, there are people who believe in upholding India's dignity," he said. "We have removed the mikes and loudspeakers from which they used to shout and cause disturbances. Our country and our religion are our national pride. If they are secure, so are we," Chief Minister Yogi declared. He remarked that Deoband had become a centre of religious fanaticism, with fatwas issued on trivial matters, including how vaccines should be administered. "From here, attempts were made to spread chaos and anarchy, with little attention paid to development," he added. Chief Minister Yogi was addressing an election rally in Deoband on Friday in support of BJP candidate Raghav Lakhnapanal Sharma from Saharanpur Lok Sabha seat.

Religion takes a new hue in Saharanpur

PNS ■ SAHARANPUR

Congress candidate Imran Masood's recent visit to the Tripura Sundari Devi temple has sparked heated debates surrounding religion and politics in the Saharanpur Lok Sabha contest. Masood's decision to visit the temple drew sharp criticism from the Bajrang Dal, which questioned the involvement of a non-Hindu in religious affairs. However, Masood defended his action as a strategic response to the Bharatiya Janata Party's frequent references to Lord Ram in their campaign speeches. This move marks a significant departure from Masood's past controversies, notably his infamous 'boti-boti' remark targeting Narendra Modi in 2014. Now, aligned with the Congress-Samajwadi Party alliance, Masood is leveraging the symbolism of Ram to connect with the voters in Saharanpur. In this fiercely contested electoral battleground, the Muslim electorate wields considerable influence, as demonstrated by the intense competition between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party. The victory of BSP's Fazlur Rehman over BJP's Raghav Lakhnapanal in the 2019 election underscores the pivotal role of this demographic. Masood's substantial vote share in the previous election further solidifies the significance of the Muslim electorate. As the competition escalates, established contenders like Lakhnapanal and Masood vie for supremacy, while the BSP has introduced Majid Khan as a fresh face. Lakhnapanal dismisses assertions of Muslim dominance in the constituency, emphasising a nuanced understanding of electoral demographics. For the BJP, reclaim-

ing lost ground in western Uttar Pradesh is of utmost importance. Saharanpur's strategic significance is evident in the party's efforts to consolidate its traditional support bases amidst shifting alliances and defections. The recent inclusion of senior SP leader Sanjay Garg into the BJP fold signals a concerted attempt to sway backward and Muslim voters. Sabir Ali Khan of the Milli Council highlights the BJP's strategy to exploit Hindu-Muslim fault lines, capitalising on the presence of Muslim candidates in the BSP and Congress camps. Amidst these intricate dynamics, the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) strategically targets disillusioned Dalit and caste-based voters to counter potential divisions. The Congress, buoyed by Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's upcoming roadshow, seeks to bridge communal divides while appealing to traditional BJP voters disenchanted with ticket distribution. Meanwhile, BSP supremo Mayawati rallies support with an eye on consolidating Dalit and Muslim votes, symbolically aligning with Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar's birth anniversary. However, amidst the whirlwind of religious narratives and electoral manoeuvres, pressing issues such as unemployment and taxation woes are relegated to the sidelines. Residents like Sachin Sharma and Mohammad Rashid voice concerns over job scarcity and complex tax systems, urging political leaders to prioritise grassroots challenges. In the midst of the clamour surrounding religious posturing and political strategies, the electorate of Saharanpur grapples with urgent issues, emphasising the necessity for substantive political discourse beyond mere symbolism.

SP to win all seats in UP going to polls in 1st phase: Akhilesh

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday claimed that his party would win the seats going to polls in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh on April 19. The SP chief on Friday launched the election campaign for the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections in UP from Pilibhit constituency. Bhagwat Saran Gangwar is the SP candidate from Pilibhit. "You will hear good news from Pilibhit and other seats going to polls in the first phase of the elections," the SP chief said while addressing a meeting in Purnapur town of Pilibhit district. Without naming Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the SP president said "big leaders have already addressed election meetings in Pilibhit and the face of leadership of Lucknow has turned pale as the people here have decided to teach BJP a lesson". He claimed that the SP candidate from Pilibhit will win with a historic margin. Referring to three farm laws which were repealed by the

Candidates for Kaushambi, Kushinagar announced

Lucknow (PNS): Samajwadi Party, on Friday, announced the names of two more candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh. Pushpendra Saroj has been given the ticket from Kaushambi and Ajay Pratap Singh from Kushinagar. The SP had suffered defeats in both these seats in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections with the Bharatiya Janata Party candidates emerging victorious. In the parliamentary 2019 election in Kushinagar, the party had given its ticket to NP Kushwaha who suffered defeat at the hands of BJP candidate Vijay Kumar Dubey. In the 2014 election, SP's Radhe Shyam Singh ranked fourth in the constituency where BJP's Rajesh Pandey had emerged victori-

ous. In the 2019 election in Kaushambi, BJP's Vinod Sonkar had defeated SP's Indrajit Saroj. In the 2014 Lok Sabha election, BJP candidate Vinod Sonkar had defeated SP's Shailendra Kumar who had won the seat in the 2009 poll. Uttar Pradesh will vote in all the seven phases of Lok Sabha elections starting April 19. Kaushambi will go to polls in the fifth phase on May 20 while polling will be held in Kushinagar on June 1 in the last phase of the elections. The results of the elections will be declared on June 4. Meanwhile, the Election Commission of India on Friday issued the notification for the third phase of Lok Sabha elections in 10 constituencies of Uttar Pradesh sector." Without naming BJP MP from Pilibhit, Varun Gandhi, the SP chief said "the BJP has punished its MP from Pilibhit for

advocating the cause of farmers and he has been denied ticket by the party". Targeting BJP candidate Jitin Prasada, who is the PWD minister in Yogi Adityanath government, the SP chief said, "The BJP candidate is making tall claims of turning Pilibhit into Mumbai. The BJP candidate is a party hopper so he cannot be trusted as he has committed many scams as PWD minister". He alleged that during the tenure of PWD Minister Jitin Prasada, over Rs 40,000 crore was spent on repairing the potholed roads. "It remains a secret as to where that money was utilised as the roads are still full of potholes across the state," Akhilesh Yadav said. Alleging extortion by the BJP under electoral bond scheme, the SP chief said, "The BJP filled its coffers through extortion from business houses under electoral bonds. The common people have been left to their fate as there is no let-up in inflation." He alleged that both the demonetisation and the electoral bond scheme were used to launder money and this was one of the major causes for the rampant inflation.

28,116 polling staff for LS elections in Lko

Lucknow (PNS): There will be a total of 28,116 polling staff in Lucknow for the Lok Sabha elections. A senior district administration official said that the first randomisation of the duty of the polling personnel was carried out by the District Election Officer and District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar. "The district election officer started the process of randomisation by giving random numbers. In this process, the duty of presiding officer, polling officer I, polling officer II (male), polling officer II (female), polling officer III, and micro-observers was randomly determined. In the first randomisation, the duties of a total of 28,116 workers were determined, which include 4,769 presiding officers, 4,769 polling officers I, 16,523 polling officers II and polling officers III, and 598 micro-observers," he said. He added that for the 173 Vidhan Sabha Lucknow East, where the bypolls are scheduled, 657 additional polling officers first, 800 additional polling officers third, and a total of 1,457 additional workers were randomised. He said that the duty orders of all are being prepared and all duty orders will be made available to all the concerned departments from the collectorate premises.

Mayawati: We believe in action, not in statements or manifesto

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati, on Thursday, said that her party does not release election manifestos as the party believes in action and not just in making statements. "Our party believes in demonstrating actions rather than just making statements. That is why we never issue election manifestos. The strongest evidence of this approach lies in our track record in Uttar Pradesh, where we formed the government four times without releasing any election manifesto. We worked for the welfare of the extremely poor, marginalised and Dalit communities in Uttar Pradesh without relying on mere promises," Mayawati said at a public rally in Nagpur, Maharashtra. She urged people to vote for her party and not be swayed by the Bharatiya Janata Party's persuasive tactics. She added, "Just as we formed a government in Uttar Pradesh without issuing election manifestos, we will work similarly if we come to power at the national level." "As the opposition parties release their election manifestos, especially the BJP, it is crucial for you to distance yourself from their persuasive tactics. In the interest of the nation and the state, you should cast your vote for our party, the BSP, rather than giving it to the BJP, Congress, or any other ruling or opposition party. Just as we formed a government in Uttar Pradesh without issuing election manifestos, we will work similarly if we come to power at the national level," she said. Meanwhile, Mayawati accused the BJP of helping capitalists, the rich and taking financial assistance from them through electoral bonds. Mayawati said that her party did not take a single penny through this scheme. The BSP chief asserted that no 'juma' or guarantee will work for the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections as the people have realised that not even one-fourth of the promises made by the ruling party have been fulfilled and they are yet to see 'achhe din'. She also questioned the reliability of electronic voting

9 more candidates named

Lucknow (PNS): Bahujan Samaj Party, on Friday, released its fourth list of nine candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh. The list included the names of Bhim Rajbhar and Balkrishna Chauhan. BSP chief Mayawati has fielded former party state president Bhim Rajbhar from Azamgarh and Balkrishna Chauhan from Ghosi Lok Sabha seats. Apart from these, BSP tickets have been given to Mohammad Irfan from Etah, Shyam Kishore Awasthi from Dhaurahra, Sachchidanand Pandey from Faizabad and Dayashankar Mishra from Basti. The names of Javed Simnani from Gorakhpur, Satyendra Kumar Maurya from Chandauli and Dhaneshwar Gautam from Robertsganj also appear in the list. The BSP is contesting the Lok Sabha elections alone. Mayawati is expected to hold 40 election rallies in Uttar Pradesh, starting with Saharanpur and Muzaffarnagar on April 14. Mayawati's political successor and BSP national coordinator Akash Anand has been holding election rallies in western UP since April 6. Along with Mayawati, her young nephew Akash is playing an important role in the election campaigns. Akash is

expected to hold public meetings in Hathras on April 13 and Saharanpur and Kairana on April 17. Meanwhile, in a setback to BSP, party's former MP Malook Nagar joined the Rashtriya Lok Dal in the presence of party chief Jayant Chaudhary in Delhi on Thursday. Nagar left the BSP reportedly after he was denied the ticket in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. "When I became an MP, the RLD, Samajwadi Party and BSP played a huge role. Jayant played a significant role as well. He held big meetings in five Vidhan Sabhas segments of my Lok Sabha constituency. That is why there were hoardings of all three parties in west Uttar Pradesh. After winning as an MP, no one saw my hoarding because the parties parted ways. Malook Nagar became the MP from three of the parties," Nagar said after joining the RLD. Nagar had won the 2019 Lok Sabha election on the BSP ticket. The BSP was then in alliance with the RLD and the SP. "I always raised many issues in Parliament, rising above party and politics, about the work done by the government and also openly criticised any shortcomings of the ruling party," he added.

UP farmers to play key role in 'Mission 80'

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The upcoming general elections of 2024 are poised to witness a significant impact from crores of farmers across the state. Their role is expected to be a decisive factor in achieving the target of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath by securing 80 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh for the Bharatiya Janata Party. The initiatives undertaken by the double-engine government have placed the welfare of farmers at the forefront of governance. From ensuring free electricity for irrigation through tube wells to ensuring fair payment for sugarcane dues and the establishment of new sugar mills, the government's commitment to farmers is evident. This proactive approach is expected to res-

onate with the electorate, particularly the 'annadata' farmers who have benefited from the government's schemes. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi, these policies have not only increased the income of farmers but have also fostered self-reliance and prosperity. As voters head to the polls, they are likely to remember these farmer-centric policies and their positive impact on their livelihoods. It is noteworthy that crores of farmers in Uttar Pradesh will prove to be a trump card in achieving the target of 80 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats of UP, set by PM Modi and CM Yogi. The Yogi government of the state not only formulated schemes and policies for the farmers but also ensured their implementation. The latest example of this

is providing free electricity to private tube wells of the farmers for irrigation. The Yogi government recently announced and fulfilled this commitment. This decision of the government is going to directly benefit around 1.5 crore farmers in the state and their families (approximately 6-7 crore people). Under this, farmers will not need to pay any electricity bills for private tube wells from April 2023 onwards. Moreover, if there are any pending bills, the government will introduce a plan for paying them off in interest-free and easy installments. The government has taken significant steps for sugarcane farmers, leading to a substantial increase in their incomes. Under this, the state government has facilitated payment of approximately Rs 2.50 lakh crore as sugarcane dues from 2017 till now.

Not only this, in the past seven years the state government has increased the sugarcane advised price (SAP) by Rs 55 per quintal. This has made sugarcane farmers in the state self-reliant and prosperous. In addition, the government has established three new sugar mills since March 2017, while restarting operations of five sugar mills, and expanding the capacities in 38 sugar mills, creating additional crushing capacity of 1,07,100 TCD, and providing direct or indirect employment to around 1,17,810 people. Furthermore, the daily crushing capacity of sugar mills, which was 7.50 lakh TCD before 2017, has now increased to 8.36 lakh TCD. In addition, large-scale crop loans have been made available to farmers in the state. Under the Kisan Credit Card scheme, by December 2023,

46.41 lakh farmers have been benefited in the 2023-24 fiscal. The schemes launched by the Central government to provide relief to the 'annadata' farmers have also been implemented efficiently in Uttar Pradesh. Under the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, the Central government took the initiative to provide Rs 6,000 per year as minimum income support to the farmers, under which a total of 12 crore farmers in the country and 2.68 crore farmers in the state are being benefited. By February 2024, eligible farmers across the state have received Rs 68,139 crore directly into their accounts through DBT (direct benefit transfer). In addition to this, financial assistance has been provided to farmers for purchasing agricultural machinery and installation of solar pumps.

machines (EVMs). She said the BJP would not come to power easily at the Centre this time because of its "casteist, capitalist, narrow-minded and hate-filled" policies if free and fair elections were held and the EVMs were not tampered with. She alleged that the BJP has put most of its efforts in making capitalists richer. The BSP chief said the BJP and most other political parties run organisations and contest elections with the financial support of capitalists and rich people and this had been revealed by the electoral bond data released by the State Bank of India. "They took money from the rich, but the BSP has not taken a single penny from any capi-

talist or rich people through electoral bonds," Mayawati said. She said the poor, Dalits, adivasis, backward communities, Muslims and other minorities had not made much progress in the country because of the casteist, communal and pro-capitalist policies of the BJP and the Congress. Mayawati alleged that the vacant government posts reserved for Dalits, tribals and Other Backward Classes (OBC) have not been filled for many years. The former chief minister of Uttar Pradesh said that the condition of Dalits as well as Muslims and other religious minorities in the country was very bad and this was also revealed in the Sachar Committee Report 2006.

