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Modi, Mamata faceoff in Bengal





(Left to right): Prime Minister Narendra Modi with BJP candidate Sukanta Majumdar during a public meeting ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Balurghat and West Bengal on Tuesday; Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee during an election campaign rally ahead of Lok Sabha polls, at Hill Cart road in Siliguri on Tuesday

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

Bengal witnessed a virtual duel between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee even as the former accused the Bengal Government of stopping Ram Navami celebrations and hon-ouring those who throw stones at Ram Navami processions while the latter asked the people, particularly the minorities not to walk into the trap of the BJP which is trying to trigger communal riots in Bengal.

The Prime Minister, who was addressing election rallies at Balurghat and Raiganj in North Bengal, alleged how the Bengal administration has

spike the Ram Navami celebrations

Tomorrow the entire nation Navami ... but here the Trinamool Congress has always tried to stop it from taking place in Bengal ... they tried many conspiracies. And we were forced to get permission from the High Court and tomorrow, with devotion and faith, we will celebrate Ram Navami," the Prime Minister said.

"It has always been that the TMC stops such religious programmes and promotes and honours those people who throw stones at these processions," he said.

been doing everything to However, the Chief Minister hit back from a rally at Moinaguri in Jalpaiguri district asking people to goes to celebrate the Ram remain alert against the "evil designs of the BJP to trigger riots in the

name of festivals." In a statement that most Opposition parties, including the BJP read as a bid to act the messiah of the before Muslims

elections, Mamata said, "Bengal is for every religion but here are some people who are trying to play communal politics by triggering riots I ask the people, particularly my minority brothers and sisters to keep your cool and do not walk into the trap laid by them ... some people are spreading fake videos ... some may raise slogans ... but if you hear such slogans keep

your cool and pray to Allah so that things pass off without fuss ... because Ram Navami is a festival of mutual respect honour."

The BJP sends NIA in Bengal to disturb and imise the innocent innocent victimise people, she said. Earlier the High Court had

Vishwa Hindu allowed Parishad and the Anjani Putra Sena to take out processions, but under certain conditions, the maximum participants should not be more than 200 and that there would be no play of arms or DJs.

Tuesday's development came against the backdrop of weeks' long riots at Howrah, Serampore and Dalkhola in the days following Ram Navami.

The Modi-Mamata spar came at a time when in a major development the Jadavpur University authorities on allowed the Tuesday celebrations of Ram Navami at the campus even as sources said "if Saraswati Puja can be organised why Ram Navami cannot be celebrated here." This is the first time that such

celebrations would be allowed inside the campus. Elsewhere in North Bengal

the Chief Minister warned the people against the Citizenship people against the Citizenship Amendment Act, comparing it with the head of a big fish which has a tail in the National Register of Citizens. "If it is a big fish then the CAA is the head and NRC is the tail and the Uniform Civil Code is its torso," Mamata said accusing the BJP government of playing "dirty politics of polarisation."

Attacking the Centre for "defaming Bengal with allegations of corruption," she demanded a white paper to be released on the issue

# Chattisgarh encounter leaves 29 Naxals dead

t least 29 Naxalites were Akilled in an encounter with security personnel in Chhattisgarh's Kanker district on Tuesday, police officials

Three security personnel suffered injuries in the fierce gun-battle and a large quantity of weapons was also recovered from the spot, they

The gunfight took place at around 2 pm in Hapatola forest between Binagunda and Koronar villages under Chhotebethiya police station limits, when a joint team of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the state police's District Reserve Guard (DRG) was out on an anti-Naxal operation, Inspector General of Police (Bastar

Range) Sundarraj P said. The operation was launched based on inputs about the presence of senior cadres of north Bastar division of the outlawed CPI (Maoist) Shankar, Lalita, Raju and others, he said. During patrolling in the area, a fierce gun-battle broke out between the two sides, the senior IPS officer said. "Bodies of 29 Maoists along

with a huge cache of weapons, including AK-47, SLR, Insas and .303 rifles, were recovered from the spot," the IG said. Continued on Page 8 | Polling in the Naxalite-hit

Bastar Lok Sabha seat will take place on April 19 in the first phase, while the Kanker constituency, part of the Bastar region, will vote in the second round of general elections on April 26. The search operation was still

underway in the area amid intermittent firing between security personnel and Naxalites, said Sundarraj.

"Three security personnel sustained injuries in the gunfight and their condition was stated to be out of danger," he said, adding they were referred to hospital for treatment.

After the latest encounter, 79 Naxalites have been killed in separate gun-battles with security forces in the Bastar region, comprising seven districts, including Kanker, so far this year. On April 2, as many as 13 Naxalites were killed in an encounter with security forces in Bijapur



Ranjan Dimri / The Pioneer

## Congress leads in complaints to EC

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid allegations by Opposition parties that the Government is misusing probe agencies to target its leaders, the Election Commission on Tuesday shared a data saying around 200 complaints have been filed by various political parties and candidates across States.

The Congress is the top in the list of filing complaints to the EC, followed by the BJP for violation of Model Code of Conduct. According to the EC, the BJP has filed 51 complaints, of them, action has been taken in 38 cases while the Congress filed 59 and action taken on 51 cases. Several political parties from the INDIA Bloc had approached the poll panel seeking its intervention in the alleged misuse of probe agencies by the Government to target their leaders over graft.

Following the arrest of Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal by the Enforcement Directorate in a money laundering case linked to the alleged excise scam, the Opposition parties had mounted renewed attack on the Government for its alleged bid to silence their ahead leaders parliamentary elections.

According to the EC, suo motu removal of officers holding dual charges as Principal Secretaries to Chief Ministers in six States namely Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Himachal Jharkhand, Pradesh, and Uttarakhand, as they were holding charge of Home/

General Administration department also. This was to distance election related senior officers control over, DMs/DEOs/ROs and SPs, from Chief Minister's offices.

## MNREGA workers turn into political campaigners | Jailed Kejriwal, Sisodia and

In an unexpected turn during the Uttar Pradesh (UP) election season, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) workers are witnessing heightened demand, not for their traditional manual labour, but as foot soldiers for political campaigns

This trend has ignited a discourse on the exploitation of these workers for political purposes, not by a particular party but by parties of all hues.

Typically earning around ₹250 per day for their labour, MGNREGA workers are now being tempted into election rallies and canvassing with promises of ₹300 wages, supplemented with three meals a day and even evening liquor.

The surge in pay, coupled with additional perks, has resulted in a scarcity of MGNREGA workers willing to partake in their usual tasks, such as pond digging or rural development work, across various regions of UP.

Raja Bhaiya, head of the Vidya Dham Samiti NGO in Banda, UP, noted that in the Bundelkhand region, these workers are engaged in election campaigns for as low as ₹200-250 per day.

"They are attracted by the promise of three meals a day and evening liquor. And this is sufficient incentive for them to work at lower rates," he told The Pioneer, adding "these workers are doubling up as political karyakarta". Sukhai Ram, a MGNREGA job card

holder, was assigned to work on a pond and culvert construction project in Gram Sabha Karonda, Barabanki, but has declined, citing the allure of higher wages and "shaam ki diwai," referring to alcohol.

Continued on Page 8 | The Department of Rural Development



from several districts regarding the disruption of MGNREGA work due to elections. "Labour shortages are common during elections. Diversion is inevitable, and the Government has limited control over it," a senior official informed.

These workers are tasked with carrying election materials, waving flags at rallies, and participating in roadshows.

The exploitation of MGNREGA workers for political ends has drawn condemnation from various quarters, raising concerns about the moral implications of such practices.

Political analyst Dr Rajesh Sharma remarked, "The exploitation of MGNREGA workers for election purposes raises serious ethical questions. These vulnerable workers are being lured with temporary benefits to serve political interests, undermining the essence of the employment guarantee scheme."

This issue has reignited debates about

the efficacy of MGNREGA in combating rural unemployment and poverty, with some arguing that the scheme's objectives are being compromised for short-term political gains.

The ramifications of this trend are evident on the ground, as rural development projects suffer from labour shortages, impacting the pace and quality of work in various UP regions. In response to criticism, political parties have defended their actions, citing the need for manpower during election campaigns and asserting that they are providing job opportunities to MGNREGA workers.

"With soaring temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius, people prefer staying indoors. We require foot soldiers and have recruited some from villages," stated Rupesh Kumar, a BJP leader, although he claimed ignorance about whether these recruits are MGNREGA

Continued on Page 8

# Jain: AAP's Star Campaigners

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

On a day the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) took a cue pronounced "My name is Arvind Kejriwal and I am not a terrorist", it has named top leaders who are in jail, including the Chief Minister as the star campaigner for the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls, in apparent push to its 'Jail ka Iawab Vote Se' campaign. AAP leader and a Ràiva

Sabha member Sanjay Singh said the AAP convener has shared his message ....Kejriwal...not terrorist..." from Tihar Jail and slammed the BJP for the

treatment being meted out to him in custody.
The AAP on Tuesday announced a list of 40 star

campaigners in Gujarat which also mentioned the names of Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, Manish Sisodia, Satyendar Jain all of whom are imprisoned, as the party's star campaigner in Gujarat ahead of the Lok Sabha elections 2024. The list includes names of

Kejriwal's wife Sunita Kejriwal, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, Raghav Chadha, Isudan Gadhvi. Atishi, Saurabh



Bharadwaj, Pankaj Gupta, Gopal Rai, Kailash Gahlot, Imran Hussain and Alpesh Kathiriya. However, names of Rajya Sabha MPs Harbhajan Singh who is also an ace cricketer and Swati Maliwal are missing from the list. Meanwhile, the Delhi BJP targeted the AAP over the inclusion of Sunita Kejriwal's name in the list of its star campaigners.

"Along with corruption, nepotism is also welcome in the AAP," said Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva. Notably, Harbhajan Singh is currently busy in IPL 2024. On Tuesday, the party kicked off a mega campaign called Jail ka Jawab vote se Sankalp Sabha

Continued on Page 8

# Aditya tops UPSC exams, Animesh second, Donuru

**ARCHANA JYOTI** ■ NEW DELHI

 $T^{\text{he announcement of civil}}_{\text{services results 2023 on}}$ Tuesday stirred up more excitement than usual. Social media platforms were agog with compliments, best wishes, filmy dialogues, gyan and pravachan on the mother of all examinations conduced Services Public Commission (UPSC).

Led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, his entire Council of Ministers, BJP contestants in the Lok Sabha, other political figures from ruling and Opposition sides were first time on the same page wishing the toppers and successful candidates who cleared the exams held last

In fact the UPSC results were native Donuru Ananya trending on various media platforms.

Aditya Srivastava, originally selected for the Indian Police Services (IPS) last year, added another feather to his cap as he secured the top rank in the UPSC Civil Services Examination 2023.

Hailing from Lucknow, Srivastava's journey has been remarkable, characterised by his stint in the corporate world before pursuing civil services, reflecting his resilience and dedication. Joining Srivastava in this remarkable achievement are Animesh Pradhan from

Odisha, a Bachelor of

Technology degree holder in

computer science from NIT

Reddy, a graduate from Delhi University's Miranda House College with a degree in geography, securing the second and third ranks respectively.

Soon after the results were Modi announced. congratulated those who cleared the examination, emphasising their hard work, perseverance, and dedication. "I congratulate all those who have successfully cleared the Civil Services Examination, 2023. Their hard work, perseverance and dedication has paid off, marking the start of a promising career in public service. Their efforts will shape the future of our nation in the times to come. Rourkela, and Telangana My best wishes to them," the



(Left to right): Aditya Srivastava (All India Rank (AIR 1), Uttar Pradesh; Animesh Pradhan (AIR 2), Odisha's and Donuru Ananya Reddy (AIR 3), Telangana

Prime Minister wrote on X (previously Twitter). Senior Congress leader Rahul

Gandhi too joined in congratulating the candidates, "Congratulations to all the candidates who have successfully cleared this year's UPSC . Civil Services

With Examination. dedication and commitment, you are now entrusted with the responsibility of serving our great country. My best wishes for your future

endeavours?

1,016 the Among recommended candidates, comprising 664 men and 352 women, the top five positions are evenly distributed, with three men and two women. An IPS trainee from Kerala PK Sidharth Ramkumar

anthropology as his optional subject, while a Gurugram resident Ruhani secured the fifth rank with economics as her optional subject. Among the top 25 candidates,

secured the fourth rank with

there are 10 women and 15 men, reflecting a diverse range of backgrounds, educational including humanities, engineering, science, commerce, business administration, architecture, and law from premier institutions such as IIT, IIM, NIT, University of Delhi, and National Law University. The selected candidates also

include 30 people with benchmark disabilities, reflecting the UPSC's commitment to inclusivity.

Continued on Page 8

# City boy tops UPSC Civil Minor girl hacked to death by Services exams-2023 father over interaction with both

SHARMILA KRISHNA

Lucknow boy Aditya Srivastava made history by topping the UPSC-2023 examinations, results of which were declared on Tuesday afternoon. As soon as the results were announced, his residence on IIM Road erupted in joy. Currently undergoing training for the Indian Police Services in Hyderabad, a programme he was selected for in 2023, Aditya's parents Ajay Kumar Srivastava and Abha Srivastava, welcomed a steady stream of well-wishers congratulating them on his

remarkable success.
Aditya (26) has a sister, Privanshi Srivastava, who is studying at Delhi University. Amid plates of sweets, including 'kaju barfi' and 'mewa bites', along with cold drinks, 54year-old Ajay Srivastava, a member of the CAG audit team, expressed happiness at the result.

"This was his third attempt at the examination, and he has always been keen on appearing for this prestigious exam. He studied at a private school in Aliganj before pursuing BTech

**AUCTION NOTICE** 

लखनऊ के नाम फर्म के जी.एस.टी.

पंजीकरण के साथ प्रातः 11.00 बजे से 1

and MTech from IIT-Kanpur. His first attempt at the Civil Services examination was in 2021, after resigning from his job in Bengaluru. Unfortunately, he could not clear the preliminary examinations as he had only prepared for one month. In his second attempt, he cleared the IPS examination with a rank of 236, and now, in his third attempt, he has clinched the top spot," Ajay Kumar explained.

He highlighted Aditya's consistently outstanding academic record, noting, "Previously, he topped in all 22 branches of the school where he studied." He also pointed out that Aditya never opted for coaching and

"He only went to Delhi for mock interviews. The main reason he cracked the examination was his tremendous focus on studies. He delved deep into topics and had a thorough understanding of everything. He has won the National Talent Search Examination (NTSE) and the Kishore Vigyanik Samman award, as well as the National Mathematical Olympiad. He has excelled in all national-level competitions,"

relied solely on self-study.



Ajay Kumar added. Aditya's mother Abha Srivastava (52) expressed joy, saying: "His father deserves credit for this success because he encouraged and instilled in Aditya the determination to clear the examination. Personally, I devoted myself entirely to my children. I would conduct surprise checks while he was studying to ensure his focus, and I always found him immersed in his studies.

His dedication has paid off."
While she had hoped he would clear the IAS examinations this

year, she never expected him to

secure the top position. Speaking of his interests, Abha mentioned that Aditya was an

"He would study only if I prepared delicious dishes for him. such as paneer and non-vegetarian meals. I always made sure to cater to his culinary preferences," she added. She said that she herself was interested in pursuing higher studies but had to prioritise her children's education.

obedient boy but had a fondness

for good food.

Since Aditya was two years old, his father had been telling him that he had to appear for the IAS examinations. The results speak for themselves," she concluded. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath congratulated successful candidates of the UPSC exam-2023. Taking to his official X handle, Yogi expressed confidence that all these candidates would contribute to building a 'Developed India' with unwavering commitment to 'Nation First'. and dedicated service.

"I extend heartfelt congratula-tions to all the candidates selected in the prestigious Civil Services Exam-2023 conducted by the Union Public Service Commission. Best wishes to all of you for your golden future!,"

**NOTICE** 

दिनांक 26-04-2024 अपरान्ह 2.00 बजे My name in the passport is कार्यालय इन्स्टीट्यूट ऑफ कोआपरेटिव एण्ड कार्पोरेट मैनेजमेन्ट, रिसर्च एण्ड ट्रेनिंग, ४६७, सेक्टर–21, रिंग रोड, इन्दिरानगर, लखनऊ Siddiqui whereas in other में निष्प्रयोज्य घोषित फर्नीचर, उपकरण, विद्युतयंत्र, रद्दी, लोहे के सामान, जंक स्क्रेप आदि की (जहाँ है– जैसा है) आधार पर by this name. Ujair Ahmad son नीलामी होगी, नीलामी में प्रतिभाग करने हेतु सिक्योरिटी रु.40000/- का बैकड्राफ्ट Amraudha, Kanpur dehat. निदेशक, आई.सी. सी. एम. आर. टी.

#### 00 बजे तक संस्थान के लेखानभाग में जमा करना होगा। आई.पी. सिंह एण्ड सन्स.

आवश्यकता है Bahraich (प्राचार्य एवं सहा0 आचार्यों की) उदय प्रताप सिंह महाविद्यालय अबलकासिमपर जी०टी० रोड बाईपास, फतेहपर उ०प्र० सम्बद्ध- प्रो॰ राजेन्द्र सिंह (रज्जू भय्या) विश्वविद्यालय

प्रयागराज उ०प्र०। स्नातक स्तर पर कला संकाय में हिन्दी साहित्य अंग्रेजी साहित्य, भूगोल, गृह विज्ञान, इतिहास, राजनीति विज्ञान, समाजशास्त्र, शिक्षाशास्त्र व संस्कृत विषयों में, स्नातक स्तर पर विज्ञान संकाय में रसायन विज्ञान, जन्तु विज्ञान, वनस्पति विज्ञान भौतिक विज्ञान एवं गणित विषयों में एवं स्नातक स्तर पर वाणिज्य संकाय (बी0 कॉम)। परास्नातक स्तर पर कला संकाय में-हिन्दी, भूगोल एवं गृह विज्ञान। वाणिज्य संकाय के अन्तर्गत एम०कॉम० तथा परास्नातक स्तर पर विज्ञान संकाय के अन्तर्गत जन्तु विज्ञान, वनस्पति विज्ञान एवं गणित। पद प्राचार्य एक पद व सहा० आचार्य स्नातक स्तर पर सभी विषयों में एक-एक पट परास्नातक स्तर पर सभी विषयों में दो-दो पद। योग्यता सहा० आचार्य के लिए संबंधित विषयों में स्नातक 50 प्रतिशत, परास्नातक स्तर पर 55 प्रतिशत एवं नेट/स्लेट/डी०फिल/पी०एच०डी० सेवानिवृत्त प्राध्यापकों को वरीयता। प्राचार्य उपयुक्त योग्यता के साथ-साथ पन्द्रह वर्ष का अनुभव । वेतनमान पाचार्य २०००/- प्रति माह सहा॰ आचार्य 25000/- प्रति माह।

**नोट:** आवेदन पत्र 5 फोटो एवं संलग्नको की छायाप्रति विज्ञापन तिथि के 21 दिनों के अन्दर उदय प्रताप सिंह महाविद्यालय अबुलकासिमपुर, जी०टी० रोड बाईपास, फतेहपुर, उ०प्र० में व्यक्तिगत/डाक से भेजें मो०- 7457917619, 7457917620 7457917621

प्राचार्य/सचिव

### आवश्यकता है

आवश्यकता है (प्राचार्य एवं सहा० आचार्यों की) उज्ज्वल सिंह महाविद्यालय बहादुरपुर सम्बद्ध प्रो0 राजेन्द्र सिंह (रज्जू भय्या)

विश्वविद्यालयः प्रयागराज उ०प्र० स्नातक स्तर पर कला संकाय में हिन्दी साहित्य अंग्रेजी साहित्य, भूगोल, गृह विज्ञान, इतिहास, राजनीति विज्ञान, समाजशास्त्र, अर्थशास्त्र, शिक्षाशास्त्र व संस्कृत विषयों में, स्नातक स्तर पर विज्ञान संकाय में रसायन विज्ञान, जन्तु विज्ञान, वनस्पति विज्ञान, भौतिक विज्ञान एवं गणित विषयों में एवं स्नातक स्तर पर वाणिज्य संकाय (बी0कॉम)। परास्नातक स्तर पर कला संकाय में अंग्रेजी साहित्य, भूगोल, इतिहास, गृह विज्ञान, हिन्दी साहित्य, राजनीति विज्ञान एवं समाजशास्त्र। वाणिज्य संकाय के अन्तर्गत एम0कॉम0 तथा परास्नातक स्तर पर विज्ञान संकाय के अन्तर्गत-भौतिक विज्ञान, रसायन विज्ञान, जन्तु विज्ञान, वनस्पति विज्ञान एव गणित। पद प्राचार्य एक पद व सहा० आचार्य स्नातक स्तर पर सभी विषयों में एक-एक पद परास्नातक स्तर पर सभी विषयों में दो-दो पद योग्यता सहा० आचार्य के लिए संबंधित विषयों में स्नातक 50 प्रतिशत, परास्नातक स्तर पर 55 प्रतिशत एवं नेट/स्लेट/डी०फिल/पी०एच०डी० सेवानिवृत्त प्राध्यापकों को वरीयता। प्राचार्य उपयुक्त योग्यता के साथ-साथ पन्द्रह वर्ष का

सहा० आचार्य 25000/- प्रति माह। नोट: आवेदन पत्र 5 फोटो एवं संलग्नको की छायाप्रति विज्ञापन तिथि के 21 दिनों के अन्दर उज्ज्वल सिंह महाविद्यालय बहादुरपुर, खागा फतेहपुर, उ०प्र० में व्यक्तिगत/डाक से भेजें। मो0. 7457917614, 7457917613

अनभव । वेतनमान प्राचार्य ३००००/- प्रति माह

mentioned as Ujair Ahmad Siddiqui son of Mukhtar Ahmad records, it is correctly mentioned as Ujair Ahmad son of Mukhtar Ahmad. Now I should be known of Mukhtar Ahmad, Bazar Ward,

#### NOTICE

Gyanwati Devi w/o chandrabhan Raghurampur Post Payagpur Information my name is Gyanwati Devi or second name sushma Devi. My correct name Gyan wati Devi Date of Birth

### NOTICE

That my Property's part of land no-110 Mazra (Arazi) Peeperkhera, Gair Ahatmali Unnao adm 62.73 sq. mtr. on which H.N. at-4/1518 Kanchan Nagar-B Shuklaganj Unnao, the original sale deed dated 19/03/2012 regd as book I Vol. 6860 pages 261 to 280 at S.N. 2709 in SR- office Unnao Sadar Lost on 10-04-2024 Rajni W/o-Pradeep H.N.-4/1518 Kanchan Shuklaganj, Nagar-B Peeperkhera, Gair Ahatmali Unnao

### **NOTICE**

I Nirmala Kanwar Rajput W/O Hay. Raipal Singh of 4 Raiput army no. 3010603M residence of Balwa, Nagaur, Rajasthan. In my husband army service record my name is wrongly mentioned as Nirmala Kanwar whereas in other documents my name is Nirmala Kanwar Rajput. Which is true and correct

### NOTICE

I have changed my daughter's name from Arshia singh to Avantika singh. In future she will be known as her new name Avantika singh only. Priyanka singh W/o Sushil singh R/o-756, civil line, jail road, gonda.

### **NOTICE**

I have changed my name Wahid Ali to Mohd Izhar for all future purpose, Mohd Izhar s/o Kausar ali khan R/o Akhlak nagar katri Piper khera, Unnao

### NOTICE

I inform that my wife name is Babita W/o Vijay Kumar Chaubey is wrong in my record. It will be Babita Chaubey W/o Vijay Kumar Chaubey. Vijay Kumar Chaubey S/o Ram Bachan Chaubey, Village Padun Patti, Post Mishrauli, District Mau, PIN Code: 276179 I - 14829631H, Rank HAV

## **Elderly couple shot in** clash over old rivalry

PNS LUCKNOW

n elderly couple was shot An elderly couple was shot dead while eight others sustained injuries in a group clash over an old rivalry in Bulandshahr, police said on Tuesday. Those injured have been admitted to a local hospital where the condition of two is stated to be critical, the police said, adding no arrests have beem made so far.

The deceased were identified as Ishaq Ali (70), and his wife Jameela (68). They were beaten with lathis

before being shot in front of their house in Mahuli village of Bulandshahr district, the police said.

"About 20 people carrying lathis and stones attacked us outside our house on Monday the deceased couple.

According to the police, the father of the main accused, Shaukeen Ahmed, a resident they said.

afternoon. My parents rushed to our rescue and were shot dead," said Rahool, the son of

of the same village, was bru-tally attacked by Ishaq's father 22 years ago, leaving the victim severely injured. The rivalry continued and Shaukeen and his accomplices allegedly tried to mur-der Ishaq three years ago,

"We have deployed adequate police force in the village as a precautionary measure and have collected CCTV footage to identify the assailants," Deputy SP of Bulandshahr Poornima Singh

# father over interaction with boy

PNS LUCKNOW

A man allegedly killed his minor daughter, a Class X student, on Monday night during a heated argument over her alleged interaction with a boy in the Gudamba police station area. The man disapproved of the boy and had cautioned her against talking to him. The man fled the scene but was

apprehended by the police on Tuesday morning. The incident came to light

when the police received a distress call on UP 112 in the early hours of Tuesday, reporting the discovery of the girl's body in a pool of blood at her house in Gudamba's Mayapuri Colony.

"The body has been sent for post-mortem examination, and the accused, Sanjay Singh (40), a mason who also runs a small shop in the area, has been arrested," Deputy

arrested," Deputy Commissioner of Police, North, Abhijith R Shankar said, adding that an FIR is yet to be registered as the police have not received any complaint from the family.

