



CITY 3 DIMPLE DRAWS FLAK FOR PULWAMA REMARK

OPINION 6 ROLE OF AI IN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

WORLD 10 US EFFORT TO BRING AID TO GAZA BY SEA

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DELHI CAPITALS TAKE ON MI 12 SPORTS

Supreme Court rejects 100 per cent VVPAT verification plea

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

A tight slap to Congress led Opposition: Modi

In a landmark judgement, the Supreme Court on Friday rejected all petitions seeking 100 per cent cross-verification of votes cast using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) with Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT). Weighing in on the intensely debated issue that has long divided political parties, a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta delivered two concurring verdicts in the matter, also rejected a demand to go back

to ballot papers in elections. The order came on a day during the second phase of polling for 88 parliamentary seats in 13 States. The Supreme Court's long anticipated verdict quickly found echo in the political landscape with Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying at a rally in Araria in Bihar that it is a "tight slap" on the Congress-led Opposition which now must "apologise" for committing the "sin of creating distrust" against



Supreme Court on EVM-VVPAT Verification Case

Photo: PTI

electronic voting machines. Hours after the Supreme Court verdict, Modi said the decision shattered dreams of the INDIA Bloc that "sought to mislead the nation". "Every politician in the INDIA coalition sinned by trying to create doubts in the hearts of the nation's citizens," Modi said at an election rally in Araria Lok Sabha constituency in Bihar. "When the Congress, the RJD and other INDIA Bloc parties were in power, the poor,

backwards and Dalits used to be deprived of their votes through booth capture. With the introduction of Electronic Voting Machines, they are no longer able to play their old game. Hence, they committed the sin of creating distrust against EVMs," he said. Union Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal described the decision as "fabulous". He said the Supreme Court's ruling has exposed Opposition parties, including the Congress, which had left no opportunity to "defame" the Election Commission.

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Opposition vows to continue VVPAT campaign

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

While most Opposition parties did not express their view after the Supreme Court's verdict on VVPAT, the Congress and a couple of parties like Samajwadi Party (SP) said it will continue with its campaign on greater use of VVPATs to increase the electoral process will continue," Ramesh said in a statement.

Congress chief spokesman Jairam Ramesh said the Opposition is not a party, directly or indirectly, to the petition on VVPATs. "We have taken note of the verdict of the two-judge bench and our political campaign on the greater use of VVPATs to increase public trust in the electoral process will continue," Ramesh said in a statement.

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Estimated Poll Turnout (Phase-II) at 07:00 PM

STATES	VOTING PER CENT
Assam	70.78
Bihar	54.91
Chhattisgarh	73.05
Jammu and Kashmir	71.63
Karnataka	67.12
Kerala	65.28
Madhya Pradesh	56.60
Maharashtra	54.34
Manipur	77.18
Rajasthan	63.82
Tripura	78.63
Uttar Pradesh	54.82
West Bengal	71.84



Nearly 61 per cent voter turnout in Phase II of LS polls

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's appeal to young and women voters to turn out in great numbers and Opposition leaders, including Priyanka Gandhi's message for voters to vote and 'save the Constitution,' notwithstanding, saw nearly 61 per cent voting till 7 pm on Friday in the second phase of the Lok Sabha. The 2019 polls of the second phase recorded 66 per cent voting. At 7 pm, 61 per cent voter turnout was recorded across 13 States and Union Territories. Manipur, Chhattisgarh, Bengal, Assam and Tripura recorded over 70 per cent voter turnout while Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Maharashtra recorded

the lowest turnout at 54.85 per cent, 53 per cent and 53.5 per cent respectively. In 2019, NDA secured victory in 56 seats of the 89 seats while the UPA won 24 seats. In the ongoing second phase of Lok Sabha elections, Assam saw voting percentage of 70.97 per cent, Bihar 54.91 per cent, Chhattisgarh 73.19 per cent, Jammu and Kashmir 71.92 per cent, Karnataka 67.77 per cent, Kerala 65.45 per cent, Madhya Pradesh 57.55 per cent, Maharashtra 54.58 per cent, Manipur 77.18 per cent, Rajasthan 64.01 per cent, Tripura 78.82 per cent, Uttar Pradesh 54.83 per cent and West Bengal 71.84 per cent.