Softening stance

China responds positively to Modi's peace overtures, says it is for stability in relations

In the realm of international relations, the delicate nurturing of ties between nations often involves a mixture of diplomatic rhetoric, strategic manoeuvrings and the occasional statement to assuage tensions. Recently, two of the world's most populous nations, India and China, indulged in this exercise, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's comments on the border situation drawing a positive response from China. In an interview with Newsweek magazine, Modi underscored the importance of urgently addressing the ongoing border situation; he expressed optimism that through constructive engagement, peace and tranquillity could be restored. In response, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning emphasised the importance of "sound and stable" ties, highlighting mutual interests in regional peace and development. This response underscores China's commitment to maintaining constructive relations with India despite the border challenge. Mao's statement also sought to contextualise the border issue within the broader



framework of bilateral relations. Acknowledging the significance of the boundary question, she stressed that it should not overshadow the entirety of India-China relations. This perspective reflects China's nuanced approach to managing bilateral issues, advocating for dialogue, cooperation and strategic thinking to navigate differences.

The backdrop against which these statements unfold is the protracted border standoff that began in May 2020, following a violent clash near Pangong Tso. A research paper shared at the DGPs' Conference revealed that India's access to 26 out of 65 Patrolling Points (PPs) has been compromised. In Ladakh, an

estimated 1,000 sq km of territory has reportedly fallen under Chinese control. However, these figures have not been officially acknowledged. Subsequently, in June 2020, India and China withdrew their troops from Patrolling Point 14 in Galwan Valley. This was followed by disengagement from both the north and south banks of Pangong Tso in February 2021 and from Patrolling Point 17A near Gogra Post in August the same year. Despite numerous rounds of talks at the Corps Commander level, significant areas of contention remain unresolved. India's insistence on disengagement from specific regions, such as Depsang and Demchok, underscores the challenges involved in reaching a comprehensive resolution. The thawing of relations between India and China is not only crucial for both but also carries implications for the broader region and the world at large. As economic powerhouses and nuclear-armed States, their ability to manage their differences and cultivate stable ties is essential for regional peace and stability. Looking ahead, the path to normalised relations between India and China will likely be characterised by continued dialogue, confidence-building measures and pragmatic compromises. While the road may be fraught with obstacles, their shared interests provide a foundation upon which to build a more stable and constructive relationship.

PICTALK



Security personnel during a rehearsal for the Hirmachal Day Parade, in Shimla

PTI

Honouring the martyrs of Jallianwala Bagh

As the nation commemorates the 105th anniversary of the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, it reaffirms its commitment to justice, equality and nonviolence

Somen Sengupta, in his piece "Jallianwala Bagh revisited" published in his paper's April 10, 2022 edition on its 103rd anniversary, reflected, "This incident alone serves as a damning testament to the collective atrocity of firing upon an unarmed gathering." The actual number of casualties likely far exceeded the reported count. Somen further notes, "Dyer, facing the Hunter Commission in Lahore, ultimately lost his position with a measure of reprimand."

April 13, 2024, marks the 105th anniversary of this tragic episode. It was amidst the auspicious Baisakhi celebrations on April 13, 1919, that Punjab was engulfed in tragedy, as around 20,000 rural attendees congregated at Jallianwala Bagh, oblivious to the impending horror. Durgadas Vaidya, editor of Waqt newspaper, addressed the peaceful protesters who were voicing opposition to the oppressive Rowlatt Act, passed on March 21, 1919. The non-violent Satyagraha led by Mahatma Gandhi against the Act on April 6, 1919, culminated in his arrest on April 9 near Delhi, along



with Saifuddin Kitchlew and Dr. Satyapal. The unjust repercussions sparked widespread anger, leading to violent clashes, including the tragic killing of nearly 30 Indians on April 10 by police gunfire as they sought to cross Hall Gate Bridge into the civil lines.

However, at Jallianwala Bagh, the scene turned chaotic as Brigadier-General Reginald ('Rex') Dyer arrived unannounced. Dyer, with meticulous planning, ordered troops to open fire on the unarmed crowd, plunging the gathering into chaos and leaving an indelible mark on history and the land. The bullet-riddled walls and the well, where desperate individuals sought refuge, continue to evoke shudders.

The Jallianwala Bagh massacre claimed the lives of 379 individuals, with numerous others sustaining injuries.

The relentless firing of 1,650 rounds by British troops under Dyer's command resulted in a bloodbath. Moreover, Dyer's imposition of a curfew post-massacre exacerbated the tragedy, denying grieving families access to their deceased loved ones. The scale of suppression delayed the event's revelation in the media, only brought to light by courageous journalists like B G Horniman of Bombay Chronicle and later Amrita Bazar Patrika, prompting global leaders like Lenin to express solidarity with the suffering Indian populace. Professor K L Tuteja, a historian at Kurukshetra University, describes the massacre as a pivotal moment that drew sharp criticism both in England and India. Winston Churchill labeled it a 'monstrous event, an event which stands in singular and sinister isolation,' while former Prime Minister Herbert Asquith deemed it 'One of the worst outrages in the whole of history.' These reactions underscored the profound shock and dismay even among those who believed in the justness of British rule in

India. Within India, the massacre left a deep scar, with many viewing it as an unparalleled atrocity. Mahatma Gandhi's poignant response encapsulated the sentiment: "We do not seek to punish Dyer. We harbor no thirst for vengeance. We seek to transform the system that bred Dyer." The massacre significantly influenced the trajectory of the anti-imperialist struggle, bolstering forces that challenged British rule in India. Prominent figures like Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and Annie Besant vehemently condemned the massacre, advocating for peaceful resistance against British colonial oppression. Gandhi relinquished the title of 'Kaiser-i-Hind,' bestowed by the British, while Tagore renounced his knighthood in protest. Nehru denounced it as a 'monstrous crime,' emphasising the nation's duty to honour those who sacrificed their lives for political freedom.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Bharat Ratna Dr BR Ambedkar, born on April 14, 1891, will ever be revered for his contributions towards building a just and inclusive India. He was a guardian angel of social justice, a harbinger of inclusivity, justice and equality. As an eminent jurist, economist and social reformer, he dedicated his life to eradicating caste-based discrimination and uplifting the marginalised communities in our country. As the architect of the Indian Constitution, he ensured fundamental rights and safeguards for all citizens.

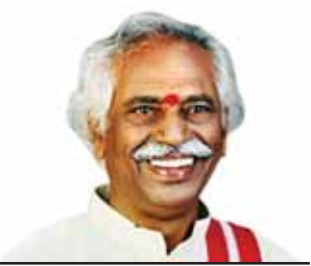
As his legacy continues to inspire millions globally even today, standing as a beacon of hope for deprived communities striving for dignity and equality, there is a lot we can learn and inspire ourselves from his vision of social justice, which was profoundly rooted in the principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. He recognised the deep-rooted inequalities entrenched within Indian society, particularly the caste system, which relegated millions to a life of discrimination and oppression. He fought for the abolition of untouchability, which is against the teachings of the Vedas, the Atrocious caste system had jolted him from within. To give shock treatment to Hindu society, he embraced Buddhism, which is so deeply rooted in Indian ethos and value system. He was not inimical to Hindutva. He had resentment against Hinduism but he was not opposed to Hinduism. He did not embrace any other alien religion though Islamic and Christian scholars tried their best to influence him. Coming from a very poor family, Dr Ambedkar suffered multiple social and economic hardships but he did not give up. He fought against the odds bravely. He was the 14th child of his parents. His father gave him good Zanskar and used to share stories and thoughts of great saints like Sant Tukaram, Sant Gyaneshwar, Sant Shiromani Ravidas, teachings of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. He did his matriculation in 1908 from Elphinstone High School. He studied Economics and Political Science at Elphinstone College. In 1912,

he got a degree from Bombay University.

With a scholarship from Maharaja of Baroda, he went to Columbia University, New York City from where he got a Master's degree in June 1915 after completing his thesis on 'Ancient Indian Commerce'. In 1916, he went to the London School of Economics. In 1920, received the D Sc by London University! He also went to the University of Bonn, Germany. In June 1927, he was awarded a Doctorate by the University of Columbia. He was a rare Indian politician of his time who studied at Columbia University, LSE and University of Bonn.

Dr Ambedkar inspires us to imbibe the principle of 'Study and Struggle' to create an incredible niche for himself as an intellectual as well. His vision of social justice emphasised the importance of education and political representation for the oppressed castes, viewing them as essential tools for empowerment and emancipation. He laid the foundation for a more inclusive and just society. He believed in the idea and ideals of dialogue. He was against armed struggle to restore the glory of every human being. He believed in the principle of co-existence, following the teachings of truth, non-violence and

HIS VISION OF SOCIAL JUSTICE EMPHASISED THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION AND POLITICAL REPRESENTATION FOR THE OPPRESSED CASTES, VIEWING THEM AS ESSENTIAL TOOLS FOR EMPOWERMENT AND EMANCIPATION



BANDARU DATTATREYA

A harbinger of justice and equality

As the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, Dr BR Ambedkar laid down the bedrock of fundamental rights and protections for all citizens

respect for the people of all castes and religions. Dr Ambedkar viewed education not merely as a means of acquiring academic qualifications but as a catalyst for the liberation of the oppressed and marginalised communities.

He emphasised the importance of universal access to education, particularly for those historically denied opportunities due to caste discrimination and social inequality. He was also an ardent champion of the cultivation of values such as empathy, justice and equality. According to him, the cultivation of the mind should be the ultimate aim of human existence. He was also a great champion of women's empowerment.

He famously said: "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved." Dr Ambedkar held strong convictions about national unity and integrity, recognising them as fundamental pillars for the progress and stability of any nation. Dr Ambedkar advocated for a society where every individual had equal rights and opportunities, emphasising the need for social harmony and mutual respect. He also played a significant role in shaping India's

labour laws. His tireless efforts as India's first Law Minister paved the way for landmark legislation like the Factories Act, the Minimum Wages Act and the Industrial Disputes Act, which continue to serve as cornerstones of labour rights and industrial progress in the country.

He stressed the significance of upholding the principles of democracy, secularism and constitutionalism to ensure the protection of the rights of weaker sections of society and the preservation of national unity.

His vision for India was one of inclusivity and pluralism, where diversity was celebrated as a source of strength rather than division. He saw untouchability as not just a moral wrong but also a significant impediment to the social progress and unity of India. He advocated for its complete abolition, stressing the need for legislative measures and social reform.

As we remember Dr BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary today, let us express our gratitude to him and commit ourselves to a democratic, secular and inclusive nation.

(The author is the Governor of Haryana. The views expressed are strictly his personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

KEJRIWAL GAINS WEIGHT IN JAIL

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Kejriwal weight has increased by one kg in jail, say jail authorities", published on April 11, this is my response. The conflicting reports on Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal's health and treatment during his judicial custody have ignited a fierce debate. Tihar jail authorities claim a weight gain of 1 kg, contradicting earlier assertions by AAP leaders of a significant weight loss. While Tihar's report indicates stability in Kejriwal's weight and fluctuating blood sugar levels, AAP alleges deteriorating health conditions and infringement of basic rights, drawing parallels to historical atrocities.

The rhetoric escalates as AAP accuses the Modi Government of employing draconian measures akin to Hitler's regime, emphasising PM Modi's suppression of Kejriwal's rights. Allegations of emotional manipulation and restrictive measures during legal meetings further intensify the political turmoil surrounding Kejriwal's incarceration. This saga not only reflects the contentious relationship between AAP and the central Government but also raises concerns about the treatment of political detainees and the politicisation of health issues in judicial proceedings.

Amanullah | Hyderabad

YOGI'S DEVELOPMENT PITCH

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Vote for Modi for continued peace, progress: Yogi at JK", published on April 11, this is my response. In a passionate appeal, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath advocated for the re-election of a Narendra Modi-led Government, highlighting peace and development as its cornerstones. Speaking at a rally in Kathua, he lauded the Government's efforts in combating terrorism and fostering development nationwide.

Dr Jitendra Singh emphasised regional progress, invoking sentiments among voters. His critique of the Congress Party underscored historical grievances, while

Byju's crisis



Apropos the news article, "Decacorn's fall signals startup governance crisis", published on April 11, this is my response. The recent turmoil at Byju's, culminating in the ousting of its founder, highlights deeper issues plaguing India's startup ecosystem. The shift from edtech to hardware sales led to a loss of core value, undermining investor trust and causing a stag-

gering 95% drop in valuation. Corporate governance lapses, including financial opacity and delayed audits, have further eroded confidence. The Extraordinary General Meeting's decision to reconstitute the board signals a necessary step towards accountability. However, legal challenges and interim orders cloud the path forward. Amidst this uncertainty, one solution emerges: allowing investors a larger role in reshaping Byju's trajectory, akin to successful interventions in other startups. Beyond financial recovery, the focus must remain on Byju's original mission: democratising education for Indian students. Restoring faith in Byju's not only revitalises the startup landscape but also sustains aspirations nationwide. Ultimately, the road to redemption demands a return to Byju's roots as an edtech innovator, guided by transparent governance and investor stewardship.

Swapna Singh | Ranchi

praising the recent construction of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya as a symbol of faith's resurgence. The event signals the BJP's concerted push in the Udhampur constituency, with Prime Minister Modi set to address a rally shortly. However, the opposition, notably Choudhary Lal Singh's camp, questions the fairness of campaign resources allocation, alleging undue favouritism. With a diverse electorate and a fierce triangular contest, the upcoming polls on April 19 in Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat promise to be closely contested, with each candidate vying for the crucial support of first-time voters.