During the police investigation, the deceased was identition, the deceased was identified as Pooja Singh (14)," the DCP said, adding that the younger siblings informed the police that Pooja and her father Sanjay had a heated argument at night when he found her interacting with a boy, leading to the escalation of man axes father to death autopsy. Additionally, a case scuffle, Brijlal pushed Pintu, has been registered based on causing him to fall. Feeling  $A^{
m man}$  allegedly fatally axed his father after the latter the complaint of the victim's second son, and the accused

Refused money for liquor,

refused to give him money for his daily quota of liquor, in According to reports, the victim, Brijlal (55) of Durjanpur Durjanpur village of Bakshi-Ka-Talab (BKT) on Monday night. The accused, Pintu, allegedly attacked the victim several times on the head village, worked as a labourer. His wife had passed away three years ago. His elder son Avdharam lives separately with his wife and children, and chest, inflicting multiple deep wounds, resulting in profuse bleeding. By the time people arrived at the scene while Brijlal's younger son Pintu resides in another house with his wife Sarita, and son. upon hearing the victim's cries for help, the accused had During interrogation, Pintu, who was later apprehended by the police, stated that he had escaped. The family members rushed reached home drunk around 11:30 pm on Monday.

has been arrested.

the injured to KGMU Trauma Pintu requested money from Centre, where he succumbed Brijlal to purchase more liquor, but Brijlal refused, to injuries early in the morning. Upon receiving information, the police reached the spot and sent the body for sparking a confrontation between them. In the ensuing

the situation. According to the police, the man first strangled the accused had been detained and was being interrogated by the police. "A sickle-like weapon was

the girl using a dupatta and then used a sharp-edged weapon to attack her. recovered from the crime scene, suggesting that the girl was killed with it as it had "The man was said to be drunk at the time of the incident. blood stains. Additionally, bruises from physical assault were found on the body," the However, this is yet to be confirmed by the police," said Shankar. He mentioned that

causing him to fall. Feeling insulted, Pintu picked up an axe and attacked his father with it. He struck Brijlal several times on the head and chest. By the time the victim's

scene, Pintu had escaped. The family rushed Brijlal to the 100-Bed Hospital in BKT, but doctors referred him to KGMU Trauma Centre. BKT ACP Sujit Pandey confirmed that the police recovered the murder weapon from the scene. A murder case was registered against Pintu based

elder son Avdharam and other

neighbours rushed to the

on the complaint of Avdharam. "With the help of surveillance, Pintu was apprehended from outside the village in the afternoon," the police said.

DCP said, adding that the weapon was seized. The girl's mother had gone to her maternal home in Lakhimpur. An FIR under IPC 302 (murder) has been registered. Gudamba SHO NK Srivastava said that aside from the victim, Sanjay has two more daughters aged 12 and 7, and a son aged 5.

## Youth alleges abduction, assault by PAC constables

Two PAC constables in civies allegedly abducted a youth from Charbagh and held him captive at the 35th PAC in Mahanagar, where they assaulted him inside a barrack along with a group of other officers.

They allegedly shaved a patch of his hair and then released him later near Kukrail Bandha road in Mahanagar on April 13 night. An FIR was registered at Mahanagar police station on April 14, based on the complaint given by the victim, Mohammad Faiz, a resident of Cantonment. The incident

came to light on Tuesday. "An FIR has been registered against the two constables, identified as Vishant Rana and Vishal Chauhan, and 10 other unidentified accused at Mahanagar police station. Two of them have been arrested," ACP, Mahanagar, Neha Tripathi said.

According to the FIR, the individuals were booked under IPC sections 147 (rioting), 323 (causing hurt), 341 (wrongful restraint), 504 (intentional insult), and 506 (criminal intimidation). Atul Sharma, Commandant

of 35th Corps PAC, said that the case report is being sent to

Meerut police, and departmental action will be taken against the accused constables. Police reported that the constables had come to Lucknow from Sitapur for a sports competition being held at the 35th PAC. In his FIR, the victim stated that he had gone to Charbagh for dinner with a friend around 11:30 pm. After dinner, while they were

walking around a bridge near Charbagh, he inadvertantly bumped into Vishant Rana, who was passing by and was on a call.

'Vishant called his friend Vishal, who started arguing with me. While my friend

managed to escape, the duo forcefully took me on their bike to the 35th PAC in Mahanagar, where they assaulted me along with 10 other unidentified men. They also cut my hair," Faiz stated in his complaint.

The accused allegedly confined the victim in a barrack before assaulting and humiliating him and dropping him off at Bandha road late at night. They called the victim's family and falsely claimed that he was involved in a mobile theft case. However, the victim was eventually rescued by a police team during night patrolling on Bandha road.

### All set for grand Ram Navami celebrations

in Ayodhya in January, city's temples are gearing up for grander Ram Navami celebrations this year compared to last year. The temples also anticipate a larger turnout of devotees for this Ram Navami celebration, following the increased focus on Lord Ram after the consecration cere-

Diwakar Tripathi from the management committee of Hanuman Setu Temple mentioned that the 'pujan abhishek' will commence in the morning. offered to the idol of Lord Ram Hanuman Mandir stated that amidst chanting of several names of Lord Vishnu, followed by an aarti. This mirrors the ritual performed on January 22 during the consecration ceremony of Lord Ram in Ayodhya," he explained. Tripathi anticipates around 35,000-40,000 devotees visiting

the temple for Ram Navami. We have arranged shade and coolers, and devotees usually walk the 'parikrama path' for darshan. Air-conditioners are installed within the temple," he

they have organised a 'bhajankirtan' programme by Bhatkhande University on Ram Navami, followed by prasad distribution.

"Four quintals of prasad are being brought from Ayodhya, including peda, panchamrit, ramdana, and panjiri," he mentioned, expecting at least 20,000 devotees.

'We have arranged fans spraying water and mats on the ground considering the hot weather conditions," he added. Anoop Verma from the

Lucknow (PNS): With the "One thousand roses will be Rakesh Dixit from the Aliganj Sandohan temple Chaupattiya celebrations are grander this year. "We have distributed flags with 'Om' inscribed on them for devotees to decorate their houses. The temple is beautifully decorated, and the idol of Lord Ram will be bathed and adorned with new garments. 'Chappan bhog' will be served, and special preparations are

underway," he elaborated. Verma expects over 50,000 devotees throughout the day, highlighting the grand flower 'shringar' of the idol and special lighting arrangements.

### Ram Lalla's 'Surya tilak' today

Lucknow (PTI): At noon on Ram Navami Wednesday, the Sun's rays will fall on the forehead of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, a 'Surva tilak' of the deity made possible by an elaborate m involving mirrors and lenses. This would be the first Ram Navami since the consecration of the Ram idol at the new temple, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22. The system was tested by the scientists on Tuesday. "The basic

objective of the Surya Tilak project is to focus a 'tilak' on the forehead of Shri Ram idol on every Shri Ram Navami day. Under the project, sunlight will be brought on the forehead of Lord Ram at noon on Shri Ram Navami in the Chaitra month every year," Dr SK Panigrahi, scientist at CSIR-CBRI Roorkee, who was associated with the project told PTI. Elaborating further, Panigrahi said, "The position of the Sun changes every year on the day of Shri Ram Navami. Detailed calculations show that the date of Shri Ram Navami repeats every 19 years." According to a senior scientist of Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)-Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), Roorkee, the planned tilak size is 58 mm.

### **CITYBRIEFS**

**OVARIAN MASS REMOVED** 

A 42-year-old Lucknow resident, a mother of two children, sought medical help at the gynecology OPD of SGPGIMS with complaints of abdominal swelling persisting for four months. Upon examination, doctors discovered a large ovarian mass. Sharing insights into the case, Dr Anju Rani said, "Surgical removal of the ovarian mass, measuring approximately 30×20 cm with a diametre of 1 foot, was successfully performed. The mass contained 7.5 litres of fluid and 3.5 kg of solid components. "Post-surgery, the patient exhibited a smooth recovery trajectory and was discharged on the fifth postoperative day," she added. The surgical team, led by Dr Anju Rani, included Dr Ira Dubey, Dr Nitika, and Dr Pragya. The nursing staff consisted of Shiv Kumari, Priyanka, and Divya, alongside OT technicians Beerbhan and Vandana.

SBI Life Insurance launched the first edition of 'IdeationX', an initiative that promises to revolutionise the future of the insurance industry. The innovative platform aims at engaging and encouraging future leaders from B-Schools across the country to think. innovate and present unconventional life insurance solutions that address consumer's evolving insurance needs and contribute towards reshaping India's life insurance sector landscape. The key objective behind this initiative is to involve the young minds who are the future leaders of the country, to identify various insurance needs and conceptualise product solutions addressing those needs.

## Rajeshwar Singh highlights environmental issues



PNS LUCKNOW

Carojnagar MLA Dr Rajeshwar Singh has Sought to highlight pressing environmental issues plaguing the nation, shedding light on alarming statistics and calling for urgent action. In a series of posts on X from his official account, Dr Singh underscored the gravity of environmental pollution and its ramifications for India. Air pollution took centre stage in Singh's

posts as he revealed a staggering statistic: "Out of the world's 100 most polluted cities,

a striking 63 are nestled within India's borders, with the capital city, New Delhi, bearing a significant share of the burden." Water pollution emerged as another critical concern, with Singh lamenting that a staggering 70% of the earth's surface water stands contaminated and unfit for consumption.

The ominous prediction that by 2030, 21

major Indian cities could confront acute water scarcity further accentuate the need for immediate and robust water management policies, he said.

Solid waste management also came under scrutiny, with Singh painting a grim picture of urban areas churning out a staggering 277 million tons of solid waste annually.

The rampant dumping of approximately 25,000 tons of plastic waste into rivers daily posed a dire threat to environmental sustainability, he noted. Biodiversity loss, a silent crisis, also found a mention in Singh's posts. He highlighted the precarious state of biodiversity hotspots,

where a staggering 90% struggle to survive, with 12% of species teetering on the brink of extinction. Despite these dire circumstances, Singh expressed hope in concerted conservation efforts and government initiatives promoting afforestation and sustainable forest management. Amidst these challenges,

Singh expressed cautious optimism about the government's policies. He lauded initiatives such as the ban on single-use plastics and the implementation of smart solid waste management systems in 100 cities as commendable steps in the right

direction. Urging public engagement in environmental conservation, Singh called upon Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) to take ownership of ponds and water bodies for conservation efforts and actively participate in tree plantation drives. Recently, Singh kickstarted an initiative to donate libraries to RWAs in Sarojininagar, beginning with Bhagirathi Enclave, emphasizing the transformative power of knowledge in shaping a sustainable future.

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Admission Notice for Law Courses in Punjab (2024-25)

As per the notification No. HED-EDU10NOTC/1/2020-3 Edu. 1/801837/2024 Dated 13/03/2024 of Punjab Government, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar is going to conduct centralized Online Counselling for Admission to B.A. LL.B. (Hons.) Five Years/ B.A. LL.B Five Years/ LL.B. Three Years/B.Com. LLB. Five Years/ B.Com LL.B. (Hons) Five Years and B.B.A. LL.B Five Years course for the session 2024-25 for the Sri Guru Teg Bahadu State University of Law, Tarn Taran and institutions/Colleges situated in Punjab and affiliated to Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, Panjab University, Chandigarh and Punjabi University, Patiala. The Portal for online registration has been activated. For eligibility, Online filing of forms, Fee and other details, the desirous candidates must see the website http://Punjabla wadmissions.gndu.ac.in. The participating institutions are requesting to submit the mandatory proforma latest by 25.04.2024. For details, updates

and all the requisite instructions check the admission website regularly. Coordinato Punjab Law Admission 2024

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# **Opp leaders glorify dons: CM**

Hitting out at the Congress and Samajwadi Party, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday said that the opposition leaders glorified criminals and mafia dons and visited their homes on their deaths to read 'Fatiha'. He asked people to read 'Fatiha' for their brand of politics through their votes.

He was addressing public meetings in favour of BJP candidates from Nagina and Kairana Lok Sabha seats, Om Kumar and Pradeep Chaudhary respectively.

Despite the scorching heat, a large number of people gathered to see and hear Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Tomorrow is the birthday of Marvada Purushottam Shri Ram. This is a historic occasion, when for the first time after a hiatus of 500 years, Ram Lalla will celebrate his birthday at his birthplace. Our generations are blessed to be witnessing the celebrations," he said. Continuing his attack on the Congress and Samajwadi Party, CM Yogi said it was because of these parties that the revered deity had to give proof of his birthplace.

"They tried to jeopardise our faith, but Sanatan Samaj was resolute. It was determined to build a grand temple at the birthplace of Lord Ram and the mission was successful because of PM Modi," he remarked.

He added: "The Congress was responsible for Baba Saheb's electoral loss, while after assuming power in 2012, the SP had said that they would get the

**'23% candidates** 

in second phase

of LS polls face

criminal cases'

Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddh

Nagar, Bulandshahr, Aligarh, and Mathura.

According to data from the

nomination papers of the can-

didates analysed by the

Association of Democratic

Reforms (ADR), all the eight or

'crorepatis' and their average wealth is Rs 10.05 crore. While

seven out of eight BIP candi-

dates are crorepatis, all the four

Samajwadi Party candidates

The average wealth of seven

BJP candidates is Rs 91.23

crore while that of four

wealth of the four Congress candidates is Rs 3.56 crore.

Hema Malini, the BJP candidate from Mathura, has

declared her assets valued at Rs

278 crore, while Satish Kumar

Gautam, the BJP candidate

from Aligarh, has declared

assets to the tune of Rs 16

Of the total 91 candidates in

the fray for eight Lok Sabha

seats, 21 candidates or 23%

have declared criminal cases

pending against them while two candidates are facing seri-

As per the party-wise analysis,

three out of eight BSP candi-

dates, two of the BJP, all four

candidates of the Samajwadi

Party, and two out of four candidates of the Congress are facing criminal charges. The educational qualification of 33% of candidates is under-

graduate as they have studied from 5th to 12 standards while

by political parties.

ous criminal charges.

are millionaires.

100% candidates of



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath being presented a memento during an election rally on Tuesday

Dalit monuments demolished. The Congress and SP-BSP have been stuck in a rut which they can't get out of."

The CM said that the leaders of these parties do not mind visiting the houses of mafia dons and criminals. "But if an innocent Hindu becomes the victim of an accident, not a single word of condolence comes from them. We greet people with 'Ram-Ram' and criminals and mafia dons with 'Ram Naam Satya," he added.

### PEOPLE PLEDGE SUPPORT DURING ROADSHOW

Enthusiastic people chanted 'Abki baar, 400 paar' during Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister

Yogi Adityanath's roadshow in Saharanpur on Tuesday. The people pledged to visit the polling booths on the 19th and vote for the BJP in front of the chief minister.

Throughout the event, echoes of 'Jai Shri Ram' resonated, with slogans like 'Ek hi nara ek hi naam, Jai Shri Ram' reverberating through the streets. The fervour of the crowd was palpable when the song, 'Jo Ram ko laaye hain, hum unko laayenge, UP me phir se hum bhagwa laharayenge', was plaved.

Youth, women, elders, and children welcomed Yogi Adityanath with enthusiasm. The roadsides were packed

with crowds eager to catch a glimpse of him as the roadshow commenced from Bhagat Singh Chowk in Saharanpur. Lotus flags adorned the surroundings, and the entire city was eager to witness the event.
The public extended a warm
welcome to both Modi and
Yogi, displaying cutouts and showering flowers along the route. Even those on rooftops joined in, greeting CM Yogi with enthusiasm.

Present during the event were BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Saharanpur, Raghav Lakhanpal Sharma, along with state government ministers Brajesh Singh and Jaswant

## 'Jumlebaazi', guarantees will not work this time: Mayawati

PNS LUCKNOW

PNS LUCKNOW  $B_{\text{supremo Mayawati, while}}^{\text{ahujan Samaj Party (BSP)}}$ Forty-two per cent candidates contesting the Lok Sabha elections in second phase are 'crorepatis' while 23% have declared criminal addressing a public meeting in support of party's candidate Bijendra Singh in Bijnor on Tuesday, said that "jumlebaazi, cases pending against them.
The eight Lok Sabha seats going to polls in the second phase on April 26 include Amroha, Meerut, Baghpat, drama and guarantees will not work in this election."

The government had promised 'achchhe din' for the poor and hardworking people, but not even a quarter of the on-paper guarantees has been fulfilled in reality. The BJP is making the rich and capitalists richer, and protecting them," she said.

Flaying the alleged weaponisation of investigating agencies against the opposition parties, she said: "Like the Congress, the Bahujan Samaj Party are BJP has also politicised the investigating agencies. The BSP government was in power four times in Uttar Pradesh where farmers were taken care of and given fair prices for their crops. The price of sugarcane was increased. Due to casteist and capitalist thinking in the BJP government, the development Samajwadi Party candidates is Rs 17.34 crore. The average of the poor, Dalits, backwards and Muslims could not take place. The quota in jobs for Dalits and tribals could not be filled. Reservation in promotions has also been rendered ineffective."

Mayawati said that a bill was brought in the Rajya Sabha for reservation in promotions, but it was not allowed to be passed by the SP MPs and the draft bill was torn in the House itself. "The voters have to ensure that the deposits of the Samajwadi Party candidates are forfeited,"

she added. Mayawati alleged that the exploitation of Dalits in the private sector has still not stopped. "Due to the BJP-RSS govern-ment, the atrocities in the name of religion have increased to a great extent. Like the previous governments at the Centre, poverty and inflation are increasing in the current BJP government as well. The country's borders are not safe. This is also a matter of concern. The opposition parties are trying to form the government at the Centre by adopting all means. We should not be misled by any party. People should not be misled by hollow election manifestos," she added.

The BSP believes more in doing than in saying. In Uttar Pradesh, we have done historic work four times without releasing a manifesto. The free ration being given to poor families is not going to do any good. Our party will provide work to every individual. The exploitation of people, especially of the Muslim community, in the guise of religion will be stopped. When the government was formed in UP under my leadership, we provided the people with a means of livelihood. A large number of Jat children from western UP were recruited in the police during our regime. Those whose words and actions don't match will have to be stopped. People will have to vote only for the Bahujan Samaj Party," Mayawati

"If our party forms the govern-ment at the Centre, its policy will be 'Sarvajan Hitaya Sarvajan Sukhaya. Our party will fulfil the unfulfilled dreams of the great saints of our country, Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar, and Chaudhary Charan Singh ji," she added.

### **BSP ANNOUNCES 11**MORE CANDIDATES

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) on Tuesday announced the names of 11 more candidates for the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh.

The party changed the Mainpuri Lok Sabha candidate and gave the ticket to Shiv Prasad Yadav instead of Gulshan Dev Shakya. Prasad is the former MLA from Barthana. The Mayawati-led party fielded Athar Jamal Lari from Varanasi against Prime

Minister Narendra Modi. Former Chief Minister Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple Yadav is in the fray as a candidate from Mainpuri, while the BIP has fielded UP's Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh from Mainpuri, which is considered as a Samajwadi Party stronghold.

Annoyed with Mayawati's decision, Shakya quit BSP and ioined Samaiwadi Party on Tuesday and was present beside Dimple who filed her nomination from Mainpuri.

In Jaunpur, Mayawati gave the ticket to mafia-turned-politician Dhananjay Singh's wife Shrikala Singh. Dhananjay was said to be preparing to contest the election from Jaunpur Lok Sabha constituency. In the meantime, a local court sentenced him to seven years in prison in a case. Thereafter, Dhananjay was arrested and sent to jail. As Dhananjay could not contest the election, his wife Srikala was given the ticket from Jaunpur.

are Muslim Khan from Budaun, Chhotelal Gangwar from Bareilly, Udraj Verma from Sultanpur, and Kranti Pandev from Farrukhabad. Mayank Dwivedi will contest from Banda, Khwaia Shamsuddin from Dumariyaganj, and Lallan Singh Yadav from Ballia. Umesh Kumar Singh will contest against SP candidate and MP Afzal Ansari from Ghazipur.

### BJP announces candidates for four seats in assembly bypolls

Lucknow (PTI): The BJP on Tuesday declared four candidates for the bypolls which will be held on four assembly constituencies in Uttar Pradesh along with the Lok Sabha elections. Bharatiya Janata Party declared Arvind Singh as its candidate for the Dadraul assembly constituency, Shailendra Kumar Shailu from the Gainsari assembly constituency and Shravan Gaur from the Duddhi (Reserved) assembly constituency. The party fielded OP Srivastava from the Lucknow East assembly constituency. Srivastava is an office bearer of Avadh Kshetra of the party.

Bypoll to four assembly

seats in Uttar Pradesh will be held in four phases simultaneously with the Lok Sabha elections. The bypolls will held in the Dadraul assembly constituency on May 13, Lucknow East on May 20, Gainsari assembly seat on May 25 and Duddhi Assembly segment on June 1.

The party did not give the ticket to the family member of Ashutosh Tandon, whose demise on November 9, 2023, at the age of 63, necessitated a at the age of 63, necessitated a bypoll on the seat. Arvind Singh, who has been fielded from Dadraul is the son of Manvendra Singh, whose death at the age of 74 on January 5 due to prolonged illness, led to a bypoll on the seat. A three-time MLA from the seat, Tandon was a Cabinet minister in the first government of Yoọi Adityanath. Yogi Adityanath.

Yogi Adityanath.

Having been with the Congress for a long time, Manvendra Singh joined the BJP in 2017 and became an MLA from Dadraul. He retained his seat in the 2022 polls. He was 70 when he died.

Shailendra Singh who has been made candidate from Gainsari, was a BJP MLA from the seat between 2017 to 2022. The constituency became vacant following the demise of sitting Samajwadi Party MLA Shiv Pratap Yadav on January 26. He started his political career from Lok Dal and was a four-time MLA from Gainsari.

Shravan Gaur who has been declared nominee from Duddhi is an office bearer of the party's Scheduled Tribe Morcha. Duddhi assembly constituency, reserved for Scheduled Tribes, fell vacant following the disqualification of the BJP's Ramdular Gond in December 2023 from the House after being convicted in a rape case. Gond was sentenced to 25 years of rigorous imprisonment for raping a girl nine years ago. According to the Representation of the People Act, a lawmaker sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more shall be disqualified "from the date of such conviction" and remain disqualified for another six years after serving time.

### Dimple files nomination for Mainpuri LS seat **Declares assets worth over ₹15.5 crore**



Dimple Yadav, flanked by Akhilesh Yadav, Ram Gopal Yadav and other leaders, filing nomination papers for Mainpuri seat

PNS LUCKNOW

Samajwadi Party leader Dimple Yadav filed her nomination papers from the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat on Tuesday. The sitting Mainpuri MP was accompanied by SP chief and her husband Akhilesh Yadav, and senior party leaders Shivpal Singh Yadav, and Ram Gopal Yadav.

Polling in Mainpuri will be held in the third round of the sevenm the third round of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on May 7. Dimple Yadav won Mainpuri seat in the 2022 Lok Sabha bypoll after it was vacat-ed following the death of SP patriarch and her father-in-law Mulayam Singh Yadav in October 2022. The SP leader is pitted against BJP candidate Jaiveer Singh and BSP's Shiv Prasad Yadav. On Monday, two other scions of the first

family of the Samajwadi Party Aditya Yadav and Akshaya — Aditya Yadav and Akshaya Yadav — had filed their nomination papers from the Budaun and Firozabad Lok Sabha seats, respectively. Aditya, who replaced his father Shivpal Yadav on this seat is making debut in electoral politics, filed papers in the presentation.

itics, filed papers in the presence of former Budaun MP Dharmendra Yadav, SP MLA Ram Khiladi Singh Yadav and Budaun ex-MP Salim Sherwani. The Buduan seat is currently held by BJP's Sanghmitra Maurya, who

defeated SP's Dharmedra Yadav in 2019. But the BJP denied Sanghmitra ticket this time and fielded Durvijay Singh Shakva.

Akshay Yadav, former Firozabad MP and another cousin of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, also filed his nomination from the Firozabad seat. He was accompanied by his father and SP chief national general secretary Ram Gopal Yadav. Mainpuri is one of the key Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh as it is the Samajwadi Party's bastion. Mainpuri is the strong-hold of the Yadav family, and the constituency has been represented by former UP CM and Dimple's father-in-law Mulayam Singh Yadav in the

Uttar Pradesh's Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh is the BJP's pick from Mainpuri against Dimple Yadav. After the announcement of his name, he said Dimple had won in the bypoll riding the sympathy wave over SP patriarch Mulayam Singh Yadav's death. Meanwhile, Dimple Yadav declared movable and immovable assets worth more than Rs 15.5 crore. Her property rose marginally since 2022 when she contested the parliamentary bypoll from Mainpuri. She had declared assets worth more than Rs 14 crore at that time. According to the affidavit submitted by her, she has immovable assets worth more than 10.44 crore and movable assets worth more than Rs 5.10 crore. Akhilesh Yadav has movable and immovable assets worth more than Rs 9.12 crore and 17.22 crore respectively, as per the affidavit. The total worth of their combined immovable assets is more than Rs 27.66

Dimple has a computer worth Rs 1.25 lakh, gold ornaments weighing more than 2.77 kg, 203 gm pearl and 127.75 carat diamond worth Rs 59.77 lakh, the affidavit said.

Her husband Akhilesh has a mobile worth about Rs 76,000, exercise equipment worth Rs 5.34 lakh and crockery worth around Rs 1.6 lakh, according to the affidavit. The SP chief has a liability of Rs 25.40 lakh, while his wife has a liability of Rs 74.44 lakh. Dimple Yadav did her graduation (BCom) from the Lucknow University in 1998. She married Akhilesh Yadav in 1999. In 2019, when she contested the parliamentary polls from Kannauj, her movable assets were worth Rs 3.68 crore while her immovable assets were worth Rs 9.30 crore. As compared to 2022, when Dimple Yadav's declared income (as per I-T return of 2021-22) was Rs 78.66 lakh, in 2023 (as per I-T return of 2022-23) her income came down marginally to Rs 76.5

### Cong-SP joint press conference today

Lucknow (PNS): On the last day of campaigning for the first phase of Lok Sabha elections on Wednesday, the Congress and Samajwadi Party will be addressing a joint press conference to send a message of solidarity amongst the constituents of the INDIA bloc. According to Congress state president Ajay Rai, both Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav will hold a joint press conference in Ghaziabad on Wednesday morning, the last day of campaigning for the first phase of the Lok Sabha elections. Congress sources con-

firmed that Rahul Gandhi and

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra would campaign in west UP on Wednesday. While Rahul Gandhi, along with Samajwadi is scheduled in the second phase on April 26.
Will address mediapersons in Ghaziabad, Priyanka Gandhi

Gandhi, along with Samajwadi is scheduled in the second phase on April 26.
The Congress and SP are contesting the Lok Sabha polls as will hold a roadshow at Saharanpur in favour of Congress candidate Imran Masood.

'Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav will address a joint press conference in Ghaziabad tomorrow. Privanka Gandhi Vadra will hold a roadshow at Saharanpur the same day," a senior Congress leader

Saharanpur will go to polls in the first phase on April 19, while the voting in Ghaziabad

partners of the opposition INDIA bloc. The Congress is contesting 17 out of 80 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, and the SP 62. One seat, Bhadohi, has been left for the Trinamool Congress.

SP chief Akhilesh Yadav started campaigning from Pilibhit on April 12 but the Gandhis have yet to launch their campaign in the state.



## Kairana transitions beyond 'exodus' campaign

BISWAJEET BANERJEE MUZAFFARNAGAR

52% candidates are graduates or have other or higher degrees. The average age of 34 per cent or 31 candidates is between 25 In the bustling hub of Nawab Market in Kairana, discusand 40 years while 42 candisions about the once-dominant dates or 46% are aged between topic of "exodus" seem to have 41 and 60 years. Twenty per cent or 18 candidates are aged dwindled, indicating a notable shift in the political discourse as the general elections draw near. between 61 and 80 years. In the second phase of the Lok Sabha "The exodus was highlighted to polls, only nine or 10% candidates are women. draw attention to the poor law and order situation back in State convenor of ADR Sanjay 2017. But now, people want to move past that and change the Singh said that despite the narrative," remarked Anurag Jain, a local trader, reflecting on rise in literacy level and aspirational society, a large number of candidates with low eduthe changing sentiments within cational qualification are still in the community. The issue first gained traction when BJP leader Hukum Singh raised concerns fray. He said despite repeated directives of the Supreme Court for curbing the entry of about the alleged departure of persons with criminal back-Hindus from Kairana, citing ground in electoral politics, there is no let-up in nominafear and intimidation by Muslim communities. While the BJP tion of the tainted candidates sought to capitalise on this nar-

rative during the 2017 Uttar

Pradesh Assembly election campaign, Md Jameel, a local SP leader, views it differently. "Exodus was a political ploy to sow division between Hindus and Muslims. The motive has been served, and the issue has naturally faded away," he observed.

Manoj Jain, a trader in nearby Palika Bazar, contests the claim, stating that in 2016-17, some Hindus shifted their base out of Muzaffarnagar (where Kairana is located) due to the machinations of a local goon. "There is no threat now because law and order have improved, and so there is no exodus," he said.

Contrary to the perception of Kairana as a Muslim-dominated area, the BJP secured the seat in the previous Lok Sabha election, leveraging sentiments around the "exodus", despite its ally Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) aligning with the Samajwadi Party. However, the SP's triumph in Kairana during the 2022 assembly election has prompted a re-evaluation of strategy by the BJP. With the constituency comprising five assembly seats, the SP secured Kairana, while the BJP emerged victorious in Nakur and Gangoh, and the RLD triumphed in Thana Bhawan and Shamli.

The Samajwadi Party is relying on solid support from the Muslim electorate, which constitutes approximately 42 per cent of voters in Kairana. Capitalising on the anti-incumbency sentiments against BJP MP Pradeep Chaudhary, the party has nominated Iqra Hasan, sister of sitting MLA Nahid Hasan.

In response, Pradeep Chaudhary is emphasising the policies implemented by the Central and state governments to woo voters. The BJP's alliance with the RLD, led by Jayant Chaudhary, has shifted the focus towards farmer-related issues, with the hope of swaying Jat voters. Meanwhile, the Bahujan Samaj

Party has nominated Shripal Rana to appeal to the Thakur voters disillusioned with the BJP. Although Rana's candidacy may not pose a significant threat, it could impact the electoral dvnamics by leveraging Thakur and Dalit votes. As the electoral battle intensifies, the Kairana Lok Sabha seat has emerged as a battleground where local concerns and evolving alliances have the potential to reshape electoral outcomes. As the countdown to the general elections begins, Kairana has emerged as a microcosm of the broader political dynamics at play in UP. With each party vying for supremacy and leveraging different strategies to mobilise support, the stage is set for a fierce battle where every vote

### forward family's political legacy Shamli (PTI): When the Covid MLA. With Kairana set to go to

pandemic hit, Iqra Hassan returned to her home town Kairana in western Uttar Pradesh from her university in London in 2021. She would soon find herself in the midst of a hectic political campaign for her brother.

Three years later, the 29-yearold, who once hoped to make a career in academics, is making her Lok Sabha poll debut on a Samajwadi Party ticket as an INDIA bloc nominee. She is pitted against sitting BJP MP Pradeep Chaudhary, who defeated her mother Tabassum Begum in the 2019 general elections.

Before her mother, Igra Hasan's father the late Munawwar Hasan represented Kairana in the Lok Sabha. Her brother Nahid Hasan is the Kairana

polls on April 19, Igra Hassan is now busy canvassing, says her maternal uncle Babloo Choudhary.

**London-educated Igra Hasan carries** 

He recalled how his "soft-spoken and strong-willed" niece campaigned for her brother in the 2022 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections while he was in jail. Asked about it, Iqra Hasan said she learnt a lot from the assembly election

campaign two years ago.
"That was the first time I led the campaign because my brother was not present at that time. He was implicated in false cases. It really helped me understand the dynamics of this region better. I have been in constant touch with the people here ever since and that has been my base for the past three years," Iqra Hasan told PTI. She acknowledged that coming from a family of politicians helped her get this opportunity but said that she does not take it for granted.

"It has helped a lot and given me the opportunity. I am privileged and I acknowledge that but I don't take that for granted any day. I am working hard and hope people can see that and vote for me," she added. However, coming from a family of politicians did not mean entering politics was a natural choice for her.

"As I said, my family was in politics. So, I always had an interest in it but not a participatory interest. My thesis also revolves around electoral reforms. My major area of interest was politics but in academics, and I wanted to do my PhD and make a career in academics but life had other plans.

### Youth found hanging from tree

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

youth was found hanging A from a tree under mysteri-

Tuesday. The police brought the body down with the help of people and sent it for an autopous circumstances along the sy after investigation. Kin alleged

railway track in Unnao on the youth was killed and his body was hanged. The incident took place in Shahjadkheda village of Ajgain Kotwali police station area of Unnao.



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(Borrower) Vinod Kumar Varma

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Singh (Guarantor 1)

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DEMAND NOTICE

Under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation And Reconstruction of Financial Assets And Enforcement Of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with Rule 3 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. The undersigned is the Authorised

officer of Piramal Capital & Housing And Enforcement of Security Interes said Act read with Rule 3 of the Sec Notices under Section 13(2) of the samounts mentioned in the respect above, Notice is hereby given, once this Notice, the amounts indicated hor from the date(s) mentioned below with other documents/writings, if a	Finance Limited (PCHFL) under Securitisal st Act, 2002 (the said Act). In exercise of pc urity Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, laid Act, calling upon the following Borrow ive Demand Notice(s) issued to them the again, to the said Borrower(s) to pay to PC lerein below, together with further intere till the date of payment and/or realizatio	in the Authorised of the Authorised to Authorised to Authorised Officer has issued Demand ver(s) (the "said Borrower(s)"), to repay the at are also given below. In connection with CHFL, within 60 days from the publication of stas detailed in the said Demand Notice(s) in, payable under the loan agreement rear security for due repayment of the loan, the ctively.
Name of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount with NPA date	Description of secured asset (immovable property)
(LC No. 06000000970 of Lucknow Branch) Virendra Kumar (Borrower) Vivek Kumar Srivastava (Co Borrower 1)	22-03-2024/ Rs. 2,33,264.44/- (Rs. Two lakh Thirty Three Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Four Only and Forty Four Paise) NPA (10-03-2024)	House No-54, Ews Sector- G Jankipuram Lucknow Lucknow Uttar Pradesh:- 226001
(LC No. 06000002956 of Lucknow Branch) Vinod Kumar Sukula (Borrower) Urmila (Co Borrower 1)		Plot of Land Gata No.1179 Raipur Fulwari Pargana Tehsil Amethi Sultanpur Uttar Pradesh:- 227405
(LC No. 06000004127 of Lucknow Branch) Rajendra Kumar Prasad (Borrower) Kamlawati Devi (Co Borrower 1)	22-03-2024/ Rs. 4,10,748/- (Rs. Four lakh Ten Thousand Seven Hundred Forty Eight Only) NPA (10-03-2024)	Plot Part of Khasra No. 2 & 4, Village & Ward-Ibrahimpur Tehsil & District Lucknow Lucknow Uttar Pradesh:-226020
(LC No. 12000000842 of Varanasi Branch) Sunil Kumar Dwivedi (Borrower) Anita Dwivedi (Co Borrower 1)	22-03-2024/ Rs. 17,54,172/- (Rs.Seventeen lakh Fifty Four Thousand One Hundred Seventy Two Only) NPA (10-03-2024)	Part of Arazi No.47 Mauza-chak Satai Misir, Paragana-arail Tehsil-Karchhana Allahabad Allahabad Uttar Pradesh:- 211003
(LC No. 12000003362 of Varanasi	22-03-2024/ Rs. 17,44,584/-	Arazi No.2351, Mauza Bharthara,

(Rs. Seventeen lakh Forty Four

Thousand Five Hundred Eighty Four

Forty Four Thousand Four Hundred

Thirty Six Only) NPA (10-03-2024)

22-03-2024/ Rs. 5.33.878/-

(Rs.Five lakh Thirty Three Thousand

Eight Hundred Seventy Eight Only) NPA (10-03-2024)

22-03-2024/ Rs. 8,45,395/- (Rs. Eight

Ninety Five Only) NPA (10-03-2024)

22-03-2024/ Rs. 4.40.165/- (Rs. Four

lakh Forty Thousand One Hundred

Sixty Five Only) NPA (10-03-2024)

22-03-2024/ Rs. 22,66,327/-

(Rs. Twenty Two lakh Sixty Six

Thousand Three Hundred Twenty

Seven Only) NPA (10-03-2024)

22-03-2024/ Rs. 15.83.989.17/-

22-03-2024/ Rs. 11,92,001/-

One Only) NPA (10-03-2024)

22-03-2024/ Rs. 12,62,043/-

23-03-2024/ Rs. 21,67,412/-

Sixty Seven Only) NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 7,99,035/-

(Rs. Seven lakh Ninety Nine Thousand

Thirty Five Only) NPA (05-03-2024)

and Eighty Two Paise) NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 14,74,004.22/-

(Rs. Fourteen lakh Seventy Four

Thousand Four Only and Twenty Two

Paise) NPA (05-03-2024)

Ninety One Thousand One Hundred Eighty Seven Only) NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 60,49,276/-

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Two Hundred Seventy Six Only)

NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 16,06,026/-

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Six Only) NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 12,41,541/-

(Rs. Twelve lakh Forty One Thousand Five Hundred Forty One Only)

NPA (04-02-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 10,55,237/-

(Rs. Ten lakh Fifty Five Thousand Two

Hundred Thirty Seven Only)

NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 15,88,506.02/-

Rs. Fifteen lakh Eighty Eight Thousan

Five Hundred Six Only and Two Paise)

NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 7.69.122/-

(Rs. Seven lakh Sixty Nine Thousand

One Hundred Twenty Two Only)

NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 5,20,260/-

(Rs. Five lakh Twenty Thousand Two Hundred Sixty Only) NPA (05-03-2024)

23-03-2024/ Rs. 8,79,898.62/-

(Rs. Eight lakh Seventy Nine Thousand

Eight Hundred Ninety Eight Only and

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Fourteen Only) NPA (05-03-2024)

Seven Only) NPA (05-03-2024)

If the said Borrowers shall fail to make payment to PCHFL as aforesaid, PCHFL shall proceed against the above secured

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Uttar Pradesh:- 221002

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Nagar Uttar Pradesh:- 201305 22-03-2024/ Rs. 2,44,436/- (Rs. Two lakh Plot No.1, Part of Khasra No.1041, Vil -Saraswan, Arjunganj, District Lucknow Lucknow Uttar Pradesh:- 226020 Individual, Plot No.78, Inside Baldey City

Colony, Khasra No.398, 399 & 400 Mi, Near Narsi Mauzagirdharpur Mathura Mathura Uttar Pradesh:- 281002 H. No. 127/444 A-2 at Arazi No.786 Juhi akh Forty Five Thousand Three Hundred Kalan Kanpur Kanpur Rural Uttar

Pradesh:- 208014 Pvt Plot No 11, Part of Arazi 575. Marshudabad, Kanpur, Kanpur Kanpur Urban Uttar Pradesh:- 208001 Plot Situated At, Arazi No.- 206 Mauja-

Hamidpur, Tappa And Pargana- Haveli,

Sadar Gorakhpur Gorakhpur Uttar

Part of Khasra No.534, Bhangeri Rs.Fifteen lakh Eighty Three Thousan Mahawatpur, Roorkee, Haridwar Nine Hundred Eighty Nine Only and Haridwar Uttaranchal: - 247666

Seventeen Paise) NPA (10-03-2024) Part of Plot No.30-A, Part of Khasra No 552, Kargaina (Jagriti Nagar) Bareilly Bareilly Uttar Pradesh:- 243001 (Rs. Fleven lakh Ninety Two Thousand

22-03-2024/ Rs. 16,68,272/- (Rs. Sixteen Khasra No. 829 Gram Kargaina Bareilly lakh Sixty Eight Thousand Two Hundred Seventy Two Only) NPA (10-03-2024) Bareilly Uttar Pradesh:- 243001

Plotn No-25 Khasra No-487 Shiv Mandir Shanti Nagar Saharanpur Saharanpur (Rs. Twelve lakh Sixty Two Thousand Saharanpur Uttar Pradesh:- 247001 Forty Three Only) NPA (10-03-2024)

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Police choki, Ghaziabad- 245101

Khasra No.1103, Village Acheja,

GautamBudh Nagar, UP-203207

Arazi No.1104 Mi House No.169 Mauzza

Dahilamau Pargana & Tehsil- Sadar, Distt

Office Pratpgarh, Pratapgarh, Up- 230001

Pratapgarh Pratapgarh, Near Jal Nigam

Bheta Haji Pur Loni, Bheta Hazipur Railw

Station Uttar Pradesh, Pin Code- 201102

Tehsil- Tilhar Distt Shahajanpur Tihar

Shahajanpur, Uma Takkej Wali Gali,

Shahajanpur, Uttar Pradesh- 242307

Part of Gata No.70 Min, Sitauted at Mauza

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District- Moradabad, Uttar Pradesh- 244501

Property Bearing Part of Plot No.142,

Khasra No.659, Mi Situated at Anand Vihar, Residential Colony, Vill-Jwalapur, Outer Nagar Palika, Near Stone Crasher,

Hvundai Showroom Haridwar, Pragana

Jwalapur Uttarakhand- 249402

Khasra No.437 Situated at Aheda

Baghpat, Uttar Pradesh- 250609

Part of Plot No.80, Khasra No.624,

Mouza Mahoil Andrum, Silver City

District Mathura- 281004

Distt- Aligarh- 202001

Distt- Aligarh- 202001

Meerut- 250002.

Meerut- 250002.

23-03-2024/ Rs. 7,36,114/- (Rs. Seven Old House No.96 & New House No.79,

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Colony Behind Atv Project, Tehsil and

Khet Khasara No.219/10, New Abadi

Khet Khasara No.219/10, New Abadi

Colony Baraula Jafrabad Par. & Teh Koil

Old House No.96 & New House No.-79,

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Buddha Nagar, Gautam Buddha Nagar,

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Sd/- (Authorised Officer)
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House No.2947 A Mohalla- Kunwar Jung

Pargana/Tehsil Dadri, District

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Alarge number of the congregated at prominent

temples of the city to pay obeisance to Maha Gauri on

Tuesday on the eight day of

Chaitra Navratra, Maha Gauri

is believed to be the eighth

form of Goddess Durga and is

thus worshipped on the eighth

day of Navaratra. A large num-

ber of people reached promi-

nent temples like Sidhapeeth

Kalavani, Sidhapeeth Lalita

Devi etc for the 'darshan' of the

including Kalyani Devi, Alopi

Temple, Kamakhya Devi

Temple and others also wit-

nessed a huge crowd. Siddha

Devi will be worshipped on the

ninth day of Navratri which

will mark the end of fast.

In addition, cultural programmes and 'devi jagran'

were organised at many tem-

ples. A long queue of devo-

tees was witnessed since

early morning at almost all

Famous temples of the city,

goddess.

large number of devotees

school teachers Monica Das, Akanksha Tiwari, Vedprakash Devotees throng temples Durga temples of the city. Devotees offered coconuts, flowers and 'chunris' to the deity and offered prayers. Special prayers, 'bhajans', 'shringars' and 'ratri jagran'

#### were also held at the temples. **PRAYERS OFFERED**

AT IFFCO TEMPLE On the occasion of Chaitra Navratri Ashtami, Mahagauri Mata, the eighth form of Durga Mata, was worshiped in the temple situated in the IFFCO Ghiyanagar, Phulpur campus here on Tuesday. Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia along with his wife Vinita Kudesia performed 'kanya pujan' and offered 'bhoj'

to the girls. During this Dr Anita Mishra, chief priest Ranjit Mishra and a large number of women devotees participated in the Ashtami Puja. 'Bhajans' and 'kirtans' were sung by women and prayers were offered for the progress and prosperity of family members.

### Wheat purchase reviewed

Special Secretary (Revenue Department), UP Government/ Nodal Officer, Varanasi Division, Prem Prakash Singh instructed the officers concerned to speed up the process of wheat purchase. He was reviewing the wheat purchase in the division at the Circuit House here on Monday. He was informed that so far 359 purchasing centres have been opened in the division against 338 proposed by the government and till now, 2388.22 MT of wheat has been purchased from 504 farmers, who were paid ₹226.28 lakh.

Singh directed the officers to purchase wheat from the farmers keeping in mind the

the necessary arrangements at all purchasing centres and also through mobile purchasing centres. "Progress should be made in purchasing wheat by going door to door. Payment to farmers should be ensured within the stipulated time period of 48 hours," he said, directing the officers that procurement should be started at the purchasing centres of all the agencies in the districts of the division and continuous monitoring of wheat procurement being done by private traders/e-traders should be done. District food marketing officers of Chandauli and Ghazipur were instructed to check the sale of wheat to other states through middlemen.

According to him, these 75 GI items included 58 handicraft products and 17 agricultural and food products. He praised the sup-port and efforts of NABARD Lucknow, UP and state government as GI Registry, Chennai, released the new list. "As soon as the information was received on the website of GI Application Status, there was a wave of joy among the GI producing community and sellers of UP including Kashi," he said. Dr Rajani Kant said among two new GI products from Varanasi region, Banaras Tirangi Barfi' is popu-

that the BJP has surrendered on

Allahabad parliamentary seat.

Tiwari said campaigning is in full

swing on the seats of Phulpur,

Allahabad Lok Sabha and sur-

rounding districts. In view of this

a proposal for a joint rally of key

party leaders and Indian National

Developmental Inclusive Alliance

(INDIA) will be sent to the nation-

date Ujjwal Raman Singh said Sangamnagari, which has the

identity of the political capital of

the state, is struggling to save its

needs 75 GIs and at the same time

we had assured him that it will

definitely happen by April 2024

and today on the day of Maha

Ashtami of Navratri, it will be

done as the promise was fulfilled

and the pride of UP increased," he

Meanwhile, Congress candi-

al leadership by the Congress.

Ujjwal will win with overwhelming

Two more Banaras products get GI tag

majority, claims Pramod Tiwari

at Rewati Raman's residence,

Tiwari said the party will con-

test the elections with full

strength in favour of Ujjwal

Raman Singh. He claimed that

Congress candidate Ujiwal

Raman Singh will win with an

overwhelming majority. He said that Kunwar Rewati

Raman Singh has served

Allahabad area for the longest

time. When Rewati Raman

Singh will come forward to gar-

ner support for his son, Ujjwal

Raman Singh, then there is no competition from anyone. He said

he said, adding that the self-

reliant campaign to re-establish India as a 'golden bird' once

again and to enhance its rich

cultural heritage making it

available to the whole world

through GI tag was given momentum by 'Local to Global' vision. Praising Prime

Minister Narendra Modi and

CM Yogi Adityanath, he said

this achievement was a result of

efforts made after 2014 in

India and after 2017 in UP and

now a new record was set in the

beginning of 2024 when UP leaving behind all the states of the

country, came on the top with 75

GI tags and achieved the distinc-

tion of reaching the first position

in India. "A few months ago, in a

function of GI organised in

Lucknow Secretariat, the CM

had expressed his wish that UP

since independence struggle and 'Banaras Metal Casting Craft' is a product prepared in the streets of Kashipura for hundreds of years. He said that with the technical support of Human Welfare Association (HWA) Varanasi alone, 148 GI products have been registered in 14 states so far, which include 56 from UP, 24 Uttarakhand, eight Madhya Pradesh, five Rajasthan, 18 Arunachal Pradesh, three Tripura, one Ladakh, three Meghalaya, eight Assam, eight Jammu & Kashmir, seven Maharashtra, two Odisha, four Gujarat and one Chhattisgarh. Dr Rajani Kant is director of HWA, which is the highest number of GIs registered as GI Technical Facilitators by any organisation in the country.

existence due to the shifting of

headquarters and saving its glory

is our priority. At the same time,

reviving the continuously closing

factories in Naini will also be a big

issue, he added. District president

Suresh Yadav, Arun Tiwari, former MLA Vijay Prakash, Harikesh Tripathi, Sudhakar

Tiwari, Mukund Tiwari, Haseeb

Ahmed, Gaurav Pandey, Talat

Azim, Raees Ahmed, Pramod

Patel, Manoj Pasi, Rakesh Patel,

Mohd Aslam, Sushil Tiwari,

Jitendra Rai among others

lar in Pucca Mahal (old city area)

were present.

### CSJMU V-C elected AIU president

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Vice-Chancellor (V-C), CSJM University (CSJMU), Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak has been elected president of Association of Indian Universities (AIU) in a meeting held in Hyderabad on Monday. He was earlier the vice-president of AIU which serves the global voice of the nation's academic community. Academicians, scholars and vice-chancellors of universities from all over India took part in it. The mission of the Association of Indian Universities is to promote academic excellence and the advancement of education in all Indian universities. Highlevel competitions are arranged between the universities through AIU in the areas of sports, research, culture and academics.

On being elected president of AIU, Prof Pathak thanked everyone and said, "the contribution of universities will play an integral role in shaping the vision of developed India. We must cultivate such a culture that the Indian education system can leave its indelible mark on the entire world. We have to work with technology to promote our culture, glorious history in the academic world". On his election as the AIU president, teaching and non-teaching staff of the CSJMU celebrated the occasion by distributing sweets.

## Ashtami: Kanya Puja organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE PRAYAGRAJ

Deputy Leader of the Opposition in Rajya Sabha Pramod Tiwari on Tuesday

met the senior Samajwadi Party

leader Kunwar Rewati Raman

Singh at his residence located

at Rajapur and held political discussions. He described

Rewati Raman as his four

decade old family friend.

Congress candidate from

Allahabad Lok Sabha Ujwal

Raman Singh was also present. While talking to journalists

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Two more traditional local

products, Banaras Tirangi Barfi and Banaras Metal

Casting Craft, have received the

Geographical Identifications

(GI) tag. With this, the total number of GI products from

UP reached 75 as promised by

the Chief Minister Yogi

Adityanath, informed ĞI

expert Padma Shri Dr Rajani

Kant here on Tuesday, adding

that the number is a proud

achievement. Dr Rajani Kant

said that with two new GI reg-

istrations from Kashi region, a

total of 34 GI tags were added to this region of Purvanchal

(eastern UP), including

Varanasi. "Kashi region has

now become the GI hub in the

world, the most diverse GI city,"

On the auspicious occasion of Ashtami festival of Vasantik Navratri on Tuesday 108 'Gauri Swarupa' girls were worshiped at a Kanya Puja programme organised in the premises of Gopi Radha Primary School and Girls Inter located

Ravindrapuri here. Meanwhile, devotees thronged Annapurna Mandir and Mangala Gauri Temple (Panchganga Ghat) during the day. Besides, heavy rush was witnessed as usual throughout the day at Durga Mandir (Durga Kund) apart from Old Durga Mandir in Ramnagar and Sheetla Mata Mandir at Adalpura on Varanasi-Chunar (Mirzapur) road.

Meanwhile, a large number of devotees also visited Vindhyachal in Mirzapur district, about 65 kilometres from here. At Gopi Radha, the girls from class LKG to V were

worshiped. On the occasion school manager Dr Manoj Kumar Shah and director Dr Shalini Shah worshiped the girls as per the rituals. In the programme, the feet of all the girls were washed, decorated and gifts in the form of fruits, 'prasad' and 'dakshina' were given. On the occasion many social workers and public representatives also worshipped and performed 'aarti' of the goddess-like girls. On the occasion Cantt MLA Saurabh Srivastava, BJP's Lok Sabha coordinator Avnish Tyagi, Madhukar Chitransh, corporator Dr Ravindra Singh, Amit Rai Chintu, Abhishek Mishra, Rajesh Trivedi etc also worshiped the girls. Besides, principal Neeti Jaiswal, deputy director Smriti Sah, assistant director Saloni Shah, deputy manager Abhinay Bhatt, school coordinator Ratnesh Govind,

Pandey and students also presented hymns to the Mother Goddess' during Kanya Puja event. Elsewhere, the activists of Namami Gange gifted cloth bags and saplings to nine girls in the form of Durga, giving a message of social concern with devotion during Kanya Puja on Ashtami Tithi. The girls carried placards, bags and plants with cleanliness slogans in their hands and gave the message of environmental protection. They appealed to the people not to use single-use plastic. Along with the girls, batukas, the symbol of Bhairav, were also respected. Halwa, puri, vegetables, ghughri and sweets were offered to the girls on behalf of Namami Gange at residence of regional coordinator Rajesh Shukla in Garhwasi Tola. The girls were given angavastram. Srishti Mishra, Poonam Shukla, Shubhangi Kapuria, Suryanshu etc also participated in the event.