After Friday's phase, polling will be over in the States of Kerala, Rajasthan and Tripura. Barring a few confrontations and complaints of fake voting in Barmer-Jaisalmer, polling was peaceful in the second phase. The third phase of elections for 94 seats across 12 States and Union Territories will be held on May 7. Modi expressed his delight saying the phase two of the Lok Sabha polls has been "too good" for the BJP-led NDA, describing the support to the ruling alliance as unparalleled. "Phase Two has been too good! Gratitude to the people across India who have voted today. The

unparalleled support for NDA is going to disappoint the Opposition even more. Voters want NDA's good governance. Youth and women voters are powering the strong NDA support," Modi said on social media. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi took potshots at the PM over his attack on the grand old party, saying he is scared and may even shed tears on the stage. Interestingly, Modi and Opposition leaders, including Rahul raised the pitch of the campaign by focusing on hot-button issues such as religious discrimination, inheritance taxes and affirmative action's during the second phase to polarize their vote bank.

Notably, Kanker, Rajnandgaon and Mahasamund in Chhattisgarh having naxalite presence, recorded voter turnout of 63.92 per cent. Similarly, the newly settled Bru voters of Tripura exercised their franchise for the 2024 general elections to the Lok Sabha. Voters in some villages of Uttar Pradesh's Mathura, Rajasthan's Banswara and Maharashtra's Parbhani boycotted polls over various issues but were persuaded by authorities to cast their franchise. Voters in some villages of Uttar Pradesh's Mathura, Rajasthan's Banswara and Maharashtra's Parbhani were boycotting the polls over various issues but were later persuaded by authorities to cast their franchise.

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THE PIONEER REPORTS FROM GROUND ZERO

KERALA

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The ebullient fight between the BJP-led NDA, the Congress-led UDF and the CPI(M)-led LDF for the 20 Lok Sabha seats from Kerala that went to the polls on Friday is continuing even after the polling concluded by 6pm on Friday. As hundreds of voters had queued up in front of polling stations at 6 pm, polling officials issued tickets to all so that no one needed to return home without casting their votes. By 7 pm on Friday, the State had registered 70 per cent polling according to the Election Commission of India. The final figure is likely to cross the 77.8 per cent figure which was recorded in the 2019 Lok Sabha poll from the State. Law enforcement agencies heaved a sigh of relief as the polling process was by and large peaceful and no major untoward incidents were reported from anywhere in the State. But there were allegations by the BJP and the opposition Congress party that thousands of voters cast their votes with the help of fake identity cards. "There were many instances of expatriate workers from other States managing to cast



their votes with the help of officials whose loyalty lied with the CPI(M)," said Adoor Prakash, Congress candidate from Attingal in southern Kerala. Seven persons reportedly died either after casting the votes or while waiting for their turn to vote. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan who cast his vote with wife Kamala and scam tainted daughter Veena Mohammed Riyaz claimed that there was a CPI(M) wave across Kerala and the LDF would win in all the 20 constituencies. He said that the good works done by the LDF to help the poor would be reflected when results are declared on 4 June.

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NORTH EAST

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Sensitive States of the North East, including Manipur and Tripura, besides Assam witnessed peaceful polling on Friday in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections. Manipur, where polling was held under high presence of security personnel, the turnout was a high 77 per cent and one incident of EVM damage was reported. The State had witnessed violence in some areas during the first phase of polls on April 19. On Friday, voting was held in the remaining parts of the Outer Manipur Lok Sabha constituency at 857 polling stations, spanning 13 Assembly segments in eight districts, officials said. Over 4.84 lakh people are eligible to vote in this phase. Fifteen assembly segments of the Outer Manipur Lok Sabha constituency went to the polls in the first phase on April 19 along with the whole of the Inner Manipur seat. Four candidates are in the fray in Outer Manipur — NPF's K Timothy Zimik, Congress's Alfred Kannang Arthur, and Independents S



Kho John and Alyson Abonmai. The BJP has not fielded any candidate and is backing its ally, the NPF. Security measures were significantly enhanced across all 13 assembly segments where polling was underway, with 87 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and 4,000 state police personnel deployed to ensure free and fair elections. During the first phase of elections, parts of the Outer Manipur seat, covering 15 assembly segments, and 32 assembly segments of the Inner Manipur seat, went to polls on April 19. In the 2019 elections, the NPF emerged victorious, defeating the BJP by a margin of 73,782 votes.