Pritam Dubey | Gwalior

CHARITY IS A UNIVERSAL VIRTUE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Essence of Charity: Insights from the Gita", published on April 11, this is my response. The essence of charity, extending beyond monetary assistance, resonates through various religious and philosophical teachings. The Bhagavad-Geeta delineates charity's nuances, emphasising its virtue in goodness, devoid of expectation or com-

pulsion. It stresses discernment in selecting worthy recipients, cautioning against enabling dependency.

Lord Krishna's discourse distinguishes charity in passion, highlighting its pitfalls of transactionalism and begrudging giving. In contrast, true charity transcends materiality, manifesting through diverse forms — money, goods, labour, words and emotions — each bearing significance in uplifting others. Across faiths, the ethos of charity endures. Jesus' exhortation to aid the needy echoes alongside Islam's emphasis on generosity and compassion. Such teachings underscore that charity isn't merely an act but a reflection of one's inner disposition towards humanity. In essence, charity embodies a universal virtue, fostering empathy, kindness and communal upliftment. Beyond religious dogma, it stands as a testament to human solidarity and the intrinsic value of extending a helping hand to those in need.


Sumit Sharma | Bhopal

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THE SPIRITUAL POWER OF NAVRATRAS

Navratras encapsulate a profound spiritual journey of detoxification and realignment



ASHWINI GURUJII


Navratras come twice a year and mark the transition in seasons, winter-summer and summer-winter. According to Ayurveda, during this time, one should consume nourishing foods in minimal quantities to rid the body of the toxins collected during the rains. The nine nights and ten days of Navratri hold within them the energy of ten forms of shakti— shailaputri, brahmachari, Chandrakanta, kushmanda, skandmata, Katyayani, kaalratri, mahagauri, siddhidatri and paratha thus each Navratri has a specific purpose. In the Navratri weather changes, ie, various energies of this creation move from imbalance towards new normalcy, including our body. In these nine days, the prana shakti inside our body undergoes a process of re-alignment, ie from imbalance to new balance for the new season. For this re-aligning the body has to be kept light. Therefore our ancients prescribed fasting or upvaas in these nine days. Upavaas has a much greater connotation than what it is generally misunderstood as — mere holding back from eating certain foods. At Dhyan Ashram, sadhaks observe Upavaas in their authentic sense, that is, giving up pleasure to observe austerities during sadhana. This is done by celebrating, eating food for energy, not sensual pleasure, following a niyam of the sadhana your Guru has given you — a mantra, dhyan or a tantric practice where senses are kept under strict control and the focus is your ishta deva and all your thoughts and actions during those days are devoted to the ishta-deva. Charity and service are an intrinsic part of such sadhnas.



Apart from fasting, there are certain mantras also which are chanted on these days for a complete body detox. For the beginner, these nine days may be divided into 3 parts of 3 days each for the three parts of the body — the region below the navel, between the navel and shoulders and the upper head region, corresponding to the energies of the goddess Saraswati, goddess Lakshmi and goddess Durga respectively. The 9 devis originate from these 3 devis which in turn have their origin in Adi Shakti. These 3 parts are further divided into 3 parts each, thus the body is divided into 9 parts in all. In the first 3 days, the sadhak stops having spicy food and performs a havan at the morning and evening sandhya with the chants invoking ma durga. The offering of kala til along with ghrīt is made and desi cows up and palash samadhi is used. In the next three days, sadhak stops intake of anna and only light foods are ingested to keep the body light. Havan for Ma Lakshmi is done at the two sandhya by making an offering of a sweet along with ghrīt. In the last three days, the sadhak only consumes water and juice (not even milk as it is considered an animal product) and havan for Ma Saraswati is performed at the two sandhyas by making offerings of ghrīt and guggal. On the 10th day, a complete fast is kept and once more Ma Durga or Ma Kali is invoked as on this day Ravan had invoked Ma Kali and Ram had invoked Ma Durga. This process brings about the required re-alignment. After this, the sadhak performs his sadhana and chants a specific mantra as prescribed by his/her Guru. With yog sadhna, all the energies that are invoked come to the sadhak. Navratras are days to prepare your body to accept the new energies of the coming season. For 9 days you re-align your body and after that on the 10th day accept new energies. Most people lighten their bodies by fasting for 9 days, only to make it heavy on the 10th day by crowding to restaurants and liquor shops. It is something like you clean your room and after that, you bring all the garbage back to the room. Fasting or any such technique will bear fruits only if carried out with a sense of detachment, for evolution. Therefore it is of utmost importance to observe fasts in tandem with yogic practices such as the Sanatan Kriya to reap maximum benefits.

(The writer is a spiritual teacher; views are personal)

Battle lines drawn in western UP



SIDHARTH MISHRA

As the battle intensifies, the BJP faces the formidable challenge of safeguarding its Hindu vote bank amidst the evolving electoral dynamics

A very unique, a kind of first time, battle is being fought in politically significant 16 Lok Sabha seats of western Uttar Pradesh, which votes in the first phase on April 19 or the second phase on April 26. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's whirlwind tour of the region is largely to counter the not so visible division in the Hindu votes. While the attack has been more direct on the Congress (its manifesto to be more specific) but an eye has also been kept on the moves of the BSP.

This part of the state has two dominant communities — the Jats and the Muslims. The two together formed the part of former Prime Minister Chowdhary Charan Singh's electoral calculus. The Dalits, specially the Jatavs, numerically have the third largest presence. Charan Singh last contested a Lok Sabha polls in 1984 and managed to hold ground despite the Rajiv Gandhi juggernaut passing through the country. The Jat leader did not live very long after the polls and his traditional seat came to his son Chowdhary Ajit Singh in 1989. Here started the story of the shrinking of the fortunes of the Charan Singh Kisan politics.

Ajit Singh in 1989 committed the grievous error of challenging his father's close lieutenant, Mulayam Singh Yadav's claim to the Chief Minister's chair of Uttar Pradesh. Mulayam Singh enjoyed backing of party veterans like Chowdhary Devi Lal and then Young Turks like Lalu Prasad Yadav and Nitish Kumar. Ajit lost and herein started the erosion in political stature of Charan Singh's family.

Mulayam Singh in the 1990s, pushed a combination of the Muslims and non-Jat landholding agricultural communities like the Yadavs, Tyagis and to an extent the Gujjars under the umbrella of Samajwadi Party.

This decade also saw rise of Dalit icon Kanshi Ram and Mayawati and their Bahujan Samaj Party. Mulayam Singh initially sought an alliance with them to add large numbers of Jatavs to counter the Jat dominance, it, however, ended in a bitter dispute as Mayawati decided to piggy ride on the BJP support to become chief minister. So by the turn of the millennium west UP had three major political forces Samajwadi Party, BSP and the BJP, correspondingly shrinking the influence of Chowdhary Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal and of course the Congress.

Entering into the second decade of the 21st century BJP had come to create its own set of Jat leaders. With the rise in the Ram Mandir sentiments and arrival of Narendra Modi on the scene, consolidating the non-Jat, other backward classes (OBC) votes in addition to the upper castes created a Hindu vote bank which was best exemplified in the loss of Chowdhary Ajit Singh





THE REGION SAW A HUGE FARMER UNREST, WHICH WAS EXPECTED TO ADVERSELY AFFECT THE FORTUNES OF THE BJP IN THE 2022 ASSEMBLY POLLS BUT THAT DID NOT HAPPEN

and his son Jayant Chowdhary both in the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections. Since 2019 a lot of developments have taken place. The region saw a huge farmer unrest which was expected to adversely affect the fortunes of the BJP in the 2022 assembly polls but that did not happen. The coming together of Jayant Chowdhary and Mulayam Singh Yadav's son Akhilesh Yadav was not of much consequence as chief minister Yogi Adityanath held on the challenge based largely on an affirmative administration and also much improved law and order situation. This time around another interesting battle is building up. Jayant Chowdhary moving to BJP side initially looked to have a solved a lot of problem for the opposition alliance, which quickly resolved their seats arrangement issues. However since then the third factor — BSP has entered the fray. The direct fight between the ruling alliance and the opposition block has now a third element to it. The BSP's strategy in the distribution of tickets is to build its core vote bank of Jatavs by using discontentment among specific communities to its advantage and hoping that Muslims would support its candidates wherever they are in position of strength vis-a-vis the opposition alliance. How does that affect the BJP? Playing on the bruised pride of the Thakur and Tyagi communities, on being ignored by the BJP, the BSP has fielded Rajput candidates in Ghaziabad and Gautam Buddha Nagar and a Tyagi from Meerut. In

Muzaffarnagar, it has played the most backward caste (MBC) card by positioning a Prajapti candidate against BJP's sitting MP Sanjeev Balyan. MBCs have remained with the BJP since the 1990s. On such seats where there is huge presence of minority voters and where the opposition SP-Congress alliance is seen to be strong, BSP has another strategy. It has fielded Muslim candidates from seats that have Muslim population to the tune of 40 to 45 percent. The presence of these candidates have made the contests very tight. Given the scenario, the challenge for Modi-led BJP is to not let its Hindu vote bank disintegrate.

(The writer is a political analyst and president, Centre for Reforms, Development & Justice; views are personal)

Swaminarayan temple: The UAE's monument of harmony

This temple stands tall as a symbol of cultural integration, mutual respect and the evolving relationship between India and the UAE



HARIVANSH

Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) was established in 1907, dedicated to nurturing individual growth through Hindu values of faith, service and global harmony. From its humble beginnings in the western part of Gujarat, the BAPS Sanstha has blossomed into a global phenomenon, transcending geographical boundaries and cultural divides. Its emblematic



dune in Sharjah. Despite initial skepticism and the formidable challenges posed by the region's social and political landscape, this prophecy manifested into reality 27 years later, with the unveiling of the largest temple in the Middle East in the Abu Mureikha area of Abu Dhabi. The journey from prophecy to fruition was fraught with obstacles, requiring unwavering

dedication and steadfast resolve from the BAPS Sanstha, as well as the timely intervention of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In 2015, a historic meeting between Prime Minister Modi and UAE President HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan marked a pivotal moment in the temple's trajectory. Their mutual commitment to realising Pramukh

Swami Maharaj's vision paved the way for the allocation of land for the temple in Abu Dhabi by the UAE Government. Central to the temple's narrative is the unwavering vision of HH Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al Nahyan, who emphasized the importance of preserving traditional architectural aesthetics. His endorsement of a traditional stone temple design in 2018 marked a significant milestone in the project's development. The temple's inauguration by Prime Minister Modi later that year, based on the approved design, served as a poignant affirmation of the enduring friendship between India and the UAE. The construction of the temple stands as a testament to the UAE's remarkable transfor-

mation from a desert country to a global powerhouse, driven by visionary leadership and unwavering determination. It symbolises the spirit of unity and cooperation that characterizes the nation's journey towards progress and prosperity. The temple's design, with its seven spires representing the seven emirates of the UAE, embodies the essence of harmony and inclusivity, reflected in the Wall of Harmony adorned with symbols from diverse cultures and nations. With meticulous attention to detail, the temple was constructed using a blend of ancient architectural principles and modern innovations. Despite the challenges posed by the scorching desert climate, innovative solutions such as nano tiles for flooring

ensured both functionality and aesthetics. The procurement of materials, including eighteen lakh bricks and seven lakh manhours of labor, underscored the monumental effort invested in realising this architectural marvel. Surrounded by artificial representations of the Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati rivers, the temple evokes a sense of divinity and tranquility, serving as a sanctuary of peace amidst the bustling cityscape of Abu Dhabi. Its serene ambience and awe-inspiring architecture stand as a testament to the transformative power of faith and the enduring bond between India and the UAE.

(The writer is Deputy Chairman, Rājya Sabha; views are personal)

Glue of corruption binds Opposition, claims BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday attacked INDIA Bloc parties over their alleged corruption and attempts to sow division on regional and religious lines, asserting that the ruling alliance-led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi stands for curbing graft.

Ahead of an INDIA Bloc rally in Tamil Nadu, in which DMK leader and Chief Minister M K Stalin and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi are expected to attend, BJP spokesperson Gaurav Bhatia claimed that the "glue of corruption" binds Opposition parties.

Bhatia said the Gandhis are the "most corrupt" family and raised the 2G spectrum case involving the then telecom minister and DMK leader A Raja, as he targeted both opposition parties.

With the opposition referring to the acquittal of all accused, including Raja, in the 2G case



to refute the corruption charge, Bhatia noted that the Supreme Court had cancelled all the 122 licenses allotted due to malpractices and expressed confidence that the Delhi High Court will consider the CBI's appeal and convict the guilty. He alleged that the DMK stands for "deceit, malpractice and kelpitomania", adding that the Dravidian party is a habitual "robber" of public money. He noted that DMK leader V Senthilbalaji continued to be a minister in the Tamil Nadu government for months after his arrest by the Enforcement Directorate in a corruption

case. Bhatia also referred to DMK leader Udhayanidhi Stalin's and Raja's alleged insult of Sanatan Dharma and the silence maintained by the Congress over it, and accused the opposition of "sowing religious discord and division".

Modi on the other hand had dubbed Tamil Nadu as India's pride and visited its temples as part of special rituals in the run up to the Ram temple's consecration ceremony to foster brotherhood as enshrined in the Constitution, the BJP spokesperson said.

Modi assertion on holding Assembly polls in JK razed NC false narrative, says BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's assertion on holding Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir "demolished" a false narrative "being created" by the National Conference (NC), People's Democratic Parth(PDP) and other opposition parties.

The BJP's reaction came after the prime minister, while addressing a poll rally in Udhampur earlier in the day, asserted that the time was not far when the Assembly polls would be held in Jammu and Kashmir, which would also get its statehood back.

"I would like to congratulate the people of Jammu and Kashmir because the prime minister has reiterated his resolve to hold early elections in Jammu and Kashmir," BJP leader Ashish Sood, who is the party's co-in charge for the Union Territory, said.