### PMG releases spl cover on Ram Navami

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

**D**ostmaster General (PMG) Pof Prayagraj Region Krishna Kumar Yadav released a special cover with cancellation on 'Ram Navami' on the eve of Ram Navami in Prayagraj head post office in a programme organised under the aegis of Postal department and Prayag Philatelic Society.

This special cover was can-

celled with the picture of a bow by pasting a postage stamp issued on 'Ramayana' on it. Director Postal Services Gaurav Srivastava, Superintendent of Post Offices Abhishek Srivastava, President of Prayag Philatelic Society Pramod Kumar Bansal and Secretary Rahul Ganguly were also present.

On the occasion the PMG said Lord Shri Ram expresses our spiritual and cultural values. He said the Postal department issues various stamps and special covers to connect people with their culture and heritage. The glory of Lord Shri Ram is also being spread in the country and the world through postal stamps. Along with India, more than 20 countries of the world have issued stamps from time to time on the characters and stories related to Ramavana. Gauray Srivastava said the character of Lord Shri Ram is omnipresent

and inclusive. **MEETING:** A meeting of the Regional Official Language Implementation Committee was organised under the chairmanship of General Manager (GM) Ashok Kumar Verma at Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE)

### Guidelines to ensure availability of water in stations, trains issued

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

reeping in mind the upcom-Ring summer season, a review meeting was held on Tuesday under the chairman ship of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) Vineet Kumar Srivastava to ensure the availability of water in all the stations of the division apart from all the trains passing through the division. In the meeting, appropriate guidelines have been issued to ensure availability of water in stations and trains. To ensure availability of drinking water in view of the heat, 25 water vending machines have been installed at various stations of Varanasi division, including four at Chhapra Junction, three at Siwan Jn, two each at Banaras, Varanasi City, Ghazipur City, Deoria Sadar, Mau and one each at Bhatni Jn, Ballia, Azamgarh, Belthara Road, Salempur Jn Kaptanganj Jn and Thawe In. Besides, the process of installing water vending machines at five stations including two in Chhapra, one each in Chhapra Kacheri, Siwan and Suremanpur is underway. The DRM said that due to water vending machines installed at stations, pure drinking water is available to the passengers at low cost. Apart from this, work is being done to install water vending machines at other stations of the division which will soon be made oper-

Along with this, a total of 85 water coolers have been installed at 33 railway stations of the division to provide cool water to the passengers. Besides, he said that the availability of bottled drinking water of approved brands is being ensured at all the stations of Varanasi division. "Stall operators located at stations have been instructed to keep adequate quantity of bottled water in their stock,"he added.

According to him, in the water booths installed at all the stations of Varanasi division, the respective water tanks are being kept full for the availability of drinking water and relatwater lines are being mon itored to ensure uninterrupted supply. Along with this, there is a plan to provide pure water to the railway passengers sitting in the general coaches of passenger trains passing through various stations of the division as per the need by running a campaign by Scouts and Guides and voluntary organisations. Along with this, he said while placing the passenger trains at the stations during train operation, care is being taken that the general class coaches should come near the water booths so that the passengers traveling in them have the convenience of filling water. Apart from this, for proper management, monitoring and smooth operation, surprise inspections are being conducted by senior officers at headquarters and divisional level, he said.

### Couple burnt as fire breaks out in house

**PIONEER NEWS SERVICE** ■ KANPUR

ational for the passengers.

n elderly couple sustained Aserious burns and five twowheelers were gutted when a fire broke out in a house under mysterious circumstances in KDA market, Janata Nagar, under Barra police station area on Tuesday morning. On gettinf information the police rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control. After rescuing the elderly couple, the police sent them to UHM hospital while all the four bikes and a scooty parked in front of the room were gutted in fire. The police have started a probe in the matter. Reports said that elderly couple Ramesh and Rajeshwari live in a house on rent in KDA market, Barra-3. The fire broke out in their room on Tuesday morning due to which they suffered serious burns. On hearing their screams, the neighbours extinguished the fire with the help of submersible pump and informed the police which rushed to the spot and sent the injured couple to a hospital where their condition was stat ed to be critical. Household goods of the elderly couple and five two-wheelers, including four bikes and a scooty, worth lakhs of rupees were gutted in

the fire. Another tenant Annu Mishra, living opposite the elderly couple, informed she was having a dispute with her husband for the past several years. She alleged that efforts were made to burn her alive on Tuesday morning and after the fire was extinguished, she got a letter threatening to burn her alive. She said her husband was a criminal and had been sent to jail in a mobile loot case. He often threatened to kill her. The police said on receipt of complaint, action will be ini-

Meanwhile a middle-aged man was battered to death before his house in Kathari village under Satti police station area of Kanpur Dehat late Monday night. He was identified as Nahar Singh (50).

tiated in the matter.

## PIONEER NEWS SERVICE VARANASI

comfort and convenience of the farmers by completing all

here on Tuesday.

# BJP releases fresh list of seven more candidates for Lok Sabha polls

The BJP on Tuesday released the 12th list of seven more polls, fielding Udayanraje Bhosale, a descendant of Maratha king Chhatrapati Shivaji, from Satara in Maharashtra and Abhijit Das Bobby as the candidate for the Diamond Harbour constituency in West Bengal. The BJP dropped Union Minister Som Parkash from Hoshiarpur in Punjab but decided to field his wife Anita Som Parkash to keep the influential local leader's support intact. With the new list, the party has named its candidates for around 430 seats for the polls to 543 seats starting from April

focused on Maharashtra, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal seats. The party also released its second list of 21 candidates for the Odisha assembly polls, fielding former minister Dilip Ray from

The BJP has fielded Abhijit Das Bobby from Diamond Harbour Parliamentary constituency in West Bengal against Trinamool Congress candidate Abhishek Banerjee, nephew of West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.Diamond Harbour has been Abhishek Banerjee's stronghold since 2014. Previously known as Hajipur, its name was changed to Diamond Harbour by the British. According to the 2011 census, the population of this

which is part of the South 24 Parganas district, is 2,221,470. Among these, 49.07% live in villages and 50.93% are urban dwellers. The proportion of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes among them is 20.63% and 0.18% respectively. There are seven Assembly seats under Diamond Harbour, including Falta, Satgachhia, Bishnupur, Maheshtala, Budge Budge, Metiabruz and Diamond Harbour. It is among the keenly watched match-ups with the BJP's Das squaring off against the incumbent TMC MP Abhishek Banerjee. In both the 2014 and 2019 Lok Sabha elections, Banerjee won with huge vote margins, proving his popularity and influence in



the seat. In 2019, he beat his nearest rival by a staggering margin of 3.20 lakh votes. Bhosale is the 17th holder of the title of Chhatrapati which was founded by the Maratha

emperor Chhatrapati Shivaji on his coronation in 1674. In 2019, Bhosale was elected to the Lok Sabha from Satara on an NCP ticket. In Uttar Pradesh, the party has fielded Vishwadeep Singh from Firozabad and Shashank Mani Tripathi from Deoria, dropping its sitting MPs from the two

The party fielded Anita Som

Parkash from the Hoshiarpur reserve parliamentary constituency, according to the list of candidates. Anita thanked the party leadership for entrusting her with the responsibility. The BJP won the seat in the 2014 and 2019 polls. The party's Vijay Sampla had won it in 2014 while Som Parkash had defeated Congress nomi-nee Raj Kumar Chabbewal in 2019. Hoshiarpur is one of the three seats which BJP had been fighting when it was in alliance with the Shiromani Akali Dal. But the saffron party is fighting the 2024 Lok Sabha polls on

face AAP nominee Raj Kumar Chabbewal in the coming polls. The Congress and the SAD are vet to name their candidates from Hoshiarpur.
As expected, the BJP fielded

former IAS officer Parampal Kaur Sidhu from Bathinda parliamentary seat, currently held by SAD MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal. Sidhu is the daughter-in-law of senior Akali leader Sinkander Singh Maluka. She recently joined the BJP along with her husband Gurpreet Singh Maluka in Delhi.

Before joining the saffron party, Sidhu, a 2011-batch IAS officer, had put in her papers. She is pitted against Congress candidate Jeet Mohinder Sidhu and AAP's Gurmeet Singh

The Bathinda seat is considered a SAD stronghold. Harsimrat won the Bathinda seat in 2009, 2014 and 2019. In the last Lok Sabha polls, she had defeated Congress candidate Amrinder Singh Raja Warring. The BJP fielded former MLA from Baba Bakala seat Manjit Singh Manna Mianwind from the Khadoor Sahib Lok Sabha seat. Khadoor Sahib seat is currently held by Congress MP Jasbir Singh. The AAP has fielded Laljit Singh Bhullar from this seat.

The electoral process spans from April 19 to June 1, 2024, across seven phases, with results slated for June 4, ahead of the 17th Lok Sabha's term conclusion on June 16, 2024.

## West Asia: Airlines told to make risk assessment for flights

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

Amid escalating tensions in the Middle East, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has asked airlines to carry out their own risk assessment on international flight operations. Air India, Vistara, IndiGo and various international airlines have opted for alternative flight paths to the West and are avoiding the Iranian airspace against the backdrop of tensions flaring up between Iran and Israel.

Civil Aviation Secretary Vumlunmang Vualnam on Tuesday said that airlines have been asked to make their own risk assessment with respect to their flight operations. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) is handholding and interacting with the airlines, and also in touch with the external affairs ministry, he added.

The secretary was responding to a query on whether there is an advisory by the ministry or the DGCA to airlines amid the crisis in the Middle East.

Air India is operating some of its international flights on alternative flight paths to and from India, and Vistara has also made changes to flight paths for some of its flights due to the Middle East situation.



Also, Air India has temporarily suspended its flights to Tel Aviv. The alternative flight paths have increased the duration of some of the international flights by around half an hour. About the Middle East crisis, Suprio Banerjee, Vice President & Sector Head, Corporate Ratings at ICRA, said commercial airlines may have to take a longer route in order to comply with no-fly regulations, leading to higher fuel expenses. "This will also impact international air travel to the directly affected and potentially affected nearby geographies during the upcoming summer holiday season if the issue persists," Banerjee said. Manan Bajoria, Group VP

Growth at travel portal ixigo, said re-routing of flights due to

the current geopolitical tensions can result in longer routes and higher expenses for airlines that run flights to and from Europe, Middle East, and Southeast Asia. "Lengthy diversions will add to airline fuel costs and may lead to an increase in airfares across these routes," Bajoria said.

Banerjee also said the ongoing geopolitical developments in the Middle East region will continue to exert pressure on crude oil prices and, in turn, on ATF prices, which have been on an elevated level compared to the pre-Covid era.

During the weekend, Iran launched dozens of drones and missiles at Israel in a retaliatory attack. On Monday, Israel said it will respond to Iran's weekend attack.

### Court upheld Centre decision to dissolve Maulana Azad Education Foundation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Tuesday upheld the the Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF), which was set up in 1989 for promoting education among educationally backward minorities, holding there was no impropriety or irregularity in arriving at it.

A bench headed by Acting Chief Justice Manmohan dis-missed a PIL by Syeda Saiyidain Hameed, John Dayal and Daya Singh and said several welfare programmes for the minority communities are being carried out devotedly by the Ministry of Minority Affairs and it could not be said that the interest of the minority communities was being hampered due to the dissolution. Maintaining that the decision to dissolve the MAEF was "well considered" and in accordance with the legal framework, the said it cannot sit in appeal and examine the appropriateness of a policy of the government.

"The decision to dissolve the MAEF has been duly taken by the General Body of the MAEF and this court finds no impropriety or irregularity in the process adopted by the



said General Body in arriving at the said decision," the bench, also comprising Justice Mini Pushkarna, said.

This Court finds no merit in the present petition and is not inclined to interfere in the considered decision taken by the respondents. Accordingly, the present petition is dismissed," the court said.

petitioners had approached the high court against the February 7 order of the Ministry of Minority Affairs which instructed the MAEF to carry out the closure process at the earliest and submit copy of the closure certificate issued by the Registrar of Societies of the Delhi government on completion of all procedures, as per extant laws. The Centre had defended its decision in the court, saying MAEF has become "obsolete' when there is a dedicated ministry holistically executing schemes for the benefit of the minorities.

The ministry's order was issued in reference to a proposal received from the Central Waqf Council (CWC) on January 21 to close the

The court had reserved its verdict on the PIL on March 13 after hearing both the sides. The petitioners had said in their PIL that the ministry's order not only deprived the deserving students, especially girls, from availing the benefits of the schemes of the MAEF but is also without jurisdiction, completely malafide, arbitrary and a colourable exercise by author-

### President expresses happiness at 60 per cent IES officers in 2022, 2023 batches being women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE **NEW DELHI** 

President Droupadi Murmu on Tuesday expressed happiness that more than 60 per cent of the Indian Economic Service (IES) officers from the 2022 and 2023 batches were women and urged them to champion initiatives that foster the holistic empowerment of women across the States while ensuring inclusive development of the country.

"Increasing participation of women will help in fulfilling the resolve of inclusive development of India," she said, calling it a significant achievement that reflects a positive trend towards greater gender diversity and inclusivity in the workforce.She was addressing a group of pro-bationers of the Indian Economic Service (2022 and 2023 batches), who had called on her at the Rashtrapati

Bhavan here. Murmu said that economic growth is an important component in the country's development. "Macro and micro economic indicators are considered useful parameters of progress. Therefore, the role of economists is important in making government policies and schemes effective and use-



officers that as India is moving towards becoming the third largest economy in the world, they will get countless opportunities in the times to come to enhance their capabilities and utilise them to the fullest.

She expressed confidence that they will make a significant contribution to the development of the country by taking proper advantage of these opportunities. The president urged the young officers to keep in mind the interest of the poor and backward sections of the country while giving policy related suggestions or taking any decision in their workplace, a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan said

Murmu said that economic service officers are expected to provide appropriate advice for economic analysis and design of development programmes as well as for strengthening the resource distribution system and evaluating schemes.

## Viral hepatitis second leading infectious cause of death worldwide, says WHO

With 1.3 million deaths annually, viral hepatitis stands as the second leading infectious cause of death worldwide, trailing only tuberculosis. Hepatitis B is responsible for 83 per cent of these deaths, with hepatitis C accounting for the remaining 17 per cent, according to the World Health Organization's 2024 Global Hepatitis Report released

Despite advancements in diagnostic tools and treatments, coverage rates for testing and treatment have stalled. However, achieving the WHO's elimination goal by 2030 remains feasible with urgent action, as per the report which reveals that there are 254 million people who are afflicted with hepatitis B, and 50 million with hepatitis C in 2022. with hepatitis C in 2022.

"Half of the burden is among people aged 30-54, with 12 per cent among children under 18. Men constitute 58 per cent of all cases. New infections have slightly decreased, with 2.2 million new cases in 2022, down from 2.5 million in 2019." However, what is a matter of concern is that diagnosis and treatment coverage rates are far below the global targets for both hepatitis B and C.

Data shows that only 13 per cent of people with chronic hepatitis B and 36 per cent with hepatitis C have been diagnosed. "Treatment rates are even lower, with only 3% receiving antiviral therapy for hepatitis B and 20% receiving curative treatment for hepatitis C," says the report, attributing the low rates to disparities in pricing and service delivery. The report said that many countries fail to procure affordable generic medicines, leading to pricing disparities. "Service delivery remains centralized and vertical, with out-of-pocket expenses for many affected curative treatment.



"This report paints a troubling picture: despite progress globally in preventing hepatitis infections, deaths are rising because far too few people with hepatitis are being diag-nosed and treated," said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. "WHO is committed to supporting countries to use all the tools at their disposal - at access prices - to save lives and turn this trend around."

New incidence estimates indicate a slight decrease compared to 2019, but the overall incidence of viral hepatitis remains high. In 2022, there were 2.2 million new infections, down from 2.5 million in 2019. These include 1.2 million new

hepatitis B infections and nearly 1 million new hepatitis C infections. More than 6000 people are getting newly infected with viral hepatitis each day. The revised estimates are derived from enhanced data from national prevalence surveys. They also indicate that prevention measures such as immunization and safe injections, along with the expansion of hepatitis C treatment, have contributed to reducing the

incidence. Across all regions, only 13% of people living with chronic hepatitis B infection had been diagnosed and approximately 3% (7 million) had received antiviral therapy at the end of 2022. Regarding hepatitis C, 36% had been diagnosed and 20% (12.5 million) had received

## Extra judicial confession loses significance in absence of substantive evidence: SC

Every nature is a "weak piece" of evidence and it may be used as a corroborative piece of evidence in tandem with substantive evidence, the Supreme Court said on Tuesday while acquitting a man who was convicted in a

1998 murder case. The apex court allowed an appeal filed by the man challenging the verdict of the Punjab and Haryana High Court which had affirmed the trial court's May 1999 order convicting and sentencing him to life imprisonment.

The prosecution alleged that

murdered a man at a cinema hall in Bhiwani as he bore a suspicion that the victim was involved in illicit relations with his wife.

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta noted that the prosecution's case was primarily based on the testimonies of two witnesses -- the victim's brother and another person who claimed that the accused had made a confession

Referring to the evidence in the case, the bench said both these witnesses fall within the category of "wholly unreliable witnesses" and it would be unsafe to place reliance on their evi-



dence so as to affirm the guilt Dealing with the purported extrajudicial confession made

by one of the witnesses, the bench said it was contradicted by the evidence of another

prosecution witness

confession by its very nature is a weak piece of evidence. It may be used as a corroborative piece of evidence in tandem with substantive evidence," the bench said.

"In wake of the discussion made above (in the judgement), we have no hesitation in holding that the prosecution failed to bring home the charge and establish the guilt of the accused appellant beyond reasonable doubt," it said.

The bench noted that the incident had taken place around 11:30 am. And the victim's brother had admitted in his cross-examination that the body was lifted from the spot

It said there cannot be any doubt that the victim's brother could not have decided at the first blush that the deceased had expired as a result of a knife

"The natural reaction expected from a brother in such a situation would have been to take immediate steps for taking the victim to the hospital so as to save his life," it said, adding the victim's brother did not make any such attempt, and in this background, his presence at the crime scene was doubtful. The apex court, which quashed the verdicts of the high court and the trial court, acquitted the appellant.

## INS Talwar seizes 940 kg of contraband narcotics: Navy

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

ndian Naval ship INS Talwar, I mission deployed in Western Arabian Sea for Maritime Security Operations as part of Combined Force(CTF)150 led Focussed

Operation Crimson Barracuda successfully apprehended a suspicious dhow on April 13 and seized 940 kg of contraband narcotics, navy said here

Giving details, officials said the ship's specialist boarding teams and MARCOs seized 940 kgs of contraband narcotics. The drugs are being disposed off as per CMF SOPs.

per CMF SOPS.
The seized drugs included 453 kg of methamphetamines, 416 kg of hash and 71 kg of heroin from a dhow as part of Focused Operation Crimson Barracuda. The Indian Navy

joined CMF last November. commend the crew of INS Talwar for their efforts throughout this Focused Operation and their hard work has paid off with this seizure of 940 kg of drugs," said Royal Canadian Navy Capt. Colin Matthews, Commander, Maritime Forces, the world's largest international naval part-nership. CTF 150's mission is to



'This seizure, the fourth of this Focused Operation, demonstrates the effectiveness and professionalism of CMF, and of the Indian Navy, in deterring and disrupting criminal and terrorist activities at sea." Crimson Barracuda, which Crimson Barracuda, which concluded on April 15, focused on countering terrorist and criminal organizations' use of the high seas to conduct smuggling operations in the Western Indian Ocean region.

CTF 150 is one of five task forces under Combined Maritime Forces, the world's

deter and disrupt the ability of non-state actors to move weapons, drugs and other illicit substances in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman.

Combined Maritime Forces is a 42-nation naval partnership upholding the international rules-based order by promot-ing security and stability across 3.2 million square miles of water encompassing some of the world's most important shipping lanes.

Relentless efforts of Indian Navy as a CMF partner reaffirms its commitment towards ensuring a drug free neigh-

### EC bars Surjewala for 48 hours for derogatory remarks against Hema Malini

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE NEW DELHI

The Election Commission on Tuesday barred Congress leader Randeep Surjewala from campaigning for 48 hours over his alleged derogatory remarks against BJP MP Hema Malini.

This is the first campaign ban imposed by the poll body in this Lok Sabha election cycle. The Election Commission last Tuesday issued a show-cause notice to Surjewala for his alleged "undignified, uncivilised and vulgar" remarks

against Malini. The poll body said it has carefully gone through the contents and averments made in the

reply of Surjewala.
"The commission without prejudice to any order/notice issued or to be issued subsequently to him in the matter relating to MCC violations, hereby, strongly condemns the impugned statement made by him during the election campaign held in Haryana and reprimands Randeep Surjewala



for the misconduct," the poll watchdog said.

The commission, under Article 324 of the Constitution and all other powers enabling in this behalf, bars Surjewala from holding any public meetings, public processions, public ral-lies, road shows and interviews, public utterances in media (electronic, print, social media) etc. In connection with ongoing elections for 48 hours from 6 pm on April 16, it said. In its notice to Surjewala, the EC had said that on careful examination, the comments were found to be "highly undignified, vulgar and uncivilised" and to be prima facie violative of the provisions of the MCC and the poll panel's advisory issued to parties last | from the IAF in 1947.

### **Oldest IAF pilot** dies at 103



**NEW DELHI** 

ndian Air Force (IAF)'s old-Lest living pilot Squadron Leader Dalip Singh Majithia died at the age of 103 at his farm in Rudrapur, Uttrakhand on Monday. His wife Joan Sanders Majithia passed away in 2021 at the age of 100. The couple is survived by two daughters. Majithia was born in Shimla on

July 27, 1920 and joined the IAF volunteer reserve in 1940 during World War-II. He joined the 4th Pilot's Course at the Initial Training School (ITA) in Walton, Lahore, in August 1940 and three months later awarded the best pilot tro-phy. He was then posted to the No. 1 Flying Training School in Ambala to continue advanced flying training. After serving in various capacities, he retired

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

## **Shower of blessings**

For the first time in a decade, IMD predicts above-normal rainfall across the nation

he Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) has marked a significant milestone by releasing its long-term forecast. For the first time in a decade, the IMD has predicted above-average rainfall across almost the entire expanse of the country. This forecast carries profound implications for various sectors, ranging from agriculture to water resource management and beyond. Policymakers and farmers will welcome this news, although ordinary individuals may find themselves contending with a more pronounced monsoon season than usual. It would indeed be a sigh of relief for all farmers. The agricultural sector, which forms the backbone of India's economy, is heavily reliant on timely and adequate rainfall. Adequate precipitation is essential for the cultivation of crops and the sustenance of agricultural activities. With an anticipated surplus in rainfall, farmers can expect better soil moisture levels, leading to improved crop yields. Additionally, the forecast offers them an opportunity to plan their cropping patterns and



maximise agricultural output. Besides, India's water resources are intricately linked to the monsoon patterns. Above-normal rainfall augurs well for the replenishment of reservoirs, lakes and groundwater aquifers. It provides the much-needed boost to water levels, especially in regions grappling with water scarcity. Adequate rainfall can alleviate the stress on water resources, ensuring better availability for domestic, industrial and agricultural purposes. A bountiful monsoon also facilitates the generation of hydroelectric power, thus contributing to the energy sector.

However, it may be too early to celebrate a normal or above-normal monsoon. Weather forecasts are prob-

abilistic in nature; even a good monsoon across the country is a rare occurrence. While above-normal rainfall brings several benefits, it also presents certain challenges. Excessive precipitation can lead to flooding, particularly in low-lying areas and regions prone to inundation. Flooding not only causes damage to property and infrastructure but also poses risks to human life. Therefore, authorities must undertake pre-emptive measures such as strengthening infrastructure, improving drainage systems and implementing effective flood management strategies. Heavy rainfall increases the risk of soil erosion and landslides, particularly in hilly terrains. Adequate soil conservation measures and afforestation efforts are essential to mitigate these risks and safeguard vulnerable ecosystems. Also, authorities need to ensure efficient water management practices to prevent wastage and optimise the utilisation of water resources. The IMD's forecast heralds promising prospects for farmers to enhance productivity and for authorities to address water scarcity concerns. By adopting a comprehensive approach that combines preparedness, conservation and sustainable practices, India can harness the benefits of abundant rainfall while minimising associated risks, paving the way for socio-economic development and environmental sustainability.



Devotees stand in a gueue to offer prayers at Dakshineswar Kali Temple on Bengali New Year, in Kolkata

# Ignoring neighbours to embrace the world-



The BJP Government has put Neighbourhood First Policy on backburner, leaving it underperforming amid rising anti-India sentiments in the region

JP government has made foreign policy a key election issue: Prime Minister Modi has stated, 'Neighbour first and Act East second. Foreign Minister S Jaishankar is campaigning how G20 has enhanced India's image and influence as a global player. Quest for High Table has shifted focus from Neighbourhood First Policy (NFP) . S Jaishankar explained that politics can go up and down in neighbourhood but people generally have good feelings for India. That is certainly not the ground reality today when in almost every country, anti-India feeling is prevalent. NFP which was formally launched in 2008, has not performed optimally due to internal and external factors. Act East appended later has also failed to take off . Followed several add-ons: sab ka saath sab ka vikas; SAGAR; Vishva Mitra; First Security Responder and so

Former Minister Jaswant Singh in his book Defending India, has noted that India is strategically confined by Macmahon Line, Durand Line, LAC and LoC. Still it was once the regional hegemon having promulgated the Indira Doctrine and employed military force in national interest. India's geography and asymmetry with neighbours are both asset and liability. Congenital problems with Pakistan and later China have made it the least connected South Asian region. NFP was designed to shape the neighbourhood, especially the periphery, extending the neighbourhood to Mauritius and Iran in the West and Myanmar in the East. Curating friendly regimes, winning the goodwill of people through economic linkages and connectivity, creating strategic assets, minimising liabilities and most of all, being sensitive to genuine concerns of neighbours were some objectives of NFP. Rubbing neighbours the wrong way was ot nor meshing domestic politics with diplomacy. That an aspirational India would create glitches for NFP was not envisioned. China, gate- crashed after hiding its strength and biding its recovery a "comeback story" time arriving with deep pockets, BRI, MSR and Wolf Warrior



diplomacy With ups and downs in politics regional rivalries were in full flow. Nepalese scholars were first to note change. The founding father, King Prithvi Narayan Shah had observed that Nepal is a yam between two boulders: China and India. They corrected that gospel to three boulders, adding US. Till late last year, Maldives followed India First policy, the only country to publicly proclaim the choice.