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UTTAR PRADESH

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

In the second phase of Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, 55-60 per cent voter turnout is expected to be recorded. Uttar Pradesh's Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said here on Friday that by 5 pm 52.74 per cent voter turnout was recorded in eight Lok Sabha constituencies where polling was held on Friday. Prominent among the 91 candidates whose fate was decided in the second phase polling are actors-turned-politician Hema Malini, who is seeking a third term from Mathura, and Arun Govil, who played the role of Lord Ram in the Ramayana TV serial. He has been fielded by the BJP from his native place Meerut. The other prominent candidates are Danish Ali of Congress from Amroha, and BJP's Atul Garg from Ghaziabad and Mahesh Sharma from Gautam Buddha Nagar. The constituencies where polling was held on Friday included Amroha, Meerut, Baghpat, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Aligarh, Mathura and Bulandshahr.



The CEO said polling was peaceful in all eight Lok Sabha constituencies and no untoward incident was reported from anywhere. He said around 150 complaints were received at the state control room and all were promptly disposed of. The CEO said complaints related to faulty electronic voting machines (EVMs), power supply breakdown, slow polling and identification documents produced by voters. He said 48 ballot units, 213 control units and 469 VVPAT machines were replaced. In one polling booth, a polling agent was asked by the police to leave the booth. Following a complaint by the political party, the agent was allowed to stay at the particular polling booth.

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KARNATAKA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU

The first phase of Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka on Friday comprising 14 constituencies witnessed an impressive 65 per cent voter turnout where the Congress and BJP locked horns on the electoral battleground in less than a year. According to poll officials, 65 per cent voter turnout was recorded. The turnout was however 49.37 per cent in Bengaluru South, and 50.04 per cent in Bengaluru North, amid indications of continued voter apathy in the city. Long queues were seen at polling booths, as people, especially senior citizens and morning walkers came out to vote during the early hours since the voting began at 7 am. Several prominent personalities like Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, IT industry veteran N R Narayana Murthy, his wife and nominated member of Rajya Sabha Sudha Murthy, cricketing legends Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble, and Javagal Srinath cast their



ballot. Former Prime Minister H D Deve Gowda, Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar, Kumaraswamy, and film personalities like Upendra, Shivarajkumar and Sudeep, also exercised their franchise. Several new couples cast their votes either before or after their marriage. Many booths saw centenarians and differently-abled people actively taking part in the democratic process. Out of 14 segments that went to polls, the highest turnout of 74.87 per cent was recorded in Mandya, followed by Udupi-Chikmagalur and Hassan at an identical 72.13 per cent, and the least 48.61 per cent in Bangalore Central.

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JAMMU

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

More than 70 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the Jammu-Reasi Lok Sabha constituency in the second phase of polling amid tight security arrangements on Friday. Over 67.22 per cent polling was recorded till 5.00 pm and a large number of voters were still standing in the polling booths to cast their votes. Election Commission authorities said while sharing the Assembly-wise polling percentage. Former Minister and working president of Congress in Jammu and Kashmir Raman Bhalla is challenging two-time sitting MP Jugal Kishore Sharma of BJP. Ankur Sharma of Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal is also in the fray to test the political waters ahead of the maiden Assembly polls in the Union Territory. Of 17,80,835 eligible voters, 11,97,127 had exercised their right to vote till 5.00 p.m. sealing the fate of 22 candidates in the fray across 2416 polling stations spread across 4 districts of Jammu, Samba, Reasi, and Rajouri (83- Kalakote-Sunderbani).



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SC to consider listing Delhi Government's plea on services row with Centre

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday told the Delhi Government that it would consider listing its plea challenging the Central Government's law establishing pre-eminence of the Lieutenant Governor over the elected dispensation in controlling services in the national Capital. A bench comprising Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra was urged by senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appearing for the AAP Government, that the whole administration has come to a standstill and the matter needed to be heard. The CJ said presently a nine-judge bench matter is going on and he will consider the submission. Presently, the nine-judge bench headed by the CJ is hearing petitions



raising a vexed legal question whether private properties can be considered "material resources of the community" under Article 39(b) of the Constitution, which is a part of the Directive Principles of State Policy. Earlier on February 9, the Delhi Government had mentioned the plea for urgent listing before the five-judge Constitution bench. On September 27 last year, the top court had ordered that a common compilation of submissions be filed by both the parties in the petition by the Delhi Government.

