



CITY 3
CONG ROOT CAUSE OF
INDIA'S PROBLEMS: YOGI

WORLD 7
MILITANTS KILL 11 IN
PAKISTAN'S BALOCHISTAN

SPORT 8
DHONI IN SPOTLIGHT AS
CSK, MI RESUME RIVALRY

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

LUCKNOW, SUNDAY APRIL 14, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3



Established 1864
sunday pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



INDIA CAUGHT IN IRAN ISRAEL CROSSFIRE

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India on Saturday said it is in touch with Iran after it seized a cargo ship MSC Aries with 17 Indians nationals onboard. The Israel-linked ship was seized by Iran's commandos near the Strait of Hormuz. "Iran will bear the consequences for choosing to escalate the situation any further," Israel military spokesman Daniel Hagari said in a statement. As for Indians, official sources said India is in touch with Iranian authorities through diplomatic channels, both in Tehran and in Delhi, to ensure the welfare and early release of the Indian nationals. The Iranian action came amid increasing fears that Tehran may launch an attack on Israeli soil in retaliation to a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 12 days ago. "We are aware that a cargo ship 'MSC Aries' has been taken control by Iran. We have learnt that there are 17 Indian nationals onboard," said a source. "We are in touch with the Iranian authorities through diplomatic channels, both in Tehran and in Delhi, to ensure security, welfare and early release of Indian nationals," it said. Reports said Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards seized MSC Aries on Saturday morning when it was sailing through the Strait of Hormuz. Reports indicated MSC Aries is



a Portuguese-flagged container ship. According to news agency AP, commandos from Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard rappelled down from a helicopter onto an Israeli-affiliated container ship near the Strait of Hormuz and seized the vessel, the latest in a series of attacks between the two countries. West Asia had braced for

potential Iranian retaliation over a suspected Israeli strike earlier this month on an Iranian consular building in Syria that killed 12 people, including a senior Guard general who once commanded its expeditionary Quds Force there. Iran's State-run IRNA said a special forces unit of the Guard's navy carried out the attack on the vessel, which other media in the country widely identified as

the Portuguese-flagged MSC Aries, a container ship associated with London-based Zodiac Maritime. Zodiac Maritime is part of Israeli billionaire Eyal Ofer's Zodiac Group. Zodiac declined to comment and referred questions to MSC, which did not immediately respond. Earlier, a West Asia defense official, who spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss

intelligence matters, shared a video of the attack with AP. In it, the Iranian commandos are seen rappelling down onto a stack of containers sitting on the deck of the vessel. A crew member on the ship can be heard saying, "Don't come out." He then tells his colleagues to go to the ship's bridge as more commandos come down on the deck.

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Air India flights avoid Iranian air space

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid soaring tensions in West Asia due to the Iran and Israel conflict, Air India flights have started taking a detour as they are now avoiding operations in the Iranian airspace. According to sources, now, all Air India flights bound for Europe could take up to two hours longer to reach the destinations.

This comes a day after the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) "advised" Indian nationals to not travel till further notice to Iran and Israel - the two countries teetering on the brink of a major military escalation. According to Flightradar24 website, Air India flight that took off from Delhi at 4.30 am on Saturday did not overfly Iran and took an alternate route to London. Instead of the usual India-Pakistan-Iran-Turkey-Black Sea route to Europe, Air India took a northern route.

Air India flights to the Middle East, however, will not be impacted as they fly South of Iranian airspace. Besides, Air India, Germany's Lufthansa have already started avoiding Iranian air space since Thursday while Australian airline Qantas said on Saturday it would redirect its long-haul flights between Perth and London to avoid Iran's airspace amid soaring Middle East tensions.

On Friday, Lufthansa flight to Mumbai took the Greece-



Mediterranean Sea-Saudi Arabia-Persian Gulf-Arabian Sea route to Mumbai. Earlier it used to take the Black Sea-Iran-Pakistan route to Mumbai. Lufthansa on Thursday said it had suspended flights to and from Tehran until probably April 13, extending its suspension by two days. Notably, the increased geopolitical tensions have added more routes to the no fly zones for airlines. Commercial airliners avoid Afghanistan ever since the country was taken over by the Taliban; Russia's war in Ukraine has made both the countries no overflying zones for most western airlines; US carriers have been avoiding Iran for some time now. Now airliners would have to avoid the airspace of Iran.

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Chaos at Sydney mall as six people stabbed to death
AP ■ SYDNEY

A man stabbed six people to death at a busy Sydney shopping centre Saturday before he was fatally shot, police said, with hundreds fleeing the chaotic scene, many weeping as they carried their children. Eight people, including a 9-month-old, were injured. New South Wales police said they believed a 40-year-old man was responsible for the Saturday afternoon attack at the Westfield Shopping Centre in Bondi Junction, in the city's eastern suburbs. They said they were not able to name him until a formal identification had taken place but that they weren't currently treating the attack as terrorism-related. The man was shot dead by a female police inspector after he turned and raised a knife, New South Wales Assistant Police Commissioner Anthony Cooke told reporters.

LG refutes AAP's claim of Kejriwal being tortured in Tihar

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

AP leader and Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh claimed on Saturday that Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal is being tortured inside the Tihar jail at the behest of the Central Government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. However, Delhi Lieutenant Governor V K Saxena rejected Singh's claim and said a false narrative is being created by a person occupying Membership of Parliament. Singh alleged the jail administration, which

officially falls under the purview of the Delhi Government, has refused to allow Kejriwal's wife Sunita to meet him in person. The AAP leader said, according to jail rules 602 and 605, jail administration has the right to let an implicated person conduct any meeting face-to-face. Reacting on his remark, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said Singh should "have knowledge about the jail manual as he came out recently after spending months there".



AAP leader Sanjay Singh addresses a Press conference in New Delhi on Saturday PTI

Sachdeva said the Kejriwal Government had made the Delhi Jail Manual in 2018, which clearly states in Rule 602 that meetings with inmates will be conducted

by not only members of a particular political party, but also Ministers sworn to the constitutional oath of office. "Inside the jail, Kejriwal is being tortured at the behest of the Government of India and Modi. "Action is being taken to break his morale. As per the rule and as mentioned in the jail manual, the jail administration has been granted the right to let the people in jail meet the visitors face-to-face. In the case of Kejriwal, his wife is not allowed to meet him face-to-face," Singh said, addressing a Press conference.

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BJP to unveil its Sankalp Patra today

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP is set to unveil its 'Sankalp Patra' (manifesto) for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections on Sunday at its party headquarters in Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other senior party leaders will be present at the event, coinciding with the birth anniversary of Baba Saheb Ambedkar, a towering leader from the Dalit community and an architect of the Indian Constitution. The manifesto will focus on 'Garib' (poor), 'Kisan' (farmer), 'Yuva' (youth), and 'Nari Shakti' (women power) under a politically coined



acronym of 'GAYN,' in addition to 'Swasthya' (health), 'Shiksha' (education), and 'Sashaktikaran' (empowerment) as the 3S, are among the prominent resolutions likely to feature in the BJP's manifesto.

The theme of the manifesto will be "Modi's Guarantee: Developed India 2047," with a focus on cultural nationalism. According to party sources, the party pledges to fulfil only those promises that are achievable. As the BJP Government has fulfilled most of its core ideological promises, including the construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and the repeal of Article 370, all eyes will be on how the ruling party's larger cultural and Hindutva agenda figures in the manifesto. Sources hinted that the BJP may include

some special resolutions on 'Garib Kalyan' (poor welfare) and 'Bharashtachar-mukt' (corruption-free), citing what Modi had outlined in the 2019 manifesto. The BJP had appointed a manifesto committee headed by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh that met twice to deliberate on its contents after the party had launched multiple exercises, including vans sent across the country and social media campaigns, to seek people's suggestions.

Continued on Page 6



Rahul Gandhi not to use Congress flag in Wayanad

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Indian National Congress on Saturday made a public genuflection in front of the Muslim League by openly declaring that the grand old party would not use its flag during the election campaign in Wayanad from where Rahul Gandhi is seeking reelection in the Lok Sabha poll.

This has been one of the preconditions set by the Muslim League for its support to the Nehru-Gandhi scion. The announcement that the Congress would not be using the party flag at Wayanad was made by M M Hassan, the president-in-charge of the KPCC on Saturday. "We will not use the party flag during election campaigning at Wayanad but we will use the emblem of the party. I am not able to explain more than this," said Hassan. When Rahul visited Wayanad to file his nomination papers, the absence of Congress flags was conspicuous during both the roadshow and the

campaign rally. Wayanad is a Muslim-dominated area where the influence of the Islamist party permeates throughout the constituency. When Jawaharlal Nehru, the great-grandfather of Rahul, visited Kerala during the early 1950s, he described the Muslim League as a dead horse.

By preventing the Congress from waving its flags at election rallies, the Muslim League is chuckling at the embarrassment it has caused the Congress. Political commentators are of the view that this is a major setback to the Congress party. "During the 2011-2016 tenure of the UDF Government, the Muslim League had made the Congress to dance to its tunes and made the then Chief Minister Oommen Chandi to appoint a League nominee as fifth Minister though the initial agreement was to give four Ministries to the party," said the commentator who did not want his name to be quoted.

Continued on Page 6

CAA, Modi emerge as a beacon of hope for mini Bengal in Pilibhit

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ PILIBHIT

In the rural expanse of Pilibhit, where the tranquility of village life intermingles with the echoes of a tumultuous past, a vibrant community has carved out its own enclave, fondly referred to as 'mini Bengal' which seamlessly mingles with the rural plains of Uttar Pradesh. Here, amidst the verdant landscapes and rustic charm of Ramnagri village, the identity struggle of its residents, mostly migrants

from Bangladesh, finds expression in a profound question that cuts through the air: 'Aapni ki Bangali (Are you Bangali)?'. This question encapsulates the identity struggle of the majority of residents. For the approximately 1 lakh migrants who sought refuge in India during the tumultuous 1970s, fleeing religious persecution and strife, Pilibhit became a sanctuary. There are 10 gram panchayats — Kundannagar, Bidhipur, Najaulia Natka, Gabia, Maharajpur, Nagoria Lalpur,

Ramnagra, Sela, and Dhuria — where they all reside, transforming these villages into 'mini Bengal', where their lifestyle matches that of any village in Bengal. They communicate with each other in Bangla and even dress like the villagers of rural Bengal. Subal Das, 82, a patriarch of the community, encapsulates their journey, stating, "We have left our land... but not our culture. Our culture is our strength, no matter where we are." This sentiment reverberates through the alleys of Ramnagri, where Bengali traditions intertwine



with the rhythms of rural life. Sripal Biswas, a custodian of community history, recounts the trials of their parents' migration, highlighting the precariousness of their status amidst uncertainty. He says most of the natives here came from Jessore, Khulna, Faridpur, Dhaka, and Barishal districts of erstwhile East Pakistan during the 1971 war. The majority of the residents of these villages belong to Namasudra and Poudra communities — a group that historically faced untouchability in Bengal —

but are treated as a general category. "Our children were born here and grew up here only, but still they were denied voting rights," said Biswas. Amidst this backdrop of uncertainty, the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) emerges as a beacon of hope. Deepanker Mistra, 24, a tech-savvy entrepreneur, explains its significance, stating, "The CAA has come as a breath of fresh air for us. It provides a pathway to citizenship for many who have lived in limbo for decades."

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Kin demand CBI probe into SI's death

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Shocked and angered by the mysterious demise of Sub-Inspector Manoj Kumar, his family members staged a protest, placing his body on the road in Binjor police station area of Lucknow on Saturday. They demanded that a case of murder be registered against those responsible for his death. Kumar, who was stationed at Machhrehta police station in Sitapur district, died of a gunshot wound during duty hours at the said police station on Friday. The protesters accused the Machhrehta police station in-charge of shooting Manoj. Upon receiving information, senior police officials despatched a team led by the Binjor police station in-charge and other senior officials to the scene to defuse the situation and resolve the impasse. The senior officers mediated with the protesters and the victim's family members, leading to the eventual cessation of the protest. However, clashes ensued between the demonstrators and local police officers during the protest, resulting in disruptions for pedestrians, including children. Manoj Kumar (50), a native of Fatehpur district, had been residing with his family in the Sarwar locality under Binjor police station area for the past decade. He had been stationed at Machhrehta police station in Sitapur district since October 21, 2023. On Friday, he succumbed to a suspicious gunshot wound sustained at the police station while on duty. Following the post-mortem examination, the body was

STF nabs 2 duping govt officials by call spoofing

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A team of the STF claimed to have apprehended two men, including the mastermind, involved in defrauding senior government officials through call spoofing method, a technique where a call from a number displays the CUG numbers of various high officials through VOIP calls. These CUG numbers belong to various high officials, including private secretaries to the UP chief minister, PWD minister, and power minister among others. The accused, posing as high officials, made recommendations for their protégés or financial sponsors. The accused have been identified as Anvesh Tiwari from Ayodhya, the mastermind, and Kaptan Tiwari, also from Ayodhya, his accomplice. The STF team recovered four mobile phones, six debit/credit cards, a laptop, an Aadhaar card, a PAN card, a driving licence, a UP media directory, Rs 2,200 in cash, and a car. The

accused were apprehended near Kamta tri-junction on Ayodhya road on Saturday afternoon. According to reports, the UP STF was tasked with uncovering the gang involved in making unauthorised calls to senior officials using the CUG numbers of high officials, soliciting favours in several districts of the state. Upon investigation, it was revealed that none of the high-level officials had made any such calls through their CUG numbers. It was discovered that the miscreants were using the call spoofing method. Utilising technical expertise and assistance from an informant, the accused were apprehended on Saturday. The mastermind of the gang, Anvesh Tiwari, admitted to using his knowledge acquired during his MCA programme in 2018 in the crime. He claimed to have started working as a freelance software developer in 2023 and later established his own company.

He confessed to have created about 3,000 software applications for schools and financial technology. In 2022, he learned about an app through the internet that allowed making calls displaying any number (call spoofing). He enlisted the help of his uncle Kaptan Tiwari to persuade government officials to do them favours. Anvesh revealed that his family had a political background, and the post of village pradhan was their ancestral seat. He disclosed using call spoofing to expedite village-related projects such as construction of drains, roads, and laying of bricks in various districts, including his native district. The police stated that the accused possessed a diary containing CUG numbers of senior government officials, which they used to defraud victims and simulate the CUG number of senior officials. They also used this method to call a police official to influence a fraud case against Anvesh in Bareilly.

around 10:30 am and while conversing, he walked behind the police station, where he reportedly shot himself in the chest with his service revolver. The protest lasted nearly three and a half hours. Police assured the family of all possible assistance and advised them to proceed with the last rites. Subsequently, the protesters budgeted, clearing the road. Later in the evening, with police oversight, the body was cremated at the Alambagh Canal crematorium. Accusing the Machhrehta police station in-charge and his associates of harassing Manoj, his wife Geeta Devi alleged that he was shot by the police in-charge due to his outspoken stance on certain departmental matters. Further elaborating on the allegation, she recounted an incident from a few months prior when a teenage girl went missing from Machhrehta police station's jurisdiction, and Manoj Kumar was tasked with the investigation. He purportedly faced pressure to hinder the probe. Demanding a CBI investigation, deceased's elder son Hritik Gaur alias Akash alleged that the station in-charge extorted money illegally from Manoj and overloaded him with work beyond his capacity. Shibu, the deceased's younger son, claimed that his father had head injuries and bruises at several spots on the body, and red marks on the back. The family alleged they were not even shown the service revolver purportedly used in the incident.

Baisakhi is source of inspiration, says Yogi



Chief Minister presented a memento at the Naka Hindola Gurdwara on the occasion of Baisakhi on Saturday

Pioneer

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday extended Baisakhi greetings and said the festival is a source of inspiration and marks the foundation of 'Khalsa Panth'. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, established Khalsa Panth (Sikh order) in 1699 as a force to protect the country and religion, and even today, the Panth continues to uphold the flag of religion with pride in the world without stopping, wavering or bowing down, he said. Addressing a programme organised at a gurdwara in Naka Hindola on the occasion of Baisakhi, Yogi said, "Baisakhi is a source of new inspiration and light." He also paid respect to the Guru Granth Sahib and extended heartfelt wishes to the

members of the Sikh community on Baisakhi. During the event, the chief minister was honoured with 'angvastra' and mementos, the UP government said in a statement. "On the demand of Sikh brothers and sisters, Prime Minister Narendra Modi decided to celebrate December 26 as 'Veer Bal Diva'. We all appreciate this," Yogi said. He further reminded people of the cost of the partition of India, highlighting the significant difficulties people faced in visiting Kartarpur Sahib, the sacred site where Guru Nanak Dev spent the last 18 years of his life. PM Modi constructed Sri Kartarpur Sahib corridor to connect people with their roots and express their respect for the Sikh Guru, he added. "The country will continue to progress in this manner, and always remain grateful to the

Sikh Gurus for the contributions and sacrifices," the chief minister said. Highlighting the connection of Lucknow with Sikhism, Adityanath said that Guru Tegh Bahadur came to the state capital and spent some days there.

PUBLIC NOTICE
This is to inform the general public that Original Sale Deed dated 01.10.2020 registered on vide Book No. 1, Volume No.10457, Page No. 305 to 352 at Serial No. 5289 dated 01.10.2020 and Original WILL registered on vide Book No. 3, Volume No. 341, Page No. 207 to 220 at Serial No. 422 dated 06.10.2016 are lost and not traceable. All persons having any claim in respect thereof by way of sale, exchange, mortgage, charge, lien or otherwise howsoever are hereby requested to make the same known in writing to the undersigned within a period of 14 days from the date of publication hereof, failing which, the claim of such person/s will be deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned. SHIVA KANT DIXIT ADVOCATE CHAMBER NO. 112, 1st Floor KAN CHAMBER, 14/113, CIVIL LINES, KANPUR NAGAR Mob: 09336632546, 09415403399

DC takes stock of renovation, beautification works

Lucknow (PNS): Divisional Commissioner Roshan Jacob took stock of the ongoing renovation and beautification works spanning from Kaiserbagh crossing to Imambarah, focusing on all heritage buildings. In her directives to the concerned officials, she emphasised expediting the completion of facade lighting on heritage buildings. Jacob stressed the importance of conducting work in a colour-coded manner within the heritage area, including the removal of the rotary railing at Kaiserbagh crossing to be replaced with a stone railing in heritage colors.

Additionally, she instructed the immediate removal of hanging wires and the relocation of haphazardly placed works spanning from Kaiserbagh crossing to Imambarah, focusing on all heritage buildings. In her directives to the concerned officials, she emphasised expediting the completion of facade lighting on heritage buildings. Jacob stressed the importance of conducting work in a colour-coded manner within the heritage area, including the removal of the rotary railing at Kaiserbagh crossing to be replaced with a stone railing in heritage colors.

‘Kakori incident a fallout of electoral feud, legal battle’

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A day after the murder of a man at a Tilak ceremony in Kakori, police attributed the incident to an election-related feud and a prolonged legal battle between the assailants and an associate of the deceased, a former block pramukh supported by the BJP, who also sustained gunshot wounds. The supporters of the block pramukh are outraged over the murder of Anant Ram, escalating tensions in Kakori. Anant Ram and his brother, Ram Vilas, a former gram pradhan, had attended the Tilak ceremony in Tej Kishan Kheda village. Monu Rawat, a rival of Ram Vilas, was also present at the function. "The conflict between the two groups resulted in gunfire targeting the former block pramukh and his associates during the Tilak function, resulting in one fatality while the former pramukh and his associate sustained injuries on Friday night in Kakori," DCP (West) Durgesh Kumar stated. He explained that both Ram Vilas and Monu Rawat were invited to the Tilak function, which was hosted by Ram Kumar Lodhi for his son Sandeep Lodhi. "They had a history of electoral rivalry and had clashed on multiple occasions previously. Prior to becoming bitter adver-

saries, they were close allies and supported each other. However, their relationship soured, leading to ongoing legal battles," he added. Five teams have been formed to apprehend the fugitives. According to reports, after the Tilak ceremony, Ram Vilas and his associate, Amit alias Chhotu, were heading home when Monu and his associates ambushed them near Salim's house in the village. Ram Vilas sustained a gunshot wound to the stomach and began bleeding profusely. Anant Ram Yadav intervened to shield Ram Vilas and took a fatal bullet. In the chaos, Jai Karan and Amit alias Chhotu were also injured. Ram Vilas sought refuge in a nearby house amidst the gunfire. Villagers reported that the DJ's loud music masked the sound of gunfire until it was too late. The injured were rushed to a private hospital, where Jai Karan was discharged after first aid. Ram Vilas and Amit are still hospitalised for their serious injuries. The police arrested the primary suspect, Monu Rawat, on Saturday, while the search continues for other suspects. Anant Ram's body was cremated under heavy police presence late in the evening following a post-mortem examination. The shooting stemmed from a

feud related to a case against the deceased's brother, the pradhan, and the main accused. Family members of Jai Karan claimed that Gyan Lodhi, another suspect, had contested the village pradhan election but lost, leading to animosity towards Ram Vilas. Additionally, a recent molestation case involving Monu Rawat's brother further fuelled tensions. Villagers alleged that Ram Kumar Lodhi orchestrated the incident by inviting both parties to the Tilak function without informing Ram Vilas about Monu's presence. Anant Ram Yadav is survived by wife Dayawati, and six children. Meanwhile, an 18-year-old woman who had been missing for the past two days was found dead at the bank of river Ganga in Bhadohi on Saturday, and one person was detained in connection to the case, police said. ASP Tejveer Singh said the matter came to light when Ajit Pratap Singh, the victim's father filed a missing person complaint on Thursday. In the complaint, Singh said that his daughter, Swati Singh (18), a student of Class 11, went out on Thursday morning after receiving a call from her former teacher and neighbour Harsh Narayan Tiwari on her mobile and did not return.