He alleged that the top leaders of the National Conference, People's Democratic Party and other opposition parties were cre-



ating a false perception of the issue by claiming that the BJP-led Centre was afraid of holding Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir.

"They were creating a false perception that things are not normal in Jammu and Kashmir, the security situation is normal and that the government of India is afraid of holding elections.. This was the kind of narrative Abdullahs, Muftis and others were creating which has (now) been demolished,"

Sood charged.

Sood said Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had earlier reiterated that the Centre will hold "early elections in Jammu and Kashmir as and when the security situation and other factors make it compatible". "It's Modi's guarantee that elections will be held in Jammu and Kashmir, Muftis, Abdullahs and Gandhis should understand that Modi's guarantee never fails," the BJP leader said.

MEA advises Indian citizens not to travel to Iran, Israel till further notice



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India on Friday advised its citizens not to travel till further notice to Iran or Israel in view of prevailing situation. This caution comes amid reports that Iran is likely to launch direct attack on Israel with the next 48 hours.

Issuing note of caution, Ministry of External Affairs(MEA)also urged all Indians currently residing in Iran or Israel to get in touch with Indian embassies there and register themselves.

The MEA also said Indians residing in Iran, Israel are requested to observe utmost precautions about their safety and restrict movements to minimum.

The ministry's advisory came on a day when reports said Iran would likely launch a direct attack on Israel within the next 48 hours. The report also said Iran was still weighing the political risks of a direct attack on Israel.

The advisory comes after Iran threatened reprisals over an Israeli strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 11 days ago, sparking fears of an escalation of violence in the Middle East.

On Wednesday, Israel's foreign minister had threatened that the country's forces would strike Iran directly if it launched an attack from its

territory against Israel. Meanwhile, over 6,000 Indian workers are expected to arrive in Israel during April and May to help the country's construction sector meet a labour shortage following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas conflict.

As part of the government-to-government (G2G) agreement, about 60 workers from India have already been sent via an "air shuttle" in the first week of April. A series of arrivals is expected in the coming weeks, a total of 850 by mid-April.

In another development, India said it has relocated its staff from its consulate in Myanmar city of Sittwe to Yangon in view of the precarious security situation in that region of Myanmar.

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India is closely monitoring the security situation in that country.

"We are closely monitoring the security situation in Myanmar, particularly in the Rakhine State. Necessary steps have been taken to ensure the safety of our citizens," he said at his weekly media briefing.

"We have temporarily relocated our staff at CGI (Consulate General of India) Sittwe to Yangon. Our Consulate in Mandalay remains fully functional," Jaiswal said.

Lalu, Rahul exhibiting thoughts from Mughal era: Modi over Navratri videos

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With Lok Sabha election campaign peaking up, several rounds of controversies oscillating between the BJP and Opposition parties has caught the attention of people across the country amidst other core issues.

The latest is the controversy over a video of RJD leader former Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav eating fish escalated on Friday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi hitting out at Opposition parties, including RJD leader, saying even Tejashwi's father Lalu Prasad and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi are now into exhibiting thoughts from the Mughal era.

Accusing the Opposition of indulging in the politics of appeasement and going after a particular vote bank, the Prime Minister also claimed that such videos are being posted during periods considered auspicious by Hindus to tease and annoy most of India's population. Tejashwi, who had clarified that the video was shot a day before Navratri began and was uploaded to "test the IQ of the BJP and Godi media followers", said the BJP's politics is limited to what people



are eating and wearing because its governments have not done anything for the people.

Addressing a rally at Udhampur in Jammu and Kashmir, Modi referred to a video of Rahul Gandhi and Lalu Yadav cooking mutton in September last year and said, "Congress and other members of the INDIA alliance are not bothered about the feelings of most of the country's population. During Sawan (an aus-

picious month in the Hindu calendar), they are going to the house of a convicted man and cooking mutton. Not only that, they are also putting up videos and teasing the people of the country."

"The law does not stop anyone from eating anything, and neither does Modi, but their intention is different. When the Mughals attacked, they were not satisfied with defeating the king alone. They did not get satisfaction

until they destroyed temples... they enjoyed doing this. In the same way, by uploading the video in the month of Sawan, they (the opposition) are exhibiting the thoughts of the Mughal era, attempting to tease people and fortify their vote bank," the PM alleged.

Training his guns on Tejashwi Yadav, without naming him, the PM said uploading a video of consuming non-vegetarian food during Navratra

was also an attempt in the same direction.

"Who are you trying to please by hurting the sentiments of people? I know these people will now shower abuses on me for saying this, but it is my duty in a democracy to tell people what is right when lines are crossed, and I am doing my duty.

They do this deliberately to attack the country's beliefs, so that a big part of the country watches their videos and gets uncomfortable. They have gone beyond appeasement and are giving evidence of their Mughal-like thinking," the PM said.

On his part Tejashwi reacted to the PM's remarks without naming him and said that, instead of talking about the issues that matter, the BJP is focusing on what people are eating and wearing.

"They are not talking about the issues of Bihar, how they will stop migration from the state or what they will do in the next five years if they are voted to power. And what will they say?"

They have done nothing in 10 years (at the Centre) and 17 years (in Bihar)... They will keep talking about what people are wearing and eating, and centre their politics around it," he said.

Widening development financing gap posing challenge to achieving SDGs: UN

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The widening development financing gap, now estimated at USD 4.2 trillion annually, exacerbated by the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic poses a formidable challenge to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in the world's poorest nations, according to a new UN report released here.

The '2024 Financing for Sustainable Development Report: Financing for Development at a Crossroads (FSDR 2024)' report underscored the urgent need for a massive surge of financing and a reform of the international financial architecture to rescue the SDGs.

It emphasized the critical importance of mobilizing financing at scale to close the development financing gap, which has ballooned from USD 2.5 trillion before the pandemic. Furthermore, the report noted that rising geopolitical tensions, climate disasters, and a global cost-of-living crisis have compounded the challenges, impeding progress on crucial development targets such as healthcare and education.

UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed stressed the urgency of the situation, emphasizing that without adequate financing, the 2030 targets cannot be met. With only six years remaining to achieve the SDGs, there is a risk of hard-won development gains being reversed, especially in the poorest countries, where almost 600 million people are



projected to continue living in extreme poverty by 2030.

"This report is yet another proof of how far we still need to go and how fast we need to act to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development," said UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina J. Mohammed. "We are truly at a crossroads and time is running out. Leaders must go beyond mere rhetoric and deliver on their promises. Without adequate financing, the 2030 targets cannot be met."

"We're experiencing a sustainable development crisis, to which inequalities, inflation, debt, conflicts and climate disasters have all contributed," added UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Li Junhua. "Resources are needed to address this, and the money is there. Billions of dollars are lost annually from tax avoidance and evasion, and fossil fuel subsidies are in the trillions. Globally, there is no shortage of money; rather, a shortage of will and commitment." According to the report, debt

burdens and rising borrowing costs are large contributors to the crisis. Estimates are that in the least developed countries debt service will be USD 40 billion annually between 2023 and 2025, up more than 50 per cent from USD 26 billion in 2022. Stronger and more frequent climate related disasters account for more than half of the debt upsurge in vulnerable countries.

The poorest countries now spend 12 per cent of their revenues on interest payments — four times more than they spent a decade ago. Roughly 40 per cent of the global population live in countries where governments spend more on interest payments than on education or health.

While investment in SDG sectors had grown steadily in the early 2000s, major sources of development funding are now slowing down. Corporate income tax rates are falling, with global average tax rates down from 28.2 per cent in 2000 to 21.1 per cent in 2023, due to globalization and tax competition.

SC extends stay on former IPS officer sentence on Dhoni contempt plea

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has extended the interim stay on the 15-day simple imprisonment handed to retired IPS officer G Sampath Kumar by the Madras High Court in a contempt of court case filed by former cricketer Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

A bench of Justices A S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan has listed the matter for hearing on May 3.

"Interim order shall continue till further orders," the bench said on Thursday. The high court had, on December 15 last year, found Kumar guilty of committing criminal contempt and sentenced him to simple imprisonment for 15 days.

In his contempt petition, Dhoni had sought punishment for Kumar for his remarks against the judiciary in a written statement filed in response to a Rs 100-crore defamation suit. Dhoni had moved the court in 2014 against the former police officer for naming him in the Indian Premier League (IPL) betting scam.

In its order, the high court had said Kumar had consciously made an attempt to scandalise and lower the authority of this court and the Supreme Court. It was established that an affidavit or pleading presented by a party before a court was an act of publication. Kumar, by his specific words, had launched an indecent attack on the judiciary, with an intention to scandalise and undermine the dignity



and majesty of this court as well as the apex court, the high court had said.

It had said when a general statement was made against the court for granting an interim order, describing the order as an abuse of the process of law, it was not a fair comment.

Similarly, accusing the Supreme Court that it failed to focus on the "rule of law" cannot be accepted as a fair expression of grievance of a party to the dispute, the bench had added.

The high court had said Kumar was a responsible police officer who had the occasion to investigate a crime. The freedom of speech and expression cannot be extended to undermine the statutory limits contained in the Contempt of Courts Act, the court had said, adding that since maintaining the dignity of courts is one of the cardinal principles of the rule of law, any publication or public speech that results in undermining it cannot be allowed, as held by the apex

court in several precedents. The high court had said the Contempt of Courts Act was enacted to secure public respect and confidence in the judiciary as an institution.

"If persons like Sampath Kumar were allowed to shake the confidence of the public in the impartial administration of justice, it should be treated as an attack on the judiciary."

"In the present case, we are convinced that the statements made by the respondent in the additional written statement is with an intention to scandalise this court, to lower its authority and to destroy the confidence of people in the administration of justice. "From the language and the context, this court has no hesitation to hold that the respondent wants to convey a message in the additional written statement that the high court as well as the Supreme Court, while passing orders, either do not follow the rule of law or pass orders which are nothing but an abuse of the process of law", the high court had said.

CIC displeased over EC failure to furnish reply to RTI plea

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Central Information Commission (CIC) has expressed "severe displeasure" over the Election Commission (EC) not furnishing a reply to an RTI plea that had asked the poll panel about the action taken on a "representation" given to it by eminent citizens, raising questions on the credibility of EVMs and VVPAT machines during elections.

Termining it a "gross violation" of the law, the CIC has also directed the EC to submit a written explanation.

Former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer M G Devasahayam, who was one of the signatories to the representation on the credibility of electronic voting machines (EVMs), voter-verifiable paper audit trail (VVPAT) and the vote-counting process, had filed an application with the poll panel under the Right to Information (RTI) Act, seeking details of the action taken on it. The representation was sent to the EC on May 2, 2022.

Through the RTI application filed on November 22, 2022, Devasahayam wanted to know about the persons and public authorities to whom the representation was forwarded, details of any meetings held on the issue and all relevant file notings.

The EC did not give any response to him within the mandatory 30-day period and Devasahayam's first appeal to senior officials was also not heard.

He approached the CIC in the second appeal, citing the lack of response from the poll panel. When quizzed by Chief Information Commissioner Heralal Samariya, the central public information officer of the EC failed to give a satisfactory reply on why no response was furnished to Devasahayam.

"Commission, after perusal of case records and submissions made during hearing, expresses severe displeasure over the conduct of the then PIO in not having provided any reply to the RTI application within the time-frame stipulated under the RTI Act. Therefore, commission directs the then PIO through the present PIO to furnish a written explanation for the gross violation of the provisions of the RTI," Samariya said.

He said if others are also responsible for the omission, then the CPIO shall serve a copy of the order on them and ensure that the written submissions of such people are sent to the CIC.

Samariya also directed the EC to provide a point-wise response to the RTI application within 30 days.

Noted technical professionals and academicians, including professors from Indian institutes of technology (IITs) and Indian institutes of management (IIMs), and former civil servants, including retired IAS, IPS and IFS officers, had written to the EC posing serious questions on the credibility of EVMs and VVPAT machines.

Rahul, Kharge to campaign in Vidarbha for two days

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

In an effort to boost the prospects of the Opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) candidates, Congress Party National president Mallikarjun Kharge and his party leader Rahul Gandhi will campaign in various Lok Sabha constituencies in Vidarbha region in the next two days. Rahul Gandhi will address a public rally for MVA candidate Bhandara-Gondia Lok Sabha Constituency Dr. Prashant Yadavrao Padole at Sakoli in Bhandara district. Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee President Nana Patole, Legislative Congress Party Leader Balasaheb Thorat, Opposition Leader Vijay Wadetiwar, State Nationalist Congress Party (Sharad Chandra Pawar) President Jayant Patil with leaders will be among those present at



Friday's rally. Mallikarjun Kharge will address a public rally at 4 PM at Golibar Chowk in Nagpur on Sunday. This public meeting is being held to campaign for the Congress Party Lok Sabha candidate from Nagpur ikas Thakre. Ahead of the rally, Kharge will visit Deekshabhoomi in

Nagpur and pay homage to late B. R Ambedkar on the occasion of the latter's birth anniversary. In the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections, five constituencies in Vidarbha region -- Nagpur, Ramtek, Bhandara-Godia, Gadchiroli-Chimur and Chandrapur – are going to polls on April 19.

Congress seeks Shinde Sena MP apology for slur on Shivaji scion

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

The Opposition Congress on Friday upped the ante and demanded an apology from Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena's sitting MP Sanjay S Mandlik who is seeking re-election from Kolhapur in western Maharashtra, for questioning the royal credentials of the Opposition MVA-Congress candidate Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj. A day after Mandlik questioned Chhatrapati's ancestry and claimed that his rival was actually 'an adopted royal', local Congress leader and MLA Satej D Patil, alias Bunty came down heavily on the Shinde Shiv Sena candidate for his utterances and rooted for his apology. "He (Mandlik) has insulted the descendants of the legendary Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj through such a comment. He must tender an apology to the people of Kolhapur and also the Chhatrapati's family members," Patil said. Incidentally, Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj is the 12th direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.