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Two terrorists killed in Baramulla

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ JAMMU

Amid high-voltage electioneering going on in the Baramulla Lok Sabha constituency of North Kashmir, a joint team of security forces on Friday eliminated two terrorists in the Nowpora area of Sopore. A civilian and two security personnel were also injured in the exchange of firing which continued intermittently during the night. The condition of all three personnel is stable. According to the Inspector General of Police, Kashmir range VK Birdi, "a joint operation was launched by the security forces on receipt of information about the presence of terrorists in the Nowpora area of Sopore in



Security personnel stand guard during an encounter with terrorists in Nowpora area of Sopore on Friday

the Baramulla district late Thursday evening". IG Kashmir said that during the search operations, the hiding terrorists opened indiscriminate firing on the security personnel leading to a fierce gunfight.

The intermittent firing continued during the night. The two terrorists were neutralised early Friday morning after fresh contact was established. The entire area was sanitised after the recovery of arms ammunition and other incriminating material. IG Kashmir VK Birdi said the identity of the slain terrorists is yet to be ascertained. Based on documents recovered from the encounter site one of the terrorists has been identified as Saifullah, he added. Voting is scheduled to take place during the fifth phase of polling on May 20. Peoples' Conference Chairman Sajad Lone and former Chief Minister Omar Abdullah are locked in a straight fight on the Lok Sabha seat.

BJP, Cong candidates file papers for Lucknow East bypoll

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

OP Srivastava from the Bharatiya Janata Party and Mukesh Singh Chauhan from the Congress filed their nomination papers for bypolls to the Lucknow East assembly constituency on Friday. A total of two nominations were filed on the first day of the nominations. No candidate turned up to file nomination for the Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency or Mohanlalganj. Both the candidates first visited the Hanuman Setu temple and paid obeisance to the

deity before reaching the collectorate. BJP candidate OP Srivastava reached the collectorate at 11:30 am riding a BJP 'Rath', followed by a cavalcade of cars with thousands of party workers. Srivastava was accompanied by Finance Minister Suresh Khanna and BJP city president Anand Dwivedi besides Mayor Sushma Kharakwal and other senior party leaders. Flashing the victory sign before proceeding towards the collectorate, Srivastava spoke of a certain win in the bypoll and Lok Sabha elections. "The BJP will win because Prime Minister Narendra Modi has fulfilled the basic needs of the general public which had been neglected in the past 70 years. PM Modi has reached out to all categories of the people, such as the poor, labourers, youth, and farmers. He has also empowered women," Srivastava said. He also cited Defence Minister Rajnath Singh's role in the development of his constituency. Asked to comment on the prospects of INDIA bloc candidate Mukesh Singh Chauhan, he said there was absolutely no challenge. "For the 140 crore people of this country, the BJP is a guarantee for the progress, while the INDIA bloc will only set alarm bells ringing. The BJP will win all the 80 seats in UP



BJP candidate OP Srivastava, and Congress candidate Mukesh Singh Chauhan on their way to collectorate in Lucknow to file nomination papers on Friday



Pioneer



सूचना
सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरा सही नाम गुलाब प्रसाद (Gulab Prasad) पुत्र राम देव प्रसाद है, जो मेरे आधार कार्ड, इन्टर मिडिएट के अंक प्रमाण पत्र में तथा मेरे पिता के सेवा सम्बन्धित अभिलेखों में अंकित है। त्रुटिबश मेरे हाईस्कूल के अंक प्रमाण पत्र अनुक्रमांक (23254295) में मेरा नाम गुलाब गुप्ता अंकित हो गया है, जो कि गलत है। गुलाब प्रसाद पुत्र रामदेव प्रसाद निवासी - 94 खा सरयाय बगझौरा सलेमपुर गढमलपुर बलिया यू० पी० 221709