Bengali Club to celebrate Poila Boishak today

Lucknow (PNS): Bengali Club and Youngmen's Association will be celebrating 'Poila Boishak' (Bengali New Year's day) on Sunday. Secretary Arun Banerjee said that Bengali Club & Youngmen's Association has always strived towards rendering great services in the field of culture, brotherhood and unity. Star Jalsa Bengali reality show singer Soumi Ghosh from Kolkata and her band will be performing live at a cultural evening on the occasion. "Bengali sweet 'darbeshi' will be distributed after the programme," he said, adding Bengali New Year is always celebrated with pomp and show. "Though most of the Bengalis are scattered in different corners of Lucknow, the majority resides in an around Rabindrapalli. This is the 1431st year of Bengali New Year. On this occasion, Bengalis prefer traditional traditional cuisine consisting of dishes like rice, five types of bhaja, shukto. The sweet dish will include payesh (kheer), mishti doi, rasogolla etc," general secretary of Bengali Club Shankar Bhowmick said.

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Form No. URC-2
Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI [Pursuant to section 374(b) of the companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the companies (Authorised to Register) Rules, 2014]

- Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application has been made to the Registrar at Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh that **M/s. Rathore Aromatics**, a partnership firm may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.
- The principal objects of the company are as follows:
A. To manufacture perfumery and essential oils.
B. To sell in wholesale or retail perfumery products, essential oils and products made of essential oils.
- A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at Gata No. 98 Village Nasirapur, District Kanpur.
- Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at 37/17, Westcott Building, The Mall, Kanpur-208001, U.P., within twenty one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.

Name(s) of Applicant
1. **REKHA RATHORE (Partner)**
2. **AMAN RATHORE (Partner)**
3. **MAYANK RATHORE (Partner)**

Dated this 12th day of April, 2024

the pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

Be informed that my husband Pushpendra Singh's army record no. 6499074N Geeta is recorded in the service record of rank Naik Pushpendra Singh. Both are my names. Instead of Geeta, there is Geeta Devi. In future I will be known and recognized as Geeta Devi. My name in government documents is Geeta Devi. Geeta Devi wife Pushpendra Singh nr.- Hirni, Ghatampur, Kanpur Nagar, U.P. 209308.

NOTICE

I have changed my name from VINOD KUMAR TO VINOD KUMAR SAINI S/O KISHORI LAL SAINI R/O 5/71 MAHAVER GANJ 2 FARRUKHABAD for future purpose

NOTICE

Notice Is Hereby Given That The Share Certificate No (s) 9827. For 550 Shares Bearing Distinctive No (s) 42191744 To 42192293 Under Folio No 009827 Standing In The Name(s) Of Mr Prithvi Raj Batra Jointly With My Rakesh Batra In The Books Of Torrent Power Ltd Have Been Lost/ Mis Placed

NOTICE

My husband whose army number is 15581294LHAV, in whose army records my name is recorded as SUNITA, which is wrong. The correct name is SUNITA DEVI, which should be recorded. SUNITA DEVI W/O Dharmendra kumar, Vi.-Ruhipur, P.- Chaukiya, Dit.-Ghazipur (U P) Pin. 233001

NOTICE

I have changed my name from LAVKUSH KUMAR KESARWANI to LAVKUSH KESARWANI. In future I Shall be known as LAVKUSH KESARWANI. LAVKUSH KESARWANI S/o Dakhi Lal Kesarwani, 635/757, Colonelganj, Distt. Prayagraj, UP.

NOTICE

The original copy of the lease deed of my property No.17, Block C, Yojana I, Govind Nagar, Kanpur, which is dated 4.1.1951, Book 1, vol.1548, Page 286, and Addl. No.Book-I, Vol.1560 on Page 47 to 60, Serial No.46 with 47 has been lost whose use will be illegal, whose information is registered in LAR No.20220000672684. Satya Prakash Dixit s/o Mahaveer Prasad Dixit R/o H. No. 109/14, Nehru Nagar, Kanpur.

AUCTION NOTICE

दिनांक 24-04-2024 अपराह्न 12:00 बजे सहायक आयुक्ता ब्यूरो (एस.आई.बी.), 110-माल रोड, लखनऊ में निष्पक्षीय वाहनों :- यू.पी. 32-बी.जी.-6358 (मारुति स्वीफ्ट डिजालर), यू.पी. 32-बी.जी.-5669 (टाटा सुनो) एवं यू.पी. 32-बी.जी.-2449 व 2553 (स्वैन्डर लार्स), यू.पी. 32-बी.जी.-5844 (सुपर स्वैन्डर) मोटरसाइकिलों की नीलामी, सिक्योरिटी रु. 10,000/- नगद जी.एस.टी. एंजीकर के साथ प्रातः 10:30 बजे - 12:00 बजे तक जमा होगा। आई.ओ.पी.ई. एड्ड सक्त.

LU research scholar gets fully-funded internship in Taiwan

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Akrati Sant, a research scholar in the department of chemistry at Lucknow University, under the supervision of Prof Sonkia Bhatia at IT College, has recently secured a fully funded internship position at the College of Biomedical Engineering, Taipei Medical University, Taiwan. This six-month internship, scheduled from May 1 to October 31, is made possible through the Taiwan Experience Education Program (TEEP) by the government of Taiwan. "Miss Sant, a dedicated scholar, will be working in the laboratory of Dr Anup Pandith, focusing on research in drug discovery and development, as well as phototheranostics for the treatment of cancer and tumours. Additionally, Miss Sant will be involved in synthesising novel materials for biological screening in the treatment of breast cancer and osteoporosis," LU

spokesperson Durgesh Srivastava said. Akrati has been actively engaged in cutting-edge research in drug discovery and development as part of her PhD programme since December 2020. Her academic journey includes completing her Master's degree at MJP Rohilkhand University. LU Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai and head of the chemistry department Prof Anil Mishra congratulated Akrati. Meanwhile, a quiz competition on 'Dr Ambedkar's Philosophy' was organised in the department of philosophy on the eve of Dr Ambedkar Jayanti. More than 50 students registered for this competition. Head of the department and organiser of the competition Rajni Srivastava declared the results. Anshika Singh was declared first, with Anya Raj Verma and Anupam Singh jointly securing the second position, and Sarvjeet Shukla securing the third position.

BANK OF MAHARASHTRA
[Rule-8(1)] **POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property)**

The undersigned being the Authorized Officer of the **Bank of Maharashtra** under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of the powers conferred under Sub-section (2) of Section 13 read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notice. The borrowers having failed to repay the amount, Notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession symbolic of the properties described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/ her under section 13(4) of the said Act read with the Rule 8 of the said rules.

S No.	Name & Address of Borrower & Guarantor	Amount due to the bank as per notice	Details of Immovable Property of which possession taken by the bank	Demand Notice Date Possession Date
Branch: Vikas Nagar				
1.	M/S Bhavya Suppliers and Infraving Private Limited, Director Mr Arvind Raj Keshar Tiwari, Address: L1/35, Vinith Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010 (U.P.) Guarantors: 1. Mr. Harsh Vardhan Sing, Address: L1/35, Vinith Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010 (U.P.) 2. Mrs Nishi Singh, Address: L1/35, Vinith Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010 (U.P.)	Rs. 48,20,361.00 + Unapplied Interest @9.75% p.a. w.e.f. 31.01.2024 + penal interest and other charges/expenses	1. Equitable mortgage of farm house property is situated at part of Khasra No- 1189, 1190, 1192, 1204, 1205, 1206, 1208, 1209, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1213 & 1411 in Aurangabad Jagir, Ward Raja Bijli Pasi, Tehsil Sarojnagar Lucknow, admeasuring 109.20 sq mtr, owned by M/s Bhavya Suppliers & Infraving Pvt Ltd., Bounded by: North: Property of Manish Kumar Chaudhary, East: Property of Sarita Tiwari, West: 15 ft wide Road, South: Property of Bhavya Suppliers and Infraving Private Limited 2. Equitable mortgage of farm house property is situated at part of Khasra No- 1189, 1190, 1192, 1204, 1205, 1206, 1208, 1209, 1210, 1211, 1212, 1213 & 1411 in Aurangabad Jagir, Ward Raja Bijli Pasi, Tehsil Sarojnagar Lucknow, admeasuring 90.334 sq mtr, owned by M/s Bhavya Suppliers & Infraving Pvt Ltd., Bounded by: North: Property of Manish Kumar Chaudhary, East: Property of Sarita Tiwari, West: 15 ft wide Road, South: Property of Shanker Datt Jha	31.01.2024 10.04.2024
2.	M/S Hritik Raj, Prop: Hritik Raj S/o Shri Satya Prakash Srivastava, Address: L-1354 Sector I, LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Aashiana, Lucknow-226012 (U.P.) Guarantors: Shri Satya Prakash Srivastava S/o Prem Lal Srivastava Address: L-1354 Sector I, LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Aashiana, Lucknow-226012 (U.P.)	Rs. 19,56,309.09 + Unapplied Interest @11.80% p.a. w.e.f. 12.12.2023 + penal interest and other charges/expenses	Equitable Mortgage of Property situated at H.No L-1354 Sector I, LDA Colony, Kanpur Road, Aashiana, Lucknow-226012 (U.P.) (Owner: Shri Satya Prakash Srivastava S/o Prem Lal Srivastava), Bounded by: North: House No 1353, East: 9 Meter Wide Road, West: House No. 1357, South: House No. 1355	12.12.2023 10.04.2024

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the properties and any dealings with the properties will be subject to the charge of Bank Of Maharashtra for an amount hereinabove mentioned. The details of the properties mortgaged to the Bank and taken possession by the Bank are as above. The Borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Place: Lucknow Date: 14.04.2024

**AUTHORISED OFFICER
BANK OF MAHARASHTRA**

Cong root cause of India's problems: Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath undertook a hectic campaign in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand on Saturday. He held a public rally in support of Bharatiya Janata Party candidate Kunwar Sarvesh Singh from Moradabad Lok Sabha constituency. In Bareilly, he sought support for the BJP candidate from Pilibhit Lok Sabha constituency and state government minister Jitin Prasada and the BJP candidate from Bareilly Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar. Furthermore, in Haldwani, Uttarakhand, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath led an election rally backing Union Minister of State for Defence, Ajay Bhatt. Chief Minister Yogi described the Congress as the root cause of the country's problems while highlighting that under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the nation was addressing every challenge effectively. He remarked that the INDI Alliance, which bows before mafia elements, cannot deliver good governance and security. He emphasised that those who harass women or businessmen have only two destinations – jail or hell. The chief minister hailed the tenure of Prime Minister Narendra Modi as India's golden era post-Independence. Addressing a public meeting in Badhapur (Bijnor), Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised that the criminalisation of politics and protection of mafia-like elements are major obstacles to development.

Yogi recounted the tragic 1980 Moradabad riot in which numerous lives were lost. He noted that details of this incident remained suppressed until 2017, when his investigation exposed the individuals behind the violence. Yogi went on to say, "Innocent traders, Hindus and Sikhs were killed as a result of the violence, and no one was held accountable. There was an anti-Sikh riot in Saharanpur in 2016, but the rioters are now hiding and begging for their lives. The BJP has given a model of development and good governance. Today there is no curfew, no riot in UP, everything is fine here. Curfew has been replaced by kanwar yatra." Addressing a public meeting in Haldwani, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that the tenure of Narendra Modi as India's prime minister would be viewed as the golden period of India post-Independence. He criticised the Congress, asserting that the party is the root cause of India's problems, whereas Prime Minister Modi has addressed and resolved the issues of the nation. Continuing his criticism of the Congress, he said, "Congress is in deep anguish due to the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code in Uttarakhand, which should actually be embraced." Yogi highlighted that Uttar Pradesh is progressing towards becoming 'Uttam Pradesh', thanks to the water from rivers originating from Uttarakhand. He added: "The BJP does not create problems; rather, it solves them. In contrast, Congress has been synonymous with problems through-



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during an election rally with BJP candidate Jitin Prasada (extreme right) and others in Pilibhit on Saturday

out its existence. Whether it is the partition of the country, terrorism, or issues like Naxalism, casteism, corruption and separatism, Congress legacy is rife with challenges. It is only through leaders like Modiji that the country has found solutions to these problems," Yogi asserted. He further remarked that when the youth of Uttarakhand stand at the border, protecting the nation, 140 crore Indians can sleep peacefully. "It is a blessing that as the minister of state

for defence, Ajay Bhatt consistently visits the border to boost the morale of our soldiers." While addressing an election rally in Baheri (Bareilly), Chief Minister Yogi said no one today could illegally occupy land, whether it belongs to Ram Lalla or a poor person, a trader or a common citizen, as such attempts draw severe consequences. He said that criminals involved in grabbing people's land would have to pay a heavy price as their properties would

be confiscated and used for building homes for the poor, as was done in Prayagraj. "When governments like ours and good people are elected, good results follow. Since you voted for the lotus, development and security are taking place. We have provided a better environment for security," he said. Yogi said that today any Indian could go to Jammu and Kashmir and buy land, an opportunity, which the Congress had deprived the

people of when it was in power. "Previous governments used to impose curfews and were infamous for their riot policies whereas not a single riot has taken place in the last seven years in Uttar Pradesh. No curfew, no riots; everything is fine in UP," he remarked. Chief Minister Yogi highlighted the hard efforts made by farmers to earn their livelihood and feed the country. "Previous governments did not understand the value of their hard work," he said.

Mayawati to address rally in Muzaffarnagar today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party supreme Mayawati is set to launch her Lok Sabha election campaign in western Uttar Pradesh with a rally in Muzaffarnagar on April 14, after a gap of seven years, to shore up electoral support for the party. Mayawati would be holding rallies from April 14 to April 23 to seek votes for BSP candidates in Muzaffarnagar, Saharanpur, Rampur, Moradabad, Bijnor, Nagina, Ghaziabad, Bagpat, Amroha, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Bulandshahr, Meerut and Hapur constituencies. Western UP's Bijnor, Nagina, Saharanpur and Amroha parliamentary constituencies are among the 10 seats on which the BSP candidates had emerged victorious in 2019. The Lok Sabha seats going to polls in the first phase of elections this year have a sizable chunk of Dalit and minority community voters. BSP workers, busy in preparations for Behenji's programmes, believe the rallies are going to be "historic" and "the atmosphere on the ground would

change" after April 14. On April 14, Mayawati will hold an election meeting at the Government Inter College grounds in Muzaffarnagar in support of party's candidate Dara Singh Prajapati and Bijnor candidate Vijender Singh Chaudhary. According to BSP leaders, local party workers would be joined by those from nearby areas like Sardhana (Meerut) as they are expecting a large turnout at Mayawati's rallies. "Behenji would be holding a rally in Muzaffarnagar for the first time since 2017. All party workers are enthusiastic about it and are going full swing for preparations. It is going to be a historic rally," a BSP leader said. He said the people in Uttar Pradesh had seen the administration of the governments led by the BSP and the Samajwadi Party and were now witnessing the BJP regime. "The atmosphere which has been created (by the BJP) will change. For example, they have created an image of good law and order while the situation has only deteriorated. The people are unhappy," he said.

Akhilesh Yadav accuses BJP of breaking SP's alliances

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, on Saturday, accused the Bharatiya Janata Party for breaking his alliance with Rashtriya Lok Dal and other parties by offering inducements to their leaders. Akhilesh Yadav addressed several election meetings in Bijnor and Nagina Lok Sabha constituencies. Manoj Kumar is the SP candidate from Nagina (SC) Lok Sabha seat. Without naming RLD chief Jayant Chaudhary and Azad Samaj Party leader Chandrashekhar, the SP chief said, "They were offered many inducements and pressure was also exerted on them and they were given security by the Union home ministry and they crossed over to the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance." He claimed the BJP will not be able to open its account in the constituencies going to polls in the first phase of Lok Sabha elections. Polling will be held in the eight Lok Sabha constituencies

going to polls in the first phase on April 19. Accusing the BJP of unleashing vendetta against the leaders of opposition parties, Akhilesh Yadav said, "The BJP is claiming to win over 400 Lok Sabha seats, but it is not confident about its electoral strength so chief ministers are being arrested and sent to jail." The SP chief claimed that the BJP is so rattled by the growing popularity of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) that it has tried to distort the name of the opposition alliance. He said that the BJP received several thousand of crore as donations under the electoral bond scheme but Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal was sent to jail for receiving donations from the same route. Targeting the BJP over unemployment, the SP chief said, "BJP has been in power at the Centre for the last 10 years and is ruling Uttar Pradesh for the last seven years, yet the party has failed to formulate a potent



economic plan to revive the economy and create fresh employment opportunities for the youth." Targeting the Yogi Adityanath government, the SP chief said, "Unemployment in UP is at its peak. One unemployed youth burnt his degrees while another committed suicide." He said the state government was so incompetent that it could not organise competitive examinations as question papers leaked.

Alleging the state government's connivance in the paper leak, the SP chief said the examination papers were deliberately leaked by the government to deny employment to the youth. The SP chief said the total number of people affected by the paper leak and subsequent cancellation of examination was close to two crore and if they decided to vote against the BJP, then the ruling party would lose at least two lakh votes in each Lok Sabha constituency of UP. Referring to the UP assembly elections in 2022, Akhilesh Yadav said the SP had won several assembly seats in Bijnor district yet they were declared as losers. He appealed to the people not to forget the injustice of the 2022 UP assembly elections and give a befitting reply to the BJP in Lok Sabha polls. He said during the agitation against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act in 2019, the SP cadres were targeted and many were arrested and sent to jail.

Social media influencers to mobilise voters in LS polls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The district administration has enlisted the help of influencers to bolster voter awareness in Lucknow district. District Election Officer/District Magistrate Lucknow, Surya Pal Gangwar, convened a significant meeting with over 50 young social media influencers to mobilise voters for the Lok Sabha elections, scheduled for May 20 in Lucknow, under the SVEEP programmes. The district election officer said that these influencers, now designated as 'Yuva Saathi', will raise awareness among the district residents about voting on May 20 and encourage voter turnout on the polling day. During the meeting, the district election officer emphasised the vital role of voting in democracy and urged participants to not only exercise their own vote but also inspire others to do the same. The DM emphasised the commencement of a large-scale voter awareness campaign in the district to motivate people to vote. He assured that adequate arrangements are being made at all polling stations for the convenience of voters. Furthermore, the DM highlighted that every eligible voter who turned 18 by April 1, 2024, should ensure their names are on the voter list and cast their vote on election

day as a civic duty. He provided instructions for individuals whose names are not yet on the voter list, offering them the opportunity to register until April 23, 2024, via the ECI website or voter helpline app using Form 6. Address changes can also be made using Form 8. He underscored the Election Commission's commitment to providing essential facilities at all polling stations, including seating arrangements, drinking water, toilets, and shelters. He urged all residents to exercise their voting rights. Moreover, the district election officer distributed slips containing his message to all participants, aiming to increase the district's voter turnout. Additionally, voter awareness programmes are being conducted daily in all district schools. The DM announced the Lucknow Voter Cup Cricket Match at KD Singh 'Babu' Stadium between the district administration officials and social media influencers on Sunday.

BRILLE BALLOT SHEETS AT POLLING BOOTHS
Uttar Pradesh Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa announced that visually impaired voters will have the option to cast their votes using dummy ballot sheets in Braille

script during the Lok Sabha elections. "These Braille ballot sheets will be provided at every polling booth. The serial numbers of the candidates on the EVMs will be engraved on the right side of the blue button. Once the candidate list is finalised, it will be transcribed into Braille script on the dummy ballot sheets. The Braille sheet will include the ballot unit number, candidate serial number, candidate name, and party name. If there are more than 15 candidates, separate ballot unit-1 and ballot unit-2 sheets will be prepared," he explained. Visually impaired voters can request these Braille ballot sheets at the polling booth. "After casting their vote, the dummy ballot sheet will be collected by the presiding officer, who will maintain a record of voters utilising this facility," Rinwa said. "The Braille dummy ballot sheets will mirror the format of the official ballot paper, displaying candidate numbers, names, party affiliations, and constituency details," he elaborated. Rinwa highlighted the extensive publicity efforts via print, electronic, and social media platforms to raise awareness among visually impaired voters about these facilities.

Register murder case in custodial death: CPI (ML)

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) has demanded that a murder case be registered against the policemen accused of custodial death of a Dalit villager, Asharam, at Mitauli police station on Friday for an inquiry into the murder of a six-year-old girl whose body was recovered last week, police said. Asharam's family along with some villagers staged a demonstration at Kasta crossing on Saturday with the dead body, demanding an FIR against the police officials. **CPI-M FLAYS ORDER OF VARANASI CP**
The Uttar Pradesh unit of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) has criticised the order of commissioner of police Varanasi to cops deployed at Kashi Vishwanath Temple to chant 'Har Har Mahadev' while welcoming the visitors, saying it was highly objectionable and anti-constitutional. According to the orders of the Commissioner of Police, the cops deployed in Kashi Vishwanath Temple will wear saffron attire and will welcome the visitors by chanting 'Jai Har Har Mahadev'. "The Constitution of India does not allow this at all. An officer of Uttar Pradesh Police is insulting the Constitution by giving such an order," said the CPI-M and added that the order should be withdrawn immediately.

health centre and then to a district hospital where he died during the treatment. Asharam was called to the Mitauli police station on Friday for an inquiry into the murder of a six-year-old girl whose body was recovered last week, police said. Asharam's family along with some villagers staged a demonstration at Kasta crossing on Saturday with the dead body, demanding an FIR against the police officials.