That has changed to India Out with President Muizzu demanding the 88 Indian soldiers leave before elections next month. He even hinted that Delhi tried bullying Male. Its strategic geography is pivotal in the Indian Ocean. Maldives is for now China First but India could have been more gentle with its smallest neighbour. Raking up the Kachhatheevu issue that the government admitted it was settled in 2015, was a self goal but both Modi and Jaishankar wished to politically embarrass the ruling DMK in Tamil Nadu and INC. Instead it has infuriated Sri Lankan media and ordinary Lankans, especially fisherfolk among the lakhs of Sri Lankan and Indian Tamils.

US Assistance Secretary of State for South Asia and Central Asia, Donald Lu has called Sri Lankan's economic with concessional loans from India and USAID. That story

MOST, IF NOT ALL, REGIONAL **COUNTRIES WANT** SAARC TO BE REVIVED, BUT INDIA'S IRON-CLAD POLICY OF NOT **DEALING WITH** PAKISTAN UNTIL TERRORISM FROM ITS SOIL STOPS HAS BEEN AGGRAVATED BY THE REMOVAL OF ARTICLE 370

revival of anti-India sentiment and further tilt towards China to whom Lanka owes USD 10 bn. In Bangladesh BNP has started an India Out campaign. China is heavily invested in projects including constructing a submarine port near Cox's Bazar adequate for 8 to 10 sub-marines. Bhutan was within a whisker of a land swap with China by the previous government. Otherwise Doklam could have been lost to the Chinese which would have endangered Siliguri Corridor, the India-Bhutan-China trijunction dispute. The new Lotay Tshering government might delay the Doklam swap. In Myanmar, the military is rapidly losing ground in the civil war with Ethnic Armed Organisations and NUG. It has lost border control with China, Bangladesh, India and Thailand to EAOs. Most critical for India is Sittwe Port vital for the multi-modal Kaladan project and also the trilateral highway to Thailand. Reuters reported that junta troops nearby have fled and an attack on Sittwe is imminent. But Sohel Kazan, executive director, Bharat Freight, said last week that Sittwe will be safe following a deal between junta and Rakhine state government. If true, that is good

will suffer a setback lead to

Kaladan project was contracted in 2008 and is nowhere near completion dislocating India's two signature Act East pro-

jects.. Delhi has to rethink its relations with the junta. Most if not all regional countries want SAARC to be revived, But India's iron clad policy of not dealing with Pakistan till terrorism from its soil stops has been aggravated by removal of Article 370. Trade potential according to World Bank between Pakistan and India is between USD 15 and 20 bn. India's NFP has not worked because its global ambitions have diluted its zeal for the neighbourhood. Further, it has been unable to compete with China despite geography being on its side. Under NFP and Act East, India has concentrated mainly in the maritime domain resulting in neglect of inland connectivity.

The Government brags about North East shining (Manipur is a shame) but little progress is seen over connectivity of BBIN (Bangladesh, Bhutan India Nepal) or South East Asia. The Bangladesh China India Myanmar (BCIM) is also dead. India's focus on neighbourhood has wavered. failing to secure the periphery. Some diplomats have advocated India setting red lines? Winning over neighbours is now a huge challenge

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

## Reflections on class and age discrimination



From a childhood encounter at a political rally to navigating workplace dynamics, an individual's journey unveils lessons in equality and empathy

he then Prime Minister was to address a public rally in Ghaziabad. My father, posted as the head of the electricity department in the city, was responsible for the electrical arrangements at the venue. He took us to listen to her speech from a vantage point.

I do not remember the speech. What I do remember is that my father came back immediately after the event ended and rushed us from the venue. He kept looking back surreptitiously, asking us to walk faster. I was to learn that a supervisor working under my father and wanting to make a good impression, was also pursuing us to introduce his family. Much later, at a more mature age, I could understand that this was an incidence of class discrimination prevalent in our society. I was to learn quite a few lifealtering lessons a few years later as I joined Indian railway services.

During my first posting in Calcutta, I was asked to study an old machine and propose measures to improve its productivity, taking the assistance of an experienced supervisor. The two of us

spent innumerable hours studying the machine. I became an apprentice to a more knowledgeable person, even though he was lower in the hierarchy. Then and even later in my subsequent postings, or even after I quit an active professional life, I learnt a lot about handling workrelated issues and even man management, from my junior colleagues, by not dwelling on the so-called finer nuances of a superior status.

I also learnt empathy for others. In yet another posting, as a branch head, I was approached by irate union leaders who complained

about the rude language by a junior colleague. His fault was that he had used the term tum to address a worker rather than the more respectable aap. This was Bengal, where everyone is expected to use a respectful salutation when talking to

I tried to assuage the hurt sentiments by pointing out that the junior colleague came from north India where it was a common practice to use the more affectionate tum even while addressing parents. The representatives were not done. They pointed out that I was

another person, whatever the

always respectful even though I was from the same region. This was another lesson learnt, never to be forgotten, about the futility of status discrimination.

We were visiting relatives a few days back. My wife's uncle, now nearing 80, narrated a recent experience. He had gone to some office for work, where a much younger person jumped the queue. The uncle objected which was rudely brushed aside by the young man, "How is it material? Have I pointed a gun at you?" This was a status discrimination of another kind - a perceived superiority of the youth against old age. Or was it the gun power? We ought to remember what Nelson Mandela said, "No one is born hating another person because of the colour of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

(The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)

### **CONSTITUTIONAL MORALITY**

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Constitutional Morality: The Pillar of India's Democracy", published on April 15, this is my response. India's electoral fervour every four years embodies the essence of democracy, echoing the aspirations of its constituent assembly. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's vision of constitutional morality as the cornerstone of governance rings true today. It's a conscious cultivation, not merely a natural sentiment, vital for a vibrant democracy. Justice D.Y. Chandrachud aptly emphasises the judiciary's role in upholding constitutional values like dignity and equality.

This jurisprudence, evolving alongside societal dynamics, ensures the Constitution remains a living document. Recent landmark judgments, from LGBTQ+ rights to adultery laws, highlight the judiciary's commitment to constitutional morality over popular sentiment. Yet, navigating societal and religious intersections, as seen in the Sabarimala case, poses ongoing challenges. The court's role in reconciling evolving beliefs, evident in decisions on euthanasia and abortion rights, underscores its pivotal position in shaping India's moral landscape. As we navigate these complexities, constitutional morality stands as a beacon, guiding our journey towards a more just and equitable society.

Sunandna Sharma | Hisar

**HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS** Madam — Apropos the news article, "Unravelling the Roy family's legacy", published on April 15, this is my response. The political landscape for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections reveals not just contemporary rivalries but also echoes of Bengal's tumultuous past. Amidst accusations and justifications, the saga of Siraj-ud-Daula's downfall resurfaces, highlighting the intricate web of alliances and betrayals that shaped the region's destiny. Delving into history, one confronts the pivotal Battle of Plassey in 1757, altering the trajectory of Bengal's identity. The

### **Revitalising railway realms**



Apropos the news article, "Desolate railway tracks transformed into a verdant oasis", published on April 15. this is my response. The transformation of a once-ignored stretch of land into the lush oasis of 'Evergreen Nursery' is a testament to human innovation and environmental stewardship. This verdant haven, nestled amidst the bustling railway tracks, not only rejuvenates the landscape but also symbolises a paradigm shift in urban con-

clash between Bengali and Islamic cultures, symbolised by Siraj-ud-Daula's reign, echoes through the ages. The triumph of Clive and the merchant princes ushered in a new era, fostering a renaissance that birthed luminaries like Tagore

The revelation from Atlee underscores the lesser-known role of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, a beacon of resistance against British rule. His legacy, intertwined with Bengal's ethos, stands as a testament to the region's indomitable spirit, shaping not just India's past, but its future. In this electoral battleground, as parties jostle for power, Bengal's historical tapestry reminds us of the enduring struggle for identity and freedom.

Roshan Kumar | Bhubaneswar

### **CAFFEINE CHRONICLES**

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Exploring the world of single origins, flat whites and beyond!", published on April 14, this is my response. Melbourne's caffeinated landscape is a saga of passion, history and innovation, woven into the

servation efforts. The metamorphosis from a crime-ridden wasteland to a vibrant botanical sanctuary reflects the power of collaborative endeavours between public and private entities. The partnership between the Delhi Division of Northern Railway and Evergreen Nursery exemplifies a shared commitment to sustainable development and beautification.

Moreover, the altruistic purpose behind the nursery, where plants are nurtured not for profit but for communal enrichment, resonates deeply with the ethos of community service. It serves as a poignant reminder of the interconnectedness between humanity and nature, where each leaf and bloom embodies a story of renewal and hope. As we traverse through these green corridors, we are reminded not only of the beauty of flora but also of our collective responsibility to safeguard our planet for future generations.

Neeraj Shah | Delhi

city's very fabric. With an abundance of cafes that surpass a thousand, each sip of espresso unveils a narrative steeped in Italian heritage and modern-day craftsmanship. Monique Bayer's guided tour offers a portal into this world, where every alleyway hides a treasure trove of coffee delights. From the legacy of Pellegrini Espresso Bar to the emergence of artisanal roasters like Industry Beans, Melbourne's coffee evolution is palpable. Monique's curated journey delves deep, introducing nuances like filter coffee and cold drip variants, enriching the sensorv experience.

In this city, coffee isn't just a beverage; it's a cultural phenomenon. From paleofriendly butter coffee to innovative frozen concoctions, Melbourne's cafes cater to every palate. With terms like cupping and AeroPress echoing through the streets, it's evident that coffee here is more than a drink—it's a way of life.

Kundan JM | Bhopal

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### **FIRST COLUMN**

### **STRIVE TO DEVELOP FAITH**

The pursuit of guidance from the Divine holds the promise of revelation



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

et me start with why we often don't endeavour to develop faith, as is commonly observed. Lord Krishna has aptly stated, "Out of thousands of men, hardly anyone strives for perfection" (The Bhagavad Gita 7.3). The essence of a perfect life lies in becoming a devotee of God, for He is the ultimate controller of the entire world.

There exist numerous reasons, or perhaps excuses, for this reluctance. Beginning with a straightforward argument: who has truly seen Him? If God holds such significance, why does He not present Himself so that we may behold Him? In this age of the internet, one might argue that He could easily make His presence felt. Some may argue that God is unmanifest, yet we lack any tangible experience of such an entity. If God is indeed a reality without whom we cannot thrive, then why do some ideologies, such as communism, appear to manage so well, especially in certain countries? Why is there pervasive poverty and suffering in the world? If God possesses omnipotence as described, why does He not rectify these injustices? We encounter many ascetics on the streets, leading some to conclude that only those who have failed turn to God, while they believe they can manage without divine intervention. Perhaps they might consider turning to God later if the need arises. These excuses, however, varied, ultimately lead us to a sense of emptiness.

In reality, it is often our ego that serves as the primary hindrance. We struggle to accept an entity so vast and incomprehensible, leaving us feeling insignificant and powerless. Another significant barrier lies in the acceptance of spiritual practices, which may seem unfamiliar and daunting. Yet, all these excuses only serve to deepen our sense of emptiness. Why not begin by praying for what we deeply desire? Even a child can pray and often does. If our prayers are sincere and aligned with righteousness, God may consider them.



The next step involves seeking guidance from God, who is eager to provide it. Given His omniscience, God communicates in various ways; to advanced devotees, He may impart intuition or even speak directly, while beginners may receive guidance through mediums such as family members, friends, or even seemingly random occurrences like messages in newspapers. It should be evident that following God's instructions is a wise course of action, vielding manifold benefits. Let us now explore some basic practices that are both accessible and highly rewarding. My personal favourite is 'darshan' - simply gazing upon an image or idol

Observing God's benevolent countenance, we can feel His attraction towards us. However, it's crucial to remember that adherence to righteousness, or 'dharma,' is of paramount importance to God. While deity forms or images serve as focal points, God's presence transcends physical limitations, permeating all existence. Another simple yet profound practice is offering 'namaskar' — paying homage to God with folded hands. This act serves to humble our egos, which often obstruct our connection with the divine and hinder our interactions with fellow beings. As we persist in these practices, we will gradually experience God's responses, not necessarily through miraculous events, but through subtle yet discernible manifestations. We can liken this experience to connecting to the internet—where there is a network, there is connectivity. Similarly, God, omnipresent as He is, can be experienced in various ways. God's subtle presence is accessible to all. He eagerly awaits our approach, desiring nothing but our well-being. Let us cast aside our doubts and excuses and wholeheartedly commit to forging a deeper connection with

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

# Iran strikes threaten regional stability



**NILANTHA ILANGAMUWA** 

The assault, though primarily symbolic in nature, highlights the mounting tensions in the region. However, the US endeavours to uphold a balance of power



t a time when people in several countries in South Asia and East Asia were celebrating the traditional new year, Iran, the second-largest country in West Asia, launched a series of missile attacks targeting its arch-enemy Israel. Jordan and Saudi Arabia supported Israel and intercepted most of the missiles fired by Iran. The attack appears to be symbolic, aimed at boosting the morale of organisations such as Hamas in Palestine, Yemen's Houthis, pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon, all of which have declared war against Israel in West Asia, as well as countries like Lebanon and Syria, rather than engaging in an official war against Israel. This attack serves as a morale booster. Shortly after the attack, Hamas rejected the Cairo agreement, a result of discussions between top intelligence agencies, the CIA and Mossad, together with other stakeholders mediated by Egypt, concerning Israeli

However, many encouraged Israel to respond quickly. However, United States President Biden stated that he would not yield if attacks were made against Iran. It is seen as a matter of prior agreement by both parties rather than a threat. The truth is, that the US administration cannot afford to assist Israel in another war at this point. At a time when the country's reputation has been tarnished at the international level and when Biden's political power is extremely weak if the United States makes such an unwise decision, it will have to face unprecedented consequences shortly, similar to how the United States has caused irreversible damage to world peace and order. Elon Musk's recent statement that the possibility of the United States becoming the victim of a September 11-style surprise attack is very high seems to hold deep truth. The consequences of these conflicts may not only affect Washington or New York but also American military bases around the world. The likelihood of an attack similar to the one on Pearl Harbor is high. The United States cannot always continue to create military conflicts in other countries for its war trade and keep its superpower status as it desires. The superpower, as history has proven, will inevitably crumble at any



THE ATTACK BY IRAN WAS RETALIATION. IT IS A RESPONSE TO THE ISRAELI THE IRANIAN CONSULATE IN SYRIA, A GROSS VIOLATION OF THE VIENNA CONVENTION. WHICH CLAIMED THE LIVES OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTIONARY GUARD CORPS

given point. Compared to its lifespan, the United States is a relatively young superpower in the grand scheme of civilisation, considering

the collapse of great empires.
Throughout history, mighty empires have risen and fallen, leaving lasting legacies. The Roman Empire. spanning from 27 BC to AD 476, peaked in the 2nd century AD, but internal strife, economic instability and external invasions, such as by the Visigoths and Vandals, led to its fragmentation. The Ottoman Empire, dominant in the 16th and 17th centuries across the Eastern Mediterranean, North Africa and Western Asia, declined due to internal conflicts and challenges from European powers like Russia and Austria. The Mongol Empire, founded by Genghis Khan in the 13th century, stretched from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean, but internal divisions and the death of key leaders led to its fragmentation by the late 14th century. Lastly, the British Empire, spanning from the 16th to the 20th century, faced economic strain and nationalist movements, ultimately dissolving due to internal weakness and external pressures. These collapses, driven by political, military and socioeconomic factors, reshaped the world, underscoring the transient nature of power and the enduring impact of history on modern geopolitics and

However, the deep state of the United States has certainly studied and comprehended global history better than many other countries. That is why the basic strategy of the United States has been to create new wars while talking about peace and turn those wars into long-term tragedies to keep uncertainties. This strategy can weaken its rivals and maintain its power continuously. These issues become clear when many conflicts are understood in their political and economic context. The ideology that Israel has continnational and international forums is not a single opinion or rivalry of Israel, but it is a long-term propagation through carefully selected facts and objectives together with the United States. On one hand, the West fuels wars against hostile countries. On the other, it manufactures internal crises in those nations by imposing international sanctions. This remains a persistent behaviour

of the West. The thing that should not be forgotten here is that the attack by Iran was a retaliation. It is a response to the Israeli provocation on the Iranian consulate in Syria, a gross violation of the Vienna Convention, which claimed the lives of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps. Iran's calculation, as some analysts pointed out, was that if it did not respond, Israel would seek to push back and degrade the axis of resis-tance across the region. However, it is unreasonable to think that Israel miscalculated its attack on the Iranian diplomatic site in Syria as Israel continues to keep deep intelligence penetration of IRGC and Hezbollah networks in Syria, making those networks highly vulnerable to Israeli attacks. Iran must uphold its reputation among its allies and address internal political crises effectively. Therefore, prioritising attacks conducted through proxies is advisable, while occasional skirmishes from both sides should be acknowledged.

Moreover, it is very important to consider the government's domestic policies and openly mention Iran's inherent weaknesses amid escalating tensions among some politicians and officials in Iran. They highlighted the many crises facing the Iranian government and warned against engaging in direct conflict with Israel without first addressing these pressing issues, which they argued would only worsen the situation. They emphasised the impor-

uously pursued against Iran in tance of prudent governance and effective crisis management and the need to mitigate ongoing crises to prevent system collapse.

Economic challenges and psychological instability in society are urgent issues that need to be addressed as they are now breeding grounds for enemy penetrations. They advocated the adoption of conciliatory policies to reduce tensions and promote harmony and empathy in Iranian society. The regime's repressive domestic policies, particularly regarding the mandatory hijab enforcement campaign, have fuelled widespread discontent and delegitimised the government. Recent anti-Israel actions, like seizing a cargo ship, have caused Iran's markets to react negatively. The national currency's value has hit a record low. President Ibrahim Raisi faces criticism and calls for a cabinet reshuffle to address economic hardships affecting many Iranians.

Over the years, Israel has demonstrated its capability in targeting Iranian nuclear scientists and infrastructure. Notably, the Stuxnet cyber-attack, jointly orchestrated by the United States and Israel, delivered a significant blow to Iran's nuclear ambitions. This proves that national interests are never compromised for domestic political issues, except for former President Trump. Stuxnet marked a pivotal moment, ushering in the era of cyberwarfare, where lines of code wielded the power to reshape geopolitical landscapes. Its impact reverberated globally, highlighting the evolving nature of warfare and the formidable role of technology in modern conflicts. In this situation, Iran cannot continue to be silent. It must prove its power numerically. Therefore, the recent attack was more a reputational-preservation move than a declaration of war.

(The writer is a Sri Lankan Journalist. Views are personal)

## Uttarakhand women: Agents of change in State politics

From leading environmental crusades to confronting social injustices head-on, they embody the spirit of the region, epitomising resilience and fortitude

omen in Uttarakhand are renowned for their extraordinary resilience and hard work, characteristics deeply rooted in their Himalayan heritage. Despite grappling with the challenges of life in this rugged terrain, Uttarakhand's women have consistently been at the forefront of social and environmental movements, epito-mized by figures like Gaura Devi of the Chipko movement and Tinchari Mai (Deepa Nautiyal), who spearheaded the Anti-Liquor movement. These women have fearlessly confronted injustice, embodying the spirit of Uttarakhand. This article seeks to underscore the political engagement of women in Uttarakhand, shedding light on their role in bol-



SHEETAL ARYA

stering democracy. The political participation of women in Uttarakhand can be delineated into two primary spheres: first, women assuming leadership positions within the political domain and second, women exercising their electoral rights as voters. Since the inception of the state, the representation of women in the legislative assembly has seen a significant

albeit gradual rise. From four tion in the parliamentary arena women members in the first assembly, the number has increased by 50% in the 2022 elections, marking a commendable stride. However, despite this progress, women remain a minority in the assembly, constituting a mere fraction of the total members. Presently, the legislative assembly boasts eight women members, including three Dalit women, the highest number in Uttarakhand's history. Notably, Smt. Ritu Khanduri serves as the speaker, while Smt. Rekha Arya is the lone female minister in the cabinet. Despite these advancements, the disparity in political representation persists, underscoring the challenges women face in accessing political power. While women's representa-

remains scant, with only two female MPs out of eight, the discrepancy between the female population (49%) and their political representation is stark. Despite their active participation in grassroots movements, women's presence in formal politics remains disproportionately low. . Women in Uttarakhand con-

stitute the backbone of the rural economy, grappling with issues like migration, environmental degradation and inadequate healthcare services. However, societal norms and economic constraints often deter their political involvement. Moreover, political parties' reluctance to field female candidates exacerbates this disparity. For instance, in the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha



elections, the Congress has not nominated any female candidates, while the BJP has nominated only one, Mrs. Mala Rajya Laxmi Shah.

Nevertheless, women voters in Uttarakhand have emerged as a formidable force, outnumbering men in recent elections. Their increasing political awareness, fueled by issues directly affecting their lives,

coupled with higher literacy rates and government initiatives like reservation quotas, has galvanized their participation. Policies such as 30% horizontal reservation in government jobs and 50% reservation in Panchayats have bolstered women's political agency, enabling them to assume leadership roles at the grassroots level.

In the run-up to the 2024 Parliamentary elections, both major parties are vying for women's support, employing diverse strategies. Congress has pledged financial assistance and job reservations for women, emphasizing women's security and Conversely, the BJP highlights its implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) as

a milestone for women's rights,

coupled with grassroots mobilization efforts.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal among women voters, attributed to his grassroots connect and initiatives like the Women Reservation Bill, further consolidates BJP's electoral prospects. The "Modi factor" has resonated with Uttarakhand's women, contributing to BJP's continued

dominance since 2017. To bolster women's empowerment, the state government has allocated a substantial gender budget for 2024-25, earmarked for bridging gender disparities and promoting equality. Additionally, measures like deploying women employees to oversee polling booths and facilitating pregnant women's access to voting booths underscore the commitment to

inclusive governance. In conclusion, Dr Ambedkar's assertion that a community's progress is contingent upon women's advancement holds for Uttarakhand. While women have historically been instrumental in social movements, their underrepresentation in formal politics remains a pressing concern. Addressing these challenges is imperative for ensuring women's political representation and expediting the state's development. As Uttarakhand gears up for the upcoming Chunav Kauthig, with women comprising 48.1 per cent of the electorate, their increased participation promises to be a harbinger of democracy's triumph in the

> (The writer is a research scholar; views are personal)

# **INDIA Block exploited** voters in JK, says Shah

**MOHIT KANDHARI** ■ JAMMU

T aunching a scathing attack on the constituents of the INDI Alliance in Jammu and Kashmir, Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday appealed to the people in Kashmir not to vote for the Congress, National Conference and PDP, saying they have been exploited.

Alleging that these three parties did not allow democracy to grow in Jammu and Kashmir... on the pretext of security, Shah said they only exploited our Kashmiri youth and handed over guns to them.

Addressing a Jan Ashirwad Maha Rally in Jammu in support of sitting MP Jugal Kishore Sharma Amit Shah said, "I want to ask (National Conference president) Farooq Abdullah and the PDP as to under whose rule most of the fake encounters took place? And who fired on the children of Kashmir, and handed over guns to them? "These are the three parties responsible for all this. Prime Minister Narendra Modi restored peace in Jammu and Kashmir and paved the way for the region's develop-ment. J and K slipped into backwardness due to terrorism and agitations for the past 70 years. Modi facilitated the end



of terrorism, stone-pelting, and separatism and paved the way for development in J&K," he

Reaching out to the Kashmirbased common voter Union Home Minister said the BJP believes in winning the hearts of people which will ultimately lead to the 'lotus', his party's poll symbol, blooming across

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the BJP's rival parties have asked people not to vote for the BJP and its "proxies", claiming the ruling party was more interested in the land of Kashmir than the welfare of its people.

I want to clear the misgivings being created among Kashmiri youths that the BJP wants to take the land of Kashmir by force. The BJP is not among those who occupy land by force but believes in winning

the hearts of people". Shah said the BJP is in no haste as it knows that the party's symbol 'lotus' will bloom on its own in the Valley with the love of

Meanwhile, Congress leader Sachin Pilot also addressed an election rally in Kathua in favor of Choudhary Lal Singh of the Congress party.
Pilot accused the BJP govern-

ment of playing "religious politics to divert attention from its failures" on the development Election front."The Commission is watching as a mute spectator. In connection with the Chandigarh mayoral elections, we had to move to the Supreme Court for justice, and we got it. They sealed the accounts of the Congress, put elected chief ministers in jail, and tried to muzzle the oppo-sition," Pilot said while addressCurtains down on campaigns in Udhampur

**MOHIT KANDHARI** ■ JAMMU

 $T^{\text{he curtains came down on}}_{\text{the two-week-long high-decibel campaign by leaders of}}$ political parties to woo the electorate in Udhampur-Doda Lok Sabha constituency on Tuesday. Over 16.23 lakh voters will decide the fate of 12 candidates in Udhampur-Doda con-

stituency on April 19. The Lok Sabha seat is set to witness a three-cornered contest even though the battle lines are drawn between Rajput candidates of the BJP and the Congress. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself spearheaded the campaign in support of the party candidate Dr Jitendra Singh, who is seeking a third consecutive term from the electorate. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh also addressed public rallies to bolster Dr Jitendra Singh's campaign as some of his public meetings witnessed thin attendance during the campaign trail in some of the pockets of Kathua and Udhampur districts.

On the other hand, Choudhary Lal Singh of the Congress party is relying heavily on his charisma and support of the alliance partners including the

PDP in the Chenab Valley region to give a tough fight to the sitting BJP MP. His election meetings were attended by a sizable number of people and were more vibrant.