NOTICE

DUE TO MISTAKE IN PASSPORT MY NAME WRITTEN AS MOHAMMAD RAZA DANIALY & FATHER'S NAME AS QAMAR RAZA RIZVI WHERE AS MY CORRECT NAME IS MOHD. RAZA DANIALY & FATHER'S CORRECT NAME IS SYED QAMAR RAZA. PLEASE CORRECT ACCORDINGLY. MOHD. RAZA DANIALY RO 546/52 HARDOI ROAD, S A R F A R A Z G A N J, THAKURGANJ, LUCKNOW-226003

NOTICE

I have changed my name from SAURABH KUMAR JAISWAL to SAURABH JAISWAL. In future I shall be known as SAURABH JAISWAL. SAURABH JAISWAL S/o Subhash Chandra Jaiswal, Jafarpur, Babuganj, Prayagraj

NOTICE

My name Shakuntala Devi is registered in my husband's service record, whereas in Aadhaar card it is Shakuntala Rawat which is true, in future I will be known as Shakuntala Rawat wife of late Gajai Singh Rawat R/o Gopesh Kunj, Sec-6, Babu Vihar, Vrindavan Colony, Lucknow.

NOTICE

The DOB of my mother and father have been wrongly recorded in the defence records. While father Ram kishor exact DOB 09-06-1961 Mother Vimala Devi exact DOB 08-07-1973 Which is correct. Ankit Patel service no. 17038698k Belwara. Hamlet naseerpur PS malwan fatehpur.

NOTICE

I Mrs. SAMINA aged about 44 years w/o Mr. ABU ZAFAR Residing at H.No. 282 Qasimpura (Baz ki masjid) Maunath Bhanjani Distt-Mau, Uttar Pradesh Pin- 275101 have changed my name to SAMINA ABUL KALAM vide affidavit dated 24.04.2024 sworn before Advocate and Notary public Harigovind Prasad (Advocate) District-Mau Uttar Pradesh 275101.

NOTICE

DUE TO MISTAKE IN SCHOOL RECORDS of my DAUGHTER KM. SUHANA SRIVASTAVA MY (MOTHER'S) NAME WRITTEN AS SANGITA SRIVASTAVA WHERE AS MY CORRECT NAME IS SANGEETA SRIVASTAVA. PLEASE CORRECT ACCORDINGLY. MRS. SANGEETA SRIVASTAVA W/o MR. ANURAG SRIVASTAVA. 448/102 NAGARIA, THAKURGANJ, LUCKNOW

in the Lok Sabha elections," he added. Regarding the development works in Lucknow East, he said he would complete the same started out by Ashutosh Tandon, whose demise necessitated the bypoll. According to Srivastava's documents, he has movable assets worth Rs 8,48,35,361, while his wife has movable assets worth Rs 85,23,037. His immovable assets are worth Rs 3,13,00,000 and those of his wife Rs 2,30,00,000. His liabilities are to the tune of Rs 2,79,66,168,

while those of his wife are Rs 22,04,453. Mukesh Singh Chauhan also made a grand entry with a large number of Congress workers at 2 pm. Chauhan, a three-time councilor as well as an advocate, said the Lucknow East assembly constituency has been a picture of neglect, thanks to the state government. "Issue like lack of water supply and poor roads are plaguing this constituency. Waterlogging is rampant, and we are taking up

these issues with the residents. We are getting a lot of support from the locals who want a change," he said. Mukesh Singh's assets include movable property worth Rs 55,21,516.19. His wife has movable property worth Rs 11,19,002.27. Mukesh has immovable property worth Rs 57,21,682. Congress leader Devendra Pratap Singh, who accompanied Chauhan, said Lucknow East is faced with health and education issues.

"Inflation is an all-time high and youth are jobless. The BJP says that Lucknow East is their fort but Congress will conquer it, and we are confident about it," he added. Meanwhile, Parvez Alam (26), who collected the nomination form on Friday, said he would in the Lok Sabha election fray as an independent candidate. A builder by profession, Alam said he also contested the 2022 Vidhan Sabha election on the Indian National League

ticket. "I want to contest the elections because I do not understand the religious issues which the parties propagate. My aim is ensuring quality education and health for the citizens," he added. Rashtriya Insaaf Party candidate Dr Nafees Ahmed, who also collected the nomination form, is a paediatrician by profession and a resident of Rae Bareilly road. He said he would be filing nomination for the Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency. "I have been fight-

ing elections since 2012 because I feel that there are no arrangements or opportunities for the poor," he added. Rakesh Baba from a temple near Malhor also collected the nomination form on Friday. He said he would be filing his nominations for the Lok Sabha election as a Bhartiya Naman Party candidate. "I want to serve the people and end corruption which is rampant. I will be fighting elections for the first time," he said.