Girl alleges sexual exploitation, dowry demand by fiancé

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A Facebook friend of a girl proposed to marry her while imploring her to turn their friendship into a lifelong relationship and allegedly sexually exploited her by taking her into confidence. He later put a hefty demand of dowry and a car as a gift for marrying her. "Vipin Mishra of Ayodhya, sexually exploited me after he took me to different hotels in Charbagh before the marriage. I kept requesting him to spare me until the marriage, but in vain. My marriage is scheduled for April 25, and Vipin and his family are demanding a hefty sum of dowry and a car as a gift. My father cannot afford these gifts. We have already spent around Rs 7 lakh till date. The demand for additional dowry is a ploy to cancel the marriage," she alleged. On her complaint, the PGI police registered a case and started a probe. Those named in the case have been identified as Vipin Mishra, his father Jagannath Mishra and their relative Shubham (Vipin's sister's husband), all of Ayodhya district. In her complaint, the girl said she came in contact with Vipin through a Facebook post and he later played the Brahmin

card, saying both belonged to the same caste and so they could be good friends. "He later insisted on meeting me and reached Lucknow. He told me that he is also a Brahmin and they can be good friends. He later proposed to me," she said. The girl informed her mother, who sent her father to talk to Vipin's father about the marriage, and the negotiations started. On April 29, 2022, an engagement function was organised and Vipin got Rs 1.1 lakh and other items as gifts. After that, Vipin would call the victim to meet him at hotels in Charbagh where he allegedly sexually exploited her," the girl alleged. She said another pre-wedding function was fixed on January 26, 2023 on her insistence and her parents spent around Rs 6 lakh. "Our marriage is scheduled for April 25. Vipin invited me to meet him at his house in New Delhi, saying he had to go shopping. He also sent me a ticket to a train. On reaching there on October 27, Vipin sexually exploited me again. Three days later, his brother-in-law Shubham joined him at the home. Shubham had an evil design in his mind for me and he caught me by my hand one day. When I opposed, he said he had a 'right on my

body' because he was her husband's brother-in-law. I complained to Vipin but sided with Shubham. They later increased their demand for dowry. Shubham said he would not let Vipin marry me while Vipin's father also demanded the dowry and refused to allow the marriage," she alleged. Police registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC.

TWO DEAD IN SUV-TRUCK COLLISION IN DEORIA
Two people were killed and one was injured here, when their SUV collided with a stranded truck from behind, police said on Saturday. Additional Superintendent of Police Dipendra Nath said the incident occurred on Friday night in Tandwa village under the Madanpur Police station area. The police team rushed to the spot and rescued three men who were travelling in the SUV and took them to a hospital, the ASP said. "Two of the occupants of the SUV, Sanjay Singh (45) and Krishna Yadav (50), both residents of Deoria, were declared dead by the doctors at the hospital. The third occupant, Seshnath Yadav, sustained injuries and is still admitted there," he said. The bodies were sent for post-mortem and further investigation is underway, he added.

BJP to consolidate votes with narrative of development

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bharatiya Janata Party's star campaigner Yogi Adityanath is focusing on the development narrative to consolidate votes across sections in the state in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections 2024 to achieve the party's ambitious target of 80 out of 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh. In this context, the slogan 'Developed Uttar Pradesh for a Developed India' is raised in every public meeting and it may prove to be a game-changer. From Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the BJP leaders are making concerted efforts to drive the message of development and well-being of people home to the voters. At every public gathering, these leaders meticulously outline the progress achieved nationwide over the past decade, as well as in Uttar Pradesh over the last seven years, in order to familiarise people with their works and also their intent. They are keen on highlighting the monumental changes witnessed in the state under the governance of the double-engine government. Over the past seven years, the Yogi government has orchestrated transformative initiatives, particularly in bolstering the state's infrastructure and enhancing its amenities. The improved connectivity has garnered the interest of investors both domestically and internationally, leading to the influx of investments worth lakhs of crores of rupees and the creation of numerous employment opportunities. Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Yogi have set their sights on winning all 80 Lok Sabha seats in the state, aiming to sustain this momentum of progress and transformation. If analysts are to be believed, this objective is finding resonance and support among the populace of the state. In every election, development emerges as the paramount issue, and general elections 2024 are no exception. The BJP stands out with a significant advantage over its oppositions, particularly regarding development agendas. Notably, in Uttar Pradesh, Chief Minister Yogi has spearheaded a transformative era of progress over the past seven years. This period has witnessed remarkable advancements in the state's infrastructure, amenities and connectivity. Under the guidance of Prime Minister Modi and the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi, Uttar Pradesh now boasts the operation of six expressways, with an additional seven under construction, significantly elevating its share to over 55 per cent of the nation's total expressway network. Moreover,

Uttar Pradesh leads the nation in airport infrastructure, with four international and eleven domestic airports in operation, complemented by six under development. Noteworthy is the establishment of one of the country's two defence industrial corridors within Uttar Pradesh, delineated into six nodes, including Aligarh, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Jhansi and Chitrakoot. Brahmos units are being established in Lucknow node and Bharat dynamics units in Jhansi node. The connectivity landscape of Uttar Pradesh extends far beyond conventional highways and airports, encompassing modern metro systems and waterways. Presently, metro services are operational in four cities of the state, including Gautam Buddha Nagar, Lucknow, Kanpur and Agra. Additionally, plans are underway to introduce metro projects in Kashi, Meerut, Prayagraj, Gorakhpur, Jhansi, and Bareilly, signaling a significant expansion of urban transport infrastructure. Notably, efforts to enhance metro connectivity in Lucknow through a second phase expansion are in progress. Moreover, the inauguration of rapid rail Namoo Bharat on the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut corridor marks a significant milestone, establishing the country's inaugural regional rail service. In Varanasi, the implementation of a ropeway project underscores the commitment to innovative transport solutions. Furthermore, Uttar Pradesh has made commendable strides in leveraging waterways for connectivity enhancement. The National Waterway-1 vision is facilitating the linkage of Prayagraj with Haldia port, fostering seamless inland navigation. Moreover, a multi-modal terminal is being operated on the Haldia-Varanasi road and river Ganga in Varanasi. Due to improvements in infrastructure, Uttar Pradesh has become the dream destination for investors. In the Global Investors' Summit 2023, proposals worth nearly Rs 40 lakh crore were received from across the country and the world, which could potentially create crores of jobs and employment opportunities. Recently, through the fourth groundbreaking ceremony (GBC@IV), the implementation of investment proposals worth Rs 10.24 lakh crore has begun. This will create employment for thousands of youth. Prior to this, investment proposals worth Rs 4.28 lakh crore were received in the Investors' Summit 2018. Under this, the implementation of these investment proposals was carried out through three GBCs.

This poll is for ‘Future India’: Bansal

PNS ■ VARANASI

Bharatiya Janata Party national general secretary Sunil Bansal said that the upcoming Lok Sabha election was to make the Future India. “These days two slogans are heard everywhere. One, ‘Abki Baar 400 Paar’ (this time more than 400 seats) and the second, ‘Phir ek baar, Modi sarkar’ (Modi government once again) and the people have made up their mind that this time Prime Minister Narendra Modi has to be given 400 seats. There is no doubt in anyone’s mind regarding this,” Bansal said while addressing a workshop of the party’s yuva vistaraks (youth promoters) at the BJP’s regional office in Rohania here on Saturday. More than 50 yuva vistaraks from each assembly segment of Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency participated in the workshop. About 300 youths participated in the workshop. “We all are fortunate to have got the opportunity to campaign for Prime Minister Narendra Modi,” he added. “After 10-20 years, when the people will discuss with the new generation, they will tell how they had worked for Modi ji. They will have many stories to tell in the future,” Bansal said and asked the party workers to make up their minds and reach out to the youth in Varanasi, the prime minister’s Lok Sabha constituency. The BJP national general secretary said that now 50 days were left for polling and the party workers should remain



BJP general secretary Sunil Bansal addressing party's Yuva Vistaraks in Varanasi on Saturday

active among the youth.

“If the party workers work honestly for even five hours every day for 50 days, they will get results more than the target set by the party,” he said, suggesting the young workers to do their work for half the day and work for the party for the other half as about five lakh youth voters in Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency were in the age group of 18 to 30 years. Bansal told the yuva vistaraks that five important tasks had to be done as part of the Lok Sabha election preparations. He said the first task was to organise NaMo Yuva Chaupals at all the 340 Shakti Kendras of Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency within the next 10 days, ensuring that there were more than 100 participants in each NaMo Yuva Chaupal.

He said the second important work was to prepare a list of 10 youth for each of the 1909 booths in this parliamentary constituency. “All the 10 members included in this list should be first time voters. Along with the names, the mobile numbers should also be there in the list,” he said. “Besides, in 21 mandals falling under the Lok Sabha constituency, new voter conferences have to be organised as per the mandal,” he advised. Highlighting the third important task, he said that five big programmes of youth in the five assembly segments of Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency should be organised in which padyatras, motorcycle rallies, conferences, seminars, meetings etc. were prominent. “Efforts should be made so all these youths come to the nom-

ination rally of the prime minister and through these programmes about 50,000 youths would have joined the BJP,” he said. According to Bansal, the fourth important task was to form 100 teams of these youth to make public contacts in the entire Lok Sabha constituency. “These teams will carry forward the campaign of the prime minister through hand bills, stickers and placards at major places of the city,” he added. He said that the fifth important task was to make special contacts with the talented youth living in Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency and to make their list and connect them with the prime minister. The BJP leader said that the aim of this election was not just victory but also to make Modi victorious by more votes than

the previous election. “All have seen Kashi changing. Kashi Vishwanath Dham is built. Lakhs of people come every day. Due to this, people’s employment has increased. The coming five years are important for the development of Kashi. The prime minister is moving forward with the resolve of a developed India. Today, countries like America, Russia and England believe in India. We will make India a world leader again. This dream should not only be of Modi but of the young generation,” he said. While delivering the welcome address, BJP regional president Dilip Patel said that the prime minister would win from Varanasi Lok Sabha by a record number of votes and the lotus would bloom in all the 14 Lok Sabha constituencies of Kashi region. The function was conducted by BJP regional general secretary Ashutosh Pal while Yuva Morcha regional president Shailendra Maurya proposed the vote of thanks. Cluster in-charge and UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Girish Chandra Yadav, MLC and Lok Sabha coordinator Ashwani Tyagi, state secretary Archana Mishra, Lok Sabha in-charge Satish Dwivedi, MLC and district and city in-charge Arun Pathak, former MLA Jagdish Patel, Ashok Chaurasia, Rajesh Rajbhar, regional media in-charge Navratan Rath, media in-charge Santosh Solapurkar, Rajat Jaiswal, Aman Sonkar, Sandeep Keshari were among those present.

₹8-cr assets uncovered in name of Atiq’s former cleaning worker

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Assets valued at over Rs 8 crore have been uncovered under the name of Shyamji Saroj, a former cleaning worker at the residence of close relatives of Atiq. Following the recovery of sale deed registration and land documents, bank accounts, dishonoured cheques, affidavits etc, police have launched a probe into the matter. Acting on the complaint filed by Saroj, the police have registered a case against the accused and commenced their search operation. A multimillion-rupee scheme involving the transfer of benami properties to sweepers and servants has come to light. These individuals, unaware of their substantial property holdings and bank balances in the lakhs, have now discovered their millionaire status. The revelation has sparked conversations throughout Prayagraj. Saroj, earning a monthly wage of Rs 8,000, possesses valuable land in several villages across Naini, Phulpur, and Handia

tehsils. The police are poised to seize these benami properties following document scrutiny and testimonial evidence gathering. A resident of Koral in the Nawabganj police station area, Saroj has lodged a complaint against Javed Khan, Kamran Ahmed, Faraz Ahmed Khan, Shuklaji, and others at the Atarsuiya police station. Alleging a 15-year tenure as a cleaner in the households of Javed, Kamran, and Faraz, all closely associated with the slain mafia don-turned-politician Atiq and Ashraf, Saroj claims that these individuals, along with Atiq and Ashraf, orchestrated the registration of land sale deeds across Prayagraj in his name. Accusing them of coercing him into signing documents and opening bank accounts, Saroj alleged that they retained control of passbooks and pre-signed cheques. He further claimed to have been abducted and held captive in a hotel in Ranimandi, where he faced threats in the name of Atiq-Ashraf and was physically assaulted into signing numer-

ous papers. In response to Saroj’s complaint, the police have registered a case under serious charges. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Nagar) Deepak Bhukar stated that further details are being gathered regarding the properties mentioned, with physical verification to be conducted in collaboration with revenue administration. These properties, considered proceeds of criminal activity, will also be confiscated under the Gangsters Act. It is worth noting that several individuals closely associated with Atiq devised a scheme to acquire land, subsequently registering benami properties in the names of servants when their personal and familial landholdings expanded. This strategy also involved the illicit purchase and sale of Dalit, disputed, state, ceiling, and Waqf Board lands for significant sums. Police scrutiny and the deployment of multiple investigative teams have begun to unravel the extent of this operation.

Two hawkers killed, one injured in road mishap

Varanasi (PNS): Two newspaper hawkers were killed and one other sustained serious injuries when an uncontrolled car hit them near Dhakwan village under Chaubeypur police station of the district on Saturday morning. All three hawkers – Sanjeet Kumar (35), Shail Kumar (34) and Pramod Kumar (32) – were going to Pandeypur by bicycles to collect newspapers for distribution. While Sanjeet Kumar and Shail Kumar died on the spot, the condition of Pramod Kumar was said to be critical. He has been shifted to the Trauma Centre in BHU in view of his critical condition. Agitated over the accident, a mob blocked the Varanasi-Ghazipur highway, demanding arrest of the car driver. The ADCP, SDM, ACP reached the spot and assured the protesters that financial assistance would be provided to the victims and the car driver would be arrested and legal action would be taken against him. On the assurance given by the officers, the road blockade was lifted. The police sent the bodies for post-mortem. According to police, the car involved in the accident belongs to an officer of Ballia, who is a resident of Ghazipur. The vehicle is registered in the name of the officer’s wife. Police are searching for the driver.

BJP candidate Tripathi meets DyCM Maurya



PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Neeraj Tripathi, the BJP candidate from the Allahabad parliamentary seat, met Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya in Lucknow on Saturday. The Deputy CM congratulated Tripathi and wished him victory. Wife Kavita Tripathi was also in attendance. He is currently serving as the additional advocate general of Uttar Pradesh. His wife Kavita actively engages in social service and holds the position of BJP Mahila Morcha state secretary. It’s noteworthy that Keshari Nath Tripathi was a prominent leader of the BJP, having held various significant positions within the party, including state president, minister, assembly speaker, and governor. His passing on January 8, 2023, prompted condolences from numerous senior leaders, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and Defense Minister Rajnath Singh.

Keshari Nath Tripathi was known for advocating against treating politics as a business and opposed nepotism, refraining from involving his son in politics during his lifetime. He urged party workers to unite and elect the right candidate. Neeraj Tripathi, along with his wife Kavita Tripathi, MLA Nirmala Paswan, and senior BJP leader Dr LS Ojha, also paid a courtesy visit to the deputy CM’s camp office in Lucknow. Maurya shared a picture of the meeting on social media, extending his congratulations to Neeraj Tripathi and expressing advance wishes for a resounding victory. Previously, BJP candidates from other constituencies, including MLA Praveen Patel from Phulpur and Kaushambi MP Vinod Sonkar, sought blessings from the deputy CM in Lucknow. Additionally, Vinod Kumar Bind, BJP candidate from Bhadohi Lok Sabha constituency and MLA from Majhawan (Mirzapur), also met Maurya.

Man shot at while sleeping

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 45-year-old man, who was sleeping on a cot in the verandah of his house in Aswa alias Hajiganj village of Soraon police station area, was shot at around 1 am on and Saturday. The bullet struck him between the waist and stomach while he was asleep. When family members rushed to the scene upon hearing the screams, the attackers had already fled. Shailendra Kumar Patel, son of Ramkumar, had been living outside the village for several years, building a house on his farmland along the S o r a o n - Shantipuram road. After having dinner on Friday, Shailendra was sleeping in the verandah of his house when the attackers arrived and opened fire around 1 am on Saturday. Nearly eight months ago, more than half a dozen men had assaulted Ramkumar at his house, inflicting serious injuries, over a land dispute. They brutally beat Ramkumar Patel, resulting in multiple fractures in his arms and legs. A case was registered against about half a dozen people from the village under various sections at Soraon police station based on the victim’s complaint regarding the incident. It has been alleged that the police did not act impartially and



instead attempted to protect the accused. Had concrete action been taken against the attackers earlier, the recent attack on Shailendra Patel might have been prevented, sources claimed. Inspector Satish Kumar, in-charge of Soraon, stated that a case has been registered against four unidentified accused under various IPC sections based on the victim’s family’s complaint, and efforts are underway to apprehend them.

SEVERAL INJURED IN BUS-TRUCK COLLISION

Several passengers aboard a roadways bus sustained injuries when the vehicle collided with a truck on the Prayagraj-Mirzapur highway near United College of Industrial police station area on Saturday. The injured have been admitted to a hospital. Upon receiving the report, police reached the scene. The bus, belonging to the Mirzapur depot and carrying passengers bound for Mirzapur, was involved in the collision with a rice-laden truck approaching from the opposite direction around 4 pm. The impact ejected several passengers from their seats, resulting in injuries to more than half a dozen on the bus. Inspector, Naini, Yash Pal Singh said Aryan Gupta, son of Daya Shankar from Ghoraval Robertsganj; Amit, son of Shyam Sundar from Renukoot; Asha Devi, wife of Ramchandra from Indranagar, Rae Bareli; and Bal Krishna, son of Kamla Prasad from Bharekhara Jigna, who were seated near the front, sustained grievous injuries. Other passengers suffered minor injuries. Following the accident, the police transported all the injured to a nearby private nursing home and informed their families about the incident.

Devotees throng temples on fifth day of Navratri



Prayagraj (PNS): On the fifth day of Chaitra Navratri, devotees gathered in various temples to worship Goddess Skandamata, the fifth form of Maa Durga, amidst Vedic chants on Saturday. The rituals included performing aarti, offering ‘Naiveda’, sweets, and flowers to the goddess. Long queues of devotees were seen at Shaktipeeth Kalyani Devi, Lalita Devi, Alop Shankari, and other Devi temples throughout the day. The day began with ‘Mangala Aarti’ at 4:30 in the morning, followed by ‘darshan’ and worship rituals continuing until late at night. Devotees purchased flower garlands, coconuts, and ‘chunri’ from shops outside the temples to offer to the goddess. Maa Skandamata, the fifth form of Maa Durga, is revered on the fifth day of Chaitra Navratri. Known as the mother of Lord Skanda (Kartikkeya), she is depicted riding a lion with four arms. In one arm, she holds Kartikkeya, in another a lotus flower, while displaying the ‘Jagat Taran Varad Mudra’ with her remaining arms, signifying peace and solace. Astrologer Acharya Anant Kumar Mishra explained that Skandamata, the deity of wisdom and wealth, is worshipped on this day. Temples experienced heavy footfall throughout the day, with devotees seeking ‘darshan’. Vinayak Bhardwaj, priest of Badi Devi Temple, highlighted the unique glory of Maa Kushmanda.

AAU VC, NERAMAC MD visit rice research institute

PNS ■ VARANASI

Vice-Chancellor of Assam Agricultural University (AAU), Jorhat, Dr Vidyut Chandan Deka, and Managing Director of North Eastern Regional Agricultural Marketing Corporation (NERAMAC) Cmde (Retired) Rajeev Ashok visited the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC) here on Friday. During their visit, they received detailed information from the scientists of IRRI’s Varanasi centre on aspects like development and breeding of high quality varieties of paddy, seed system, value chain proposals, natural management techniques, capacity building etc. Additionally, collaboration opportunities related to the Assam Agri-business and Rural Transformation Project (APART) implemented in Assam were also discussed with the scientists. The visiting delegates were exposed to state-of-the-art techniques in different types of development/breeding, testing protocols, quality seed production, conditioning methods, agronomic practices for mechanised direct-seeded rice, value chain propositions and post-production operations. They also got an opportunity to explore the technologies visiting state-of-the-art laboratories, speed breed facility and other agricultural facilities. While visiting the Sensory and Product Development



AAU VC Dr VC Deka, and NERAMAC MD Cmde (Retd) Rajeev Ashok visiting ISARC in Varanasi on Friday

Laboratory, they tasted the high value rice products being developed by ISARC scientists like Kalanamak rice cookies, Muesli, instant upma etc. The visit of Dr Deka was mainly focused on promoting and strengthening the decades-old collaboration and partnership between IRRI and AAU, which has been instrumental in driving agricultural transformation in Assam and beyond. Dr Deka appreciated the important role played by ISARC in strengthening this collaboration, citing the concrete impacts achieved through joint initiatives such as the World Bank-funded Assam Agribusiness and Rural Transformation Project

(APART). He further said that as a result of APART, more than 50 per cent of rice farmers in Assam were using mechanised equipment, which had reduced the labour required by farmers in farming practices and through modern technologies, the farmers were getting more profits. ISARC Director Dr Sudhanshu Singh explained the proposed role and future plans of ISARC in promoting research, scientific innovation and agricultural development in rice-based agriculture in Assam. He said, “ISARC has made significant pioneering contributions in rice research and development over the years. Our endeavour is to ensure that

IRRI’s innovations reach maximum countries in South Asia and South East Asia through our centre in Varanasi.” Dr Deka also met Director of the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) Dr SVS Raju and Director of the Indian Institute of Vegetable Research (IIVR) Dr Tushar Kanti Behera and discussed ways to promote cooperation, share experiences and mutual development and advancement in the field of agriculture and allied sciences. In a one-on-one interaction with senior scientists from ISARC, Cmde (Retd) Rajeev Ashok discussed important topics related to agricultural marketing and development.