Seventy-six year-old Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu is the grandson of the great reformer, Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, a democrat and an associate of late Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. At an election rally held on Thursday, Mandlik wondered whether the Maharajas (Chhatrapatis) were actually from Kolhapur. "They (Chhatrapatis) are not the true heirs, but are adopted ones... It is 'the people of Kolhapur' who are the genuine legacy holders," he had said. On his part, Mandlik rejected the Congress' demand for his apology and said that he had

not shown any disrespect or cast aspersions on the Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj. "What I meant was that this Chhatrapati is not from Kolhapur, since he was adopted. He is an outsider. I have the highest regard for the Chhatrapati. Why should I tender any apology?" Mandlik asked. In no mood to accept the accept the explanation given by Mandlik, Patil demanded to know from the Shinde Sena candidate as to "who has given him the 'script' to read out" "Why he is suddenly remembering the Chhatrapati's royal lineage and that too after six-long decades?," he asked.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that the people of Maharashtra "will not forgive or forget" the slur by Mandlik on the Chhatrapati who is a revered personality, and the 12th direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut also hit out at Mandlik for "insulting" Chhatrapati. "The people of Maharashtra will not forgive or forget the insult heaped by Mandlik on the Chhatrapati who is a revered personality. Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu is the direct descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj," Raut said. Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) President Prakash Ambedkar, who is the grandson of late B R Ambedkar, said: "The whole world has accepted Chhatrapati and his family So it's not appropriate to comment on the Chhatrapati's family". "Adoption in royal families is not new... Many have become kings/rulers in this way in the past. For, once they are adopted, they become the rightful representative of that royal lineage. Chhatrapati Shrimant Shahu Maharaj is a highly revered figure in the public

minds." NCP chief Sharad Pawar said. Pawar said that Shrimant Shahu Maharaj was following in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor Chhatrapati Rajarshi Shahu Maharaj, and had built several educational institutions for which the people all over the state were indebted to him. The NCP chief said that Mandlik's remarks against Chhatrapati reflected the Shinde Sena's desperation and how low level its leaders and candidates could stoop to win the elections. "Mandlik's comments against Chhatrapati show their mentality towards the Opposition candidates," he said. "Mandlik has blatantly insulted the royal dynasty of the Kolhapur Chhatrapati, whose immense contributions to the people of the state and country cannot be underplayed or compared with anybody," Congress' spokesperson Atul Londe said. Senior BJP leader Pravin Darekar sought to defend Mandlik by saying: "He may not have intended to belittle the Chhatrapati who is a very respected person. I have a reason to believe that it might have been a slip of the tongue".

If Kolkata terror hub what about UP, Delhi: Didi to BJP

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

War of words ensued between Mamata Banerjee and the saffron leadership after the BJP called Bengal a free zone of international terror network and the Bengal Chief Minister promptly hitting back asking how things were like in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. This, after the arrest of two suspected ISIS terrorists on the small hours of Friday from a hotel in the beach town of Digha in East Midnapore. Tearing into claims made by Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari that the State had become a safe haven for terrorists the Chief Minister who was addressing a rally at Dinhat in Cooch Behar district of North Bengal said, "some people are spreading canards about Bengal calling it a terror hub ... they have no right to insult us like that because it is the Bengal Police that has within two hours of getting the information from the central agencies got the



terrorists arrested." Slamming the BJP for giving her State a bad name Banerjee the two persons arrested from Digha were not the residents of Bengal and "they were just hiding here." She asked, "what about the situation in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh? ... Is U.P safe? Is Rajasthan safe? Is Bihar safe?" Her Cabinet colleague Shashi Panja reminded how the National Investigation Agency which conducted the search-and-nab operations with the assistance of the State police saying, "even the NIA in its

press release has praised the Bengal Police for its good job and here are some people who for political reasons are trying to malign the Government." TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh too jumped into the arena pulling punches at Adhikari reminding him that Digha was a beach town in Kanthi sub-division of East Midnapore which was a stronghold of the Adhikaris and the BJP. "Who is the MP of Kanthi? And where do these people who are making such remarks

live? Is it not Kanthi? So why should not they be hauled up for harbouring criminals in their district ... it is for the BJP to answer for whatever that happens in East Midnapore," he said demanding "a thorough investigation into the matter including is there were local help being given to the terrorists." Earlier Adhikari said that in Mamata Banerjee's rule "Bengal has become a free zone for international terrorists who use the State and Kolkata as a transit point ... earlier we have seen how the Punjab Police came all the way to Kolkata to arrest international terrorists who were hiding here ... then we saw Bangladeshi criminals charged with the assassination of Banga Bandhu Muijibur Rahman getting arrested from here ... so it can be safely said that Bengal is fast becoming a safe haven for terrorists Referring to a post from BJP leader Amit Malavya where he attacked the State Government for allowing Bengal to become a "safe

haven for terrorists," the Bengal Police claimed "the two accused had been arrested after a joint operation involving themselves and central intelligence agencies. The proactive role of West Bengal Police... has been officially acknowledged by the central agencies. West Bengal has NEVER been a safe haven for terrorists and the state police will continue to remain ever-vigilant." Meanwhile, carrying forward her attack against the Centre for depriving the State and using central agencies to browbeat the opposition the Chief Minister said that without the ED and CBI BJP will not be able to walk a single step. "They have become fearful of impending defeat and so they are sending Agencies to arrest the Opposition leaders and depriving the States that are refusing to submit before them of their rightful funds ... but the people are preparing to give a befitting reply" and the BJP will not return to power this time round.

Omar to lock horns with Sajad Lone of Peoples Conference

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister and Vice President of the National Conference Omar Abdullah will be locking horns with the Chairman of the Peoples' Conference Sajad Lone from North Kashmir's Baramulla Lok Sabha seat. Omar will be taking the Lok Sabha route after a gap of 20 long years. After the abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019, the NC vice president announced he would not contest assembly elections unless J-K's statehood was restored. Earlier, Omar contested and won the Lok Sabha polls from Srinagar constituency in 2004. The PDP, which stood at a distant fourth place in the 2019 elections, has fielded former Rajya Sabha MP Fayaz Mir. Along with Omar the National Conference has fielded Shia leader Aga Syed Ruhullah Mehdi from central Kashmir's

Srinagar constituency. Srinagar goes to polls on May 13 while voting in Baramulla will be held on May 20 Speaking to reporters in Srinagar after the announcement of his candidature Omar Abdullah said, "This time, our fight is not against any individual. In North Kashmir, my fight is not against any candidate, my fight is with those powers that are behind that candidate". "It has been decided that I will be contesting from North Kashmir because BJP is focusing a lot on North Kashmir. I want these powers to be defeated in North Kashmir". Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency was redrawn in the delimitation exercise, undertaken after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, to include two assembly seats of Budgam and Beerwah — both Shia dominated, and one each new assembly segment in

Baramulla and Kupwara. Before delimitation, the Lok Sabha seat remained a strong bastion of the National Conference. The party has won the seat ten times since 1957. The Congress has won four times and the PDP once. In the last general elections in 2019, NC candidate Mohammad Akbar Lone secured 133,426, defeating his nearest rival Raja Aijaz Ali of the Peoples Conference who polled 1,03,193 votes. Independent candidate Sheikh Abdul Rashid polled 1,02,168 votes to grab the third spot, while the PDP candidate Abdul Qayoom Wani with 53,530 votes stood at number four. Rashid, who contested the last elections but is under NIA custody on terror-funding charges, influences the Langate assembly segment of the constituency which he represented in the erstwhile J-K legislature twice.

AAP claims Delhi...

From Page 1
The Chief Minister himself can look after Anand's departments. So far Kejriwal has not kept any department under his direct command. A big question arises if Kejriwal tells Lieutenant Governor of Delhi Vinai Kumar Saxena not to accept Anand's resignation, in such a situation it will be a difficult situation for the LG to take a call on the contentious matter. However, there is a view from some experts that the LG being the head of the Government can take a call on the matter. There is a strong view in the bureaucratic circle that a mechanism needs to be put in place by the LG whereby orders issued by the Chief Minister from Tihar are routed through him to the concerned Ministers. The bureaucratic circle however, is unsure how Cabinet meetings can be held by the Chief Minister with his Ministers from Tihar. "There are issues related to confidentiality of certain notes as anything which goes or comes out of the prison will have to be scanned," a senior official said. "Let's see how such issues will be sorted out in the near future if Kejriwal continues to function as the CM from Tihar," said the sources. The LG has already sent two reports regarding governance to the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Modi promises to restore...

From Page 1
He said he has fulfilled his promise of putting an end to the long sufferings of the people of Jammu and Kashmir and challenged the Congress and other Opposition parties to bring back Article 370 of the Constitution, which was revoked by the BJP-led Centre in August 2019. Buoyed by the enthusiastic response of the BJP supporters present at the rally, Modi trained his guns towards the dynastic parties. "Families with a dynastic set-up have harmed Jammu and Kashmir more than anyone else. These parties are for the family, by the family and for the family and they are the ones who created the wall of Article 370. They created an illusion that only Article 370 can safeguard the lives of the people here." With your blessings, Modi has not only demolished this wall but even buried its debris. I challenge the Opposition parties, especially the Congress, to announce that they will get Article 370 back. The country will not even look at their faces," he said. Modi said some political

parties thought that revoking Article 370 would engulf the region in a fire and Jammu and Kashmir would get separated from the country. "The youngsters of the region showed them the mirror. When the people came to know about their reality and rejected them, these parties started spreading this impression to the rest of the country. Ask my sisters and daughters in Jammu and Kashmir who were craving for their rights? They know that their brother and their son gave them their rights," he said. The Prime Minister asserted that the revocation of Article 370 ensured justice for various sections of society, who got their constitutional rights for the first time after independence. "The mothers of our soldiers are no more concerned about stone-pelting. The mothers in the valley are showering me with blessings because they are no longer concerned that their sons would fall into the wrong hands. They are sleeping with ease. Bridges are not burnt anymore while new AIIMS, IITs and IIMs are coming up along with

modern tunnels, wide roads and railway travel, which are becoming the destiny of Jammu and Kashmir," he said. "Tourists and pilgrims are coming in large numbers to both regions of Jammu and Kashmir, which was a dream of the people here," he said, adding, "Your dream is Modi's resolve. Modi has dedicated every minute of his life to you and the country and is working 24x7 to fulfill the guarantee of 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047. Referring to the construction of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Modi said, "The Congress says Ram Mandir is an election issue for BJP. I want to say Ram Mandir was never an election issue, nor will it ever become an election issue. The struggle for Ram temple was going on even before the birth of the BJP... When foreign invaders destroyed our temples, the people of India fought to save their religious places. The leaders of the Congress and its allies lived in big bungalows but when it came to changing the tent of Ram Lalla, they used to turn their backs," he said.

UK raises family...

From Page 1
The annual earnings of nearly 50 per cent of people who migrated to the UK from India was less than 39,000 pounds in 2022, according to a report by the migration observatory at the University of Oxford. Notably, Indians represent a significant portion of non-EU immigration into the UK, with substantial numbers arriving for study-related purposes. The surge in visas granted to dependents from India and Nigeria underscores the growing trend of family migration within these communities. Indians have also consistently ranked among the top beneficiaries of skilled work visas, with a notable increase observed in the 'Skilled Worker - Health and Care' category. The number of such visas issued to Indians saw a 63 per cent hike from 13,380 in 2021-22 to 21,837 in 2022-23. UK Home Office data show that Indian nationals represented 38 per cent of all dependants issued a work visa alongside main applicants, followed by Nigerian and Zimbabwean nationals (17 per cent and 9 per cent, respectively). However, the recent changes in the family visa rules will make it difficult for many Indian workers to meet the new criteria. This move to increase the income threshold to sponsor a family member's visa, initiated by Sunak and Home Secretary James Cleverly, aims to curb legal migration and alleviate taxpayer burdens, according to the UK Home Office. Cleverly emphasised the necessity of reducing migration levels, acknowledging the complexities and challenges inherent in achieving a balance acceptable to the British populace.

Court sends Kavitha to CBI custody till April 15

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A city court on Friday sent Bharat Rasthra Samithi (BRS) leader K Kavitha to CBI custody till April 15 in the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. Special Judge Kaveri Bawja passed the order after hearing arguments of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) as well as Kavitha's counsel. Kavitha, 46, was arrested by the CBI in Tihar jail, where she was lodged after her arrest by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise policy scam, on Thursday. The CBI, while seeking Kavitha's custody for five days, told the court that she was not cooperating in the investigation and was evasive in her replies. In its 22 pages order, Special Judge Bawja said 'the material collected so far by the Investigating Agency and upon perusal of the Case Diary furnished by the Investigating Officer, it appears that there is need for a detailed and sustained interrogation of the accused, keeping in view the number of accused involved in the alleged conspiracy, and the nature and modus of commission of the alleged offences. "The Investigating Agency has been able to show from the records that custodial interrogation of the above named accused on certain aspects is necessary for confronting her with the evidence collected so far and also that the witnesses in order to unearth the larger conspiracy in the matter," the order said. The order said it has been highlighted in the course of arguments that the accused did not join the investigation on 26.02.2024 despite issuance of a notice U/S 41A Cr.P.C. to her (which



fact is not disputed). The submissions made on behalf of Investigating Agency reflects substantial compliance with regard to arrest of the Accused. "During her questioning, she didn't give satisfactory replies regarding her role. Her replies were contrary to the documents recovered by the CBI during the investigation. Kavitha is concealing facts which are exclusively in her knowledge. Earlier also she did not join the investigation despite summons (being issued to her). So, we need her five days' custodial remand to unearth the conspiracy," the CBI said. Advocate Nitesh Rana, Kavitha's counsel, opposed the CBI's plea and termed the arrest illegal. He further accused the probe agency of violating Kavitha's fundamental rights. He told the court that the CBI arrested Kavitha while an application filed by her opposing the agency's plea to interrogate her in judicial custody was already pending before the court. While seeking Kavitha's custody, the CBI also stated that a liquor businessman of the "South Group" met Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and sought his support for business in the national capital. "Kejriwal assured him of support... We

have sufficient material, WhatsApp chats and statements of co-accused," the CBI told the court. Dinesh Arora, an accused-turned-approver in the case, has confirmed in his statement that accused Abhishek Boinpally informed him that Rs 100 crore was given to co-accused and former AAP communications in-charge Vijay Nair, the CBI claimed. The central probe agency also told the court that it has recorded the statements of hawala operators in the case that confirm certain payments in the case. "Licences were given to company Indospirits even after being blacklisted due to the pressure of accused Manish Sisodia," the CBI claimed. The CBI has arrested Kavitha under Section 120-B (criminal conspiracy) read with Section 477-A (falsification of accounts) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 7 (offence relating to public servant being bribed) of the Prevention of Corruption Act, according to officials. CBI officials had recently questioned Kavitha, the daughter of former Telangana chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao, inside the prison after obtaining permission from a special court. The ED had arrested her from her Banjara Hills residence in Hyderabad.