Former Rajasthan Deputy CM Sachin Pilot and star campaigner Raj Babbar also campaigned in support of Choudhary Lal Singh. The prestigious Lok Sabha seat is set to witness a triangular contest with the entry of GM Saroori of the Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP) in the fray. Former CM Omar Abdullah also took out a roadshow and addressed a series of election meetings in his support across the three districts of the Chenab Valley region to counter the impact of the DPAP campaign strategy aimed at dividing the secular vote to help the BJP candidate gain a sizable margin. Saroori may not be in a position to win, but he may prove to be a spoilsport for his erstwhile party. Both BJP and Congress candidates, presently in the fray, have won it (Udhampur) twice and that too for consecutive (two) terms. Lal Singh bagged the LS seat in 2004 and 2009 while Dr Singh wrested it from Congress in 2014 and 2019.

### Uddhav slams Modi for Congress Muslim League imprint remark

TN RAGHUNATHA MUMBAI

Maharashtra's former chief minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray on Tuesday came down heavily on Prime Minister Narendra Modi for linking the Congress with the Muslim League (ML), charging that the BJP had a "better experience" with the ML than any other political party. Speaking at a news conference

Speaking at a news conference called to launch a song for the party's new symbol Mashaal (Flaming Torch), Uddhav dismissed Modi's criticism that the Congress' Lok Sabha poll manifesto carried the imprint of Muslim League and said: "The BJP has a better experience working with the Muslim League. During the pre-Independence i.e between 1940-42, Jan Sangh founder Shyamaprasad Mukherjee was against going with the Congress that was fighting for the country's freedom. That's why he teamed up with Muslim League in West Bengal and formed a government".

How can we forget RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat visited Masjid. Even Narendra Modi visited Masjid," the Sena (UBT) chief

It may be recalled that Prime

Minister Narendra Modi, while reiterating his charge that the Congress' manifesto carried the imprint of Muslim League, had said in an election rally at Chandrapur in eastern Maharashtra on April 8: ""The Congress is indulging in the politics of divide and rule... Its manifesto carries the language mantesto carries the language of the Muslim League. Their MPs are talking about another partition of India. People from the INDI alliance are threatening to separate South India. The DMK party in the INDI alliance talks about and INDI alliance talks about ending Sanatan by calling it `dengue malaria' ".

Heaping praise on the Congress Lok Sabha poll manifesto, Uddhav said: "The Congress has come out with a good" and an "all-inclusive poll manifesto. The manifesto has a lot of good things for Maharashtra. If need be, we will include more Maharashtracentric issues in the manifesto". Dwelling upon his party's new manifesto, the Sena (UBT) president said: "Mashaal is not ust a poll symbol. The anger within the people against the Modi government will burn like Mashal and it will reduce this dictatorial and 'jumalebaazi' Modi government to ashes in the Lok Sabha polls".

BJP to EC: Stop Congress Ghar Ghar initiative

PNS NEW DELHI

The BJP on Tuesday slammed the Congress' "Ghar Ghar Guarantee" outreach to people as a corrupt practice amounting to bribery and urged the Election Commission to stop the initiative.

The BJP said the initiative was

unveiled on April 3 by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and its workers are distributing "guarantee cards" to households, presenting them application papers for accessing the party's promised benefits. "To further confound the wrong, the cards bear the promissory signatures of prominent leaders of the Indian National Congress, namely Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge, as an official endorsement," stated the BJP's communication to the poll panel. The ruling party claimed that such an initiative is akin to manipulation of voters' trust and misrepresentation of guarantee cards as legitimate instruments for accessing promised "freebies, largesse and utopian promises".

Allowing such practices openly contradicts the principl es of free and fair elections, and sets a precedent where only registered political supporters may be entitled to government schemes, and not the remaining ones," it said.

## Firing at Salman house: Cops arrest two from Bhuj

T N RAGHUNATHA N MUMBAI

ess than 48 hours after they Less than 40 nours are. super star Salman Khan's Bandra residence, the Mumbai police crime branch sleuths arrested two shooters from Bhuj town in Gujarat and brought them to Mumbai, where they were remanded by a city court to police custody till

Identifying the two arrested shooters as Vicky Gupta (24) and Sagar Shrijogendra Pal Police Joint Commissioner (Crime) Lakhmi Gautam said that acting on the technical inputs, a team of Mumbai police along with the Gujarat police – traced the two accused to Bhui town in Gujarat where were

After their arrest on Monday, the two accused were flown to Mumbai in an aircraft on After the incident, the accused before a city court which sent them to police custody for nine days. Two motorcycleborne miscreants, who were covering their faces with helmets, had opened five rounds of fire outside his Bandra (west) residence "Galaxy Apartment" in north-west Mumbai at 4.50 am on Sunday, before speeding the CCTV cameras located in away immediately after the shoot-out.

Gautam said: "After the firing incident, incarcerated gang-ster Lawrence Bishnoi's younger brother Anmol Bishnoi had in a Facebook post claimed responsibility for the firing near Salman Khan's home. During the investigations, we found that the two accused had fled to Gujarat. Immediately thereafter, we sent two teams to Gujarat".

While on the trail of the two accused, we found the location of them in Bhuj. Since we learnt that the two accused were in possession of dangerous weapons, we did not want to take chances. Together with the Bhuj police, we arrested the two accused," Gautam said. Both Gupta and Pal belong to Champaran in Bihar. "Ahead of the firing incident, the accused Salman Khan's house at least thrice," Gautam said.

Tuesday morning. Later in the abandoned the motorbike and day, the two were produced they headed to Bandra Railway Station.

"They first took a train to Santa Cruz, from where they went to Mira Road by an autorickshaw. Later on, they proceeded to Surat from where they took a train to Bhuj," a senior police officer said. Having scanned the footage of

northern suburbs of the city, the investigators made the Talking to media persons here, most of the tech-intel and

inputs received from their informers to zero in on the two accused in a temple at Bhuj. The city police had formed 15 teams to crack the case. One of the teams managed to track the motorcycle and its registration to the neighbouring Raigad district. The Navi Mumbai Police detained the two persons who claimed they had sold it to the two shooters The investigations have revealed that Gupta and Pal had rented a flat at Navi Mumbai and lived there for 25 days and did reconnaissance of Salman's residence thrice, before committing the shootout outside Khan's residence early on Sunday morning. In the initial questioning, Gupta and Pal have reportedly confessed to the firing. The

from the two accused. In a related development, Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde visited Khans' Bandra (west) residence "Galaxy Apartment" in northwest Mumbai and assured the Khan family that there was

and other items of the crime

nothing to fear. "The Maharashtra government and the police are responsible for your safety and security. The police will investigate the incident thoroughly and ensure that the culprits are punished," the Chief Minister told the Khan family.

### CM Pinarayi refutes Modi charges of financial swindling in State

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Aday after Prime Minister Narendra Modi unleashed an attack on the Kerala CPI(M) for the alleged pay-off by a sand mining company and the swindling of money from the cooperative banks in the State, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan is on a fire fighting mission. Prime Minister Narendra Modi

while election rallies at Thrissur and Kattakkada on Monday had said that poor people's hard earned money worth one lakh crore rupees which was invested in the cooperative banks in Kerala has been embezzled by the CPI(M) leaders. "It was the Centre which State cautioned the Government about this massive misappropriation of public money following the Kerala's allegation that the State's coffers were empty," the Prime Minister had said.

The CPI(M) leadership, shocked over the charge, remained incommunicado till Tuesday afternoon about the charge levelled by Modi. By afternoon, while addressing a media meet, Chief Minister Vijayan claimed that there was no financial misappropriation of any kind. "If the cooperative banks report about any loss, the State Government would take up the issue and the money would be returned to the



furious when reporters asked him about the Enforcement Directorate registering a case against the monthly pay-off by a Kochi based sand mining company. The chief minister shouted down the media reporters who raised the issue. heleaguered Marxists roped in the services of former party secretary Prakash Karat who questioned the intervention of the ED in this case. "The ED has no authority to investigate issues associated with the payment made by a company to another.

The ED could investigate only cases linked to Prevention of Money Laundering Act," said Karat while speaking to reporters Thiruvananthapuram. The

Marxist leader and his spouse Brinda Karat would travel across Kerala to convince the electorate that there was no

pay-off or misappropriation of money from the cooperative Banks. The ED's charge is that the a private sand mining company paid hundreds of crores to persons in the government inclusing the close relations of the chief minister. On Monday, the ED had summoned the managers of the company for

There were media reports that Veena Mohammed Riyaz, daughter of chief minister Vijayan has been listed as a beneficiary of the monthly pay-off by the sand mining company. Hundreds of crores rupees have been paid by the sand mining company to Exalogic Solutions, the Bangalore based company owned by Veena Riyaz. Neither Vijayan nor the CPI(M) have been able to give a convincing reply to the question what kind of services were rendered by a software company to a sand mining company.

### College student killed, two injured as car falls 50 ft off flyover in Gurugram PTI ■ GURUGRAM According to the police, the

Acollege student was killed while his two friends were severely injured here after a car they were travelling in hit a flyover divider and fell 50 feet below on the Delhi-Gurugram expressway, police said on Tuesday.

The car got badly damaged in the accident and the injured are being treated in the Medanta Hospital here, they added.

accident took place around 10 pm on Monday when the three youths were going from Delhi towards Jaipur in a car. As soon as the car reached the

flyover of Jharsa Chowk, Rishabh Guleria, who was in the driver's seat, lost control of the vehicle. The car jumped over the four-feet high divider of the flyover and fell 50 feet below into an empty space, the

## Aditya tops UPSC...

From Page 1

Among the successful candidates, 347 are from the general category, 115 from economically weaker sections, 303 from from Scheduled Tribes.

Overall, nationwide as many as 14,624 candidates qualified for appearance in the written (Main) examination, which was held in September, 2023.

"A total of 2,855 candidates qualified for the personality test of the examination," the commission said.

In Delhi, 31 aspirants of Jamia Millia Islamia's Government funded Residential Coaching Academy (RCA) cleared the exams. Professor Eqbal Hussain, Officiating Vice Chancellor, Jamia said thirty one candidates who received coaching and training in the RCA cleared the exams, an increase of eight from last year. Eleven out of 31 selected candidates are girls,

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin, Om Birla Lok Sabha Speaker, Dr Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State for Science & Technology were among many others who congratulated the candidates, underscoring the significance of their achievement and responsibility towards serving the country.

# Congress leads in complaints to EC

Data showed the other political parties have filed 90 complaints, out of which action has been taken in 80. Notably, a total of 2,68,080 complaints have been filed on c vigil, the commission's portal on violations for citizens.

Of these, action has been taken in 2,67,762 cases and 92 per cent were resolved in less than 100 minutes. Several political parties from the INDIA Bloc had approached the poll panel, accusing the Government of using probe agencies to target their leaders.

Sharing details of action taken by the poll body, the The EC said it has taken Commission said suo motu removal of DGP West Bengal as he was barred from election duty in previous elections also.

"Suo motu transfer of noncadre officers who were posted at leadership positions as Magistrate (DM) and Superintendent of Police (SP) in four States namely Gujarat, Punjab, Odisha and West Bengal.

Suo motu transfer of officers mismatch

Assam because of their kinship familial association with the elected political representatives," it The EC said on complaint

from the Congress and the AAP, directive to MeitY to transmission of Government of India's Viksit Bharat Message on WhatsApp announcement of elections.

'On complaint from DMK, FIR was registered against a Minister Shobha Karandlaje for her unverified allegations on Rameshwar Blast Café," it

action on a complaint from the Congress and issued directions to the Cabinet Secretary for compliance of its instructions on removing defacement from Government/public

premises including eadership hoardings, photos, and District messages from DMRC trains and petrol pump, highways, etc.

It further stated that directions were issued to Central Board of Direct Taxes for verification of any in

Minister Chandrasekharan in his affidavit.

During the one-month period, 16 delegations from political parties met the commission to lodge their complaints on alleged violations of Model code and related matters. Many delegations met in the

States at the level of Chief Electoral Officer. It also stated that on the complaint of TMC, notice was issued to BJP leader Ghosh

objectionable and disrespectful remarks towards Mamata Banerjee. Similarly on the complaint of BJP, notice was issued to Srinate for Supriya objectionable remarks towards BJP candidate Kangana Ranaut and Hema

Malini respectively. An FIR was lodged against remarks made by Anitha R Radhakrishnan, DMK leader towards Narendra Modi.

The poll body asserted that while it remains committed to protecting level playing field and campaign entitlement of parties and assets candidates, it has not found

that could overlap or overrun the legal judicial process. In a statement, the poll body

said it was guided by constitutional wisdom when presented with situations" involving political persons which have under been consideration and orders of the courts based on criminal investigations.

"The guidelines plugging gap in law has been issued, on a complaint from AAP anonymous advertisements in hoardings cum billboards in Delhi Municipal Commission area without giving names of publisher.

Giving wider amplitude to the meaning of 'pamphlet and poster' in the existing by including law hoardings, guidelines have been issued to Chief Secretaries of all States and UTs mandating the clear identification of printer and publisher on printed election-related material including hoardings, ensuring accountability transparency in c a m p a i g n

## Modi, Mamata faceoff in...

Mamata's statement came hours after bystanders cried "Chor! chor (thief! thief)" at her cavalcade." She said, "They were calling me thief ... had it not been election times I would have pulled out their tongues who call me thief." The BJP had sent 300 Central teams to enquire into alleged MNREGA and other frauds but failed to find any, she said.

### Jailed Kejriwal, Sisodia and Jain: AAP's Star...

Sunita, a former Indian Revenue Services (IRS) officer, gained attention with her digital briefings, where she read out messages from Kejriwal, who was arrested the Enforcement Directorate on March 21 in connection with the Delhi liquor policy money

laundering case. She has addressed three digital briefings so far in which she read out Kejriwal's messages from ED custody and Tihar jail, where he is currently lodged. She also attended the Opposition INDIA Bloc's 'Loktantra Bachao' rally on March 31 and read out her

husband's letter. "Sunita Kejriwal is likely to visit Jharkhand to campaign for INDIA Bloc ally Jharkhand Mukti Morcha," an AAP source said.

JMM chief and former Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren was arrested by the ED in January in a communications," it said. | money laundering case. His 19.

wife Kalpana Soren had met Sunita Kejriwal when she had come to Delhi to attend the March 31 INDIA Bloc

Interestingly, the name of

Swati Maliwal was not in the list of star campaigners, raising eyebrows that all is not well between Maliwal and Kejriwal since his arrest. Kejriwal, also listed as a star campaigner, is currently in judicial custody in Tihar jail and has been running the Government from prison. Currently in judicial custody at Tihar jail, his absence reverberates through the AAP's strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha upcoming Lok Sabha elections in Gujarat. His custody has been extended until April 23. Sisodia and Jain are also lodged in Tihar jail in connection with

money laundering case.
The Lok Sabha elections in Gujarat will be held in a single phase on May 7 and the last date for filing nomination papers is April

Earlier, the AAP launched a mega campaign called Jail ka Jawab vote se Sankalp Sabha. AAP convener Gopal Rai said the campaign will continue till May 23. Under this, all party MLAs will hold meetings in areas falling under the national capital's four constituencies East, South, West and New

"I will kickstart the campaign tomorrow (April 16) from the Vishwas Nagar Assembly constituency, and hold 40 sabhas... till April

Similarly, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh will begin the sabhas from Ambedkar Nagar, which will continue till May 23... All leaders will hold such sabhas and take a pledge against the arrest of Kejriwal," Rai said.

He said, "The schedule for the sabhas as well as the MLAs will be released soon... Our target is to get 1 lakh people to take a pledge in the 'Jail ka jawab vote se sankalp sabha.

# workers turn into political campaigners

From Page 1

However, civil society organisations and activists have called for enhanced oversight and accountability to prevent the exploitation of MGNREGA workers and uphold the integrity of the employment guarantee scheme.

As the election season progresses, the debate surrounding the utilisation of MGNREGA workers for election campaigns is persist, expected underscoring the intricate dynamics between politics, labour, and rural schemes in India.

# Lotus will bloom on its own in Kashmir: Shah

National Conference and PDP, alleging that most fake encounters and incidents of

their rule.
Rejecting rival parties' charge the BJP was more interested in Kashmir's land than the welfare of its people, he said the BJP is in no haste and believes in winning the hearts of people as it will ultimately lead to the 'lotus', the party's poll symbol, blooming across the Valley.

Addressing an election rally

Addressing an election rally here, Shah also said that assembly polls in J-K will be held according to the dateline set by the Supreme Court (September 30). "Nobody should have any doubt on this," the minister said. Shah alleged that the

National Congress, Conference and PDP exploited the youths of

Inese three parties did not allow democracy to grow in Shah on Tuesday slammed the Congress, nal Conference and slammatic land the congress of Kashmiri youths were exploited. I want to ask Conference (National encounters and incidents of firing on youths in Jammu and Kashmir occurred during their rule.

Rejecting rival parties' charge Kashmir and handed the gun

> But the BJP, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, restored peace and ensured development after the abrogation of Article 370, peace Shah said.

> to them? It is these three

parties."

"Modiji restored peace in Jammu and Kashmir. J-K slipped into backwardness due to terrorism and agitations for the past 70

years. "Modi facilitated the end of terrorism, fake encounters, stone-pelting, and Pakistansponsored strikes, paving the way for development in J-K,"

Kashmir than the welfare of its people.

'I want to clear the misgivings being created being created among Kashmiri youths that the BJP wants to take the land of Kashmir by force.

Kashmir by force.

"The BJP is not among those who occupy land by force but believes in winning the hearts of people," Shah told the rally held here in support of Jugal Kishore, who is seeking the third term from the Jammu parliamentary constituency. Shah said the BJP is in no haste as it knows that the party's symbol 'lotus' will

party's symbol 'lotus' will bloom on its own in the Valley with the love of people. He asked people in Kashmir not to vote for the Congress, National Conference and PDP, saying they have only exploited them over the past seven decades.

The Home Minister said the vote of 'lotus' is a vote for



Union Home Minister Amit Shah flashes the victory sign during a public meeting ahead of Lok Sabha elections, in Jammu, on Tuesday. BJP JK president Ravinder Raina and party candidate Jugal Kishore Sharma are also seen

government benefitting the most among all

Syama Prasad Mookerjee who

J-K was made the supreme sacrifice on this land for his slogan of 'ek desh mein do vidhan, do parts of the country. desh mein do vidhan, do "Modi fulfilled the dream of pradhan aur do nishan nahi

"The evil shadow of Article 370 is gone now and the tricolour is touching the skyline across J-K like the rest of the country," he said.

He said nobody has the power to raise pro-Pakistan slogans and now the air reverberates only with the slogan of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' in every nook and corner of J-K.

"The change happened because of Modi. The PDP was saying that nobody will raise the tricolour if Article 370 is revoked but I want to tell Mehbooba that we will be gone but the tricolour is going to stay forever and flutter with honour, pride and prestige," he

Abdullah was saying that BJP will not be able to revoke Article 370 even if Modi comes to power 10 times but "Modi did it in his second

tenure only". Shah said terrorism in J-K) is taking its last breath and the vouth who were carrying stones in their hands are now equipped with laptops and

pursuing their goals.

He said the abrogation of Article 370 also led to the restoration of rights to various sections of the society including women, Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and

who were deprived of the constitutional rights by the Congress and the National Conference.

Highlighting developmental schemes and projects undertaken by the Modi government since 2014, he said the budget which was enhanced many times was utilised by Lt Governor Manoj Sinha-led administration for

the welfare of the people.
"The Lt Governor ensured zero-tolerance corruption and also showed the door to those linked to terrorism," he said, referring to the sacking of over 50 government employees who were dismissed from service for their involvement in terror activities.

The Home Minister assured the people that the Modi government would develop border villages at par with Jammu city, take the number of tourist arrivals to three crore and encourage border tourism besides providing piped domestic gas to every

## AAP announces final list of four more candidates in Punjab

**PTI** ■ CHANDIGARH

The Aam Aadmi Party on Tuesday announced its final list of four more candidates in Punjab for the Lok Sabha polls, fielding three legislators and a turncoat.

With this announcement, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has declared its candidates for all 13 parliamentary seats in

The announcement regarding the names of candidates was made by the party's national general secretary Sandeep Pathak in a post on X.

From Jalandhar (reserve) constituency, AAP named former Akali MLA Pawan Kumar Tinu, who joined the party a few days back. Tinu will be facing Congress candidate and former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi and BJP's Sushil Rinku. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) is yet to name its candidate from Íalandhar.

constituency in the Jalandhar

lost the 2022 assembly polls to Congress nominee Sukhwinder Kotli. He had unsuccessfully contested the 2014 Lok Sabha elections.

The Jalandhar Lok Sabha seat is currently represented by Sushil Rinku, who won it on AAP ticket in the 2023 bypoll. Rinku was named the AAP candidate from the seat but he quit the party and joined the BJP.

Besides Tinu, AAP named

three party MLAs - ?Jagdeep Singh Kaka Brar from the Ferozepur Lok Sabha seat, Amansher Singh Kalsi from Gurdaspur and Ashok Parashar Pappi from the Ludhiana parliamentary seat. Brar is an MLA from Muktsar. He had defeated SAD nominee Kanwaljit Singh in the 2022 assembly polls. Brar had unsuccessfully contested the 2017 assembly polls. The Ferozepur seat is currently represented by SAD chief

Tinu, a Dalit leader, was elected as MLA from the Adampur assembly contest the Lok Sabha polls. The Congress, the BJP and district in 2012 and 2017. He SAD are yet to announce their candidates from the Ferozepur

Lok Sabha seat. AAP showed its faith in Batala MLA Kalsi by fielding him from the Gurdaspur seat, currently represented by BJP's Sunny Deol.

Kalsi became MLA from Batala by defeating Congress' Ashwani Sekhri in the 2022 assembly polls.

Kalsi is pitted against BJP candidate Dinesh Babbu and SAD's Daljit Singh Cheema.

The Congress is yet to name its candidate from the Gurdaspur From Ludhiana seat, AAP has fielded Ludhiana Central MLA

> He will face three-time MP Ravneet Singh Bittu, who is now the BJP candidate. Bittu had quit the Congress and joined the BJP. The Shiromani

Akali Dal and the Congress are yet to name their candidates from Ludhiana. AAP has already fielded five Cabinet ministers' - Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer from Sangrur, Kuldeep Dhaliwal from Amritsar, Balbir Singh

Laljit Bhullar from Khadoor It has named two turncoats -Raj Kumar Chabbewal from Hoshiarpur and Gurpreet Singh GP from Fatehgarh

from Patiala, Gurmeet Singh

Khuddian from Bathinda and

Sahib. The party has also fielded Punjabi actor Karamjit Anmol from Faridkot and state unit chief spokesperson Malvinder Singh Kang from Anandpur Sahib seat. the

### RLD joining BJP will not impact Muzaffarnagar ok Sabha elections: INDIA Bloc candidate

PTI ■ MUZAFFARNAGAR (UP)

Samajwadi Party leader Harendra Singh Malik, who is contesting the Lok Sabha election from Muzaffarnagar

election from Muzaffarnagar as INDIA bloc nominee, said the RLD aligning with the BJP will not have any poll impact in the constituency. The former Rajya Sabha member is pitted against BJP's Sanjeev Balyan, whom he described as an "accidental leader". Both Malik and Balyan belong to the influential Jat community of western Uttar Pradesh. Balyan won from Muzaffarnagar in 2014 and Muzaffarnagar in 2014 and 2019 and served as Union minister in the Narendra Modi-led government.

In the run-up to the polls, the Jayant Chaudhary-led Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD)switched sides to leave the INDIA bloc and align with

the BJP. The move left many in the BJP. The move left many in the region surprised. In the 2019 polls, Balyan had defeated Chaudhary's father and former RLD chief Ajit Singh by a close margin of around 5,000 votes.

On how he saw this political realignment, Malik said the RLD can do whatever it wishes as it does not have any candidate in Muzaffarnagar. "So that (RLD) is no factor here... The BJP will not get any benefit from this (RLD's support)," the Jat leader told PTI at his home here.

Malik recalled "political FIRs" that were lodged by Muzaffarnagar police during the 2019 elections, including one related to an attack on the convoy of Jayant Chaudhary's wife Charu Chaudhary. He said the villagers who

till date, leading to angst in the community against the BJP. "Maybe Jayant Chaudhary has protected the convoy were booked by the police and the political situation where he

cases have not been withdrawn

But the truth is that supporters aligned with the BJP, and it's a of Chaudhary Charan Singh

may align with anyone he wants to. Now even Farooq Abdullah is praising the BJP.

On the influence of farmers groups in the elections in the region, he said the farmer organisations are apolitical but have an influence which

# JJP to field Haryanvi singer from Gurugram

**GURUGRAM** 

The Jannayak Janta Party (JJP) decided to field Haryanvi Singer Rahul Yadav alias Rahul Fazilpuria from the Gurugram Lok Sabha con-

stituency. The JJP on Tuesday announced the names of five Lok Sabha poll candidates for Haryana. Recently, Rahul Fazilpuria's name came to the fore after a Gurugram Police to register a case against Fazilpuria and Bigg Boss OTT winner Elvish Yadav for allegedly using rare species of snakes and a .32 bore pistol in a music video.

The case was registered under various sections including the Cruelty to Animals Act, Wild Life Act and Gambling Act at the Badshahpur police station. The BJP has already announced Rao Inderjeet

Gurugram court ordered the Singh, Union Minister and sit- would like to put forward the Singh, the singer said he is also Lok Sabha seat for the upcoming LS polls to be scheduled on May 25.

Meanwhile, the Congress and Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) are yet to finalise their candidate's name for this seat. "I would like to thank senior leaders of the party who deemed me worthy. Being a local youth I will raise issues related to the youth. I also

would like to put forward the demand of an Ahir Regiment in the Indian Army and will also support the farmers' agitation," Fazilpuria told The Pioneer. "In the past, I have participated in a lot of social activity and if I am elected I would like to work for the peo-ple of the constituency," he

On being asked about the tough contest expected from BJP candidate Rao Inderjeet

popular across Haryana and this popularity will help him. On the FIR that was registered against him for using rare species of snakes and a .32 bore pistol in the music video, Rahul said, "In the video, nothing we used was original. We used special effects and other things during shooting. During the shooting necessary permission was taken, no one was hurt."