‘Teach for BHU fellows’ training begins

PNS ■ VARANASI

The two-day ‘Teach for BHU Fellows’ training started in the Laxman Das guest house complex in Banaras Hindu University here on Saturday. During the training, the fellows will get tips from experts on excelling as professionals in higher education. Addressing the inaugural session, Registrar Prof Arun Kumar Singh, who was the chief guest, said that the students, after completing TFB fellowship in BHU, made the institution proud as they joined other institutions and worked there. He urged the participants of the fresh batch of TFB to make the most of the programme and develop efficiency, teaching skills, empathy, patience and other qualities which were

important for their professional advancement. He said that teaching was a passion and a teacher should have the highest level of integrity. Guest of honour Prof Rakesh Singh from the Institute of Agricultural Sciences, said that a teacher should keep learning throughout the life in the process of upgrading and developing self. Prof Sunil Kumar Singh, coordinator of the programme, delivered the welcome address. The first session was on training and it focused on panel discussion on teaching modules. Prof Sunil Kumar Singh and Dr Somu Singh from the Faculty of Education shared insights on various aspects of effective teaching. The participants were taken on a tour to the Central Library during which Librarian Dr DK

Singh delivered a talk on ‘Role of Library in Higher Education: A Practical Approach’. He introduced the participants to various segments of the library which are crucial for the smooth and effective functioning of the library. Assistant Information and Public Relations Officer Chander Shekher Gwari discussed the significance of social media in enhancing professional profile as a higher education teacher. Dr Geeta Rai from the Institute of Science talked about intellectual property rights and its use for university teachers. A total of 25 Teach for BHU fellows are attending the workshop. Dr PC Abhilash from the Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development proposed the vote of thanks. Laxman ensured the smooth conduct of the workshop.



DM: Speed up disposal of revenue cases



PNS ■ VARANASI

District Magistrate S Rajalingam, during the review of disposal of revenue cases in the Collectorate auditorium here on Friday, directed the officers concerned to expedite the disposal of revenue cases. While directing the magistrates with special emphasis, he said that everyone’s ACR (Annual Confidential Report) would depend on the disposal of the cases. During the review of the cases of the last three months, the DM gave instructions to the officers to prepare the file of all the cases if the situation of disposal was found to be very bad, and warned that all the magistrates/officers should ensure 100 per cent disposal of the cases within a month. The disposal of cases pending for more than five years, three years and one year in various sections should become zero, he added.

NHRC flags human rights violations in Sandeshkhali

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has flagged, "numerous instances of atrocities," suggesting a clear "violation of human rights" in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal due to "neglect" in preventing such occurrences. The NHRC report following a spot inquiry into the incident also noted that the "widespread fear of retaliation, compounded by existing power dynamics, acted as a significant obstacle," hindering individuals from expressing their grievances. The rights panel has put forward several recommendations and has requested an action taken report (ATR) within eight weeks on each recommendation from the West Bengal government, as stated in a statement released by the NHRC on Saturday.

"The Commission's spot inquiry has revealed several instances of atrocities inflicted upon the victims, which clearly demonstrate, prima facie, that there was a violation of human rights due to negligence in the prevention of such violation or abatement thereof by the public servant," it said. The Commission has sent its spot inquiry report to the chief secretary and DGP, West Bengal for submitting the ATR. The NHRC report made an observation that the "atmosphere due to the atrocities by the alleged accused persons rendered the victims silent", and intimidation, and terror made them "reluctant to seek justice". This "climate of terror" not only "perpetuates the cycle of abuse", but also underscores the urgent need to create a safe and supportive environment for victims to "break free from the shackles of silence," it has



observed. The rights panel has also made an observation that the "atmosphere of fear" not only affects the victims but also has a "negative impact" on the growth and health of the children who constantly witness the ordeals of their parents at the hands of these alleged accused. On February 21, the NHRC had taken suo motu cognisance of print and electronic media reports that in Sandeshkhali, North 24th Paragana, "innocent and impoverished women have been harassed and sexually assaulted by a group of local gang of a political person". As a result, for the last few days, local villagers had started protesting, seeking appropriate legal action against the "perpetrators of horrific crimes indulged by various goons and anti-social elements, when the local administration failed to take appropriate legal action against the perpetrators of

crime," it added. In addition to seeking reports from the state government, the Commission, considering the gravity of the situation, had deputed an investigation team for a spot inquiry, headed by one of its members. "In response, thereto, the DG and IGP, West Bengal vide communication dated 29.02.2024, revealed that a total of 25 cases were registered among which seven cases were on alleged complaints of a sexual offence against women and 24 accused persons were arrested," it said. Efforts were also being made to arrest the absconding perpetrators of the crime. The overall situation of the entire Sandeshkhali police station area and Nazat police station area was described to be "well under control". The NHRC investigation team found that there is a need to "uproot the fear" of these persons from the hearts of the vic-

tims to enable them to live their normal lives with their families and gain the confidence to live in society with dignity and pride. It is the duty of the district authorities, being arms of a welfare state, to take consistent measures to instil confidence in the residents of the area in general, and victims in particular, so that others who have been victims of crimes may come forward and file their complaints, the statement said. The NHRC, in its statement, said its team also interacted with the police and administration at Sandeshkhali and requested for further information, "but despite reminders, no reply has been given to date". The recommendations given by the NHRC team include "reinstating trust in the rule of law and confidence in authorities" and ensuring witness protection and redressal of grievances.

Indian Army celebrates 40 years of Operation Meghdoot on Siachen Glacier

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Army and IAF have significantly enhanced their combat capabilities to guard the Siachen glacier, world's highest battlefield located at a height of more than 20,000 feet. India secured the strategically important heights on the glacier on April 13, 1984 as part of Operation Meghdoot thereby gaining edge over Pakistan. Highlighting some crucial improvements undertaken to further improve operational readiness, officials said here on the 40th year of Operation Meghdoot, measures include induction of heavy-lift helicopters and logistic drones, deployment of all-terrain vehicles and laying of an extensive network of tracks. The Siachen glacier at the height of around 20,000 feet in the Karakoram mountain range is known as the highest militarised zone in the world where soldiers have to battle frostbite and high winds. It is 78 kms in length. Under its "Operation Meghdoot", the Indian Army established its full control over the glacier on April 13, 1984. "The Indian Army's control over the Siachen glacier has not only been a story of unparalleled valour and determination but also an incredible journey of technological advancements and logistical improvements that transformed it from one of the most formidable terrains into a symbol of indomitable spirit and innovation," said an official.



The initiatives, especially laid out in the last five years, have made significant strides in improving the living conditions and operational capabilities of the personnel deployed in Siachen, he said. There has been a noteworthy improvement in the aspect of mobility in Siachen with the development of an extensive network of tracks and the introduction of all-terrain vehicles (ATV), have significantly improved mobility across the glacier," he said. Another official said innovations like the DRDO-developed ATV bridges have enabled the Army to overcome natural obstacles, while high-quality "Dyneema" ropes in aerial cableways ensure seamless supply lines to even the most-remote outposts. The induction of heavy-lift helicopters and logistic drones

has vastly improved the supply of essentials to the personnel deployed in posts that are cut off, especially in winters, he said. The availability of special clothing, mountaineering equipment and advanced rations has enhanced the ability of the soldiers to withstand the harsh conditions of the world's coldest battlefield, the official added. He said gadgets, such as pocket weather trackers, with each soldier provides timely weather updates and warn them about possible avalanches. There has been a focus on improvement in mobile and data connectivity in the region as well and introduction of the VSAT technology has revolutionised communication on the glacier, providing the troops with data and internet connectivity.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has established telemedicine nodes that provide critical medical support not only to the troops but also to the local populace and tourists in the Nubra valley. Operation Meghdoot was launched when the Indian Army and IAF advanced to the Siachen glacier to secure the heights dominating the Northern Ladakh region. The operation involved the airlifting of Indian Army soldiers by the IAF and dropping them on the glacial peaks. Although the operation began in 1984, IAF helicopters were already operating in the Siachen Glacier since 1978, flying the Chetak helicopters which was the first IAF helicopter to land in the Glacier in October 1978. By 1984, Pakistan's cartographic aggression in the

uncharted territory of Ladakh, allowing foreign mountaineering expeditions in Siachen, was becoming a cause of concern. Having received intelligence inputs about an impending Pakistani military action in the area, India decided to thwart Pakistan's efforts to legitimize its claim on Siachen. The Indian Army launched Operation Meghdoot, to secure strategic heights on Siachen with the deployment of troops. Playing an irreplaceable role in this effort, IAF's tactical and strategic airlifters, An-12s, An-32s and IL-76s transported stores and troops and air-dropped supplies to high altitude airfields, from where Mi-17, Mi-8, Chetak and Cheetah helicopters ferried men and material to dizzying heights on the glacier, far above the limits set by the helicopter manufacturers. Soon, about 300-odd troops were positioned on the strategically important peaks and passes of the glacier. By the time the Pakistan army reacted by advancing its own troops, the Indian Army was occupying strategically crucial mountain peaks and passes, thereby gaining a tactical advantage. Nearly all the aircraft of the IAF including Rafale, Su-30MKI, Chinook, Apache, Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH) Mk III & Mk IV, Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) Prachand, MiG-29, Mirage-2000, C-17, C-130 J, IL-76 and An-32 operate in support of Operation Meghdoot.

Modi tries his hand at gaming during meet with top gamers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Not often would one see a Prime Minister indulging in video games but, during an interaction with some of the country's top gamers, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday not only addressed issues facing the e-sports and gaming industry but also played VR (virtual reality) and other mobile games. He also remarked in jest "Bhagwaan kare mujhe iski aadat na lage (I pray to god I do not get addicted to this)" after a few rounds of gaming. Impressed by his humour, the gamers called him the "coolest PM" and "country's biggest influencer." Incidentally, his comments on word 'noob' turned into a slug fest between political parties. During the interaction with the gamers, Prime Minister Modi burst out laughing and took a dig at the Opposition when one of the participants mentioned the word 'noob'. Noob is a slang word that refers to someone who is new to a game, concept, or idea, implying a lack of experience in that field. In a video posted by the Prime Minister on X, the gamers are seen telling him some gaming terminologies like "grind" and "noob". Upon hearing the word "noob", Modi is seen bursting into laughter. "If I use this word during elections, people will wonder who am I referring to. If I say it, you will assume it for a particular person," Modi says without naming any leader.



The remark led to a sort of war of words between Congress and BJP. "These are just political tactics of the BJP around the elections. This will backfire," veteran Congress leader Pramod Tiwari told a TV channel. BJP leader Shehzad Poonawalla took to X to slam Congress. "PM Modi did not name anybody, but why are Congress leaders reacting and confirming who the noob of politics is?" Poonawalla said. Kangana Ranaut also responded, asking, "Who is the noob?" Meanwhile, in the free-wheeling interaction regarding the future as well as the challenges before the e-gaming industry, the prime minister posed curious questions to the gamers while also trying his hands at some of the games. "People have offered different solutions. I have an alternative solution called Mission LIFE, which advocates for changing our daily lifestyle to benefit the environment. Now, envi-

sion a game aimed at addressing global climate issues, where the gamer must explore various methods and solutions to identify the most sustainable approach," Modi told the gamers during the interaction. "What are these steps? How do we navigate through it and choose the best approach for success? Take swachhata as an example, the game theme could revolve around cleanliness and every child should play this game. Youngsters should embrace Indian values and understand their true significance," he said. The gamers discussed new developments in the gaming industry with the prime minister, who stressed how the government has recognised the creativity of the gamers, promoting the gaming industry in India. They also engaged on issues concerning gambling versus gaming while discussing the participation of women in the gaming industry.

BJP Government has legalised corruption through electoral bonds, alleges Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Countering Prime Minister Narendra Modi's attack on the Opposition on the issue of corruption, the Congress on Saturday alleged that the BJP has consistently hampered anti-corruption efforts across the country. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that the BJP Government has "legalised" corruption through electoral bonds, politicised anti-corruption efforts by unleashing probe agencies against political opponents and slowed down the legal process against politicians who join the BJP. "It takes a special kind of hypocrisy for PM Modi to parade himself around the country screaming 'Bhramshatkar Hatao'. No one has done more to legalise and normalise corruption than Prime Minister Modi," he alleged. In his election speeches, Modi has made a strong pitch on the issue of corruption, claiming that while he wants to finish the menace, the Congress and other opposition parties were targeting him for it and have come together to protect the corrupt. Ramesh claimed that in July 2018, the Modi government amended the Prevention of Corruption Act, rendering



anti-graft bodies ineffective. "Six years later, 65 per cent of anti-corruption probes in Maharashtra are still pending approval. "How the BJP rendered anti-corruption bodies ineffective: In July 2018, the Modi Sarkar introduced Section 17(A) to the Prevention of Corruption Act (PCA) to supposedly protect government servants from frivolous complaints. The legal process is an inquiry to FIR to the chargesheet. "Before this new 'safeguard' was added, Section 19(A) of the PCA required anti-corruption bodies to seek approval from the government/department before filing a charge sheet, the last step in the legal process," the Congress leader claimed. He said the Modi government's amendment requires anti-corruption bodies, including the CBI, to seek approval even before launching an investigation, the first step in the legal process. "It's a tremendous

weakening of the powers of anti-corruption agencies," he alleged. Ramesh said the amendment required the government to make their decision within a maximum of four months, but it does not mention what action can be taken if the time limit is not followed. "This, unsurprisingly, has been widely misused. Out of 354 Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) cases currently pending approval before the state of Maharashtra, only two were addressed within the time limit. "In the remaining 352, the ACB has not heard from the concerned government or department for more than four months," he claimed. The Congress general secretary also claimed that Maharashtra has the lowest conviction rate in the country under the PCA - just 11 per cent in 2021, and just nine per cent in 2022 according to National Crime Records Bureau data.

Congress slams Government over issue of Chinese transgressions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Congress on Saturday hit out at the Narendra Modi government on the issue of Chinese transgressions and said External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar's reported remark that "China has not occupied any of our land" is akin to giving another free pass to the neighbouring country. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said the EAM's statement is a "copy-paste" of Modi's clean chit to China after the Galwan skirmish in 2020, when 20 Indian soldiers were killed. Kharge responded to the remark in a post on X, "Wearing '56-inch' long Chinese Blinkers, on the 'Laal Aankh', Modi Government has given a free pass to the Chinese, twice in a week's time." He added, "First, @narendramodiji's interview in foreign press where he failed to put forth India's case strongly at the global stage. Now, his Foreign Minister, handing over another Clean Chit to expansionist China." Kharge hit out at the Modi government alleging it was yet to come out clean on the Chinese transgressions at borders and asked him if the bilateral talks between the two countries were to open Indian markets to imported Chinese goods. "@narendramodiji, Since 4 years, the people of India, and

the Opposition is asking you take them in confidence, in the Parliament and in public discourse on repeated Chinese transgressions, illegal occupation and building of military infrastructure, near our borders, but you have not bothered to take us in confidence," Kharge said in his post. "What were the 19 rounds of bilateral talks with your Chinese counterpart for? Was it to increase Chinese imports of India? Or take PM CARES funds from 3000 companies having Chinese directors," he asked. "Why has the status quo ante, pre 2020, not returned? Why is India still denied access to areas in Depsang Plains, Demchok Nalla and several patrolling points in Hot Springs and Gogra Post? Mr. Modi's Policy towards China is 'M' for 'Meek'. "Modi Ki Chinese Guarantee 2.0. A sordid saga of endangering National Security and India's Territorial Integrity by giving a 'double clean chit' to China for stealing our land," the Congress chief said. Congress general secretary (Communications) Jairam Ramesh in a statement said the Modi government has been letting off China for its aggression against India. He claimed that after the prime minister's public "clean chit" on June 19, 2020 and the Union Home Minister's "clean chit" on

April 9, 2024, comes a third "clean chit" from Jaishankar. "Clearly this is all orchestrated by the Super Sutradhar himself," Ramesh said. Ramesh said that EAM's recent statement that "China has not occupied any of our land" represents a "renewed setback" to India's position on its northern border, rivalled only by the prime minister's statement that "No one has entered Indian territory and no one is in our territory." "Not only are all these statements a profound insult to our fallen soldiers in Galwan, but they also represent the legitimisation of Chinese claims over thousands of square kilometres of land to which Indian troops had access until May 2020. "In particular, the EAM's remarks represent an acceptance of Chinese control over Demchok and the strategic Depsang Plains where Chinese troops continue to block our soldiers' at the critical Y-Junction, preventing them from accessing Patrol Points 10, 11, 11A, 12 and 13," Ramesh alleged. Ramesh claimed that Chinese troops remain in place despite 21 rounds of military talks over four years. Where withdrawals have been negotiated, the Modi government has accepted buffer zones that lie predominantly in areas that Indian troops once freely accessed, he said.

President Droupadi Murmu greets citizens on eve of Ambedkar birth anniversary



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu on Saturday greeted citizens on the eve of the birth anniversary of Dr B R Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution, and asked all to adopt his ideals to work collectively for the inclusive development of the country. Babasaheb Ambedkar, a pioneer of social change and a versatile personality, made exceptional contributions to our country and society as a jurist, educationist, economist, social reformer and political leader, she said. Even today, his strong belief in the constitutional system is the foundation of our democracy and good governance, the president said. She said, Dr Ambedkar devoted his entire life to the estab-

lishment of an egalitarian society and struggled for the upliftment of the downtrodden. "On this occasion, let us adopt the ideals of Dr Ambedkar and work collectively for the inclusive development of our country," President Murmu said. Born on April 14, 1891, in a Dalit family in Maharashtra, Ambedkar rose from a humble background to become a leading voice of the marginalised people during the freedom struggle and is credited with introducing several social reforms. In a message, the President said, "On the occasion of the birth anniversary of Babasaheb Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, the architect of our Constitution and one of the most eminent nation builders, I extend my warm greetings and best wishes to all fellow citizens."

Choudhary mounting a tough challenge to MoS PMO

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Two back-to-back election rallies addressed by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kathua and Udhampur districts have further lifted the morale of the Bharatiya Janata Party workers ahead of the first round of polling on April 19. So far, the road shows and street corner meetings of the BJP candidate from the Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha seat have not received enthusiastic responses in some of the pockets of Kathua and Udhampur districts. On the other hand, the Congress party candidate Choudhary Lal Singh is gradually intensifying his poll campaign across the Chenab Valley region and in the plain areas of Kathua district to upset the appellation of Dr Jitendra Singh. The poor response of the party workers had left them worried, especially after witnessing the charged-up atmosphere at the election meetings of the rival candidate Choudhary Lal Singh. To lift the morale of the party workers and boost the campaign of MoS PMO Dr Jitendra Singh, the election rallies of star campaigners were planned. The campaign managers while reviewing the day-to-day progress of the campaign were able to figure out the reasons. According to a senior BJP leader, non-cooperation by some of the angry BJP workers



created a piquant situation for the party. Some of the local MLA's who were not on the same page with Dr Jitendra Singh had decided to maintain a low profile during the electioneering. The BJP leader said the campaign committee of the party has sorted out the issues at the ground level emphasising the role of the booth level workers on the day of polling. Former Chief Minister and National Conference Vice President Omar Abdullah is also scheduled to join the poll campaign in support of Lal Singh in the Chenab Valley region. On Saturday Congress campaigner Raj Babbar and AICC Incharge J&k BharatSinh Solanki also addressed a massive rally in Udhampur in support of Lal Singh. In the last leg of the campaigning Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is also scheduled to visit Basohli on April 15 to campaign in support of Dr

Jitendra Singh. In Kashmir valley, the National Conference candidate Mian Altaf Ahmed Saturday issued a video statement in which he stated that he is ready to contest elections for the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat. In the video, Mian Altaf has dispelled the rumours and said that he is doing fine now. "I was unwell for the last few days. Initially, the doctors said that it might be a case of jaundice, however, then it was detected to be a case of mild fever, I have recovered a lot during the last few days," Mian Altaf is heard saying in this fresh video. The former MLA of Kangan Ganderbal said, "I do not know who spread these rumours. I will not back out from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat. Omar Abdullah, the party vice president, had also come to see me." Earlier, it was rumoured that Mian Altaf may pull out of the competition from the Anantnag-Rajouri seat.