MCD begins desilting, cleaning drains before monsoon season

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has begun the desilting work and cleaning of drains ahead of the monsoon season while devising a comprehensive action plan to ensure the timely completion of this task before the commencement of the upcoming monsoon season this year. A total of 4460.2 metric tons of silt has been successfully removed from drains measuring four feet and above across all 12 zones of the civic body. The silt taken out from the drains is being sent to the landfill site and its monitoring is being done. The maximum cleanup of silt has happened from South Shahdara zone with the removal of 875 MT silt followed by 856.93 MT from Central Zone and 667.56MT from South Zone. The MCD has a total of 12 zones under its jurisdiction which includes Rohini Zone, City SP Zone, Civil Lines Zone, Karol Bagh Zone, Narela Zone, Keshavpurm Zone, South Zone, West Zone, Najafgarh Zone, Central Zone, Shahdara North Zone and Shahdara South Zone. With adequate numbers of equipment/machinery for taking out silt from the drains and well trained personnel, desilting work has commenced and is being carried out in a prescribed manner. Silt removal is underway in 695 drains spanning a total length of 452.72 kilometres. During the rainy season, sediments including mud, sand and sludge gets deposited in the bed of drains which causes obstruction of the water to flow smoothly resulting in the overflow of drainage. The Civic Agency aims that cleanliness of drains will minimise civic woes during the rains as the majority of drains in the city are interconnected.

‘US defence commitments to Japan, Philippines ironclad’

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

The United States’ commitments to the defence of Japan and the Philippines remain “ironclad,” President Joe Biden has said as he launched a new trilateral partnership in the strategic Indo-Pacific with the leaders of the two countries amid their separate territorial disputes with China.

Biden’s comments came as he hosted the first-ever trilateral summit between the three countries, welcoming Filipino President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. to the White House a day after the official visit of Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida. Japan and the Philippines have separate territorial disputes with China. In Tokyo’s case, the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea and in Manila’s case areas of the South China Sea are disputed with Beijing. Biden also asserted that any

attack on Philippine aircraft, vessels or its armed forces in the South China Sea would invoke “our mutual defence treaty”.

The visit to Washington by Marcos comes days after Manila accused a Chinese vessel of “highly dangerous manoeuvres” near the Second Thomas Shoal, a disputed maritime region near the Spratly Islands.

The US-Japan-Philippines trilateral comes after the creation of groupings in the Indo-Pacific, starting with the Quad, comprising India, the US, Australia and Japan, and the AUKUS consisting of Australia, the US and the UK, amid increasing concerns over China’s military muscle-flexing in the region.

The US president said “a great deal of history in our world will be written in the Indo-Pacific over the coming years”.

“Today we commit to writing

that story in the future together to build an Indo-Pacific that is free, open, prosperous and secure for all,” Biden said as he described the US, Japan and the Philippines as “three allies, three steadfast partners and three proud democracies”.

Biden said among the key areas where the countries are deepening ties are “first, technology and clean energy for securing our semiconductor supply chain”.

“From securing our semiconductor supply chain to expanding trusted telecommunications in the Philippines to building a clean energy workforce, to expanding our cooperation across the entire board,” the US president said.

“Second, we are deepening our maritime and security ties. I want to be clear, the United States’ defence commitments to Japan and the Philippines are ironclad. They’re ironclad. As I’ve said before, any attack on

Philippine aircraft, vessels or armed forces in the South China Sea would invoke our mutual defence treaty,” he said.

Biden also announced launching an economic corridor in the Philippines as part of the G-7’s partnership for global infrastructure and investment.

“This is the first corridor in the Indo-Pacific. It means more jobs for people across the entire region. It means more investment and sectors critical to our future clean energy, ports, railroads, agriculture, and much more,” he said.

Japanese Prime Minister Kishida said amid the compound crisis faced by the global community, multi-layered cooperation between allies and like-minded countries is essential if they are to maintain and bolster a free and open international order based on the rule of law.

Mali’s junta bans media from reporting on political activities

AP ■ BAMAKO

In a deepening crackdown, Mali’s ruling junta on Thursday banned the media from reporting on activities of political parties and associations, a day after suspending all political activities in the country until further notice.

The order, issued by Mali’s high authority for communication, was distributed on social media. The notice said it applied to all forms of the media, including television, radio, online and print newspapers.

Mali has experienced two coups since 2020, leading a wave of political instability that has swept across West and Central Africa in recent years. Along with its political troubles, the country is also in the grip of a worsening insurgency by militants linked to al-Qaida and the Islamic State group.

The scope of the ban — or how

it would be applied in practice — was not immediately clear. It was also not known if journalists would still be allowed to report on issues such as the economy, which are closely tied to politics and who would monitor their work.

The umbrella organisation that represents journalists in Mali responded with an unusually stern rebuttal. The group, known as Maison de le Press, or Press House, said it rejects the order and called on journalists to continue to report on politics in Mali. It also urged them to “stand tall, remain unified and to mobilize to defend the right of citizens to have access to information.”

Mali’s national commission for human rights also expressed regret and profound concern over the decision in a statement published late Thursday. It warned the junta the decision could prove harmful.

“Instead of calming the social

climate, these restrictions on fundamental rights and freedoms could potentially stir up trouble and tension, which the country does not need,” it said.

The clampdown on the media followed a similar action on Wednesday, when the junta ordered the suspension of all activities by political parties until further notice, citing a need to preserve public order.

The news was broadcast on state television as the population was celebrating Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan during which observant Muslims fast from dawn till dusk. Analysts said the move was likely a backlash against political figures, civil society and students who have expressed frustration with the junta’s failure to return the country to democratic rule as promised.

“Recent weeks saw mounting pressure by political parties and figures,” Rida Lyammouri of the Policy

Center for the New South, a Morocco-based think tank, told The Associated Press.

“For the first time, the public and politicians have publicly criticized junta leaders and accused them of a lack of seriousness.”

Col. Assimi Goita, who took charge after a second coup in 2021, promised to return the country to democracy in early 2024. But in September, the junta cancelled elections scheduled for February 2024 indefinitely, citing the need for further technical preparations.

The junta has vowed to end the insurgency that emerged in 2012 after deposing the elected government. It cut military ties with France amid growing frustration with the lack of progress after a decade of assistance, and turned to Russian contractors, mercenaries for the Wagner group, for security support instead. But analysts say the violence has only grown worse.

US, Japan and S Korea hold drills in disputed sea

Aboard The USS Theodore Roosevelt(AP): A US carrier strike group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt has held a three-day joint exercise with its allies Japan and South Korea as US President Joe Biden met for talks with leaders from Japan and the Philippines at the White House.

The duelling military and diplomatic maneuvers are meant to strengthen the partners’ solidarity in the face of China’s aggressive military actions in the region. A number of US and South Korean guided missile destroyers and a Japanese warship joined the April 10-12 drill in the disputed East China Sea, where worries about China territorial claims are rising. The Associated Press was one of several news organizations allowed a front-row look at the drills.

Rear Adm. Christopher Alexander, commander of Carrier Strike Group Nine, said the three nations conducted undersea warfare exercises, maritime interdiction operations, search and rescue drills and work focused on communication and data sharing.

He told journalists Thursday on the Roosevelt that these drills would help improve communication among the United States and its allies and “better prepare us for a crisis in the region.”

F/A-18E Super Hornet combat jets took off from the carrier’s flight deck, which also had anti-submarine MH-60R Seahawk helicopters. Journalists were flown more than an hour from Kadena Air Base, the hub of US Pacific air power. Kadena is on Japan’s southern island of Okinawa, which is home to about half of the 50,000 American troops stationed in Japan.

“It is a busy time; there is a lot going on in the world,” Alexander said.

“The significance of this exercise is we have three like-minded countries, three like-minded navies that believe in peace, security and stability in the western Pacific.”

The participation of Japan and South Korea was another sign of improving ties between

the sometimes wary neighbours. The two US allies’ relationship has often been strained by the memory of Japan’s half-century colonization of the Korean Peninsula. Washington has been pressing them to cooperate so the three partners can better deal with threats from China and North Korea.

This week’s huge parliamentary election defeat of the governing party of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, who has sought better relations with Japan, could constrain his Japan-friendly efforts, but experts believe ties will remain stable.

The latest naval exercise is part of Biden’s work to deepen security and diplomatic engagement with Indo-Pacific nations. Biden invited Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos to the White House for their first trilateral talks Thursday, and has declared that the US defence commitment to the Pacific allies is “ironclad.”

Tensions between China and the Philippines have risen over repeated clashes by the two nations’ coast guard vessels in the disputed South China Sea. Chinese coast guard ships also regularly approach disputed Japanese-controlled East China Sea islands near Taiwan. Beijing has defended its operations in the South China Sea and blamed the United States for creating tensions. China’s President Xi Jinping had a series of talks this week with senior officials from Vietnam, Russia and Taiwan.

The US-Japan-South Korea naval exercises follow four-way drills held in the South China Sea, where Japan joined the United States, Australia and the Philippines.

Participants carefully avoided mentioning China and said they were holding the exercises to safeguard a peaceful and stable Indo-Pacific.

An area of long-simmering disputes, the South China Sea serves a key sea lane for global trade. Concerned governments include Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, Brunei and Taiwan. (AP)

Indian mission in Israel issues travel advisory

AP ■ WARSAW/ TEL AVIV

The Indian embassy in Israel on Friday issued an advisory for its nationals in the country, urging them to avoid unnecessary travel, amid fears of a retaliatory attack by Iran.

The advisory came soon after the Ministry of External Affairs on Friday asked its citizens not to travel to Iran or Israel amid escalating tensions between the two countries following a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria days ago.

“In view of the prevailing security situation in the region, all Indian nationals in Israel are advised to avoid unnecessary travel, remain calm and follow safety guidelines issued by the local authorities,” an ‘important advisory’ released by the embassy on its social media handles said.

“The embassy remains in touch with the Israeli authorities to ensure the safety of all our nationals,” it said.

The mission has also asked all its nationals who are not yet registered with it to do so at a given link. The United States has also issued similar advisory



Women protest against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government and call for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas militant group in Tel Aviv, Israel, Thursday.

AP

to its nationals telling them to restrict their movement and follow guidelines. Iran has blamed Israel for an attack on its diplomatic building in Damascus on April 1 in which

two of its prominent commanders were killed among others. Iran has vowed revenge to avenge the attack. The threat has led to worldwide diplomatic initiatives to thwart

a possible further conflagration in the region already struggling with Israel’s offensive in Gaza following a terror attack carried out by Hamas in its territory on October 7, and also regular exchange of fire between the Jewish state and Lebanese Shi’ite faction Hezbollah, which joined the war in solidarity with Hamas.

Houthis, considered Iran’s proxy in Yemen, and other factions seen as close to Tehran have also from time to time carried out attacks against Israel and at assets of countries that seem to be supportive of the Jewish state, disrupting international waters and global trade routes.

Poland’s government said on Friday the killing of a Polish aid worker by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza was “murder” and demands support from Israel in its own investigation and for the case to be brought before an independent court in Israel.

Poland’s deputy foreign minister, Wladyslaw Teofil Bartoszewski, was addressing lawmakers in parliament on the April 1 death of Damian Sobol,

35, and six other workers of the World Central Kitchen charity, who were bringing food to the needy in Gaza.

He called the killings “shocking and disturbing” and said Poland expects Israel’s “full cooperation” in the murder investigation opened by Polish prosecutors in Przemysl, Sobol’s hometown.

In the debate in parliament, many lawmakers said the killings should be considered a war crime. Bartoszewski said Poland was working with other countries whose citizens were killed in the shelling — Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States — to jointly press for a detailed investigation into how cars marked as humanitarian convoy could have become targets of repeated shelling by the Israeli army.

He stressed that all international rule of defense were violated for that attack. He said that the dismissals and disciplinary measures applied to the officers responsible for the killings were “inadequate” and demanded that the case be tried by an independent court in Israel.

Hindu temple demolished in Pak’s Khyber district

Peshawar (PTI): A historical Hindu temple near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border has been demolished and construction for a commercial complex has started at the site in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province that was closed since 1947 when the original occupants migrated to India.

The ‘Khyber Temple’ was situated in the border town of Landi Kotal Bazaar in the Khyber district but had been vanishing brick by brick over the years. The construction at the site started about 10-15 days ago.

Officials from various administrative departments either denied they were aware of the existence of the Hindu temple or claimed the construction was happening according to the rules. Tribal journalist Ibrahim Shinwari, said: “The temple was located in the centre of the Landi Kotal bazaar, which was closed in 1947 after the local Hindu families migrated to India.

Indian-origin victim of UK’s Post Office scandal rejects apology

AP ■ WAJIMAA

An Indian-origin former manager of a Post Office in England wrongly jailed while pregnant has rejected the apology of a former boss of the government-owned entity during an ongoing public inquiry into the accounting scandal.

Seema Misra, now 47, had her conviction quashed in April 2021 as the Court of Appeal ruled that she had been wrongly imprisoned over 12 years ago after being accused of stealing GBP 75,000 from her Post Office branch in Surrey where she was the sub-postmistress.