Nigerian citizen held on fraud charges

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A Nigerian citizen, who defrauded a woman in Alambagh, was arrested by a Special Task Force (STF) team on Friday. The accused, Cletus Obiazzi aka Fred, was residing in Guranak Nagar, Tilak Vihar, Delhi. He deceived multiple Indian citizens by creating fake profiles of USA/UK nationals on Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp to lure them into romantic relationships. Operating under the guise of these false identities, he promised expensive gifts to his victims and later posed as a Customs or Income Tax officer to extort money from them. The police recovered several items, including 10 mobile phones, a counterfeit Nigerian passport, various documents such as a driving licence and an election card from Nigeria, ATM cards, an ID card from Nigeria, and Rs 2,820 in cash. The investigation into a case in which an Alambagh resident was deceived by someone claiming to be 'Raymond Yadav' from London led to the arrest of the accused.

In his confession, the accused revealed that he came to India in 2019 with a fake passport and visa, engaging in cybercrime like many other Nigerians who visit India for this purpose. He said they would lure victims by posting false photos online, engaging in romantic conversations on social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, posing as citizens of developed countries like America or England, and promising various expensive gifts. As per his confession, the accused and his accomplices demanded money under the pretense of taxes, customs charges, and money transfer fees. They utilised SIM cards and bank accounts registered under fake addresses to commit these crimes. The accused disclosed that they purchased Indian SIMs for Rs 5,000 each from one Nigerian individual and obtained bank account numbers for Rs 10,000 from another. The accused has defrauded hundreds of Indian citizens of crores of rupees, transferring the money to Nigerian bank accounts belonging to relatives or acquaintances. Recently, he transferred Rs 71,000 to a Nigerian account, whose details he provided during interrogation.

Ritika confirmed that the thieves ransacked the parlour and stole cash from the safe. "After reviewing the CCTV footage, we spotted three unidentified men in the parlour. One scaled the main gate and entered the house where the parlour is located, while the other two stood guard outside," she explained. Details of the parlour staff were also provided. The police have registered a case and started an investigation. In a separate incident, a group of youths attacked a lone individual they identified as a rival in Chinhat during the night on Thursday. The victim, Vikas Yadav of Hardasi Khara, was headed to a shop when he was intercepted by Abhishek Gautam, Sachin Yadav, Azad Rawat, and Ayush Kumar Rawat of Hardasi Khara. "They brandished iron rods and knives, attacking me without provocation," Yadav reported. He sustained lacerations from the assault. Additionally, unidentified men attempted to steal cash from an ATM housed in a building opposite Ashiyana police station. The theft was discovered by the bank's surveillance team, who detected an attempt to break into the ATM's cash tray. The incident was reported to the police after the bank received notification from their surveillance team. Notably, the police were unaware of the attempted theft until they received the bank's complaint.

CASH STOLEN FROM BEAUTY PARLOUR
Three unidentified accused stole Rs 48,000 from a beauty parlour in Gomti Nagar, despite claims of intense night vigil by police picket teams. The complainant, Ritika Mohan of Vijay Khand, operates the beauty parlour located within her house. "We were at our parental house in South City on Lucknow-Rae Bareilly road when the parlour was closed on the night of April 19. Upon returning the next morning, the staff discovered that the beauty parlour had been burgled," she stated.

CITY BRIEFS

DIAGNOSTIC ASPECTS OF LYMPH NODE TUMOURS DISCUSSED

The department of pathology, Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences, conducted a workshop, 'Understanding Lymphoma Diagnosis - Live Microscopy Session', on Friday. The workshop was organised in the lead-up to the first annual conference of the UP Hematology Group (UPHGCN-24). The workshop was designed as a full-day session focused on discussing the diagnostic aspects of lymph node tumours, specifically lymphomas. To address this critical and challenging area of pathology diagnosis, Prof Sumeet Gujral from the department of pathology at Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, and Brig Tathagata Chatterjee delivered lectures and presented microscopic cases for interactive discussion with the audience. Prof Pradyumn Singh and Prof Namrata Punit Awasthi highlighted the nuances of lymphomas involving the skin and those that mimic other tumours, potentially leading to diagnostic delays. The workshop was attended by over 50 delegates from Uttar Pradesh and neighbouring regions. The participants engaged in hands-on live microscopic viewing, image projection, and audio recording, which received a positive response.