Kerala polls: Strong under currents to throw in surprises

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

With election to the Lok Sabha from the State is hardly a fortnight away, campaigning has reached a feverish pitch in Kerala. On Monday, Narendra Modi will make a whirlwind tour to the State, becoming the first Prime Minister visiting Kerala to extend Vishu Greetings to the people. The ruling CPI(M) has fielded the country's two most intelligent and scholarly leaders, Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury to take on Modi. The CPI(M) commissars, popularly known as "carrot and beetroot" of Indian politics are coming with a mission to win in as many seats as possible as it is important for the party to have a reasonable number of MPs to remain in reckoning as a national party. The duo is likely to tour all the 19 constituencies except Wayanad from where Congress scion Rahul Gandhi is seeking reelection. Though the initial phase of the election campaign saw the LDF (led by the CPI(M)) and the INDI alliance led by the Congress engaged in a straight bout, things have taken a change and the BJP has emerged as a strong contender in Thiruvananthapuram, Pathanamthitta, Thrissur and Kasaragod. Sasi Tharoor, the Congress candidate from Thiruvananthapuram who had hoped for a smooth sailing has lost his initial advantage as BJP's Rajeev Chandrasekhar derailed the glamour boy's claims by exposing the fact that the capital city of Kerla has not been benefitted during his 15 years long tenure as MP. "Sasi Tharoor has become a butt of jokes with his claims that it was he who taught Gautam Adani the significance of Vizhinjam Container Terminal. There were instances when Tharoor was drive away by his own party-men when he went to campaign," said Valsa Mony senior editor, Kala Kaumudi, a popular Malayalam political weekly. According to Valsa, grand daughter of Sukumaran, the founder of Kerala Kaumudi, the BJP was not in contention all these years because of the inefficiency of the Kerala leadership of the party. The average voter in the State is fed up of the corruption indulged in by the CPI(M) while the popularity of the Congress has reached a nadir because of the party's infigthing and policy of appeasement, said Valsa.



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Centre under utilising budget for North East, alleges Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress on Saturday accused the Centre of under-utilising the budget for the northeast and said it is the only political party that can deliver justice to the states in the region. "The Modi government's 'Bluff and Rule' policy continues to unravel. The Modi government has a history of allocating big budgets to the North East and then chronically underutilising these budgets in the last 10 years," Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said in a social media post. He said since 2014, the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has utilised the full budget for the northeast only on two occasions. "While the UPA consistently utilised around 90 per cent of the budget, the Modi government's utilisation falls to a mere 60 per cent regularly. "In FY23, the budget was Rs 2,755 crore. However, in June 2023, a report from the Controller General of Accounts (CGA) revealed that the ministry utilised only Rs 989 crore (35.9 per cent) of its allocated budget," the former Union minister said. In 2020-21, the fund utilisation in the case of the North East Road Sector Development scheme was 52 per cent, Ramesh claimed, adding that for the North East Special Infrastructure Development



scheme, only 34 per cent of the funds were utilised. The Congress leader said the Modi government boasts that the PM-DevINE scheme launched in 2022 outlays Rs 6,600 crore for the period from 2022-23 to 2025-26 for the holistic development of the northeastern region. He said on December 7, 2023, the DoNER (Development of North Eastern Region)-ministry informed the Rajya Sabha that only over 10 per cent of the funds (Rs 855.85 crore) under the Prime Minister's Development Initiative for North East Region (PM-DevINE) were sanctioned. "In January 2023, in the run-up to elections in Meghalaya, Nagaland and Tripura, the Modi government 'doubled' the budget for the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region. Given its history of bluffing with its big fund allocations and dramatic under-utilisations, we await the details of how much in funds has actually reached the North East. "@INCIndia is the only political party that can deliver justice to the states of North East India," Ramesh said, using the hashtag "#HaathBadlegaHalaat".

India made HPV testing kits to undergo validation across various study centres

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, India-made testing kits for the human papillomavirus (HPV), the leading cause of cervical cancer, will undergo validation across multiple study centers using global samples to ensure accuracy. Spearheaded by AIIMS, Delhi, this project will commence by examining 1,200 samples from France sourced from the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) biorepository. According to Prof. Neerja Bhatla, the lead investigator on the project, this groundbreaking initiative will evaluate the effectiveness of HPV screening test kits against international quality benchmarks. "Once validated, these kits can significantly benefit millions of women in India and other low- and middle-income countries by enabling early detection of cervical cancer at affordable prices. Currently, available HPV test kits are priced between Rs 1,500 and Rs 3,000,



but the indigenous kits are expected to be more cost-effective," she said. The study will be conducted with the support of DBT-BIRAC Grand Challenges India in collaboration with IARC. The testing will be performed at AIIMS, New Delhi, National Institute of Cancer Prevention and Research (NICPR) Noida and ICMR-National Institute For Research In Reproductive and Child Health Mumbai. The lab activities will begin from Monday. Dr Bhatla said, "Cervical cancer continues to be a major problem globally. Altogether

127,000 of the 600,000 cases per year are in India. Of the 300,000 deaths across the world, 80,000 deaths are from India." "That's why an indigenous HPV test was developed to make it user-friendly, operable and accessible even in the periphery hospitals," she added. These validation studies are important to avoid false results and eliminate the margin of error. "It's not that simple to validate these testing kits as it involves stringent international standards. The clinical versus analytical validity is something

we need to balance. We need to follow the international criteria that have been laid down and it was something that was raised by the NITI Aayog as well," Dr Bhatla said. It is similar to a Pap smear test and the sample will be collected by brush or a swab from the cervix. "In a Pap smear, we stain the sample so that we can read the cytology or the map of cells. This will be a molecular test like that of COVID," said Dr Bhatla. Presently, HPV tests are expensive and need elaborate laboratory setups. They should meet international standards to receive WHO prequalification and have necessary quality assurance, she said. Worldwide, cervical cancer is the fourth most common cancer in women. In India, it is the second most common cancer among women after breast cancer. Every two minutes, a woman dies of cervical cancer around the world, Bhatla said. In India, there are approximately 1,27,526 new cases and 79,906 deaths per annum, Bhatla stated.

IATO suggests presenting Indian democratic process to foreign tourists

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Association of Tour Operators (IATO), representing the tourism industry nationally, has suggested presenting the world's largest democratic process which unfolds in seven phases to international tourists in four culturally vibrant cities: Delhi, Varanasi, Jaipur, and Kochi. This initiative, envisioned as a model project, seeks to provide foreign visitors with an insight into India's democratic festival slated from April 19 to June 1. From voter registration to campaigning, polling, and counting of votes, global tourists will have the opportunity to engage with various aspects of the electoral process, IATO said in a letter to the Union Tourism Ministry. Talking to The Pioneer, IATO President Rajiv Mehra said that we have suggested that the four cities can be selected as a pilot project as model cities where tour operators



can take foreign tourists to show them as to "How the elections are conducted in our country". This will build a strong image of our country all over the world." Just as festivals are celebrated with enthusiasm and participation, showcasing the democratic process can be an enriching experience for tourists. Through guided tours and interactive experiences in these model cities, visitors can witness firsthand how elections are conducted in India, said Mehra, who is also the Director of Delhi-based Uday Tours and Travel Pvt. Ltd. Moreover, by selecting cities

with diverse cultural backgrounds and historical significance, such as Varanasi with its spiritual heritage and Jaipur with its regal charm, tourists can gain a deeper understanding of how democracy thrives amidst India's rich tapestry of cultures and traditions, he added. By offering foreign tourists the chance to participate in this festival of democracy, India can not only showcase its commitment to democratic principles but also promote cultural exchange and international understanding. Through this initiative, visitors can witness the vibrancy of India's democratic spirit and carry home memories of a truly unique and enlightening experience. India's national elections are a giant exercise in democracy and logistics that take over a month to complete. About 968 million people are eligible to vote — more than the populations of the United States, the European Union and Russia combined. Even as the Tourism Ministry

is still assessing the feasibility of the IATO's proposal, there are reports that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on its part has invited the Conservative and Labour parties of the United Kingdom and the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats of Germany. From among the neighbouring countries, the ruling Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League besides prominent political parties of Nepal have been invited, as per the reports. As of now, the BJP has sent invitations to political parties of at least 25 nations who have been requested to send their representatives to witness India's electioneering. Thirteen parties have accepted the invitation so far, according to the reports. Polling will unfold over seven phases around the country, beginning on April 19 and ending on June 1. All the votes from the country's 28 states and eight union territories will be counted and results released on June 4.

Rahul Gandhi not to...

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Though the Congress is numerically stronger in the Legislative Assembly, it is the Muslim League which calls the shots in UDE. The League had demanded that it be given three seats in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls and the Congress had to do a lot to pacify and mollify the Islamic outfit. The Congress had assured the League that it would be allocated the next Rajya Sabha seat from the State.

INDIA CAUGHT...

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One commando can be seen kneeling above the others to provide them potential cover fire. The video corresponded with known details of the MSC Aries. The helicopter used also appeared to be a Soviet-era Mil Mi-17 helicopter, which both the Guard and the Iranian-backed Houthis of Yemen have used in the past to conduct commando raids on ships. The British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations described the vessel as being "seized by regional authorities" in the Gulf of Oman off the Emirati port city of Fujairah, without elaborating. The MSC Aries had been last located off Dubai heading toward the Strait of Hormuz on Friday. The ship had turned off its tracking data, which has been common for Israeli-affiliated ships moving

through the region. Iran since 2019 has engaged in a series of ship seizures and attacks on vessels have been attributed to it amid ongoing tensions with the West over its rapidly advancing nuclear programme. In previous seizures, Iran has offered initial explanations about their operations to make it seem like the attacks had nothing to do with the wider geopolitical tensions - though later acknowledging as much. In Saturday's attack, however, Iran telling offered no explanation for the seizure other than to say the MSC Aries had links to Israel. For days, Iranian officials up to and including Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei have been threatening to "slap" Israel for the Syria strike. Western Governments have issued warnings to their citizens in the region to be prepared for attack

LG refutes...

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"When the wife of Kejriwal applied to meet him, she was told that you cannot meet him face-to-face but through a window. I am saying with full responsibility that even the dreaded criminals are allowed to meet in the barrack, but a three-time CM of Delhi is allowed to meet his wife through a window having a glass in between," he added. The AAP leader claimed that Kejriwal's rights were being snatched away. Singh said, "In the same Tihar jail, many meetings take place... but Kejriwal, a three-time elected Chief Minister, is being humiliated and made to meet his family through the jangla. This is happening at the behest of the BJP-led Central Government." The 'mulakat jangla' is an iron mesh which separates the inmate from the visitor in a room inside the jail. A visitor and an inmate can talk to each other by sitting on different sides of the mesh. "Look at the history of Tihar jail, people are allowed to have face-to-face meetings. In this same jail, Subrata Roy of Sahara used to have meetings via the internet, phone, office facilities, etc. In this same jail, Chandra Brothers used to have regular meetings and sign many documents. Those they wanted to meet were allowed

to meet them. But in Tihar Jail, efforts are being made to break Kejriwal's morale," he said. "There was no immediate reaction from the Tihar administration. "Today, the fight is to save democracy and the Constitution. I would request Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah not to take away the rights of Kejriwal, which are guaranteed constitutionally, democratically, legally and under the prison rules. Don't try to be a dictator," he added. Kejriwal has been arrested by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case stemming from the alleged excise policy scam. He is in judicial custody till April 15 and is currently lodged in Tihar jail. On Friday, the jail authorities scheduled Kejriwal's meeting with his Punjab counterpart Bhagwant Mann for April 15, saying that he can meet the AAP convener, but as a normal visitor in the 'mulakat jangla'. The Chief Minister met his wife Sunita Kejriwal and personal secretary Bibhav Kumar inside Tihar jail on Tuesday. The LG also took note of the AAPs propagation that the scheme and subsidies pertaining to 'free' electricity, water and bus rides for women will be stopped, since Kejriwal is in jail under judicial custody.

CAA, Modi emerge...

From Page 1

With the CAA taking center stage in Pilibhit's political discourse, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership garners unwavering support. Manoranjan Das, a vocal proponent of Modi, asserts, "We will vote for Modi, whoever the candidate is. His leadership gives us hope for a brighter future." Despite political promises, disillusionment prevails among the residents. "Beyond words, nothing has been done to change our lives," laments a resident. Manoj Bishai echoes this sentiment, expressing skepticism towards political

rhetoric. "We voted for the Congress after Indira Gandhi helped us, but her successors and local Congress leaders have not been helpful at all," he remarks. Despite strides made in obtaining voting rights for some through naturalisation, discrimination persists. Narayan Mahato, 78, highlights the challenges faced by his children, denied voting rights due to their migrant status. "PM Modi has given us the CAA weapon, which will certainly end our woes and help our children lead a better life," he states, hopeful for recognition and respect.

BJP...

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The BJP has received over 1.5 million suggestions for its manifesto, including more than 400,000 through the NaMo app and over 1.1 million through videos. An election manifesto is a comprehensive declaration of a party's policies, objectives, and proposed actions if they come into power that serves as a roadmap for voters to understand the party's stance on various issues. Political parties release manifestos to communicate

their agenda, priorities, and proposed solutions to societal challenges. Manifestos also hold parties accountable post-election. Voters can refer back to the promises made and assess if the party fulfills its commitments, promoting transparency in governance. Meanwhile, the Opposition party, the Indian National Congress, has already released its manifesto titled "Nyay Patra." Congress leaders Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi, and Rahul Gandhi have highlighted 25 guarantees to the public, with a key promise to provide annual financial assistance of

Air India flights...

From Page 1

Meanwhile, India, France, and Russia among other countries have advised their citizens against traveling to the region, which is already tense due to the ongoing seven-month war in Gaza. India on Friday asked its citizens not to travel to Iran and Israel amid increasing fears that Tehran may launch an attack on Israeli soil in retaliation to a strike on the Iranian consulate in Syria 11 days ago. People familiar with the latest developments said no more Indians will be allowed to go to Israel to work in the

construction sector. The first batch of 64 Indian workers had left for Israel earlier this month and over 6,000 construction workers from India were to leave for Israel in April and May. In an advisory, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) also urged the Indians residing in Iran and Israel to exercise utmost precautions about their safety and restrict their movements to minimum. "In view of the prevailing situation in the region, all Indians are advised not to travel to Iran or Israel till further notice," it said.

Rs100,000 to the poorest women in families. The upcoming general elections in India are scheduled to take place from April 19, 2024, to June 1, 2024, to choose the 543 representatives for the 18th Lok Sabha. Around 970 million individuals, out of a total population of 1.44 billion are eligible to take part in the elections. The legislative Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim will coincide with the general election. Additionally, there will be by-elections for 35 seats across 16 States.

In 2014, BJP stormed to power by winning 282 seats in the Lok Sabha. Its coalition NDA secured 353 seats. The Congress was reduced to just 44 seats in the Lok Sabha, its lowest ever tally in history. In terms of vote share, BJP managed to secure 31 per cent of the total votes while Congress won 19.3 per cent of the total votes cast. In 2019, the BJP improved its tally even further, winning 303 seats in the lower House. It was the first time in over three and a half decades that a party managed to cross the 300-seat mark in the Lok Sabha elections.

Gopi Thotakura to become 1st Indian space tourist

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Gopi Thotakura, an entrepreneur and a pilot, is set to become the first Indian to venture into space as a tourist on Amazon founder Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin's NS-25 mission. Thotakura was selected as one of the six crew members for the mission, making him the first Indian space tourist and the second Indian to venture into space after the Indian Army's Wing Commander Rakesh Sharma in 1984. The flight date is yet to be announced, the aerospace company said. This mission will be the seventh human flight for the New Shepard programme and the 25th in its history. To date, the programme

has flown 31 humans above the Karman line, the proposed conventional boundary between Earth's atmosphere and outer space. New Shepard is a fully reusable sub-orbital launch vehicle developed for space tourism by Blue Origin. According to Blue Origin, "Gopi is a pilot and aviator who learned how to fly before he could drive." He is the co-founder of Preserve Life Corp, a global centre for holistic wellness and applied health located near Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport. In addition to flying jets commercially, he pilots bush, aerobatic, and seaplanes, as well as gliders and hot air balloons, and has served as an international medical jet pilot.



A lifelong traveller, his most recent adventure took him to the summit of Mt Kilimanjaro in Tanzania. Andhra Pradesh-born Thotakura is a graduate of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Other crew members of the flight include Mason Angel, Sylvain Chiron, Kenneth L. Hess, Carol Schaller, and former Air Force Captain Ed Dwight, who was selected by President John F Kennedy in 1961 as the nation's first Black astronaut candidate but was never granted the opportunity to fly to space. During the flight, each astronaut will carry a postcard to space on behalf of Blue Origin's foundation, Club for the Future.

This programme gives students access to space on Blue Origin's rockets, including an all-digital method to create and send postcards. The Club's mission is to inspire and mobilise future generations to pursue careers in STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) for the benefit of Earth. From an environmental standpoint, nearly 99 per cent of New Shepard's dry mass is reused, including the booster, capsule, engine, landing gear, and parachutes. New Shepard's engine is fuelled by highly efficient liquid oxygen and hydrogen. During the flight, the only byproduct is water vapour with no carbon emissions, the company said.

Militants kill 11 in Pakistan's Balochistan

PTI ■ KARACHI

At least 11 people, nine of them from Punjab province, were shot dead by militants in Pakistan's restive Balochistan in two separate incidents, authorities said on Saturday, as the region witnessed a surge in terror attacks in recent days. Nine of the deceased were travelling in a bus on the National Highway from Quetta to Taftan when they were stopped by unknown militants, who pulled them out of the bus and killed them later, an official said. "The bodies of these nine men were later found with bullet wounds in the nearby mountainous areas near a bridge," he said. "The bus was going from Quetta to Taftan when armed men stopped it and after identifying passengers took the nine men to the mountainous areas," he added. The victims were from Wazirabad, Mandi Bahauddin, and Gujranwala in Punjab province. In a separate incident, a car was fired upon on the same highway in which two passengers were killed and two others injured. Condemning the attacks, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sought a report of the incident from authorities.

Chaos at a Sydney mall as 6 people stabbed to death

Suspect fatally shot by police

AP ■ SYDNEY

A man stabbed six people to death at a busy Sydney shopping centre Saturday before he was fatally shot, police said, with hundreds fleeing the chaotic scene, many weeping as they carried their children. Eight people, including a 9-month-old, were injured. New South Wales police said they believed a 40-year-old man was responsible for the Saturday afternoon attack at the Westfield Shopping Centre in Bondi Junction, in the city's eastern suburbs. They said they were not able to name him until a formal identification had taken place but that they weren't currently treating the attack as terrorism-related. The man was shot dead by a female police inspector after he turned and raised a knife, New South Wales Assistant Police Commissioner Anthony Cooke told reporters. "This all happened very, very quickly — the officer that was in the vicinity attended on her own, was guided to the location of the offender by people who were in the centre," he said. "She took the actions that she did saving a range of people's lives." The stabbing at the shopping centre, which was a hub of activity on a particularly warm

fall afternoon, began around 3:10 p.m. and police were called soon after. "They just said run, run, run — someone's been stabbed," one witness told ABC TV in Australia. "(The attacker) was walking really calmly like he was having an ice cream in a park. And then he went up the escalators ... and probably with-in about a minute we heard three gunshots." Six of the victims — five women and a man — and the suspect died. Commissioner Karen Webb said the eight injured people were being treated at hospitals. The baby was in surgery, but it was too early to know the condition, she said. "We are confident that there is no ongoing risk, and we are dealing with one person who is now deceased," Webb said in a later briefing. She added: "It's not a terrorism incident." Witnesses were shocked at the rare outburst of violence. Australia enacted strict gun laws after a man killed 35 and wounded another 23 in 1996, in Tasmania. "I saw all the people running and I didn't know what was happening," said Ayush Singh. "I thought it was some people playing a prank or something and after some time I saw a guy with a knife running from the footpath to the cafe where I work."

He said police arrived quickly and told everyone to stay put. Singh said he saw the man running just metres away as he wielded a knife. "I didn't hear him say anything," he added. "Just a random guy stabbing people. Mad guy." Roi Huberman, a sound engineer at ABC TV in Australia, told the network that he sheltered in a store during the incident. "And suddenly we heard a shot or maybe two shots and we didn't know what to do," he said. "Then the very capable person in the store took us to the back where it can be locked. She then locked the store and then she then let us through the back and now we are out." As the attack unfolded, panicked individuals streamed out of the shopping centre, many with children in their arms. Paramedics treated injured people at the scene. The shopping centre and the surrounding area remains in lockdown as police piece together what went on. "It's been an incredibly distressing day for so many people in our community, people who went to the shops today, a packed shopping centre, and then got caught up in something we could never imagine here, something so disturbing and terrifying for many," Kellie Sloane, a local lawmaker, said.

Israel finds body of missing teen

AP ■ AL-MUGHAYYIR (WEST BANK)

Israel's army said on Saturday the body of a missing Israeli teen was found in the West Bank after he was killed in a "terrorist attack," as violence escalated across the Israeli-occupied territory where tensions have simmered for months. The disappearance of 14-year-old Binyamin Achimair sparked attacks by Israeli settlers on Palestinian villages on Friday and Saturday. Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in a statement on social media urged people not to take the law into their own hands. On Friday, Palestinian Jihad Abu Alia was killed and 25 others

were wounded in the attack on al-Mughayyir village, Palestinian health officials said. On Saturday, Israeli troops delayed for several hours the ambulance carrying the 26-year-old man's body for burial, witnesses said. Dozens of Israeli settlers returned to the village's outskirts on Saturday, burning 12 homes and several cars. The Palestinian Health Ministry said three people from the village were injured, one critically. Border police fired tear gas toward villagers who gathered, trying to disperse them. In the nearby village of Douma, Israeli settlers set fire to around 15 homes and 10 farms, the head of the local village council, Slieman Dawabshah, told

The Associated Press, saying he had been there. "The army came but unfortunately, the army were protecting the settlers," he said, asserting that it fired tear gas and rubber bullets at Palestinians trying to confront and expel them. The Israeli military did not immediately comment. The Palestinian Red Crescent said six people were injured by gunfire but did not say who fired. Tensions in the West Bank have been especially high since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war in nearby Gaza on October 7, sparked by the Hamas attack on southern Israel that killed about 1,200 people and took 250 hostages. More than 33,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed in

Israel's offensive, according to Gaza health officials. Hamas since then has been trying to ignite other fronts, including in the West Bank, in hopes of exerting more pressure on Israel. Such efforts have largely failed, though more than 460 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in the West Bank since October 7, most in clashes sparked by army raids but some by vigilante settlers. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the killing of the Israeli teen. According to Israeli media, the teen was last seen leaving the settler outpost of Malachei Shalom early Friday to tend to livestock nearby. The sheep returned to the outpost hours later without him, reports said.