### JD(S) seeks EC action over alleged security lapse at meet attended by Deve Gowda

PTI ■ TUMAKURU (KARNATAKA)

The JD(S) on Tuesday approached the Election Commission over the alleged security lapse at an event presided by former Prime Minister and party patriarch H D Deve Gowda here and sought the suspension of police. sought the suspension of police officials responsible for it.

In a letter to the Returning

Officer of Tumakuru, the party said, on April 15 at Kunchitiga Samudaya Bhavana here, a leaders' meeting was conducted with due

permission from the poll panel by BJP and JD(S) under the leadership of Deve Gowda in support of V Somanna (BJP). Somanna is contesting from the Tumakuru constituency in the forthcoming Lok Sabha

polls. "Police officials who were present at the meeting venue did not take any security measures and let women supporting the Congress inside the hall. The women managed to reach the stage where Deve Gowda was present without being questioned or checked as police failed to do their job,"

the party alleged.
The JD(S) alleged that Deputy
Chief Minister and state
Congress chief D K Shivakumar and Minister Rajanna were behind the

# EVMs airlifted to four remote polling booths in Arunachal

**PTI** ■ ITANAGAR

The first batch of 40 election officials including police personnel were airlifted to four remote polling stations in Arunachal Pradesh's Kra Daadi district to conduct polling for the simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections in the northeastern state on April 19, an official said on Tuesday.

The polling officials along with Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Voter Verifiable

PTI ■ KOZHIKODE/WAYANAD (KERALA)

Senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday lashed out at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing him of helping a few rich

businessmen in the country. Gandhi also attacked Modi over the electoral

bond issue, terming it as a form of extortion where the intimidatory tactics are "much more sophisticated"

as central agencies like the CBI, ED and Income Tax Department are deployed against the targeted

"There are some people in every small town or village who extort money on the streets by threatening physical

harm. In malayalam you call this extortion 'kolla adikkal' (loot), but

Modi calls it electoral bonds. What a

common thief is doing on the streets,

the PM is doing at an international level," he alleged.

Gandhi accused the BJP-led central

government of using "sophisticated"

threaten targeted

businessmen.

tactics to

businessmen.

Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) were airlifted on Monday to the polling stations located at Pip-Sorang Circle in the remote district bordering China, the offitrict bordering China, the official said. "They were airlifted in two sorties by an MI-172 chopper operated in the state by Skyone airways," Toko Babu, officer on special duty (OSD) to the state's Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), said on Tuesday.

Airlifting of more polling teams to remote polling stations where road communication is not conducive, would be done as per requirements of respective dis-trict electoral officers (DEOs) of various districts, he said.

"The polling teams airlifted on Monday will be stationed at Tali, the ADC headquarters in the district, from where they will undertake a foot march to reach Pip-Sorang circle," Babu said. Tali assembly constituency which falls under Arunachal West Parliamentary seat, is one among the 10 assembly seats won unopposed. Jike Takku of

BIP had won the seat uncontested this time. Each polling team consists of 10 persons on an average including, a presiding officer, two polling officers, one polling attendant besides, security personnel, the official said, and added that the four polling stations in the Pip-Sorang circle include, Tedung, Pip-Sorang, Kharsang and Korapu. The OSD added that remaining

polling stations in the state, which require the polling teams to undertake a foot march, will

start leaving for their respective polling booths on April 17 from the respective district head-

quarters.
There are altogether 228 polling stations in the state out of the total 2,226, which could be reached only through foot march. Out of these, to reach 61 polling stations it requires two days of foot-march, while in seven other booths, polling officials have to march for three days to reach their respective destinations.

"In his interview, he was trying to

Later in Wayanad, Gandhi alleged that Modi "does not have the

asking people to bang steel utensils and switch on their mobile phone lights during the COVID-19

Earlier in Kodiyathur, Gandhi alleged



Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidates Shripad Naik and Pallavi Dempo on Tuesday filed their nominations for elections to the North Goa and South Goa seats respectively.
Goa Chief Minister Pramod

Sawant, who accompanied Naik and Dempo during the filing of their nominations, expressed confidence that the BJP will win both the seats in the coastal state

by huge margins.
Pallavi Dempo, the executive director of Dempo Industries, filed her nomination before the returning officer at the Mathany Saldanha complex (administrative building) at Margao in South Goa.

She was accompanied by CM Sawant, state BJP president Sadanand Shet Tanavade and

hundreds of supporters. The South Goa Lok Sabha seat is currently held by Congress' Francisco Sardinha.

Dempo is pitted against Viriato Fernandes of the Congress. North Goa MP Shripad Naik filed his papers at the collectorate in state capital Panaji in the presence of CM Sawant and Tanavade. Naik said he is getting an overwhelming response from voters and has completed one round of campaigning.
The parliamentarian is pitted

against Congress candidate Ramakant Khalap. Sawant said in Panaji that the

BJP will win both the seats in Goa. "We will win by a margin of one lakh votes in North Goa and by 60,000 votes in South Goa," he said. Sawant said Prime Minister

Narendra Modi has given various guarantees in the party's manifesto. 'The people of Goa have also

given the guarantee that they will elect both the BJP candidates," he said. The Lok Sabha polls in Goa will be held in a single phase on May 7.



CBI and Income Tax people will come, they will interrogate and at the end of it, they will say why don't you give this (their business) to Adani," the sitting Congress MP from Wayanad "At the electoral bond level, the threats are much more sophisticated. The ED, He alleged that this is how Adani got

the Mumbai airport from its previous owner. In other instances, such intimidatory tactics also led to the businessman paying the BJP in electoral bonds, he also alleged. He raised the electoral bond issue by

referring to a recent interview of

that Modi's job was also to distract people from the real issues in the country, protect the richest businessmen in India and "forgive their bank loans". Modi is helping "five or six of the biggest, richest businessmen" in India, he alleged.

pandemic.

Kozhikode district.

# Trump to return to court after Tensions rise in Aus after bishop, no jurors picked on first day

Donald Trump will return Tuesday as a judge works to find a panel of jurors who will decide whether the former president is guilty of criminal charges alleging he falsified business records to cover up a sex scandal during the 2016 campaign.

The first day of Trump's history-making hush money trial in Manhattan ended with no one yet chosen to be on the panel of 12 jurors and six alternates. Dozens of people were dismissed after saying they didn't believe they could be fair, though dozens of other prospective jurors have yet to be questioned.

It's the first of Trump's four criminal cases to go to trial and may be the only one that could reach a verdict before voters decide in November whether the presumptive Republican presidential nominee should return to the White House. It puts Trump's legal problems at the center of the closely con-tested race against President Joe Biden, with Trump painting himself as the victim of a politically motivated justice system working to deprive him of another term.

Trump has pleaded not guilty to 34 felony counts of falsifying business records as part of an alleged effort to keep salacious — and, he says, bogus stories about his sex life from emerging during his 2016 campaign. On Monday, Trump called the case brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg a "scam" and "witch hunt."

The charges center on \$130,000 in payments that Trump's company made to his then-lawyer, Michael Cohen. He paid that sum on Trump's behalf to keep porn actor Stormy Daniels from going public with her claims of a sexual encounter with Trump a decade earlier. Trump has denied the sexual encounter ever happened.

Prosecutors say the payments to Cohen were falsely logged as legal fees. Prosecutors have described it as part of a scheme



cial scandal more than two

decades ago, has been brought

against 330 people, according

to the Justice Department. The

court will consider whether it

can be used against those who

disrupted Congress' certifica-

tion of Joe Biden's 2020 presi-

dential election victory over

The former president and pre-

sumptive nominee for the 2024

Republican nomination is fac-

ing two charges in the case

brought by special counsel Jack Smith in Washington that

could be knocked out with a

favorable ruling from the

nation's highest court. Next week, the justices will hear arguments over whether Trump has "absolute immuni-

ty" from prosecution in the

case, a proposition that has so

far been rejected by two lower

The first former U.S. president

under indictment, Trump is on

trial on hush money charges in New York and also has been

charged with election interfer-

ence in Georgia and with mis-

handling classified documents

In Tuesday's case, the court is

hearing an appeal from Joseph

Fischer, a former Pennsylvania

police officer who has been

indicted on seven counts,

including obstruction, for his actions on Jan. 6, 2021, when a mob of Trump supporters stormed the Capitol in a bid to keep Biden, a Democrat, from

taking the White House.

Lawyers for Fischer argue that

the charge doesn't cover his

The obstruction charge, which carries up to 20 years behind

bars, is among the most widely used felony charges brought

in Florida.

ticularly as Trump's reputation was suffering at the time from comments he had made about women.

Trump has acknowledged reimbursing Cohen for the payment and that it was designed to stop Daniels from going public about the alleged encounter. But Trump has previously said it had nothing to do with the campaign.
Jury selection could take sev-

eral more days — or even weeks — in the heavily Democratic city where Trump grew up and catapulted to celebrity status decades before winning the White House. Only about a third of the 96 people in the first panel of potential jurors brought into the courtroom on Monday remained after the judge excused some members. More than half of the group was excused after telling the judge they could not be fair and impartial and several others were dismissed for other reasons that were not disclosed. Another group of more than 100 potential jurors sent to the courthouse Monday was not

for questioning.
Meanwhile, Supreme Court on Tuesday is taking up the first of two cases that could affect the criminal prosecution of former President Donald Trump for his efforts to overturn his election loss in 2020. Hundreds of charges stemming from the Capitol riot also are at stake.

yet brought into the courtroom

The justices are hearing arguments over the charge of obstruction of an official proto bury damaging stories Trump feared could help his opponent in the 2016 race, parceeding. That charge, stemin the massive federal prosecution following the deadly insurrection. Roughly 170 Jan. 6 defendants

have been convicted of obstructing or conspiring to obstruct the Jan. 6 joint session of Congress, including the leaders of two far-right extremist groups, the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers. A number of defendants have had their sentencings delayed until after the justices rule on the matter. Some rioters have even won early release from prison while the appeal is pending over concerns that they might end up serving longer than they should have if the Supreme Court rules against the Justice Department. That includes Kevin Seefried, a Delaware man who threatened a Black police officer with a pole attached to a Confederate battle flag as he stormed the Capitol. Seefried was sentenced last year to three years behind bars, but a judge recently ordered that he be released one year into his prison term while awaiting the Supreme Court's

ruling. The high court case focuses on whether the anti-obstruction provision of a law that was enacted in 2002 in response to the financial scandal that brought down Enron Corp. can be used against Jan. 6 defendants.

Fischer's lawyers argue that the provision was meant to close a loophole in criminal law and discourage the destruction of records in response to an investigation. Until the Capitol riot, they told the court, every criminal case using the provision had involved allegations of destroying or otherwise manipulating records.

But the administration says the other side is reading the law too narrowly, arguing it serves "as a catchall offense designed to ensure complete coverage of all forms of corrupt obstruction of an official proceeding," including Fischer's "alleged conduct in joining a violent riot to disrupt the joint session of Congress certifying the presidential election results." Smith has argued separately in the immunity case that the obstruction charges against

Trump are valid, no matter the

outcome of Fischer's case.

A teenager has been accused of wounding a Christian bishop and a priest during a church service in the second מהוא בותר בין בוא high-profile knife attack to rock Sydney in recent days, leaving communities on edge, leaders calling for calm and a besieged church urging against retaliation. The 16-year-old was overpowered by the shocked congregation at Christ the Good Shepherd Church after he allegedly stabbed Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and the Rev. Isaac Royel dur-

priest wounded in knife attack

A police forensic officer works at a crime scene at the Christ the Good Shepherd Church in suburban Wakely in western Sydney, Australia on Tuesday.

church demanding vengeance. They hurled bricks, bottles and fence boards at police, who temporarily barricaded the boy inside the church for his own safety. Many in the crowd chanted "an eye for an eye" and

"bring him out." Several people including police officers required hospital treatment following the hourslong

The church said in a statement on Tuesday it "denounced

This was an inconvenience,"

she said in a telephone inter-

view from Florida. "But in the

grand scheme of things going

on overseas, it's a minor

While individual travelers

may have been affected, oper-

ations at the airport appeared

near normal with delays of

under 15 minutes, according

to the Chicago Department of

retaliation of any kind." Police stood guard around mosques in parts of Sydney on Tuesday after reports that text messages were circulating urging the Assyrian Christian community to retaliate against Muslims.

Sydney's Lakemba Mosque, Australia's largest, has hired additional private security for the next week after receiving fire bomb threats on Monday

Police and community leaders said public anxiety had been heightened by a lone assailant's knife attack in a Sydney shopping mall on Saturday that killed five women and a male security guard who attempted to intervene. The 40-year-old assailant, Joel Cauchi, had a history of mental illness and trouble with women and a fascination with knives. He was shot dead by police.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese urged the public not to take the law into their own

### Pro-Palestinian demonstrators shut down airport, Chicaco key bridges

but barely.

inconvenience."

Aviation.

AP CHICAGO

Pro-Palestinian demonstra-tors blocked roadways in Illinois, California, New York and the Pacific Northwest on Monday, temporarily shutting down travel into some of the nation's most heavily used airports, onto the Golden Gate and Brooklyn bridges and on a busy West Coast highway.

ing a service on Monday night that was being streamed

Police have not commented on

reports that the boy's fingers

were severed by parishioners in

the Orthodox Assyrian church

in suburban Wakeley, but con-

firmed his hand injuries were

Video of the attack spread

quickly on social media and an

angry mob converged on the

online.

'severe."

In Chicago, protesters linked arms and blocked lanes of Interstate 190 leading into O'Hare International Airport around 7 am in a demonstration they said was part of a global "economic blockade to free Palestine," according to Rifqa Falaneh, one of the organizers. Traffic in the San Francisco

Bay Area was snarled for hours as demonstrators shut down all vehicle, pedestrian and bike traffic on the Golden Gate Bridge and chained themselves to 55-gallon drums filled with cement

across Interstate 880 in Oakland. Protesters marching into Brooklyn blocked Manhattan-bound traffic on the Brooklyn Bridge. In Eugene, Oregon, protesters blocked Interstate 5, shutting down traffic on the major highway for about 45 minutes. O'Hare warned travelers on the social platform X to take alternative forms of transportation with car travel "substantially delayed this morning due to protest activity." Some travelers stuck in stand-

still traffic left their cars and walked the final leg to the airwalked the final leg to the airport along the freeway, trailing their luggage behind them. Among them was Madeline Hannan from suburban Chicago. She was headed to O'Hare for a work trip to Florida when her and her husband's car ended up stalled for 20 minutes. She got out

made it to the gate on time,

Inbound traffic toward

O'Hare resumed around 9 Near Seattle, the Washington State Department of Transportation said a demonstration closed the main road Seattle-Tacoma

International Airport. Social media posts showed people holding a banner and waving Palestinian flags while standing on the highway. State authorities urged people to use light rail instead. and "both ran and speed walked" more than a mile (1.6 kilometers). She said she

About 20 protesters were arrested at the Golden Gate

Bridge demonstration and traffic resumed shortly after noon, according to the California Highway Patrol. The agency said officers were making arrests at two points on the interstate, including one spot where roughly 300 protesters refused orders to

disperse. "Attempting to block or shut down a freeway or state highway to protest is unlawful, dangerous, and prevents motorists from safely reaching their destinations," the agency said in a statement.

Oregon State Police said 52 protestors were were arrested for disorderly conduct fol-lowing the Interstate 5 protest in Eugene, Oregon, about 110 miles (177 kilometers) south of Portland. Six vehicles were towed from the scene.

New York Police made numerous arrests, saying 150 protesters were initially involved in the march around 3:15 p.m., but that number

### Sunak faces resistance over smoking ban plans

conduct.

ritish Prime Minister Rishi DSunak faces very vocal resistance against his plans to effectively ban smoking for anyone aged 15 and younger as a new bill comes up for a vote in the House of Commons on Tuesday. The British Indian leader proposed the Tobacco and Vapes Bill last year and declared his vision for creating a "smokefree generation" by making it an offence to sell tobacco products to anyone born after January 1, 2009, which covers children aged 15. Once it clears its parliamentary journey, the new legislation will introduce some of the world's strictest anti-smoking

laws in the country.
"I propose that in future we raise the smoking age by one year, every year. That means a 14-year-old today will never legally be sold a cigarette and that they — and their generation — can grow up smoke-free. We know this works," Sunak had declared at the Conservative Party conference in October last year. As there is Opposition backing for the



bill in Parliament and governing Conservative MPs have a free vote on the bill, any Tory votes against the bill will not be seen as a full-blown rebellion But two of Sunak's immediate

against the Prime Minister. predecessors, Liz Truss and Boris Johnson, have been leading a very vocal group of Tories who plan to vote against the bill as "un-Conservative" and taking away choice from the pub-

safe level of tobacco consump- enforcement. tion. It is uniquely harmful, and that is why we are taking this important action today to protect the next generation," said UK Health Secretary Victoria

"This Bill will save thousands of lives, ease the strain on our NHS [National Health Service], and improve the UK's productivity," she said.

Under the new law, smoking itself would not be criminalised, and anyone who can legally buy tobacco will not be prevented from doing so.

The ban aims to stop people from smoking even before they start as the government pointed to its highly addictive nature, with four in five smokers picking it up before the age of 20, remaining addicted for life. If passed, the bill will progress to the next stage, bringing the UK closer to creating the first smoke-free generation, the government says. Under the plans, trading standards officers would get new powers to issue on-the-spot 100-pound fines to shops selling tobacco or vapes to children, with all the money

"The truth is that there is no raised going towards further

"This historic legislation will consign smoking to the 'ash heap of history," said Deborah Arnott, head of the charity Action on Smoking and Health (ASH). The Tobacco and Vapes Bill would also give the government new powers to tackle youth vaping by restricting flavours and regulating the way that vapes are sold and packaged to make them less appealing to children.

The UK's Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) said while vaping can play a useful role in helping adult smokers to quit, non-smokers and children should never vape.

The long-term health impacts of vaping are unknown, and the nicotine contained within them can be highly addictive, it warned. According to official figures, responsible for around 80,000 deaths annually, smoking is the UK's single biggest preventable killer and costs the NHS and economy an estimated GBP 17 billion a year more than the GBP 10 billion annual revenue from tobacco taxation.



President Joe Biden, right, meets with Prime Minister Petr Fiala of the Czech Republic in the Oval Office at the White House, Monday.

## Indian-origin principal wins legal challenge over school prayer ban

PTI ■ LONDON

An Indian-origin school principal, often referred to as "Britain's strictest headmistress", on Tuesday welcomed a UK High Court rul-ing that upheld her ban on prayer rituals after a Muslim pupil sought to legally challenge it as discriminatory. Katherine Birbalsingh, of Indo-

Guyanese heritage, had told the court that Michaela School – a "secular" secondary school for boys and girls in Wembley, north London – did not allow religious prayers in keeping with its ethos of promoting an "inclusive environment".

While half of the pupils at the school are Muslims, it also has large numbers of Sikh, Hindu and Christian pupils.

vide a prayer room for use by pupils, for various reasons. These reasons include that a prayer room would foster division amongst pupils, contrary to the School's ethos, lack of available space and available staff to supervise pupils and that pupils would miss important School activities, including during the lunch break if they were to spend time in a prayer room," Birbalsingh told the court. "Unacceptable segregation or division, contrary to the whole ethos of the school, was taking place as a result of permitting prayer. An intimidatory atmosphere was developing. Our strict disciplinary policies, on which the ethos and great success of (the) School is based,

"As the Governing Body is were at risk of being under-aware, the School does not pro-mined," she said.

Justice Thomas Linden, in an 80-page judgment following a hearing in January, ruled in the school's favour. "In my judgment, the starting

point is that the School was

right to take the view that the issue was whether to permit and facilitate ritual prayer indoors: in effect, to reverse its longstanding policy of not providing a prayer room," it reads. "She (the unnamed pupil) knew that the School is secular, and her own evidence is that her mother wished her to go there because it was known to be strict... Her evidence has focussed on her preferences and what she supposes the position would be elsewhere,"

Observing that there is a substantial increase in attacks against Hindus in the US, an Indian-American Congressman has said that this was just the "beginning of a coordinated anti-Hindu attack", as he asked the community members to unite against hate crimes. Congressman Shri Thanedar's remarks came during a news conference held at the National Press Club here on Monday.

**PTI** ■ WASHINGTON

"Today I am seeing in the United States a substantial increase in attacks on Hinduism. A lot of misinformation is being circulated whether it is online or otherwise," Thanedar said.

Thanedar and four other Indian-American lawmakers -Khanna, Raia Krishnamoorthi, Ami Bera and Pramila Jayapal - had recently



written to the Department of Justice seeking an investigation on the recent surge in attacks on Hindu temples and places of worship.

At the press conference organised by HinduAction, a nonprofit body, Thanedar complained that no action has been taken against those responsible for the attacks and no arrests have been made

"We have experienced substantially more events of this kind in recent months. I have a feeling that this is just the beginning of a very coordinated attempt against this community and the community must stand together. The time has come and I will stand with you," Thanedar said.

'Substantial increase in attack on Hindus in US'

'Having practised Hinduism, having grown up as a Hindu in a Hindu household, I know what Hinduism is. It is a very peaceful religion," he said, adding that it is not a religion that attacks others.

However, this community continues to be misrepresented, misunderstood, sometimes

deliberately, he said.
"I recently joined four of my Indian-American colleagues to write to the Department of Justice. You know, one of the concerns that we had was the rising attacks on places of worship," Thanedar said.

"We've seen those happening in California, we have seen those happening all the way in New York and all across America. It appears to be a very coordinated effort to attack these places of worship, which has created a lot of fear in the community," he said.

Thanedar alleged that often local law enforcement enters into these investigations which

go nowhere. He said it leaves the community feeling like they have nobody who cares about them. That means that the community continues to live in fear. The community continues to live in an adverse situation with essentially no help from law enforce-

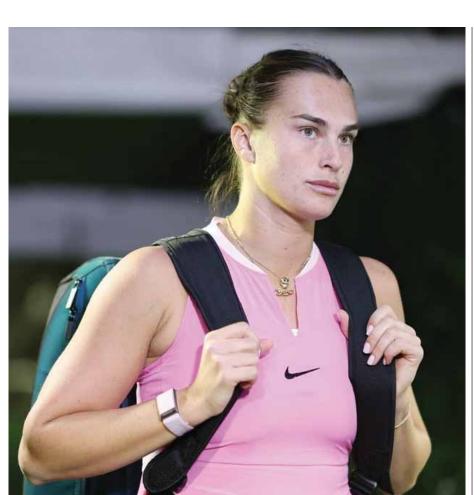
ment, he added. Thanedar said that there is a need to coordinate efforts between the local law enforcement, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Department of Justice.

"A higher priority needs to be assigned to such hate crimes against this peaceful community," he said.

That is what we have asked the Justice Department to do and it is time for the whole community to come together and make sure that we demand equality, that we demand justice. We will not tolerate such hate against Hinduism.

Thanedar said he has introduced a resolution in the United States Congress on "anti-Hindu attacks".

'Through the resolution and the letter that we wrote to the Department of Justice, we continue to put pressure on this administration to ensure that the Hindu community has a right to live in peace," he said. Utsav Chakrabarti from HinduACtion described it as a historic resolution in the fight against "anti-Hindu crimes" in the US.



# SABALENKA TO FACE GOOD FRIEND

**AP** ■ STUTTGART, GERMANY

Paula Badosa battled past Diana Shnaider 6-3, 6-4 to set up a match with friend and world No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka at the Porsche Grand Prix.

Shnaider fended off four match points before former No. 2 Badosa took her fifth opportunity at the clay-court tournament on Monday. Badosa's 10 double faults

allowed Shnaider eight break point opportunities. The 20-year-old Russian was unable to

take any of them on the center court in Stuttgart. Sabalenka has finished runner-

up on her last three appearances in Stuttgart, losing the final to former No.1 Ashleigh Barty in 2021 and current No.1 Iga Swiatek in 2022 and 2023.

Sachia Vickery of the United States defeated Aliaksandra Sasnovich of Belarus 7-6 (2), 7-5 and will next face compatriot Coco Gauff, the world No. 3. Veronika Kudermetova of Russia outlasted Barbora Krejcíková 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 for a

second-round meeting with No. 4 Elena Rybakina.

Kudermetova was a break down in the deciding set but fought back and took her first match point to prevail after 3 hours, 6 minutes - one of the longest ever matches in

Stuttgart. Gauff, Sabalenka, Swiatek and Rybakina all received firstround byes. Eight of the top 10 women are at the tournament. Swiatek is bidding to become the first three-time champion in Stuttgart since Maria Sharapova won from 2012-14.

## **Goal Palmer scores four in 6-0** demolition of dismal Everton

**AP** ■ LONDON

Cole Palmer put on an unstoppable display with a perfect first-half hat trick and a fourth in the second half as Chelsea demolished Everton 6-0 in the English Premier

Palmer scored with his left foot, head and right foot in the 13th, 19th and 29th minutes on Monday to become the first Chelsea player to score in

Chelsea player to score in seven successive home games. "It all happens so fast," Palmer told Sky Sports. "We started well and I scored another hat trick - buzzing. First one was my favorite, my right foot was a bit of a swinger"

The Manchester City reject

stroked home a superb first from just outside the box and nodded in the second from close range after Jordan Pickford could only parry Nicolas Jackson's shot.

His third was a wonderful 35-yard lob after Pickford needlessly gifted him possession

Nicolas Jackson added a fourth a minute before halftime, and Palmer made it 5-0 from the penalty spot in the 64th.

Substitute Alfie Gilchrist's first goal for the club made it six in iniurv time.

Palmer's goals took his season tally to 20 in the league, tied with Manchester City's Erling Haaland.

The result extended a depressing few days for

Everton. Just hours before kickoff, the club lodged an appeal against a two-point deduction for a second breach of the Premier League financial

Everton was docked two points last week for overspending in a

three-year spell up to the end of the 2022-23 season. It was a second deduction this season for Everton, which had six points removed - reduced from 10 following an appeal - for breaching spending limits from 2019-20 to the 2021-22

Australian aggression can be countered with

"We've already agreed that's gone, we have to get on with it," Everton manager Sean Dyche said. "(The points deduction) is out of our control."

Dyche described Monday as a "collective down day" and said his team was miles off the pace. "We can't perform like that at a place like this. The key moments when they got chances, finding the back of the net, we haven't done that all season."