During Thursday’s hearings for the Post Office Horizon IT inquiry in London, former Post Office Managing Director David Smith apologised for a congratulatory email he sent after Misra’s conviction.

“It was intended to be a congratulatory email to the team, knowing that they had worked hard on the case,” Smith said in

his written evidence to the inquiry.

“However, knowing what I do now, it is evident that my email would have caused Seema Misra and her family substantial distress to read and I would like to apologise for that... Even if this had been a correct conviction, I would never think that it was ‘brilliant news’ for a pregnant woman to go to prison and I am hugely apologetic that my email can be read as such,” he said.

“However, seeing this email in the light of what I know now, I understand the anger and the upset that it will have caused and sincerely apologise for that,” he added.

But, speaking to reporters later, Misra rejected the apology which comes many years after her ordeal.

“I was eight weeks pregnant – they need to apologise to my youngest son. It was terrible. I haven’t accepted the apologies,” Misra told the BBC.

“We had my conviction over-

turned, nobody came at that time to apologise. And now they just suddenly realised that when they have to appear in a public inquiry, they have to apologise,” she said.

Misra was sent to Bronzefield prison in south-east England and served four-and-a-half months, later giving birth to her second son wearing an electronic tag. Smith told the inquiry that Misra had been used as a “test case” and the success of the case led to more confidence in the faulty Horizon IT accounting system.

“How can they do a test on a human being? I’m a living creature. I heard that my case had been used as a test case before. But hearing it again and again, it’s just annoying. It makes me more and more angry, to be honest,” Misra told “Sky News” concerning his evidence.

The UK government, which formally owns Post Office Ltd, has paid out millions in compensa-

tion to hundreds of sub-postmasters – many of them of Indian heritage – impacted by the faulty Horizon software.

Earlier this year, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged action in the historic scandal which wrongly accused sub-postmasters of fraud.

Last month, a new law tabled in Parliament introduced the Post Office (Horizon System) Offences Bill, a blanket exoneration to quash convictions brought about by erroneous Horizon evidence. A public inquiry in the case, underway in a phased manner, is expected to conclude in July.

The controversial Horizon system, developed by the Japanese company Fujitsu, was first rolled out in 1999 to some post offices for variable tasks, including accounting and stocktaking. However, it appeared to have significant bugs, which could cause the system to misreport, sometimes involving large sums as in the case of these sub-postmasters.

Pope will travel to Indonesia, PNG and Singapore

Vatican City (AP): Pope Francis will visit Indonesia, East Timor, Papua New Guinea and Singapore in September, the Vatican announced Friday, confirming the longest trip of Francis’ papacy that is sure to test his health, stamina and mobility.

The Vatican confirmed the September 2-13 visit, saying the 87-year-old pope would visit Jakarta, Indonesia; Port Moresby and Vanimo, Papua New Guinea; Dili, East Timor; and Singapore. Further details will be announced later.

Francis’ health has become a source of increasing concern and speculation, even though the pontiff is able to carry on with a rigorous schedule of meetings at the Vatican and even excursions to local parishes. Francis, who had part of one lung removed as a young man, had to cancel a planned visit to Dubai late last year after he came down with a bad case of bronchitis. He suffered from respiratory

problems all winter and had to curtail his participation in Holy Week events to save his energy for Easter.

Francis has also been using a wheelchair for nearly two years because of bad knee ligaments, and has said that travelling has become increasingly more difficult.

And yet at 11 days, the trip would be the longest of Francis’ papacy, outpacing by a few days some of his long trips to the Americas early on in his 11-year papacy. It will bring the Argentine Jesuit to the world’s most populous Muslim nation, Indonesia, as well as the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, where the Catholic Church wields enormous influence.

There is also a chance of another leg to the trip being added later: This week, the Vatican foreign minister, Archbishop Paul Gallagher, was in Vietnam and discussed a papal visit, Vatican News reported, without providing details.

Sexual assaults rise in Central African Republic

Bangui (AP): It was too late for the mother to shield her children when the two masked and armed Russian fighters burst into her home, held her at gunpoint and took turns raping her. Her five children were forced to watch in the dark.

Seated in a restaurant in Central African Republic’s capital, where she has since fled, she wiped away tears. Two years on, the assault has “stayed with me in my core,” she said.

The Associated Press does not identify survivors of sexual assault. She blamed the Russians who are part of the Wagner mercenary group that operates alongside Central African Republic’s army and has been accused by locals and rights groups of abuses. She

had seen them patrolling in her town of Bambari before. On the day of the assault, they were fighting rebels there.

Gender-based violence is rising in Central African Republic amid ongoing conflict, weak legal and care systems and the stigma of speaking up, locals and aid groups say. Since 2020, incidents have jumped from about 9,200 reported cases to 25,500, according to cases tracked by the UN and partners.

But international funding for the country has dropped, with gender-based violence receiving some of the least support. The humanitarian request for about USD 14 million received less than 15 per cent of that, according to the UN. Central African Republic has been in conflict since

2013, when predominantly Muslim rebels seized power and forced the president from office.

Mostly Christian militias fought back. A 2019 peace deal only lessened the fighting, and six of the 14 armed groups that signed later left the agreement. Wagner, a UN peace-keeping mission and Rwandan troops are all on the ground to try to quell the violence. “More than 10 years on since this crisis unfolded, many people are still displaced, vulnerable and live at the mercy of armed groups,” said Lewis Mudge, Central Africa director for Human Rights Watch. A new dynamic has emerged as well whereby mercenaries aligned with the government are also, at times, preying on the local population.”

Gang gets 122-year prison term for murdering Indian

PTI ■ LONDON

Four Indian-origin men in their 20s, who were found guilty of the murder of a 23-year-old delivery driver, also of Indian heritage, were on Friday sentenced to a total of 122 years’ imprisonment.

Aurman Singh was pronounced dead at the scene when the local West Mercia Police attended reports of an attack in the Berwick Avenue area of Shrewsbury, western England, in August last year and went on to arrest four men on suspicion of murder.

Arshdeep Singh, 24, Jagdeep Singh, 23, Shivdeep Singh, 27, and Manjot Singh, 24, were found guilty of murder with weapons including an axe, hockey stick and shovel.

They were each sentenced to life imprisonment, with a minimum term of 28 years behind bars.



A fifth Indian-origin man, Sukhmandeep Singh, 24, believed to be the “inside man” who sent information about Aurman’s deliveries on the day he was murdered and found guilty of manslaughter was handed a 10-year sentence.

“I am pleased that significant sentences have been handed to

these men for the brutal murder of Aurman Singh. These five men are dangerous individuals who will now serve a considerable sentence in prison where they cannot cause further harm to the wider public,” said Detective Chief Inspector (DCI) Mark Bellamy of West Mercia Police, who led the

murder investigation. “Aurman’s family have understandably been left shattered when he was tragically killed in a planned and brutal attack in Shrewsbury, and my thoughts and condolences remain with them. Today’s sentence should send a strong message to those who think they can come into our towns and cities to commit violent crime that we will not stop in our efforts to find them and put them before the courts,” he said.

The sentencing hearing at Stafford Crown Court was presided over by Judge Kristina Montgomery, who described the case as “a very public execution”, in which Aurman had been left to die at the side of the road. It followed the five men’s conviction last month at the end of a six-week trial at the same court.

Aurman’s family stated that there are no words that could

ever explain the impact the tragedy has had on their lives. The statement issued through the police reads: “Today a mother will grow old without her son. A sister will grow up without her brother. We don’t want what has happened to us to happen to another family.

“It is an unbearable loss for us which has changed our lives. My daughter and myself will be living our lives for the sake of it but our happiness and the will to live is not there.

“We would like to thank the police for conducting their investigation diligently and supporting us through this tough time.”

West Mercia Police described it as a complex investigation, which involved forces across the country. Earlier, the police said that no evidence emerged that would clearly explain a motive behind the brutal attack on Aurman Singh throughout the trial.



AN OASIS OF PEACE AND TRANQUILLITY

Discover the authentic rural life at Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort in the vicinity of Delhi



Nestled in the heart of the picturesque Aravali region in Haryana, Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort stands as a testament to the harmonious blend of modern comfort and natural beauty coupled with local flavours. This newly inaugurated haven offers an unparalleled experience for both business and leisure travelers seeking a respite from the bustling city life of nearby New Delhi. What is more it gives an authentic local experience. Spread across a unique 360-degree design layout, the resort boasts 158 spacious guest rooms, each offering breathtaking views of the panoramic Aravali ranges, verdant gardens, or the tranquil swimming pool. Whether it's a weekend escape or a brief stopover, guests are enveloped in luxury and tranquillity from the moment they arrive. For those seeking the perfect venue for weddings, social gatherings, or corporate events, the resort's expansive indoor and outdoor banquet spaces provide an ideal setting. With state-of-the-art technology and lush outdoor lawns spanning over 11,000 sq. ft., the possibilities are endless for creating memorable



moments amidst serene surroundings. Indulgence takes center stage at Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort, with an array of culinary delights awaiting guests at its four dining venues. From the lively ambiance of The Aravali Kitchen, offering a diverse selection of regional and international cuisines, to the exotic flavors of Huang, the Pan-Asian specialty restaurant, every dining experience is a journey of culinary discovery. Beyond gastronomic pleasures, guests

can rejuvenate their senses at the Levo Spa, featuring six treatment rooms and a range of holistic therapies administered by expert practitioners. Meanwhile, the three-tier swimming pool provides a refreshing oasis for relaxation and leisure. In addition to its luxurious accommodations and amenities, the resort offers an array of services tailored to enhance the guest experience. From pet-friendly offerings and collaborative lobby spaces to morning wellness activities and express laundry services, every aspect of the stay is designed to ensure comfort and convenience. Conveniently located less than an hour's drive from the Indira Gandhi International Airport, Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort is also in close proximity to several local attractions, including Damdama Lake, Sultanpur Bird Sanctuary, and Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary, inviting guests to explore the natural wonders of the region. Whether seeking a peaceful retreat, a memorable event venue, or a culinary adventure, Courtyard by Marriott Aravali Resort promises an unforgettable experience that epitomizes the essence of tranquillity, luxury, and hospitality.

“WE THINK GLOBAL BUT ACT LOCAL”

RAJNEESH KUMAR General Manager of Courtyard Marriott talked to THE PIONEER about the resort's USP and why it is a no-miss destination for people looking for an enjoyable retreat

Can you tell us what makes your resort stand out?

Absolutely. Firstly, our resort boasts a unique design and is considered an architectural marvel, attracting guests right from the start. Secondly, we prioritize providing our guests with an unforgettable experience, whether it's through our accommodations, dining options, or attentive service. At Courtyard Marriott, every individual is treated as a cherished guest, not just a customer, and we adhere to global standards of hygiene, service quality, and food offerings.

Who is your target clientele?

Typically, our guests come from the Delhi NCR region, although we do receive occasional bookings from abroad. Our resort seamlessly blends Marriott's expertise with local flavours, offering guests a glimpse into rural India while maintaining international standards. We work on the maxim of 'think global, act local.'

What kind of experience can guests expect during their stay at your resort?

Guests can anticipate an



How well-equipped are you to host conferences and large events like weddings?

Corporate gatherings and weddings are both within our expertise. We have extensive facilities for hosting conferences and seminars, and for weddings, we can accommodate large numbers of guests. In fact, we often reserve the entire resort for wedding parties to ensure an exclusive experience for the participants.

What types of cuisine do you offer to guests?

Our culinary offerings focus on authentic local cuisine that is both delicious and nutritious. Guests particularly enjoy our variety of parathas and other regional specialties.

Lastly, what message would you like to convey to our readers?

I would like to extend a heartfelt invitation to everyone to come and experience firsthand what our resort has to offer. We're confident that once you visit, you'll understand the unique charm and hospitality that sets us apart.

authentic rural experience. We meticulously plan their itineraries to include immersive rural activities such as pottery-making, rural trails, and traditional tasks like butter-making or milking cows. We have 'chaupal' where guests can intermingle, sit on charpais or cots. Our goal is to provide guests with a unique and memorable stay that reflects the charm of rural India.

BHUTAN ON MY PLATE

CHEF MICHAEL S WAMY was recently in the national capital to bring us a unique culinary extravaganza from Bhutan.

SHOBORI GANGULI recounts her experience of the royal tastes from this remote Himalayan kingdom



Bhutan has been sitting in my travel bucket list for years. Unfortunately not to have found the time to soak in one of the world's most bountiful wonderlands, on top of the Himalayas, I was naturally excited to settle for the next best option — Honk at the Pullman, Aerocity, Delhi, when they decided to celebrate a wholesome culinary journey through Bhutan with itinerant Chef Michael Swamy of Cottage Chef Culinaire. The incredibly gifted Chef, fondly known as “The Historian Chef”, has an impressive repertoire of cuisines. From Indo-Portuguese to Bhutanese, right down to the remotest of India's wildlife reserves and sanctuaries, he keeps travelling from his base in Mumbai across the length and breadth of this country to bring the secret kitchens of India and its neighbourhood to mainstream fine dining tables. Chef Swamy is associated with the Bhutan based VEEN natural mineral water company. Although originating in Finnish Lapland, it was in the Kingdom of Bhutan in 2014 that the company found the purest waters in the world in the region's natural water springs located in the upper reaches of the Khana Bharti River in the foothills of the Himalayan district of Samtse. Chef Swamy had especially curated a seven course Royal Bhutanese meal for us though he admitted that he had to tone down the spicy accent of authentic Bhutanese cuisine to suit the north Indian palate. I was a wee bit disappointed because we in the South or the East of India love our spices. Anyway, what unfolded was a delectable culinary journey across the Himalayan kingdom. Unfortunately, for reasons I shall detail later, the first on the Chef's menu, a beverage called Top of the Mountain, a concoction of orange, fragrant mint leaves spicy jalapenos, herby coriander with lime and VEEN sparkling water never really reached my table.