FBI hikes reward for info on Indian wanted for killing wife

PTI ■ NEW YORK

The FBI is now offering a reward of up to USD 250,000 for information leading to the arrest of a 33-year-old "extremely dangerous" Indian national who is wanted in the US for allegedly killing his wife in 2015. Bhadreshkumar Chetanbhai Patel, who was last known to be in the Newark area of New Jersey, is wanted for allegedly killing his wife Palak Patel by striking her multiple times with an object when they worked at a doughnut shop in Hanover, Maryland. Patel is on the FBI's list of "Ten Most Wanted Fugitives" and the

federal agency announced a reward of up to USD 250,000 for information leading to his arrest. Initially, the FBI had offered a USD 100,000 reward for information about Patel. Patel has been charged with first-degree murder, second-degree murder, first-degree assault, second-degree assault, and dangerous weapons with intent to injure, the FBI said in a statement. A federal arrest warrant was issued in the Maryland district court on April 20, 2015, after Patel was charged with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. According to a 2017 FBI press release, Patel and his wife

worked the night shift at the doughnut shop of one of his relatives. Investigators believe Patel killed his wife, who was 21 at the time, in a back room of the shop just before midnight on April 12, 2015. Patel allegedly stabbed his wife multiple times and fled by a rear door. The statement warned that Patel should be considered "armed and extremely dangerous". According to the FBI, investigators theorise that Palak Patel wanted to return to India — their visas had expired the month before — and her husband was against the idea. "The best guess is that he did-

n't want her to leave," said Special Agent Jonathan Shaffer, who was investigating the case from the FBI's Baltimore Division. "It's possible he thought he would be disgraced by her leaving and returning to India." Although the motive remains unclear, Shaffer noted that after the crime, Patel's "actions show a very cool and calculated mentality about escaping the scene and fleeing the area." After the murder, a customer who entered the shop realised something was wrong when no one came to take his order. He alerted a Police Department officer who discovered Palak Patel's body. "It was horrific

what had been done to this young woman," Shaffer said. Realising that Patel was an international flight risk, local police requested FBI assistance, and several days after the murder, a federal arrest warrant was issued charging him with unlawful flight to avoid prosecution. Investigators believe that Patel could be with distant relatives in the US or that he could have fled to Canada. "Or he could have travelled through Canada back to India," Shaffer said. "Those are among the plausible options we are exploring," according to the press release issued in 2017.

Pak has highest living cost in all of Asia with a 25 per cent inflation rate: ADB

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Pakistan has the highest living cost in all of Asia with a 25 per cent inflation rate and its economy may grow at the fourth lowest pace of 1.9 per cent in the region, according to a new Asian Development Bank (ADB) report. The report was released on Thursday in Manila. The Express Tribune reported that the Asian Development Outlook also painted a gloomy picture for the next fiscal year as well, projecting a 15 per cent inflation rate for the next fiscal year — again the highest among 46 countries and a 2.8 per cent growth rate — the fifth lowest for FY 2024-25. The Manila-based lending agency stated that the inflation

rate in Pakistan is expected to be 25 per cent in the current fiscal year — the highest in all of Asia. This makes Pakistan the most expensive nation in Asia. Earlier, the cost of living in Pakistan used to be the highest in South Asia. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and federal government had set the inflation target at 21 per cent for this fiscal year but they are going to miss it despite inflicting huge losses in the shape of a 22 per cent interest rate. The ADB said during the current fiscal year, the country's economic growth rate might remain at 1.9 per cent — the fourth lowest after Myanmar, Azerbaijan and Nauru. Pakistan is in a stagflation phase for a prolonged period and the World Bank too said

last week that another 10 million more people might fall into the poverty trap because of any adverse shocks. About 98 million people are already living a poor life in Pakistan. In the past, the ADB gave a rather optimistic economic scenario close to Pakistan's official forecasts. However, the latest ADB report stated that Pakistan would continue to face challenges from substantial new external financing requirements and the rollover of old debt, exacerbated by tight global monetary conditions. The Manila-based lender said political uncertainty that affected macroeconomic policy-making would remain a key risk to the sustainability of stabilisation and reform efforts.

It said with Pakistan's large external financing requirements and weak external buffers, disbursement from multilateral and bilateral partners remained crucial. "Further IMF support for a medium-term reform agenda would considerably improve market sentiment and catalyse affordable external financing from other sources," the report added. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb is set to meet the IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva next week in Washington to request a new bailout package. The IMF MD said this week that Pakistan was in discussions for a potential follow-up programme. However, she said that there are "very important issues" to be

solved in Pakistan: the tax base, how the richer part of the society contributed to the economy, the way public spending is being directed, and creating a more transparent environment. The ADB said low confidence, a surge in living costs, and the implementation of tighter macroeconomic policies under the IMF programme would restrain domestic demand in Pakistan. It said the government's goal was to achieve a primary surplus of 0.4 per cent and an overall deficit of 7.5 per cent of GDP in FY2024, with both declining gradually in subsequent years. However, the World Bank said last week that Pakistan would miss both these budget targets, reported The Express Tribune.

Shelling in Russian-occupied Ukraine claims 10 lives

AP ■ KYIV

At least 10 people, including children, died after shelling late on Friday struck a Russian-occupied town in Ukraine's southern Zaporizhzhia region, a local Kremlin-installed official said, blaming Ukraine for the attack. Meanwhile, Ukrainian officials reported at least three civilian deaths elsewhere in the country that they said resulted from Russian attacks. Russian emergency services on Saturday were working in the rubble in hopes of saving civilians trapped underneath the debris of their homes in Tokmak, in a part of southern Ukraine that Moscow has illegally annexed from Kyiv, according to the Kremlin-installed regional head Yevhen

Balitsky. The Tokmak municipal administration reported on Telegram that the shelling struck three apartment blocks on Friday evening. Five people were pulled alive from the rubble, Balitsky said, and a total of 13 people were hospitalised. As of early afternoon on Saturday, Ukraine had not commented on the allegations. Elsewhere in Ukraine, at least two civilians died as a result of Russian shelling on Friday and overnight, according to officials. Both deaths occurred in the front-line Donetsk region in the east, according to Telegram posts by local Gov. Vadym Filashkin. On Saturday, Russian forces also shelled a car making food

deliveries in the northern Chernihiv region, killing its civilian driver, regional Gov. Vyacheslav Chaus said. In the Kharkiv region in the northeast, overnight Russian shelling left a man trapped under rubble and also wounded a second man, according to local Gov. Oleh Syniehubov and Ukrainian emergency services. Both have been hospitalised, according to a Telegram update by the state emergency service. Local Ukrainian officials reported over a dozen civilians were wounded by Russian shelling on Friday and overnight in the country's north, south and east. It was not immediately possible to verify the claims by Balitsky or the Ukrainian authorities.

Trump to host rally on Biden's home turf in northeast Pennsylvania

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump plans to hold a rally Saturday in northeast Pennsylvania, venturing into an area President Joe Biden considers his home turf in what will be the Republican's last rally before his criminal hush money trial begins Monday. The presumptive GOP nominee and former president is scheduled to speak at the Schnecksville Fire Hall in Lehigh County. It will be Trump's third visit this year to the vital swing state, one that could decide who wins this year's presidential race. He also plans to attend a fundraiser in nearby Bucks County before the event. Pennsylvania is a critical battleground in the rematch between Trump and Biden, with both candidates expected to visit the state frequently through November. Trump flipped the state to the Republican column in 2016 but lost it four years after to Biden, who was born in the northeast

city of Scranton and has long talked about his roots in the city. Biden plans to deliver a major address Tuesday in Scranton on tax fairness. Trump is navigating four separate criminal prosecutions while running to avenge his loss to Biden, creating an unprecedented swirl of legal and political chaos. Jury selection starts Monday in New York in his trial where he is charged with seeking during his 2016 campaign to bury stories about extramarital affairs by arranging hush money payments. It will be the first criminal trial ever of a former US president. And it will limit Trump's availability on the campaign trail, though he is expected to speak to the media after court often and has for months fundraised and campaigned on the felony charges he faces, arguing political opponents are pursuing them to stop him from winning the White House again. Biden has argued Trump's lies about losing the 2020 election



are dangerous for the country. He has said Trump poses a fundamental threat to democracy and U.S. alliances abroad — rhetoric that Trump has argued applies to Biden.

In recent weeks, both candidates have tried to stir up their voting bases and tear apart their opponent's coalitions, a strategy that will be tested over the coming months.

Trump recently said that any Democratic-leaning voters who support Israel should back him instead, as Biden has criticized Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's actions

in his war against Hamas. The Republican said Wednesday that "any Jewish person who votes for a Democrat or votes for Biden should have their head examined." He also has new ammunition to criticize Biden's handling of the economy, as the government said Wednesday that inflation jumped 0.4% in March to 3.5% annually. But Biden has also put Trump on the defensive over the issue of abortion, a key weakness for the GOP as many voters have opposed new restrictions that some states have placed on the procedure after justices that Trump appointed to the Supreme Court helped overturn Roe v Wade in 2022. Trump tried to defuse the controversy and appease women voters by saying the matter should be settled by the states, instead of the federal government. But that argument became problematic this past week as Arizona's top court ruled that the state could enforce an 1864

law criminalizing abortion, prompting Trump on Wednesday to suggest the 19th century law was too restrictive for his taste. Trump has instead tried to make immigration the central issue of the campaign. The Republican has sought to portray Biden as feckless on border security, given the record-high numbers of individuals who have crossed the southern border illegally during his administration. He also attacked the president for not doing more to ramp up oil drilling, even though domestic production is at an all-time high. The area around Lehigh County has enjoyed job growth under Biden. The Bureau of Labor Statistics said it contains 445,200 jobs, up from a prepandemic total of 429,900 jobs during the Trump administration. The area's unemployment rate is a healthy 3.9%, meaningfully better than the 4.6% achieved before the coronavirus pandemic struck during Trump's presidency.

Pak opp alliance to launch drive against govt

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Former Pakistan prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, in a late-night meeting that continued till the early hours of Saturday decided to come together under the banner of Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), a movement to protect the Constitution of Pakistan. The launch of the movement indicates that the dream of post-election peace and political stability will be wilting sooner than expected. The six-party alliance that includes Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, in a late-night meeting that continued till the early hours of Saturday decided to come together under the banner of Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), a movement to protect the Constitution of Pakistan.



RR survive anxious moments

PTI ■ MULLANPUR (CHANDIGARH)

Rajasthan Royals struggled against Punjab Kings bowlers who took the pace off the ball cleverly on a sticky pitch but found enough steam to eke out a hardworking three-wicket win in their IPL match here on Saturday. The target was a rather easy-looking 148 but a set of spot-on Punjab bowlers and a tacky surface made the task of Royals tough before they made 152 for seven. The Rajasthan outfit required 49 runs off the last five overs, but they had to wait till the penultimate ball of the match to get over the line despite having power-hitters like Rovman Powell (11, 5b) and Shimron Hetmyer (27 not out, 10b, 1x4, 3x6) in their ranks.

That equation came down to 10 off the final six balls after Hetmyer mounded Harshal Patel for a six and four, which the

his leg-stump. Jaiswal, who played a delectable flick off Kagiso Rabada, looked on course to end a string of low scores in this IPL. But a rather needless uppercut off Rabada was grabbed by Harshal Patel near third man as Rajasthan looked a tad wobbly. Their woes deepened when skipper Sanju Samson, who had earlier broken the man-acles with a six and four off Livingstone, was trapped leg-before by Rabada in his last over. Samson could not connect with a slightly low, incoming delivery from Rabada, and the ball pinged his backfoot and even the DRS could not save him. Earlier, Rajasthan bowlers under Avesh (2/34) and Maharaj (2/23) exploited a sticky pitch to the hilt to restrict Punjab Kings to an underwhelming total. Ashutosh Sharma (31, 16b), Jitesh Sharma (29, 24b) and Livingstone (21, 14b) tried

that gripped a bit, especially for left-arm spinner Maharaj and leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal. However, a slice of credit should also go to veteran pacer Trent Boult who conceded just 15 runs in his three power play overs. The last three power play overs fetched only 10 runs for Kings as they ended that passage on a modest 38 for one. In the next five overs, the hosts struggled to hit even one boundary as they laboured to 53 for four in 10 overs, losing Jonny Bairstow, stand-in-skipper Sam Curran and Prabhsimran Singh, all consumed by the combination of a slow deck and accurate spinners. Their biggest hope could have been the range-hitting ability of in-form Shahshank Singh but a feeble pull off Sen could not progress beyond Jurel at mid-wicket. With the cream of top-order failing to con-



West Indian left-hander realised through a couple of sixes off pacer Arshdeep Singh in the last over. The Royals began their chase sedately through Yashasvi Jaiswal and Tanush Kotian without any real scoreboard pressure behind them. However, Kotian, who was batting so up in the order in T20s for the first time, did not find his flow but still assisted Jaiswal to add 56 in 8.2 overs. But his effort to hammer Liam Livingstone out of the ground ended up in him losing

to force the pace but Punjab needed more than those pretty little caeos. But the Kings had a rather quick start to their innings with 26 runs coming in the first three overs as Atharva Taide, who came in for injured skipper Shikhar Dhawan, hammered a couple of fours off pacer Kuldeep Sen. But the brakes were soon applied as Taide's mistimed pull off Avesh ended in the hands of Sen inside the circle. Thereafter the Punjab batters struggled to muster any sort of momentum on a pitch

tribute anything significant, PBKS required some hefty hand from Livingstone and Jitesh to get to even a par score. Sharma showed some intent too, clobbering Chahal for a gorgeously timed six over extra over, and later sent Sen for a six to the straight fence before getting out to Avesh. Livingstone, who creamed Sen for a six and four off successive balls through mid-wicket, and Ashutosh, who smoked Avesh for two sixes in the 19th over, helped PBKS add 61 runs in the last five overs, but their effort came a wee bit late.

KKR seek home comfort against Mayank-less LSG

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Two-time champions Kolkata Knight Riders will seek home comfort in their bid to return to winning ways when they face a depleted Lucknow Super Giants in an Indian Premier League match here on Sunday. The match will be KKR's first of the five matches at home on the trot and the Gautam Gambhir-mentored side will be fully aware this can prove decisive to clinch the play-off spot for the first time since 2021. In the points tally, nothing separates the two teams, both of whom have secured three wins each, and lost their respective last-round matches. KKR's over-reliance on their Caribbean ageing duo of Sunil Narine and Andre Russell was exposed by defending champions Chennai Super Kings when they lost by seven wickets in their previous outing. Narine (27) and Russell (10) failed with the bat and the team, who had posted two 200-plus scores from three matches on the back of the Caribbean duo's blazing form, could manage an under par 137/9 at Chennai. That sums up KKR's batting that has relied on some odd fireworks and missed an anchor in the absence of Nitish Rana (finger injury), who is slated to sit out of another match. In the spotlight since the beginning of the season, KKR captain Shreyas Iyer has failed to impress and his scores give an abysmal picture -- 0, 39 not out, 18 and 34. Their another designated bat-



ter Venkatesh Iyer has three single digit scores this season to go with one odd fifty against Royal Challengers Bengaluru and the team, it seems, doesn't have a clear role for him. From batting at No. 3 in their IPL opener against Sunrisers Hyderabad, Iyer was seen in the finisher's role at No. 7 and No. 5 in their last two matches. Ramandeep Singh also had a lean run after an impressive 35 against SRH. The 2022 U-19 World Cup winning Angkrish Raghuvanshi has impressed the most following his 54 against Delhi Capitals. And he will like to return among runs after failing to convert his start against CSK. The most-talked about signing Mitchell Starc's poor form with the ball has been the talk of the town. The Aussie speed gun has an economy of 11.00 and took his first wicket of this IPL against DC after giving away 100 runs in the first two matches.

Having come as Impact Subs, left-arm orthodox spinner Anukul Roy has been impressive and he would like to forge formidable partnership with Narine. While KKR will be overwhelming favourites at Eden, LSG with their unassuming approach will not give up easily, even as they will miss their pace sensation Mayank Yadav for a second successive match. Recovering from a side strain that ruled him out of their match against Gujarat Titans, Mayank is doing "good" but skipper KL Rahul has said that he may take "a couple of more games before coming back". Mayank's replacement Arshad Khan failed to impress, conceding at 10.73 runs over as they failed to defend 167 at home against DC last evening. Mohsin Khan, who claimed 2/34 against Punjab Kings, could be a perfect replacement but it remains to be seen if he's fully recovered from his

hamstring injury that had sidelined the left-arm pacer. The team owned by Kolkata-based industrialist Sanjeev Goenka will hope for a much better show after mustering an average 167/7 against DC on Friday. The likes of Quinton De Kock and Rahul will look to return among runs, while they also boast of a powerful line-up down the order with the likes of Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran. That they also have a formidable slow bowling lineup in Ravi Bishnoi and Krunal Pandya will pose some tough questions for KKR batters. **TEAMS (FROM):** **Kolkata Knight Riders:** Shreyas Iyer (c), KS Bharat, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Rinku Singh, Angkrish Raghuvanshi, Sherfane Rutherford, Manish Pandey, Andre Russell, Nitish Rana, Venkatesh Iyer, Anukul Roy, Ramandeep Singh, Varun Chakravarthi, Sunil Narine, Vaibhav Arora, Chetan Sakariya, Harshit Rana, Suyash Sharma, Mitchell Starc, Dushmantha Chameera, Sakib Hussain and Mujeeb Ur Rahman. **Lucknow Super Giants:** KL Rahul (c), Quinton de Kock, Nicholas Pooran, Ayush Badoni, Kyle Mayers, Marcus Stoinis, Deepak Hooda, Devdutt Padikkal, Ravi Bishnoi, Naveen-ul-Haq, Krunal Pandya, Yudhvir Singh, Prerak Mankad, Yash Thakur, Amit Mishra, Shamir Joseph, Mayank Yadav, Mohsin Khan, K. Gowtham, Arshin Kulkarni, M. Siddharth, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry and Mohd Arshad Khan.

Dhoni in spotlight as CSK, MI resume rivalry in new era

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The legendary Mahendra Singh Dhoni will be in the spotlight in what could be his final game at the iconic Wankhede Stadium when defending champions Chennai Super Kings take on Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League here on Sunday. Dhoni returns to the hallowed turf of Wankhede for the first time ever as a non-captain of the CSK, potentially in his last IPL season. It will also be his first appearance as just a player for any team since November 2005. Even at 42, Dhoni's glove-work remains impeccable and so does his assessment of the game like always. But CSK will hope that his tactical acumen also helps them improve a dismal away record this season, having suffered two defeats on the road. CSK would also hope their recent record against MI — four wins in last five matches including their seven-wicket win here last season — holds them in good stead. Two of IPL's most successful teams with five titles each, both sides are witnessing a tectonic shift of leadership change with Hardik Pandya taking over the mantle from Rohit Sharma at MI and Ruturaj Gaikwad succeeding Dhoni at CSK, but there is nothing that suggests their intense rivalry would expect any such shift. If anything, CSK's bowlers could be put to sword by the rampaging MI batters who have gone hammer and tongs at the flat pitches here, scoring in excess of 230 against Delhi Capitals and chasing down nearly 200 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru with more than four overs to spare. Pandya's MI have found their footing after a jittery start. Their batters have done well in the last two outings and Suryakumar Yadav's 17-ball fifty against RCB provides an ominous sign to CSK bowlers, who have shown mastery on slow, turning pitches at the



Chepauck but remain untested on flat, batting-friendly surfaces. Ishan Kishan (161 runs) and Rohit's opening stand would thus be crucial in the scheme of things but CSK would also have a lot of assurance with their own batting. Skipper Gaikwad may not be a marauder with the bat but he can be the silent enforcer in the CSK line-up, which has the exuberance of Rachin Ravindra at the top, sturdiness of Daryl Mitchell in the middle and explosiveness of Shivam Dube (176 runs), Ravindra Jadeja and Dhoni in the death overs. CSK would also be aware that seeing off the dexterous Jasprit Bumrah (10 wickets) and going after the rest of the MI bowling would be the key, since the others have given away runs at alarming rate while struggling with their

line and lengths on placid surfaces. Despite Bumrah's five-wicket haul, MI leaked runs at a high rate to allow RCB get closer to the 200-run mark here a few nights ago. A lot will be riding on Shardul Thakur and Tushar Deshpande for CSK, who both return to their home ground, but Mustafizur Rahman (9 wickets) and the wily Jadeja would be the ones to watch out for given their recent exploits. On their part, teams say "we want to get as many runs as possible" but by the look of it, scores around 220-230 while batting first could be the best way possible to ensure an upperhand at this venue. **TEAMS (FROM):** **Mumbai Indians:** Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David,

Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwen Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shephard, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai, Nehal Wadhara, Luke Wood. **Chennai Super Kings:** MS Dhoni (wk), Aravelly Avanish (wk), Devon Conway, Ruturaj Gaikwad (c), Ajinkya Rahane, Shaik Rasheed, Moeen Ali, Shivam Dube, RS Hangargekar, Ravindra Jadeja, Ajay Jadav Mandal, Daryl Mitchell, Rachin Ravindra, Mitchell Santner, Nishant Sindhu, Deepak Chahar, Tushar Deshpande, Mukesh Choudhary, Mustafizur Rahman, Matheesha Pathirana, Simarjeet Singh, Prashant Solanki, Shardul Thakur, Maheesh Theekshana, Sameer Rizvi.