The Liverpool club sits in 16th place, only two points and two places above the relegation

After running its unbeaten streak to eight, Chelsea was in ninth place, only one point behind West Ham.



## Muddappa begins season with double victory

Multiple-time national Hemanth Muddappa of Mantra Racing began the season with a double victory at the summer edition of the Valley Run 2024 at Amby

Valley here on Tuesday. Bengaluru's Muddappa was also adjudged as the fastest rider of

Muddappa, the 12-time national champion, punched above his weight as he won the unrestricted class with a 1000cc bike, the BMW S1000RRR, and managed to set a national record of 09.480 seconds for this category.

He edged past seasoned rider
Mohammed Riyaz from

In the four stroke 851 to 1050cc Open class, Muddappa clocked 09.692s to take the second gold ahead of Riddhiish Patil of Mumbai but had to be content with a second place in the third

Astride a Dayatona, Riyaz won the 4-stroke 551 up to 850cc Open class in 10.421 seconds, pushing Muddappa's Kawasaki Ninja 6R to second place. The FMSCI event was scheduled

to run concurrently with the first round of the Nationals, but since the MMSC event was postponed, Elite Octane and Sportscraft, the organisers of this race, successfully completed the

after that the team improved and the score-lines were close, we missed some chances, some work needs to be done

Asked how should the team counter Australia's attacking style of play, he said innovative passing could do

are dependent on penalty corners — the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Australia. Defences have become stronger, here PC conversion is such an important tool that in every match about 1-2 goals have to be scored from



The recent 0-5 drubbing notwithstanding, former drag-flick specialist Rupinder Pal Singh feels the Olympic-bound Indian men's hockey team can counter Australia's aggressive style of play with better defensive coordination and some innovative passing and some innovative passing. India were blanked in the five-Test series in Perth some days ago, a disappointing outing for the team, which did reasonably well in the FIH Pro League before that and is expected to better or match its bronze from Tokyo Olympics at the Paris Games in July-August.

Singh, who was part of the 2014 Asian Games gold-winning side, is not too concerned by the final result as he felt the team kept improving with every game. "We lost the first match 5-1,

prior to the Olympics. The series was a preparation for Paris Olympics, as new variations and players were tried out," he told PTI Videos.

"Australia's hard press can be countered, high level of coordination is required defender-to-defender ball transfer, quick passes from defenders to the midfield, overhead passes would be useful in countering such a style of play," the 33-year-old suggested. He sees no fault in India's reliance on penalty corners for scoring.
"...All international teams, all

them," he pointed out.



He described current India captain Harmanpreet Singh as one of the best drag-flickers in he world.

He was, however, concerned about the penalty corner conversion rate of the women's team, which is seeking to rebuild itself after its stunning failure to qualify for the Olympics.

for the Olympics.

"That's a worry(Penalty corner conversion), its penalty corner is an important tool in today's hockey we need to work on that," he said.

Singh was speaking on the sidelines of a three-day training program organised by Hockey India. It was also attended by former India goalkeeper Yogita Bali, along with India goalkeepers Adrian D'Souza, Bharat Chetri, Helen Mary, Dipika Murty, Akash Chikte, and PT

Apart from Singh, the other eminent former India drag-flickers who attended the training were Gurjinder Singh, VR Raghunath, and Jaspreet Kaur. The former stars have drawn

up a curriculum on the basics

of drag-flicking and goalkeeping which would be implemented across all academies and centres in the country.

FUTURE BRIGHT FOR HOCKEY: WOMEN'S Despite the Olympic heartbreak, women's hockey will do well, according to bali, who picked Manipur's Bichu Devi Kharibam as the successor for long-serving

goalkeeper Savita Punia.
"In Bengaluru, we trained with top six goalkeepers of India, and I found Bichhu to be the best in India after Savita. She could be India's number one after Savita," Bali Bali said Indian women's

hockey has grown by leaps and bounds in recent years. "Compared to when I started playing, there are a lot more facilities, now there are scientific advisors, nutrition experts to help the development of the players. "Earlier Indian Railways was the prominent employment provider for hockey players, now several departments are offering jobs, so things are going well," she said.

### Four titles in seven months, success of Kolkata Big Three will have huge impact: AIFF president Five for the Maidan 'Big Three'. football,' Chaubey told PTI. "The three giants of Kolkata enjoy enormous fan support in West Bengal. football, 'Chaubey told PTI. "The three giants of Kolkata enjoy enormous fan support in West Bengal. football, 'Chaubey told PTI. "The three giants of Kolkata enjoy enormous fan support in West Bengal. Five' for the Maidan 'Big Three'. Mohun Bagan is the oldest club in

Mohun Bagan, East Bengal and Mohammedan Sporting — will not just have a massive impact on state football but will also have a positive effect on the sport in the country, said All India Football Federation president Kalyan Chaubey on Tuesday. Seven months, four titles, and the

Seven months, four titles, and the 'Mecca of Indian football' was celebrating after Mohun Bagan's maiden League Winners Shield triumph following their 2-1 win over Mumbai City FC at the packed Salt Lake Stadium here on Monday.

"Bringing home the ISL Shield, I-League Trophy, Super Cup and Durand Cup to West Bengal is a sign of new-age football in the state, and adaptability of these clubs to the newer norms of League with a round to spare and

India and globally. I'm sure the success of MB and EB, along with Mohammedan Sporting joining the two in ISL next season, will have a massive impact on Indian football." It all began with Mohun Bagan starting the season with their first Durand Cup title in 23 years, defeating arch-rivals East Bengal 1-0 on September 3 last

East Bengal made amends to win the Super Cup, beating Odisha FC 3-2 in Bhubaneswar on January 29. It marked the end of their 12-year trophy drought. Having faced multiple relegation, Mohammedan Sporting came back from oblivion to defeat Shillong Lajong FC 2-1 earlier this month to win the I-



confirm their promotion to ISL. Mohun Bagan then went on to lift the ISL Shield in front of a record 61,000plus home crowd at the Salt Lake Stadium.

The Green and Maroon brigade will now aim to finish season by lifting the ISL Trophy, which would be a 'High

while Mohammedan Sporting came into existence two years later in 1891. East Bengal (established in 1920) also recently celebrated their centenary year. "They are the 'Big Three' of Kolkata football. With historic milestones and football. With historic milestones and to have ruled Indian football for decades, the three have centuries-old football culture and I'm just glad that they have all come around once again to help the city earn the bragging rights," he said.

"It's a remarkable year for Kolkata football to bring home four titles this season."

"Millions of football fans, having their loyalties to these Big Three, have joined in to reverberate Kolkata's legacy," he

# Paris bound Olympians look forward to a post COVID Games with fans in stands

AP NEW YORK

 $T_{\rm and\ games\ for\ many\ of}^{\rm he\ biggest\ races,\ routines}$ this generation's Olympic athletes were contested in front of mostly empty stands, largely devoid of coaches to help them out or friends and family to cheer them on.

That was three years ago at the COVID-19 Summer Olympics and two years ago at the COVID-19 Winter Olympics. Now that they're preparing for the Paris Olympics that begin in July and a return to something that feels normal - the Americans heading back to the Games know they can never take for granted the screaming fans and a hug from Mom or Dad.

"I think it's super important to be able to share these again." massive moments with people you care about," said BMX rider Alise Willoughby, who has been to the last three Olympics.

Willoughby and about 100 other U.S. Athletes are doing interviews and photo shoots media summit at a hotel in can tailor my routines to

Times Square - an event that itself was made impossible in the lead-up to the Tokyo Games in 2021 amid the coronavirus pandemic.
One topic of conversation

this week is how grateful the bikers, rowers, gymnasts and the rest are to be past the days tracing, contact quarantines and daily swabbing or spitting for COVID-19 tests inside the so-called Olympic bubble.

In Paris, there will be celebrations with relatives and one-on-one contact with coaches, most of whom were not allowed into the venues three years ago. The USA House - a traditional stop for athletes to wind down and kick back, especially after they're done competing - will

Mostly, athletes are looking forward to the chance to soak in the feeling from the crowd, an element sorely missing in the cavernous and largely

unfilled venues in Tokyo. "I'll be able to see the audience's emotions. I want this week at the Team USA to build that with them and I



that," said American rhythmic gymnast Evita Griskenas, who plans French music to accompany one routine and "All-American" number for another, all with the goal of getting fans caught up in the moment.

Griskenas said she already feels a different vibe.
Preparing for the Olympics in Tokyo - Games that were initially delayed by a year, then held in an atmosphere nobody quite recognized became a largely solitary, and joyless, affair.

'It turned into training in my basement and throwing things outside," she said.
This year, a different experience awaits, and some athletes are even looking forward to a crowd rooting against them because, hey, at least it's a crowd.

"The boys have been saying, We want to play France in, like, the semifinals," rugby player Perry Baker said. "You just visualize how big that can be, and how fun that can be. Their crowd. Our crowd. We live for those moments." With crowds, naturally, come

other issues that were mostly set on the sideline in 2021. On Monday, French President Emmanuel Macron the much-touted opening ceremony scheduled for the Seine River could be moved to the Stade de France if the security threat is

deemed too high.
Asked what she thought of that possibility, Nicole Deal, the chief of security for the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Committee, said other than her main goal - athlete safety
- she wants to provide the
best experience for the athletes.

"Security is an underpinning and a foundation. We're not the main show," Deal said. With two of the next five

Olympics set to come to the U.Ś. - Los Angeles hosts in 2028 and Salt Lake City is a virtual lock for the Winter Games in 2034 - Olympic leaders know there's a lot riding on Paris. This return to "normal," they hope, will bring more Americans back to watching the Olympics in person, online and on TV.

Prime-time ratings in Tokyo were 42% lower than the previous Summer Games, in Rio de Janeiro in 2016, and 50% below the Games before that, in London in 2012. There were a number of reasons for that - including the increasingly fragmented

viewing audience, the rise of streaming services and the 13-hour time difference between New York and Japan. But also: COVID-19.

"Even for those who were

back home, it wasn't the most

important thing going on for us at that time," USOPC CEO Sarah Hirshland said of the renewed possibilities presented by the first COVID-19-free Games since 2018. "This is about an opportunity to really focus on this incredible thing called

Olympic and Paralympic sport. It brings us together almost like nothing else."
The way things went in Tokyo took some of the luster away from what was nearly a perfect experience for indoor volleyball player Jordyn Poulter. Yes, she won a gold medal in her first Olympics, three years ago. Yes, it was a once-in-a-lifetime type of triumph. Still, there was something missing.

"Not being able to relish in that moment with factors."

that moment with friends and family in that immediate time - it's something that I'm looking forward to in this next one," she said.

### Beijing half marathon results under investigation after runners appear to hand win to Chinese star

**AP** ■ BANGKOK

Organisers are investigating a half marathon race in Beijing after three African runners appeared to let China's top long-distance runner move ahead of them shortly before the finish line and sprint to victory, sparking public speculation that the result was rigged.

There was a flood of public reaction online expressing suspicion about the race after video from the final moments of Sunday's Mengniu Beijing Half Marathon circulated On Monday, online. organizers of the race issued a

statement saying they would investigate the results. The organising committee attaches great importance to the issue raised by netizens about the results of the (race)," organisers said.

"A special investigation team has been set up to conduct an investigation, and the results of the investigation will be released to the public in a timely fashion."

The Beijing Sports Bureau, which was in charge of the race, did not respond to a

request for comment.

He Jie, who won the marathon at the Asian Games and holds the Chinese national record in the event, was trailing behind three runners from Kenya and Ethiopia as they approached the finish line. One of the runners then seems to gesture for the others to slow down as He moves in front and sprints to the finish line.

One of the other runners, Willy Mnangat of Kenya, told BBC Sport Africa that they allowed He to win but that they had been hired to serve as pacemakers and were not competing to win the race. However, all three had entered the race as official competitors rather than as pacemakers. "I was not there to compete," Mnangat was quoted as

saying.
"My job was to set the pace

Chinese

and help the guy win but unfortunately, he did not achieve the target, which was to break the national record." He finished with a time of 1 hour, 3 minutes, 44 seconds, which was more than a minute slower than the half marathon

# Butler turns the table on KKR in IPL's biggest run-chase

**PTI** ■ KOLKATA

**R** ajasthan Royals pulled off the Indian Premier League's biggest run chase to beat Kolkata Knight Riders by two wickets here on Tuesday.

Asked to bat first, KKR rode on Sunil Narine's 56-ball 109 to post 223/6 in the allotted 20 overs.

In reply, RR were in all sorts of trouble at one stage but Jos Buttler blasted his way to an unbeaten 60-ball 107, as the visitors completed the chase in the last ball of the match. After his team was asked to bat first on a fresh pitch, bat first on a fresh pitch, Narine blazed away to a 49-ball 100 to lead KKR's charge in this top-of-the-table clash at Eden Gardens. However, Buttler had other ideas as he did the job for RR

from an extremely difficult position.

After his team was asked to bat first on a fresh pitch, Narine blazed away to a 49-

ball 100 to lead KKR's charge in this top-of-the-table clash at Eden Gardens.

Trent Bolt eventually got the better of Narne, but not before the opener amassed 109 off 56 balls with the help of 13 fours and six sixes, displaying supreme confidence and skill against one of the best attacks of the

It was a one-man show from KKR as Narine batted till the 18th over, first stitching 85 18th over, first stitching 85 runs with Angkrish Raghuvanshi (30) and then adding 51 runs with Andre Russell (13).

Not only did he pierce the field with ease, he also unleashed a relentless attack on P. Ashwin and Vuzwendra

on R Ashwin and Yuzvendra Chahal, keeping the fielders busy by playing shots in the V. Having reached fifty in 29 balls, the Trinidadian took just 20 deliveries to get to his maiden T20 century, pulling Chahal to the midwicket



Clad in a crisp white T-shirt, team owner Shah Rukh Khan sent a flying kiss from the stands.

On the field, his West Indies teammate Russell jumped in joy, giving him a bear hug as Narine waved his bat in a muted celebration.

Finally, it took a Boult special to end Narine's innings as the Kiwi left-arm pacer nailed a perfect yorker that also broke the leg stump, causing some delay in the middle.

With Narine taking the centre stage, the Royals spinners had a poor day. Ashwin gave away four wides and conceded 49 runs from his four overs, while Chahal returned with figures of 1/54 from his full quota.

Later, Rinku Singh's nine-ball 20 not out with two sixes and one four took the total past 200-mark, as KKR scored 62 runs in the last five overs. Avesh Khan (2/35) and Boult (1/31) were the pick of the

Royals bowlers. Kuldeep Sen

(2/46) also picked two. Riyan Parag dropped a sitter from in-form English opener Phil Salt in the second ball of

The drop did not cost the Royals much as Salt, who scored a match-winning unbeaten 89 against Lucknow

Super Giants, got out for 10

handed return catch. But sloppy fielding at the onset looked to have its

thanks to Avesh Khan's one-

impact as Narine and the young Raghuvanshi seized the momentum in the power play. Raghuvanshi's exquisite timing was on full display when he slammed Boult for three boundaries in the fifth

Narine took charge against Sen with a monstrous six over deep midwicket and followed that up with a boundary in a 16-run over, as KKR made 56

for I in the power play.

Narine soon shifted to top gear, smashing Chahal over long-off and in the next over produced an even bigger hit in the same region to race to his half-century in 29 balls.

The duo took KKR to 100/1 at the halfway mark before Raghuvanshi threw his wicket away, mistiming an upper cut. But Narine continued the onslaught to prop up KKR in

### We want to attack Power Play: Head says, revealing SRH batting philosophy



**PTI** ■ BENGALURU

Sunrisers Hyderabad have taken T20 batting to the next level with sustained range-hitting in the Indian Premier League, and Travis Head said maximising Power Play segment was central to

their aggressive approach. Head, whose 39-ball 100 led SRH to a record-setting 287/3 against Royal Challengers Bengaluru on Monday, underscored that approach with a fifty inside the Power

It was also the second time Head completed a half-century within the first six overs.

**PTI** ■ BENGALURU

self from the squad.

match press meet.

he added.

"We've definitely got a lot of power through our top and

Royal Challengers Bengaluru all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has decid-

ed to take an indefinite "mental and

Monday was initially attributed to a fin-

ger injury he suffered during the previous match against Mumbai Indians.

But he later admitted to dropping him-

"It was a pretty easy decision. I went to Faf and the coaches after the last game

(vs Mumbai Indians) and said it was

probably time we tried someone else (in

his place)," Maxwell said in the post-

"It's actually a good time to give myself a bit of a mental and physical break, get

my body right. If I'm required to get in during the tournament, I can, hopeful-

ly, get back into a solid mental and phys-

ical space where I can make an impact,"

This is the second time in his career that

Maxwell has opted out of competitive

He had taken a similar break in

October 2019, stating that he felt men-

cricket in order to gather himself.

middle-order and I think we've sort of got to tailor the way we want to play around that power

that we've got, especially in power play," said Head in the post-match press conference.

The Australian opener has a perfect ally at the top in an equally belligerent Abhishek Sharma, who blunts slower bowlers upfront while Head goes about destroying the

I guess Abhi and I at the top of the order try to maximise that (Power Play) as much as we can. It may be fours, it may be

"But yeah, we want to try to attack the power play with the two of us and then obviously we've got a lot of power through that middle-order," Head added.

It wasn't a mere tall claim as a quick check will reveal SRH's power play scores in six matches this season as 65/1, 81/1, 58/1, 78/1, 40/3 and 76/0, and none of the other nine teams have come close to those numbers.

But it was not blind hitting. Head revealed his approach in the initial six overs.

"Depending on the field positions, I try to sum up what the bowlers are trying to do. In the power play, with just two fielders out, I try to think about hitting the ball 360, around the whole ground, as you only have to go over the infield or through the infielders for boundaries.

"I'd worked on a few things over the last couple of days. I did not execute the way I would have liked (in the last two matches). But today, especially in the power play, I was able to strike the ball the way I wanted," said the left-

The 30-year-old also lauded Hyderabad bowlers, especially skipper and premier pacer Pat Cummins, for holding their nerves when RCB batters were

scoring briskly. We knew that we probably needed three or four really good overs in the game to win it. So, it's amazing to sit here and think that when we make 280, but it's going to be one of the nights for the bowlers to hold on and I thought Pat

bowled exceptionally well. "We were able to get wickets throughout the middle of the overs which set the game up. DK (Dinesh Karthik) played an unbelievable innings. But we did really well to get them back at 125 or 130 for five," he

# GT, Delhi Capitals search for consistency

**PTI** ■ AHMEDABAD

the flaws.

ujrat Titans will be striving for much needed consistency when they meet Delhi Capitals in an Indian Premier League match here on Wednesday. Unlike the past two editions, the Titans have not been able to play like a well-oiled machine though they still have time to fix

A last ball win over table leaders Rajasthan Royals on April 10 was just the kind of result the Titans needed to infuse fresh live to their campaign. They have only managed only two wins from their first six games but with another eight matches remaining, the Shubman Gillled team has enough time to

turn things around. The absence of Mohammad Shami has hurt them but they must best use the available resources. Umesh Yadav has taken seven wickets but has leaked more than 10 runs per over. His new ball partner Spencer Johnson and the seasoned Mohit Sharma too can improve on their economy rate. Star spinner Rashid Khan has been at his frugal best but would like to have more wickets in his kitty. His cameo in the last game helped Titans seal a thrilling win and the team would also be expecting more out of him with the bat.

Delhi Capitals, on the other hand, have struggled to assemble their playing eleven due to form and fitness issues.



After four losses in five games, they got a much needed boost with the win against Lucknow Super Giants but they still have a lot to sort out if they are to push themselves for a place in the play-offs.

The presence of a fit again Kuldeep Yadav made a huge difference as he broke the backbone of the opposition with three timely strikes in Lucknow. Kuldeep, who has



added more speed to his craft, seems to be at the peak of his powers and it could be difficult for Titans batters to face him, especially against his googlies. In Jack Fraser-McGurk, Capitals seem to have found an

able number three and will be hoping that the Australian builds on the success of his maiden IPL game.

Anrich Nortje, who has been taken to the cleaners by the batters so far in the IPL, did not play the last game. Mukesh Kumar has conceded

10 runs per over in the five games and was also expensive in his comeback game against LSG. The biggest positive for the team has been the batting form of skipper Rishabh Pant, who seems to be getting better with every outing. It would be fair to say that the southpaw is in prime position to make India's squad for the T20 World Cup despite stiff opposition from the likes of Sanju Samson and Ishan Kishan.

Thin on Indian bating talent, the Capitals rely heavily on the likes of David Warner, who would itching to make an impact after not contributing much in the last three games.

### Every game is like semifinal for us now: RCB coach Flower

**PTI** ■ BENGALURU

After his side's sixth deteat in seven matches in the fter his side's sixth defeat in Indian Premier ongoing Indian Premier League, Royal Challengers Bengaluru head coach Andy Flower confessed that each of their remaining seven matches will have to be treated like a semifinal.

In the latest setback to their playoff aspirations, RCB went down by 25 runs against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on Monday.

"It is obviously knockout time and every game is like a semifinal for us now. But we will have to think that we will come back stronger," Flower said on RCB Game Day.

RCB conceded the highestever IPL total - 287 for three as the Hyderabad batters went



on a merry ride against their directionless bowlers. Flower admitted that it was a

tough night for his side. "It was a really tough night in the field, of course, as they finished so powerfully that it probably took the wind out of our souls," he said.

However, Flower found shards of positives during RCB's chase such as Dinesh Karthik's superlative 83 off 35 balls and skipper Faf Du Plessis' 28-ball The Zimbabwean wanted to

build on them in the coming

matches. "I am really proud of the way we fought with the bat out there in the middle. We lost the game but I was really proud of the way we fought," said Flower.

The former England coach lauded Karthik for the way he took on SRH bowlers, and said it would not be surprising if the wicketkeeper batter made it to India's T20 World Cup squad. "Dinesh Karthik is really making a push for the World Cup team (of India) as well and is only getting better on the field," he added.

RCB will next face Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on April 21.

The sudden dip in his form was surpris-

ing, considering the hot run he had in the run-up to the IPL. Maxwell had made 552 runs from 17 T20Is from

November onwards, averaging 42 and

his strike-rate was an impressive 185.

But the Victorian started the IPL with

a first-ball duck against Chennai Super

Kings in an away match, and from that

"T20 cricket is a pretty fickle game. Even if you look at the first game, I ran

one off the middle of the bat to the

point his fortunes plummeted.



### RCB SRH game was one of sixes, not of batsmanship: Finch

PTI BENGALURU

Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bengaluru unleashing a barrage of sixes in their IPL match left little room for batsmanship and what mattered was who hit the most number of sixes, said Australia's T20 World Cup-winning skipper Aaron Finch.

Travis Head's maiden T20 ton and Heinrich Klaasen's pillaging 67 drove SRH to a record-breaking 287 for three, which helped them go past their own 277/3 against Mumbai Indians at Hyderabad this March 27.

Dinesh Karthik then smashed a blazing 35-ball 83 but RCB ended up losing the match in which 38 sixes were hit all around the park.

"It was never going to be a game where you talk about batsmanship. It's a game where you talk about who hit the most sixes and that was the difference," Finch said on Star Sports. "They (RCB) had to start at 14

(runs per over). And if you have one bad over it goes to 16." Finch said the Hyderabad side used the Powerplay segment well.

"They (SRH) were getting lucky in the first powerplay and they needed those sixes and Travis Head was the difference there.

to keep going, we have a deep batting line-up and we are going to put the bowlers to the sword here," added Finch. Head's destructive hundred, crafted off 39 balls, was the

fourth fastest in the tournament.

the cornerstone of SRH's 25-run win. Finch said IPL teams had started changing their strategies by bringing in big-hitters like Klaasen up the order as they play

fearless cricket.

"A lot of times teams think that Klaasen has so much power to the back end, let's hold him back. Like (RCB's) Glenn Maxwell at times, you don't want to expose him right now because if he gets out, then we've got to rebuild. Teams don't think like that any-

"(SRH coach) Dan Vettori has talked about that, play aggressive, play fearlessly and bear the consequence if it doesn't go right. If it does go right, you don't

Dinesh Karthik once again underlined his value making a 35-ball 83 at a strike-rate of 237. Finch said the ability to strike the ball comes naturally to Karthik, given his more than two decades of experience in the game.

"Well, once you've got 20-25 years of experience behind you, and you've got that bulk of balls you've hit throughout your whole career since you were five years old, you don't lose that ability to bat.

## RCB Maxwell takes mental physical break from

physical" break from the Indian Premier League, blaming his wretched tally and physically ruined at that time. The 35-year-old made his comebatting form for the decision. Maxwell's absence from RCB's match against Sunrisers Hyderabad here on back a couple of months later.

In the ongoing IPL, Maxwell has been quite underwhelming with the bat in the six matches he has played this season, contributing just 32 runs at an average of 5.33 and a strike-rate of 94. Twenty eight of those 32 runs came against Kolkata Knight Riders alone,

helped to a great degree by two dropped

"I have been in this situation in the past where you can keep playing and get yourself deeper into a hole. We have had a pretty big deficiency after the power play, which has been my area of strength over the last couple of seasons. "I felt like I wasn't contributing with the bat, and with the results and the position we find ourselves on the table, I think it's a good time to give someone else an opportunity to show their wares, and hopefully, someone can make that spot their own," a candid

Maxwell said.



ter six months in cricket leading into another opportunity," he said.

The big-hitting Australian, however, still hoped to return and make an impact in the later stages of the tournament. "The management here has been outstanding. I don't think I've had a bet-

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this tournament. mind right, there's no reason I can't finish the tournament well if I do get

Maxwell said luck was not on his side "So, it's frustrating when it ends up like in this tournament. this. But if I can get my body and my

keeper. I picked up the length, saw a scoring opportunity, but opened the face a little bit too much. "When you are going well, that goes wide of the (wicketkeeper's) gloves, you get a boundary. You are 4 off 1, and you are away for the tournament," he noted.

"I probably just haven't got away. In the first few games, I feel I made reasonably good decisions (for shot selection). But I was finding ways to get out.

"He started off well, his intent to get the ball rolling and then a courageous move to keep Klaasen at No. 3 and say we need

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