Anyway the soup, Ema Datshi, Chef Swamy's version of Bhutan's national dish, served in a fresh baked bun, and topped with native red rice crisps was absolute heaven. This certainly would be one of the rarest soups I have ever tasted. The oven fresh bun sat dry in the centre of the soup dish, with a generous filling of finely chopped fresh vegetable in a creamy sauce. Then a delicately flavoured steaming hot creamy soup was gently poured over the bun as it flowed out into the soup dish, like lava erupting from a volcano. Awesome is too weak a word for Chef's Ema Datshi.



For Appetizers we had Chapale, fried flour and buckwheat pastries filled with lamb. Served with a spicy chilly relish, the lamb was just adequately spiced to make it a light starter. Then came the Momos, spicy yak milk cheese stuffed dumplings, steamed and drizzled with freshly made Himalayan morel oil. While all of us here in the north think of momos merely as stuffed and steamed dumplings, vegetarian or non vegetarian, Chef Swamy's momos were a work of art, the cheese and chicken stuffing simply melting in one's mouth. Then there were Chicken wings, crispy chicken tossed in a selection of North Eastern peppers and Himalayan honey. Although served again with a spicy relish, this tilted towards the sweeter side, courtesy the honey. Among the appetizers, Chef Swamy's momos were the clear winners. Yet again, unfortunately, the next on the Chef's menu, a Palate

Cleanser of Gondhoraj Sorbet never arrived on my table. Then there was an inordinate silence from the Chef's kitchen for about 25 minutes, reasons for which I shall detail soon. The main course followed shortly. There was Bak Thuk noodles with warm cherry tomato, potato beans and radish salad. Alongside came Butter Poached Himalayan Trout, the tender mountain fish poached with butter and spiced with mustard and Bhutanese podi. The butter and spices made this Himalayan delicacy really stand out. This was accompanied by Doh Siyar Nei-long, a chicken curry with ginger, garlic, chilli and black sesame paste served with short-grain black and white rice. The woodiness of the sesame stood out, embracing the succulent chicken with an outstanding flavour. Chef Swamy played the perfect host, pacing from one table to another through the evening, serving one royal Bhutanese dish after another. As someone closely following the F&B industry's journey of innovative ideas to increase footfalls, I felt an airport hotel does not quite have the ambience required to curate a Roving Chef yet. At Pullman for, instance, while we were treated to a unique dining experience, there was a constant rush of passengers, national and international, jet lagged individuals dragging themselves to the coffee shop. Then there were conferences and events all over the place. Although the staff at Pullman's Honk was extremely polite, courteous and responsive, taking care of each and every guest, Chef Swamy's Bhutanese fare did get overwhelmed by some regular orders being thrown into the kitchen like egg fried rice and dimsums at some tables. As mentioned at the outset this explained the oversight on the Chef's VEEN sparkling water concoction of orange and lime as also the Palate Cleanser Gondhoraj Sorbet.





Fraser-McGurk, Kuldeep steer DC to their second win of season

LSG fail to build up big total after shaky start

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Australia's Jake Fraser-McGurk announced himself with a belligerent half-century on his IPL debut after spinner Kuldeep Yadav dazzled with the ball as Delhi Capitals recorded a morale-boosting six-wicket win over Lucknow Super Giants here on Friday.

Ayush Badoni (55 not out off 35 balls) smashed a quick-fire unbeaten half century to help the Super Giants recover to a respectable 167/7 after Kuldeep (3/20) sizzled with a three-wicket haul.

Fraser-McGurk (55 off 35 balls) and skipper Rishabh Pant (41) struck a 77-run partnership to take the match away from the hosts and secure DC's second win of the season.

The 22-year-old Australian, known for his aggressive approach, smoked a shot of length delivery off Yash Thakur over deep mid-wicket to get his first-ever runs in the IPL. He followed that with another six in the next over.

Prithvi Shaw (32) was looking

in good nick but Ravi Bishnoi made an instant impact as he entered the game, getting rid of the opener, as DC fell to 63/2. The LSG bowlers were able to dominate the visitors for some time as Fraser-McGurk also struggled to find the boundaries.

But Pant hoisted the ball over Bishnoi's head for a straight six to not only reach the 3,000-run milestone in IPL but also collected Delhi's first boundary in 29 deliveries in the 11th over. The dashing wicketkeeper-batter gave a glimpse of his vintage self, playing some audacious shots, including a reverse scoop off Marcus Stoinis.

Pant's power-hitting eased the pressure of Fraser-McGurk who slammed compatriot Stoinis for a hat-trick of sixes to bring the equation to almost a run a ball.

Earlier, returning to the side after missing three matches due to a groin niggle, Kuldeep picked three wickets while giving away 20 runs and conceding no boundaries in his quota of four overs.

His victims included skipper

KL Rahul (39), Marcus Stoinis (8) and the dangerous Nicholas Pooran (0).

Khaleel Ahmed (2/41), who landed the early blow, Ishant Sharma (1/36) and Mukesh Kumar (1/41) also took wickets to leave LSG reeling at 94/7.

But then Badoni took the onus upon himself to resurrect the LSG innings. He smashed five boundaries and a six and alongside Arshad Khan (20 off 16 balls) stitched a 73-run unbeaten stand.

Opting to bat, Quinton de Kock (19) had started strong with four boundaries but was dismissed by Khaleel with a leg-before wicket decision in the third over.

Devdutt Padikkal's (3) wretched run continued as he became Khaleel's second victim of the day. The pacer pinned Padikkal in front of middle and leg for his fifth consecutive single-figure score.

Khaleel had the opportunity to make it two out of two but the pacer dropped Stoinis on 0 off his own delivery in the very next ball.

However, Rahul continued to collect boundaries at the other end, taking his side to 57/2 in the powerplay.

But the introduction of Kuldeep in the eighth over helped trigger a batting collapse.

The left-arm spinner first bowled a nicely tossed up delivery with Stoinis throwing his hands at it only to get a leading edge that flew straight to Ishant at backward point. He then bamboozled the in-form Pooran, who looked clueless as the ball uprooted the off stump.

The batting collapse forced the hosts to send Deepak Hooda (10) as an Impact Substitute but Kuldeep picked up his third wicket in eight balls to get ride of Rahul, completely deflating the LSG batting. Delhi bowlers choked the LSG batters as the boundaries dried up.

Ishant and Mukesh, who also returned to the Delhi playing XI after recovering from an injury, joined the act accounting for Hooda and Krunal Pandya (3) respectively.



Hardik enjoys challenges, fans will start loving him: Kishan



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Hardik Pandya might have been at the receiving end of fans' ire in this IPL, but Ishan Kishan has little doubt that the Mumbai Indians skipper is "enjoying the challenge" of winning them over.

Pandya, who replaced Rohit Sharma as the regular skipper of Mumbai before the start of this IPL, has been consistently getting booed by the spectators inside the stadium and the situation was no different on Thursday night when MI faced Royal Challengers Bengaluru.

But he also found a small

corner of supporters at the Wankhede Stadium as MI registered a big win over RCB, and they were encouraged by star batter Virat Kohli.

"He (Pandya) loves challenges, he has been in this situation before and he is in that situation right now. He is not someone who will come out and talk about it and say let's stop this or that," Kishan told the media here after MI defeated RCB by seven wickets.

"I know that he must be enjoying it. I know him personally. I have spent a lot of time with him. He is ready for the challenges because you cannot complain to the fans,

they will come up with their explanations and their point of views," Kishan added.

Kishan said the 29-year-old all-rounder could turn all anger around with his performances.

"But knowing how Hardik Pandya thinks, he is happy with people doing it but I know that in the coming games he will do it with the bat and people will start loving him (again)," he said.

Kishan highlighted Indian fans' tendency to recognise the hard work of a cricketer, irrespective of their personal feelings towards him.

"People also recognise your hard work, what you are going through and still you

are doing so well for your team. I think people do recognise that."

"Our fans will be a little harsh on you but at the same time when you do well, or when you show that it is (still) not bothering you and (that) you are in a very good headspace, that might change. If not today, tomorrow. If not tomorrow, day after tomorrow," he said.

Kishan said Pandya's focus was on improving his outings.

"I feel happy about him that even in this situation he is so keen on performing, hitting six on the very first ball knowing that things can go different way and people will question you again. But that is something which Hardik has in himself and other players don't," Kishan noted.

Jasprit Bumrah was at the top of his game returning with 4-0-21-5 against RCB but the other MI bowlers were wayward. Kishan backed them to do well.

"We will get through that because planning is always there, we keep talking to our coaches, our captain, our video analyst," he said.

"The wicket was very good (for batters). When the wicket is so good, we cannot complain about our bowlers, who were also good, but (then) we finished the game in the 16th over.

"We have to look at the positives that the bowlers did a great job in restricting RCB below 200," he added.

It is in my muscle memory: Suryakumar on his audacious shots

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The world's number one T20 batter, Suryakumar Yadav attributed the audacious array of shots he played against Royal Challengers Bengaluru to "muscle memory" and constant practice at nets.

Suryakumar dazzled with a 19-ball 52 studded with four sixes and five fours to help Mumbai Indians chase down RCB's 197-run target in just 15.3 overs.

"I just try to play the field. I practice these shots. It is in my muscle memory," Suryakumar said after MI's seven-wicket win in the IPL on Thursday night.

Asked about his favourite shot in the match against RCB, he said, "I think all the shots. The slice over point was my favourite."

Suryakumar was playing in his second match of this IPL after recovering from a sports hernia surgery.

"It is always good to be back in Wankhede. Joining the squad was great. Mentally I was here, just physically in Bangalore (for recovery at NCA)."

"Coming at Wankhede, chasing 200, if there is dew it is important to take a chance. We wanted to finish early for the net run rate," said the 33-year-old.

Asked about Jasprit Bumrah's five-wicket haul, Suryakumar said, "It is always good to have Jasprit by your side. It has been 2 to



3 years, have never batted Jasprit in the nets. Either he breaks my bat or my foot."

On Ishan Kishan who make 69 off just 34 balls, he said, "That's what we have told him. Just go out and enjoy. His intent has been great. He

is enjoying the fruits."

Later in an interview with 'JioCinema', Suryakumar said whenever he came out to bat he would try to see how he could change the course of the game.

"I think about the shots I

play beforehand, because I have practiced all of them during the nets. I try to make sure that I bat according to the situation of the game. If the game is progressing slowly, then I think of how I could possibly speed it up.

"Whenever I go into bat, I always try to see how I can change the game and how I can control it with my abilities," he said.

On MI's performance so far, he said, "I think the train was always on track, it just took a while to get going. It's fine, we're coming back and have found our rhythm."

"It feels great to have won two games in a row at the Wankhede. It gives us great confidence and has improved the team's atmosphere as well."

Former Australia all-rounder Shane Watson said sky is the limit for Suryakumar when he's batting at his best.

"When his mind's free, he just lets loose. The sky is the limit for him when he's batting like that. He can hit them and does hit them all around the ground," said Watson.

"When he's in the type of form like he showed tonight, the poor bowlers, no one can bowl anywhere."

"He's got an incredible awareness of the field but then the skill to be able to manipulate the ball into those gaps, it's freakish stuff. The Mumbai Indians are very lucky to have him."

OTHER SPORTS

ASIAN CHAMPIONSHIP

Dahiya reaches bronze medal round

PTI ■ BISHKEK (KYRGYZSTAN)

Indian wrestlers Akash Dahiya and Anirudh Kumar kept themselves in contention for bronze medals at the Asian Championships but three of their team-mates exited the tournament after losing at different stages in their respective categories, here on Friday.

Competing in the non-Olympic 61kg category, Akash began with a close 10-8 win over Sardor Ruzimov from Uzbekistan and followed it up with a comfortable 7-3 victory over Korea's Sanghyeon Son in the quarterfinal.

However, Kazakhstan's Assyl Aitakyn proved to be too

strong for the Indian in the semifinal and could not score a single point, losing his bout by technical superiority.

He will now fight it out with Mongolia's Enkhbold Enkhbat.

Yash Tushir (74kg) went out of contention after losing his repechage round by technical superiority to Syrbaz Talgat from Kazakhstan.

Also bowing out early was Sandeep Singh Maan (86kg), who lost his qualification bout 0-5 to Japan's Tatsuya Shirai.

Vinay (92kg) also fizzled out in the 92kg qualification round, losing his bout by fall to veteran Kazakhstan wrestler Adilet

Davumbayev.

In 125kg, Anirudh Kumar began with a 3-0 win over Pakistan's Zaman Anwar but was outplayed by Iran's Amir Hossein Abbas Zare in the quarterfinal, losing by technical superiority.

Since the Iranian reached the final, it kept the door open for Anirudh and now he will fight for bronze against Bahrain's Shamil Magomed A Sharipov.

India had won three medals on Thursday through Udit (57kg, silver), Abhimanyou (70kg, bronze) and Vicky (97kg, bronze).

The men's free-style competition will conclude today and the women's bouts will begin on Saturday.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Six-time world champion Sboxer M C Mary Kom on Friday stepped down as India's chef-de-mission for the upcoming Paris Olympics, saying she is "left with no choice" due to some personal reasons.

Indian Olympic Association (IOA) President PT Usha announced that Mary Kom had asked to be relieved from her position in a letter addressed to her.

"I consider it an honour to serve my country in every way possible, and I was mentally prepared for it. However, I regret that I will not be able to uphold the prestigious responsibility and would like



to resign, owing to personal reasons," the 41-year-old stated in a letter to Usha.

"It is embarrassing to retreat from a commitment, which I seldom do, but I am left with no choice. I am there to cheer on my country and the athletes competing in this Olympic

Games, with great expectations," she added.

The IOA had announced her appointment on March 21.

The celebrated boxer, who is also a bronze-medallist from the 2012 London Olympics, was to be the logistical in-charge of the country's contingent at the July 26-August 11 Games.

"We are sad that Olympic medal winning boxer and Chairperson of the IOA Athletes Commission Mary Kom has stepped down citing personal reasons. We respect her decision and her privacy," Usha said in a statement.

"I shall make the appropriate consultations and soon make an announcement about the replacement for Mary Kom."