Rahul, Langer backing motivated me: LSG batter Badoni

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

Young Lucknow Super Giants batter Ayush Badoni credited skipper KL Rahul and coach Justin Langer for keeping faith in him despite his disappointing run early in the ongoing IPL season, saying their support helped him perform against the Delhi Capitals, albeit in a losing cause. The 24-year-old Badoni struck an unbeaten 55 off 35 balls to help resurrect LSG's innings and post a competitive 167 for 7, a target which the Delhi Capitals achieved in 18.1 overs here on Friday. "The start of the season was not good but I was doing well at the nets. So I am thankful to KL Rahul and Justin Langer for backing me and giving me chance," Badoni said at the post-match press conference. "While I was batting I was just thinking of taking the game deep and then attack because if we bat till 20 overs we can score 150 plus. I think we were 20 runs short. "I was quite motivated because I was batting well at the nets so I was just backing myself, I was just waiting for the knock which came today." Badoni said he shares a good bonding with both the skipper and coach and that has helped him in improving his game. "I spoke a lot to KL Rahul and he backs me everytime. He tells me you are best player and you can finish well. I also share a good bonding with Justin. I went to Australia last year and there also he made learn a few things and improved my game," he said. I went to Australia in September last which was facil-



itated by LSG where we had a training camp with Justin for 10 days and that helped me a lot." Badoni said DC spinner Kuldeep Yadav (3/20) turned out to be match-winner. "Kuldeep was bowling well. He broke our momentum," he said. DC assistant coach Pravin Amre believes Jake Fraser-McGurk's whirlwind knock in

his debut IPL appearance helped the team to chase down the target easily as he grabbed his opportunity with both hands. The 22-year-old Australian struck a belligerent 55 off 35 deliveries which included five massive sixes. "It was tremendous innings by Jack because he was batting very well at the nets. We have

got that he has that X-factor, the ability to strike the sixes and he also got five sixes. That's was this format is all about and we were doing well in the last 2 games but we were not crossing the line. "So we wanted some impact on the game. We have talent but it's important to deliver and I think Jack has got that talent and he can be dangerous in this format," he said. "Jack got the opportunity today and he grabbed it with both hands. It is important for a good talent to perform on the ground because there is vast difference in performing at the nets and in a match." Amre also credited Prithvi Shaw (32 off 22) for giving them a good start. "As an opener he (Shaw) has got a role to play, winning the powerplay is also critical. As a coaching staff we want him to play at least 30 balls because if he plays 30 balls we have more chance to win. "In 22 balls he got 32 and that was also important because we were chasing and his experienced partner (David) Warner got out and that also allowed Jack to settle down. But he being more consistent is good for him as well for the team also." Amre also lauded spinners Kuldeep and Axar Patel, who dominated in the crucial middle overs. "We are forgetting Kuldeep's contribution. He bowled a dream ball to dismiss Nicholas Pooran. Axar also bowled well in the middle overs giving away just 25 runs off his 4 overs. We took the control of the game after powerplay and all credit goes to our spin department."

"So long as you have food
in your mouth, you have
solved all questions for the
time being"
— Franz Kafka



For the residents of Ayodhya, as much as for Hindus across the globe, Ram Navami symbolises the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream and the reaffirmation of their unwavering faith in Lord Ram, says **BISWAJEET BANERJEE**



A DAY AWAITED FOR FIVE CENTURIES

AYODHYA,

the ancient city steeped in the rich tapestry of Hindu mythology and history, is poised to witness an unparalleled spectacle as it gears up to celebrate its first Ram Navami following the consecration of the majestic Ram Mandir. The air is filled with anticipation and reverence as devotees from all corners of India flock to this sacred land to partake in the festivities honoring Lord Ram, the epitome of righteousness and virtue.

Months of meticulous planning and fervent preparations have culminated in the grandeur that envelops Ayodhya today. The city, adorned with vibrant colors and resounding chants of "Jai Shri Ram," exudes an aura of spirituality and devotion that is palpable in every nook and cranny.

The consecration of the Ram Mandir, a momentous event that resonated deeply with millions of devotees across the globe, has added an extra layer of significance to this year's Ram Navami celebrations. For the residents of Ayodhya, it symbolizes the fulfillment of a long-cherished dream and the reaffirmation of their unwavering faith in Lord Ram.

Radha Sharma, a local resident, encapsulated the sentiments of many when she said, "This Ram Navami holds a special place in our hearts. It's not just about celebrating the birth of Lord Ram; it's about witnessing the fruition of our faith and devotion."

As the countdown to Ram Navami begins, devotees throng the Ram Mandir, eager to offer their prayers and seek the blessings of the divine. The atmosphere is electric with fervent devotion as chants of "Jai Shri Ram" reverberate through the streets, transcending linguistic and cultural barriers.

Ramesh Singh, a pilgrim from Bihar, echoed the sentiments of countless others as he remarked, "Ram Navami is not just a festival; it's a spiritual journey. Being here in Ayodhya, amidst the sacred surroundings, fills my heart with joy and peace."

At the heart of the celebrations lies the Ram Mandir, believed to be situated at the very spot where Lord Rama, the seventh avatar of Lord Vishnu, was born. For devotees, it is not merely a structure but a sacred sanctum that serves as a beacon of hope and divine connection.

ADMINISTRATION STRATEGY

As Ayodhya braces itself for the influx of around 50 lakh devotees in all nine days of Ram Navami, the administration has meticulously crafted a comprehensive crowd management strategy to ensure the safety and convenience of all participants. The maximum rush of 25 lakh-30 lakh devotees is expected on the Ram Navami day of April 17 – when people take a dip at river Sarayu.



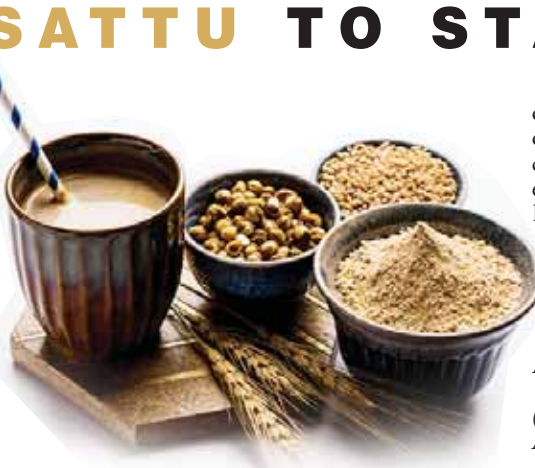
Ram Navam A Celebration of Faith and Virtue

Ram Navami transcends the realms of mere festivity; it embodies a profound reaffirmation of faith and the timeless virtues exemplified by Lord Rama. Though revered as a deity, Lord Rama epitomizes the human manifestation of a divine force, embodying qualities of righteousness and compassion that resonate with every individual. The celebration of Ram Navami serves as a spiritual compass, guiding devotees towards a path of benevolence and divinity, fostering personal growth and evolution. As the culmination of the nine-day Chaitra Navratri celebrations, Ram Navami holds a special significance, particularly in Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Rama. The Hindu month of Chaitra, heralding the transition from spring to summer, sets the stage for this auspicious occasion, elevating its sanctity and joy.

The celebration unfolds with a prayer to the sun at the break of dawn, symbolizing the dawn of enlightenment and spiritual awakening. At midday, a special prayer commemorates the divine birth of Lord Ram, invoking blessings and divine grace upon all. The spirit of celebration extends beyond the temples, as Rath yatras or chariot processions of Lord Ram, accompanied by his consort Sita, brother Lakshman, and devoted Hanuman, traverse the streets, spreading joy and spiritual fervor. The devotees converge on the banks of the sacred Sarayu River, immersing themselves in its purifying waters, seeking spiritual rejuvenation and divine blessings.

BRING SATTU TO STAY COOL

As temperatures soar in anticipation of Ram Navami, the Ram Mandir Trust has issued a special plea to devotees: bring along Sattu. Recognized for its cooling properties, Sattu, a traditional flour, promises respite from the scorching heat, ensuring the well-being and comfort of pilgrims during their visit to Ayodhya. Champat Rai, the Convener of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, underscored the significance of hydration and maintaining a cool



demeanor amidst the festivities. He urged devotees to embrace Sattu as a means to combat the sweltering temperatures, emphasizing its effectiveness in beating the heat.

With the welfare of devotees at the forefront, the Trust's initiative aims to ensure a pleasant and comfortable experience for all pilgrims as they partake in the sacred celebrations of Ram Navami in Ayodhya.

(Additional reporting done by BP Singh from Ayodhya).

In anticipation of the monumental crowds expected to throng the city, a strategic deployment of magistrates and police personnel has been planned. Heightened security measures will be implemented at sensitive areas and major temples, including the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, to prevent any untoward incidents. Efforts are underway to facilitate smooth entry and exit at the Ram Janmabhoomi temple, with the Trust exploring multiple entries and exits to avoid potential stampede-like situations. Additionally, arrangements have been made to provide water and mats on open floors, considering the approaching hot weather conditions, ensuring the comfort of devotees. To address any medical emergencies, round-the-clock medical facilities with extra beds will be available in both government health institutions and private hospitals. Traffic management will be streamlined, and vigilant monitoring will be conducted to identify and segregate any criminal elements.

The administration is leaving no stone unturned to enhance safety and convenience for devotees taking a dip in the sacred Sarayu River during Ram Navami. Additional fiber motorboats have been deployed, and barricades will be set up in the river to regulate the flow of people, facilitating secure access for devotees. Moreover, elaborate arrangements are being made for public toilets and regular cleaning, with over 2,000 sanitation workers mobilized for this purpose. Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra affirmed, "We have taken all necessary precautions to ensure the safety of pilgrims and residents alike. Our priority is to facilitate a peaceful and joyous celebration of Ram Navami."

ECONOMIC STIMULUS THROUGH FESTIVITIES

The festivities have not only kindled the flames of spirituality but have also breathed new life into Ayodhya's economy. Local businesses have witnessed a surge in sales

of religious artifacts, sweets, and traditional attire, as tourists and pilgrims alike immerse themselves in the spiritual ambiance of the city.

Ram Gupta, a local businessman, remarked, "The consecration of the Ram Mandir has brought prosperity to Ayodhya. We've seen a significant increase in sales, and tourists are eager to experience the cultural heritage of our city." Behind the scenes, skilled artisans have toiled tirelessly to craft intricate idols and decorations for the celebrations. From colorful rangolis adorning the streets to ornate idols of Lord Ram, Sita, and Lakshman, their craftsmanship adds a touch of elegance to the festivities, showcasing Ayodhya's rich cultural heritage to the world.

Ram Das, one such artisan, shared his sentiments, "For us, this Ram Navami is not just about business; it's about contributing to something larger than

ourselves. Crafting these idols is a way of expressing our devotion to Lord Ram and our love for our heritage."

Footfall in these days is tremendous bringing smiles on the faces of hoteliers. Sharad Kapoor, Director, Shaane Awadh Hotel told this reporter that not a single room is available till Ram Navami. "All the hotels, home stays and dharmshalas are booked, and the hospitality sector is doing very well since January 22," he said. Ram Navami is not merely a commemoration; it is a transformative journey, a celebration of faith, virtue, and the eternal triumph of good over evil. As the devotees unite in reverence and devotion, Ayodhya reverberates with the timeless chants of "Jai Shri Ram," echoing the enduring legacy of Lord Rama's divine grace and benevolence.



NAVRATRI

A FESTIVAL OF TRADITION, INNOVATION, AND WELLNESS

Beyond its religious significance, Navratri embraces fasting practices that promote detoxification, improved digestion, and overall wellness. **DIVYA BHATIA** explores how this nine-day celebration intertwines spiritual devotion with a mindful approach to nourishment. You can experience Navaratri at Edesia, Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla, in all its charm and majesty

Navratri, a nine-day festival celebrated in Northern India, holds immense significance, dedicated to Goddess Durga. Derived from Sanskrit, 'Navratri' signifies 'nine nights,' with each day devoted to one of Durga's nine forms. Falling twice a year, Navratri marks the onset of joyous festivities after the spring or during the harvest season.

Legend surrounds Navratri, with stories of Goddess Durga's triumph over evil. Whether battling Mahishasura for nine days or seeking refuge in a cave at Vaishno Devi, fasting and feasting rituals commemorate these tales. Regardless of the narrative, Navratri heralds a season of exuberance, marked by vibrant celebrations and abundant sweets.

During Navratri, adherents observe dietary restrictions, abstaining from grains and opting for satvik foods like Sabudana, kuttu, and rajgira. Fasting typically involves consuming only once or twice daily, with a focus on water, dairy, and fruits. Some prefer meals made from buckwheat or water chestnut flour, reflecting individual fasting preferences.

Health experts advocate controlled fasting, citing benefits such as reduced inflammation, improved digestion, and enhanced overall well-being. Despite myths surrounding weight gain, Navratri fasting encourages a healthier lifestyle, emphasizing fruits, salads, and detoxification practices.

In recent years, the F&B industry has recognized Navratri's potential, leading to innovations in Navratri cuisine. Evolving with changing dietary trends, Navratri food offerings now cater to health-conscious consumers, featuring lighter cooking methods and nutritious ingredients. As people prioritize health during the festival, Navratri continues to inspire culinary creativity while promoting well-being.

Adding to this spiritual significance, Chef Mani Mohan Pathak of Pilibhit House, Haridwar- IHCL SeleQtions, emphasizes the festival's evolution in the culinary world, stating, "Fasting is performed from ancient times, there are certain restrictions on fasting. Now fasting is getting fashioned, business, innovation and popular trends. Now the trend is towards healthier Navratri food options, with dietary preferences. The incorporation of superfoods like Makhana, quinoa and chia seeds, as well as creative twists on traditional recipes using ingredients such as sweet potato, sabudana, and buckwheat flour. Additionally, an emphasis on lighter cooking methods such as baking, or air frying, to reduce oil consumption. Overall, there's a growing awareness of nutrition and a desire to enjoy Navratri festivities without compromising on health goals."

Agreeing with Chef Pathak, Chef Sreenivasan Govindarajan, Director Culinary, Radisson Blu Plaza Delhi Airport, shared, "In recent years, Navratri food trends have seen a steady focus on tradition with a subtle shift towards health consciousness and innovation. However, the fundamental choices in Navratri cuisine have remained largely unchanged. What's notable, though, is the growing emphasis on hygiene and the meticulous preparation of dishes. People today are more conscious about the cleanliness of their food, reflecting a broader trend towards prioritizing health and well-being even during cultural celebrations. This nuanced approach ensures that while the flavors remain traditional, each dish is prepared with care and attention to hygiene, meeting the evolving tastes and standards of modern times."

While Navratri presents chefs with challenges, including limited ingredients, Chef Ashutosh Bisht of Crowne Plaza New Delhi Okhla remains undeterred. He explains, "Creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty within the constraints of limited ingredients poses a significant challenge. With a restricted palette of options, the key lies in maximizing flavor and variety despite the constraints." This sentiment is echoed by Chef Sreenivasan Govindarajan, who emphasizes the importance of balancing taste and nutrition in Navratri cuisine. He said, "Balancing taste and nutrition becomes paramount, requiring careful selection and preparation of ingredients to ensure that each dish is not only fulfilling but also delicious. Overcoming this challenge demands creativity and ingenuity in the kitchen, as chefs strive to craft flavorful Navratri meals that satisfy both the palate and the nutritional



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

SPIRITUAL FOOD

CHEF ADITI DIXIT, a culinary virtuoso at CYK Hospitalities, is renowned for her innovative approach to gastronomy. With a passion for crafting exquisite dishes that tantalize the taste buds, Chef Dixit elevates dining experiences to new heights. Chef Aditi Dixit talked about Navratri offerings. Excerpts



What trends have you observed in Navratri food over recent years, particularly in response to increasing health consciousness and a desire for innovative dishes?

In recent years, especially in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, several noteworthy trends have emerged in Navratri cuisine. These trends are predominantly driven by a growing awareness of health considerations and a desire for culinary innovation. One significant trend involves the use of healthier ingredients, where there has been a notable shift away from refined flours towards alternatives such as buckwheat flour, amaranth flour, kuttu flour, and water chestnut flour. These alternatives, being gluten-free and often considered healthier options, have gained popularity among health-conscious individuals.

Moreover, there has been an increasing adoption of low-oil cooking techniques to reduce overall calorie intake and create lighter meals. Techniques such as baking, steaming, and air-frying have become preferred methods during Navratri, aligning with health-conscious dietary preferences.

What benefits does Navratri food offer, and what challenges do you face when creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty within the limitations of ingredients?

Navratri fasting offers several benefits when approached mindfully. It encourages the consumption of a diverse array of foods, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, and dairy products, promoting the absorption of essential nutrients, vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Moreover, Navratri fasting emphasizes the intake of fluids such as water, coconut water, and herbal teas, aiding in hydration and overall well-being. For many, Navratri

fasting can also support weight control by emphasizing lighter, plant-based foods and avoiding processed and high-calorie options.

However, creating a Navratri menu that is both healthy and flavorful comes with its challenges. Fasting during Navratri imposes restrictions on certain ingredients such as grains, pulses, onions, garlic, and common spices, necessitating creativity in utilizing alternative ingredients without compromising taste and nutrition. Additionally, maintaining a balanced nutritional profile, particularly in terms of protein intake, can be challenging due to limitations on traditional protein sources like lentils and beans. Hence, increasing the incorporation of dairy products, nuts, seeds, and plant proteins becomes crucial. Moreover, catering to individual allergies, intolerances, and dietary preferences adds another layer of complexity when designing a menu that caters to a diverse group of people observing Navratri fasting.

Could you share one of your most unique Navratri dishes that you've created recently, which has been particularly popular?

Certainly! We recently introduced an extensive Navratri menu featuring innovative dishes such as sweet potato & amaranth kebab, vegan millet tikki, arbi tuk chaat, hasselback aloo chaat, paan rose lassi, and kesar pista lassi. Among these offerings, the sweet potato and amaranth kebab stands out for its unique and versatile flavour profile. It has garnered significant popularity among our patrons and remains a personal favourite of mine as well.

Which ingredient do you find most versatile in Navratri cuisine?

For me personally, sabudana, also known as tapioca pearls or sago, is an incredibly versatile ingredient commonly used during Navratri fasting. Its adaptability lends itself to a myriad of beloved dishes, including sabudana khichdi, thalipeeth, kheer, vada, salad, chiwda, and papad, making it an indispensable element in Navratri cuisine.



HEALTHIER SHIFT IN NAVRATRI CUISINE

With a passion for blending traditional flavors with modern techniques, **CHEF GAURAV** has carved a niche for himself in the culinary world. His dedication to quality ingredients, attention to detail, and commitment to culinary excellence have earned him accolades from both diners and peers alike. Here he talks about Navratri food. Excerpts.

What trends have you observed in Navratri food over recent years, particularly in response to increasing health consciousness and a desire for innovative dishes?

Over recent years, we've noticed a significant shift towards healthier ingredients in Navratri cuisine. Millets like Foxtail and Rajgira are now replacing refined sabudana in dishes like khichdi, offering a more nutritious alternative. Moreover, there's been an increased emphasis on incorporating fruits and vegetables, such as Buckwheat flour rotis stuffed with veggies and salads featuring ingredients like lotus stem and water chestnuts. Additionally, alternatives to dairy like almond milk, coconut milk, and soy milk are being used in dishes like halwa, cheela, and puddings. These changes reflect a growing desire among people to celebrate Navratri while maintaining a healthy

lifestyle.

What kind of benefits does Navratri food offer? What challenges do you face when creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty with limitations of ingredients?

Navratri food, despite its limitations in ingredients, offers a surprising range of health benefits. The focus on whole grains, legumes, fruits, and vegetables provides a detoxifying effect, improves digestion, and boosts immunity. However, creating a menu that is both healthy and tasty can be challenging due to restrictions such as no onions, garlic, or certain grains. The key lies in getting creative with spices, herbs, and alternative flours to craft flavorful dishes that satisfy the palate while meeting dietary requirements.

Could you share one of your most unique Navratri dishes that you've

created recently, which has been super popular?

Certainly! One of our most beloved Navratri dishes is our Tandoori Sweet Potato Chaat. We start with tandoor-roasted sweet potatoes, which are then tossed in a vibrant medley of mint chutney (crafted without onion and garlic), sweet and tangy dates chutney, a touch of rock salt (sendha namak), crushed black pepper, a squeeze of lemon juice, and chopped green chilies. Finally, we add a delightful crunch of roasted peanuts and crispy fried potato lachha. It's a harmonious blend of textures and flavors that has quickly become a Navratri favorite among our patrons.

Which ingredient do you find most versatile in Navratri cuisine?

Chef: Black pepper.



Photo: Pankaj Kumar

ripening. This innovative twist has yielded fantastic results, offering a healthy and delicious alternative to traditional Navratri fare," he shared.

Whereas, Mr. Kamal Kanth, Executive Chef, Sambarpot, defines his Kashmiri dum aloo with stuffed paneer, khoya & dry fruits as the person's favorite from Navratri thali. What surprised us were Sabudana Dumplings that are created by Chef Deshraj Punia, who shared with pride, "We give them a unique twist by

shallow frying them, which makes them look like a fusion dish. They're cooked in desi ghee, which is good for both your skin and stomach, and they taste really delicious and light."

Bringing out the best dish also depends on the ingredients used in creating the best dish. But with limitations of options, innovation is key to success. Ingredients like Potato, Sweet Potato, Buckwheat, all are there, but which ingredients are most versatile? Chef Ashutosh Bisht thinks it's curd as he rightly pointed out its benefits. It can be used to create refreshing drinks, flavorful subzi preparations, or even desserts. Additionally, it's a great source of energy that can be digested quickly, making it an ideal component for Navratri meals.

According to Chef Mani Mohan Pathak, the key ingredient is potato/ sweet potatoes and sabudana. Potato is been used plain boiled/ fried and roasted. Further, potato is used in sabudana khichdi, tikki, sabzi, and even kuttu ki puris or parathas made from kuttu flour.

Overall, we can say that Navratri brings with it a delightful culinary experience that caters to both tradition and taste. This vibrant festival has brought out the creative side of the F&B world and continues to inspire many without compromising on health.

SHUBHO NOBO BORSHO

Today is *Poila Boishakh*, a day when Bengalis across the globe usher in their new year. And what better way to celebrate than food. **SHOBORI GANGULI** joined the feast and festivities at Hyatt Gurugram with critically acclaimed **CHEF ANANYA BANERJEE** whose signature take on a traditional Bengali feast made it a special day indeed

The first day of the Bengali New Year is not just another date on the calendar to mark for rituals and ceremonies. It is all about cultural bonhomie, dance and music, a day to let your hair down, meet friends and family over a grand meal, a day when even the most humble of kitchens becomes the fulcrum of all celebrations, with everyone on the lookout for a feast to remember. Truth be told, nothing can vie with the spirit that enwraps all of Bengal this day. But for *probashi* (non-resident) Bengalis like me, scattered across the country, we crave to partake of a sumptuous spread, course by course, from a traditional kitchen this special day which, for many of us, dwells only in the realms of nostalgia.

In this context one draws immense consolation from the fact that roving itinerant chefs like Ananya Banerjee are rewriting centuries old traditional manuscripts, rich with secret spices and untold innovations, for a generation that is clawing back to find its roots today.

The Chef's Bengal Bhoj at Hyatt this weekend provided exactly that opportunity.

For my generation, Chef Banerjee's creations are a warm and nostalgic embrace from a distant past when our tiny lives revolved around our grandmother's or mother's kitchens, a time when festivals meant food, each meal a feast. Little did we know back then that as we grew older we would simultaneously travel far away from those kitchens, from their aromas and flavours.

It is therefore heartening to know that someone like Chef Banerjee, while keeping her much wider international clientele in mind, has carved a unique niche for herself in her quest to recover the history and philosophy that informs Bengal's exquisite culinary heritage. As she puts it, that while going traditional, "I



CHEF ANANYA BANERJEE

tend to be very progressive when I curate a Chef's table."

True to her promise, the Chef laid out a lavish *Poila Boishakh* spread, from a live Bengali street food counter of *Phuchkas* and *Churmur* to appetizers like *Chicken Kobiraji*, *Mochaar Chop* and *Bhetki Paturi* or the vegetarian alternative of *Paneer Paturi*.

The main course meandered its delectable way through *Phulko Loochi*, *Chholar Daal*, *Kosha Maangsho* and *Aloo Posto*. Accompanied by steamed rice were Chef Banerjee's innovative twists to the traditional *Prawn Malai Curry* and *Lebu Lonka Murgi*.

Bengalis are never far behind when it comes to desserts. Even after a rich and sumptuous meal, there's always space left to accommodate some *mishti* to sign off a great feast. Chef Banerjee's Baked *Roshogulla* with *Jhola Nolen Gur* (a liquid syrup of date jaggery) delicately poured on top was really an elixir from heaven. So was the *Patishapta*, crepes with a rich filling of grated coconut and *khejurer gur* (date jaggery). The *Mango Baked Yogurt* too beckoned our undivided attention.

Even as technology takes over our time and lives, and reels and Instagrams provide instant and vicarious pleasure to millions of viewers, nothing in the world can ever replace the wholesome sensory experience of enjoying a good meal real time, even as our senses come alive to the sight, aromas, textures and sounds of a live kitchen.

The one attribute that sets Chef Banerjee apart from the rest of her tribe is the personal attention she devotes to every guest. She flits around the entire dining hall, at times personally mixing the magical *phuchka*



filling to the guests's satisfaction, or taking them on a guided tour through her handcrafted menu, her play with spices and herbs writ large on the fare she puts out. Chef Banerjee's energy and vivacity is truly infectious, her culinary creations "something to live for," as a friend at the table put it.

A very Happy New Year to all of you out there!

(Please reach out to the May Edition of our magazine EXOTICA for a detailed story on the above)

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF SINGLE ORIGINS, FLAT WHITES, AND BEYOND!

Melbourne boasts an abundance of café choices that can enchant even the most dedicated caffeine enthusiasts

BY **RUPALI DEAN**

Woven deeply into Melbourne's essence, caffeine has long coursed through the veins of this vibrant Australian city. With its cobblestone alleyways and hidden gems, Melbourne boasts a city with their profound love for coffee. The Italians' staggering array of cafes that number well above a thousand. With only two days to explore this caffeinated paradise, I decide to embark on a sensory journey in pursuit of the perfect brew. Opting for a guided excursion to delve into Melbourne's coffee tapestry, I booked a walking tour led by a knowledgeable local. The tour, starting at Tulip Coffee, introduced me to Monique Bayer, the passionate founder of W a l k Melbourne.

Savouring a meticulously crafted single origin and a robust house blend espresso, Monique gently unveiled the rich history of Melbourne's coffee culture, tracing its origins back to the 1950s with the iconic Pellegrini Espresso Bar—a legacy brought forth by Italian immigrants infusing the city with their profound love for coffee. The Italians' indelible influence catalysed a coffee revolution, paving the way for a proliferation of expert roasters and skilled baristas in the early 2000s. Today, Melbourne stands as a coffee connoisseur's haven, where the alluring aroma of freshly brewed espresso dances through laneways and spills onto bustling streets. Amidst this caffeinated symphony, as I indulged in various espresso creations, my palate gravitated towards the comforting familiarity of the house blend complemented by a hint of milk, embracing the city's love affair with coffee—one fragrant sip at a time.

A PLETHORA OF PASSION

Hailing from Tasmania, the industrious Bayer curates around three tours weekly, meticulously orchestrating bespoke experiences for small groups of no more than ten individuals. The genesis of her guided tours can be traced back to a leisurely café expedition with like-minded coffee enthusiasts in September 2012, sparking the



inception of her immersive walking adventures. Immersed in the ambrosial world of coffee, I found myself savouring a potent single origin espresso, a departure from my usual cup of joe. As Monique divulged the emerging predilection for filter coffee—a gentle brewing method that

intrigued my taste buds—she promised to introduce me to this nuanced approach during our escapade. The art of coffee filtration, she explained, unfolds like a scientific exploration, offering an array of techniques to unlock diverse flavours and aromas. Monique's insatiable quest for hidden local treasures



Monique Bayer



A local coffee maker

unearthed gems like Bean by Workshop Bros, discreetly marked by a modest overhead sign, and Industry Beans, celebrated for its trendy ambiance and revered for concocting velvety Aussie Flat Whites. In her relentless pursuit of culinary marvels, she unveils these well-kept secrets, enriching our expedition with tantalizing discoveries at every turn.

COFFEE LOVE

Immersed in the vibrant tapestry of Melbourne's coffee culture, I found myself navigating a world of tantalizing options tailored even to those adhering to a paleo diet. The allure of butter coffee, touted for its purported benefits of heightened vitality and drive,

beckoned from establishments like Patch Café in Richmond and Seedling in Flinders Lane, promising a unique caffeinated experience. Enlightened by Monique's insights, I learned that a true Melbournian's relationship with coffee hinges on quality, with subpar brews failing to captivate discerning palates. Amidst the lively chatter of coffee aficionados, terms like cupping, siphon, AeroPress, and pour-over resonated across the eclectic coffee shops lining our path, each method a testament to Melbourne's fervent coffee affair.

Our sojourn led us to the Maker, where I indulged in the intricate art of filter coffee, opting for the elaborate cold drip

variant—a meticulous 12 to 24-hour extraction process that accentuates the bean's essence while tempering bitterness. Here, I unearthed the enchanting novelty of frozen coffee, a departure from the conventional iced coffee of my homeland, where coffee is customized, frozen, and preserved until beckoned for consumption.

In Melbourne, coffee transcends mere refreshment; it is a sacred ritual, where reverence for the brew and the bean intertwine seamlessly. As the day unfolded with myriad caffeine-infused revelations, this latest discovery stood as a crowning jewel, a testament to a city that embraces coffee with a sanctity unmatched elsewhere.

(Awarded the "Best food writer in the country" by the Indian culinary forum, WACS and the ministry of Tourism, Rupali Dean writes on food and travel.)





**YOUR
WEEK
AHEAD**

MADHU KOTIYA



ARIES March 21-April 19

This week, you're poised for financial prosperity and professional advancement, bringing a sense of contentment to your life. Your innate curiosity and inventive outlook keep you feeling rejuvenated and passionate, contributing to a youthful vigor. Family joy is amplified, especially through the achievements and joy that come from younger members, reinforcing your belief in the simplicity and joy beyond material possessions. Your naturally independent spirit allows you to navigate changes with ease, adding to your happiness. However, the sphere of romantic connections presents challenges. Although there's potential for new beginnings and the stirrings of deep feelings, these early stages of companionship might not culminate in lasting fulfillment. Efforts to strengthen existing bonds may also encounter obstacles, requiring patience and understanding to navigate.

Lucky number 5 | **Lucky colour** Magenta
Lucky day Friday



LEO July 23-Aug 22

This week, you find yourself deeply engaged in spiritual practices, embracing these moments with joy. However, a shadow of discord and unfriendly intentions looms over you, casting a pall. You may encounter a situation where your accomplishments are threatened by those with a crafty mindset, presenting a significant challenge to navigate. In the face of such adversity, it's crucial to guard your steps carefully, leaving no openings for exploitation. Despite the hard work you've invested without immediate signs of change, a reflective pause can reveal the progress you've made, boosting your determination. Financial gains mid-week signal a phase of abundance, enhancing your sense of material security. Moreover, the week promises joyful occasions, with gatherings and celebrations marking the fulfillment of personal aspirations, reflecting a harmonious blend of success across different facets of your life.

Lucky number 12 | **Lucky colour** Mint
Lucky day Saturday



SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21

This week, you embody an exceptional level of inner fortitude and intellectual acumen, thinking expansively and aiming high. Demonstrating courage, patience, and a disciplined approach to your desires signifies a deep-seated resolve. This kind of inner strength and radiance speaks to a profound connection with your inner self. You find great significance in engaging deeply with practices that enhance your inner power, reflecting a strong inclination towards spiritual growth. Many find that embracing a path of spiritual enrichment leads to a greater sense of stability and a transformative uplift in their overall outlook and lifestyle. Adopting practices like meditation can significantly benefit your holistic wellbeing, aligning your physical, mental, and spiritual facets harmoniously. As the week concludes, the diligent pursuit of your goals begins to bear fruit, rewarding you with prosperity and robust health.

Lucky number 17 | **Lucky colour** Burgundy
Lucky day Wednesday



TAURUS April 20-May 20

Your creativity and boundless imagination empower you to sculpt your reality to your desires. This week, anticipate joyful milestones that symbolize new beginnings and growth. At your core, you embody the essence of love, kindness, and empathy. You seek harmony and are adept at avoiding discord and disputes. Although you might appear contemplative and reserved, you possess an underlying courage and resolve. You embrace the power of your dreams, striving to turn the seemingly impossible into reality. Expect an unforeseen positive shift that will pleasantly surprise you, marking a significant turn in your journey. New endeavors related to your career or business are on the horizon, promising substantial rewards that will elevate your self-assurance. Having invested considerable effort into achieving balance, you now find yourself in a place of calm and contentment.

Lucky number 2 | **Lucky colour** Lime
Lucky day Monday



VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22

This week calls for quick, determined moves on your part. A fresh wave of vitality is set to sweep aside any haze of uncertainty or negative vibes, paving the way for open dialogues and the initiation of new endeavors. There's a strong chance for progress in plans involving travel abroad, with preparations now complete, signaling readiness for a new journey. Moreover, you're on the cusp of a profound shift in your beliefs and values, leading to a more aligned and coherent view of your life's direction. Embrace the opportunity to forge new connections, for without the warmth of shared experiences, you may find yourself wrestling with feelings of isolation. A thoughtful approach towards finances and social interactions promises significant benefits during this opportune time. Seize this moment to thrive.

Lucky number 14 | **Lucky colour** Navy
Lucky day Thursday



CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19

This week heralds a period of significant fruition and accomplishment for you. The cosmic rhythm aligns in such a way that your abilities are amplified, enabling you to seize the myriad opportunities that arise. Your belief in higher energies fuels your journey. Your innate creativity is set to flourish, heralding major achievements such as the successful completion of projects, ventures, and other personal milestones. You're surrounded by an aura of well-being, with harmony pervading both your personal and professional environments. Life, in its myriad expressions, offers you abundance and joy. You find satisfaction in your current state, laying a solid foundation for future endeavors. Past concerns are now shadows, leaving you free to embrace an optimistic outlook. Emotional, physical, and deeper pleasures are fully aligned, ensuring contentment on every level.

Lucky number 13 | **Lucky colour** Cream
Lucky day Friday



GEMINI May 21-June 20

This week challenges you to pour your energy into your commitments, leaving little room for personal life and relaxation. Your dedication is unwavering, yet your ambitions still seem distant, casting a shadow of monotony and fatigue over your daily routine. Your tolerance for minor annoyances is thin, causing fluctuations in your emotional state. At times, the desire for guidance or therapeutic support becomes apparent, highlighting the importance of self-care amidst the hustle. Meanwhile, adversaries appear more proactive, posing potential threats to your image and efforts. It's crucial to navigate this period with discretion, making pivotal choices independently to shield against the malicious intentions of others. Staying vigilant and trustful in your judgment will be key to mitigating any detrimental impacts during these times.

Lucky number 7 | **Lucky colour** Ivory
Lucky day Wednesday



LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22

This week, you find yourself navigating a sea of emotional turbulence, with past wounds and worries keeping you restless. The shadow of regret looms large, highlighting vulnerabilities that seem acute. Your path through this turmoil begins with distinguishing between unfounded fears and genuine issues. Tackling real challenges head-on will dissipate the clouds of anxiety, leading to a serene end to your week. Amidst this emotional upheaval, a calm oasis awaits, offering you space to heal and find clarity. This tranquil period is a chance to soothe your spirit and banish doubts. Additionally, the potential for journeys, whether physical or spiritual, presents itself, inviting you to transcend both positive and negative emotions. By facing and overcoming your fears, you'll emerge with renewed self-esteem and a clearer sense of direction.

Lucky number 18 | **Lucky colour** Peach
Lucky day Saturday



AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18

An unseen guiding force is poised to illuminate your path, offering clarity and insight during moments of quiet reflection. This phase ushers in a surge of inspiration, energizing you to embark on new ventures that demand your swift action and undivided focus. Now is the moment to harness your potential and sculpt the success you've envisioned. A wave of well-being and vitality is set to envelop you, promising recovery and rejuvenation for those facing health challenges. Relish in this renewed strength. For those who collaborate with others, your integrity and inventive spirit will earn you admiration, fostering a harmonious and fertile ground for shared endeavors. Your dedication and resilience will empower you to overcome obstacles, securing triumphs from the most daunting situations.

Lucky number 20 | **Lucky colour** Violet
Lucky day Sunday



CANCER June 21-July 22

This week, you find yourself remarkably perceptive and deeply in tune with your surroundings, blessed with an expansive imagination that often carries you into realms of fantasy. Your ability to perceive beyond the surface could rival that of a seer, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach in decision-making—relying on both intuition and intellect. Watch your spending closely; exceeding your budget could lead to financial strain, especially with unforeseen expenses on the horizon. You're juggling numerous projects, stretching across both your personal and professional life, necessitating a reassessment of your priorities. Embracing flexibility and a commitment to self-improvement are key to navigating this period successfully. This balanced approach will not only foster personal growth but also protect you from potential stress and emotional upheaval amidst life's inevitable changes.

Lucky number 19 | **Lucky colour** Beige
Lucky day Monday



SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21

This week invites deep introspection and a gentle approach to personal challenges. You may encounter moments of low spirits and introspection, highlighting the importance of nurturing close family bonds, especially with maternal figures. Embracing practices such as meditation, yoga, and engaging with inspirational literature can significantly aid in rejuvenating your sense of inner calm and strengthening your cognitive abilities. Midweek, it's essential to stay vigilant about your well-being, as a tendency towards sluggishness could become prominent. Maintaining an optimistic perspective is crucial, as your aspirations and goals are within reach, awaiting realization. For those engaged in professional endeavors, opportunities for advancement or favorable job prospects are on the horizon, signaling a period of swift and positive transitions.

Lucky number 3 | **Lucky colour** Fuchsia
Lucky day Monday



PISCES Feb 19-March 20

This week, you'll radiate a compelling presence, effortlessly capturing the attention and admiration of those around you. Your self-assurance is rooted in a deep understanding of your strengths and the clarity of your purpose. You excel in articulating your thoughts and leading with finesse, ensuring that you steer your life in the direction you desire. This period presents an opportunity for you to achieve recognition and success, as you embrace growth and the joy of discovery. By embracing new perspectives and expanding your horizons, you'll find innovative solutions to challenges, enhancing your intellectual prowess. Your commitment to personal values and generosity not only enriches your own life but also makes a lasting impact on those you encounter, further amplifying your influential energy.

Lucky number 1 | **Lucky colour** Amber
Lucky day Wednesday

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ASTROTURF
BHARAT BHUSHAN PADMADEO

Greet valued readers on the solemn occasion of Chaitra Navaratra beginning on Hindu New Year, and hence its importance. Hindu annular calendar provides for 4 Navaratri of which the one held during the Hindu month of Ashvin is most sought after. A good number of devout also observe Chaitra Navaratra. Very few pursue the other two. All festivities have their story lines and religious spirit. Be that as they may. But they are so designed and timed as to help one periodically reinvent oneself. It will be interesting to note that the Navaratri coincide with solar ingress into 4 different cardinal signs of the natural zodiac. They are marked with major transition in the cosmic energy pattern, which in turn, set off four major seasons in India. Evidently, the seasonal changes shall have related bearing on life cycle on earth. Every seasonal transition brings in new opportunities in so far as our productive aspirations are concerned, but not without posing fresh challenges. And we have no choice than to keep pace with the callings of emerging times. Accordingly, we need to be well

geared up to take on the callings of emerging times in all strength with ease and comfort. It is in this spirit that the devout subject themselves to a 9 day prayer regime, with focus on Mother Goddess Durga, the epitome of Shakti. The irony, however, is that Shakti is like a double edged weapon. If rightfully applied, it will prove rewarding and fulfilling. If misused, it could lead to disastrous consequences. Here comes the role of the state of mind. The way mind is inherently ordained is how it uses Shakti. If positively oriented, it is directed towards productive aspirations. If, otherwise, negatively driven, it may prove disastrous. That makes it incumbent upon us to keep our mind in shape. Navaratri are such occasions when we periodically work upon our mind self. Navaratri prayer regime first helps purify the mind of all its limitations, following which its wholesome powers could be positively used to our advantage. In the process one's faith gets rekindled. Our individual energy structure gets recharged, worth doing justice to the callings of priority pref-



erences. Keeping away from indulgences, the devout follow an austere life. Strict dietary restrictions are observed. Ordinarily we follow a particular dietary habit. The digestive system gets used to secrete a particular set of enzymes to digest them. During

the festive season, when the dietary regime undergoes change, the digestive system has to accordingly readjust itself to suit the occasion. In the process, the bowel regime undergoes cleansing so that it could secrete the desired enzymes. We, thus strengthen

our dietary system, vital to a healthy life ahead. The occasion also has valued educative import for us. If you look at the imagery of Mother Goddess Durga, in an exploratory mode, it will offer an interesting reading. First, the allegory running around Goddess Durga. It is believed that Demons drove away the Devas from Devaloka, their place of abode. In a state of desperation the devatas approached Lord Brahma, the God-personified for creation for help. Brahma led them all to Lord Vishnu, the God-personified assigned with the task to administer. Realising that enormous power was needed to counter the might of Demons, Lord Vishnu in turn, led them all to Lord Shiva, the epitome of Shakti. Lord Shiva asked all the Devas to share their individual Tejas (shakti-radiance). Their tejas pooled in together turned into a huge fire, out of which emerged the all-powerful Mother Goddess Durga. The Devas also offered their respective weapons for Mother's use. She then took on and humbled all the demons. She, however, did not do it single-handed. She was

assisted by many other Goddesses in Her mission, all of them originating from the mainframe of Durga herself. After completing their respective tasks, they reverted back to their source-frame. The question now is: how comes the Devas, the individually evolved beings, known for their righteous conduct had to face the humiliation of being driven away by evil-forces from their homeland? Evidently, either the Devas were not strong enough to match the might of demons, or else, there had to be something wrong in them, which brought them to such a pass. One possibility is that being overtaken by egotistic sense of being superior ones; they mistook themselves to be unassailable. Also, engrossed in their individualistic pursuits, righteous though, they lost their sense of alert about the impending danger and their collective obligations. The inevitable had to happen. *The issue continues* The writer is an astrologer, vastu consultant and spiritual counsellor. Connect with him at Tel: 91-11-9818037273/9871037272 Email: bharatbhushanpadmadeo@gmail.com