COLLEGE OF NURSING

The College of Nursing at SGP GIMS celebrated the Lamp Lighting and Oath Taking Ceremony for the 14th batch of BSc (Nursing) students on Friday. Fifty-six BSc (Nursing) students participated in the traditional pledge ceremony. The event was coordinated by Yadiya, associate professor at the College of Nursing, and began with a welcome address by Anju Verma, associate professor. Principal Dr Radha K presented the annual report for the academic year 2023-24. This was followed by an address from SGP GIMS director Prof RK Dhiman, who was the chief guest.

BELGIUM DELEGATION VISITS RDSO

To connect themselves with Indian Railways and to showcase their products, a Belgium delegation visited RDSO on Wednesday. The delegation consisted of members of six Belgium companies, including Samuel Buche, Business Developer, AGC Glass and Sylvain Bertacco, Regional Director, CET Power. A detailed presentation was given covering the recent achievements of RDSO and the ongoing projects. The procurement procedure of Indian Railways was also explained during the presentation. RDSO Director-General Ajay Kumar Rana thanked the Belgium delegation and said that such visits would provide opportunities to Indian Railways to connect with new technology.

WORKSHOP

The concluding session of a two-day workshop focused on conceptualising and developing the International Vedic Science Centre in Naimisharanya took place in Lucknow. Advisor to the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Awanish Awasthi was the chief guest. The proposed centre aims to preserve, research, and apply Vedic knowledge for the advancement of humanity. The institution will demonstrate the relevance of India's ancient wisdom by validating it through modern science and technology. In his address, Awasthi highlighted the significance of leveraging faith traditions for societal progress, citing the global success of the Ram temple in Ayodhya as a crowd-funded project. He emphasised the UP government's commitment to translating Vedic wisdom and science into tangible solutions for contemporary challenges resulting from our actions.

LUMBA STUDENTS GET JOBS

The department of business administration at University of Lucknow (LUMBA) announced the outcome of a recent placement drive conducted by Berger

Paints India Ltd. After a rigorous selection process, Saif Alam, Shashank Srivastava, Divyansu Dahlan, Harsh Mishra, and Saurabh Mishra have been selected to join Berger Paints India Ltd as sales officer trainees, with an attractive package of Rs 7.09 LPA. Berger Paints India Ltd has extended this opportunity to the talented individuals from LUMBA, acknowledging their potential and caliber. The selected students will commence their professional journey with one of India's leading paint companies, undergoing comprehensive training and development as sales officer trainees. Head of the department Prof Sangeeta Sahu congratulated the placement and career development coordinators for collaborating with blue-chip companies across various industries and sectors. LU Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai congratulated the selected students on their achievement.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY DAY

The Council of Science and Technology, Uttar Pradesh, celebrated World Intellectual Property Day on Friday (April 26). This day was established by the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in 2000 to raise awareness about intellectual property, promote creativity, artistry, and encourage innovation. The theme for this year is 'IP and the SDGs: Building a common future with innovation and creativity'. The Council of Science and Technology, UP, organised a seminar focused on intellectual property. Former Managing Director of PWD Bharat Raj Singh was the chief guest at the event. Prof Alka Mishra from the department of astronomy, Lucknow University, was also present on the occasion. Director of the Council Dr DK Srivastava highlighted that two innovators identified by them were honoured by the Government of India on World Intellectual Property Day.

BJP got its 'acche din' but where are the good days it promised: Maya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) president Mayawati on Friday targeted the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) over its promise to bring good days for farmers, poor and other deprived people of the country, asking what happened to those much-publicised promises and why the lives of crores of poor, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and minorities continued to be miserable. In a post on X, Mayawati said, "In the second phase of Lok Sabha elections in the country today, especially the poor, unemployed, farmers, women and other deprived people must think that you have brought good days of BJP but what happened to their much-publicised and tempting promise of bringing acche din for you? Rather, why is their life so troubled?" In a related post she said, "Like Congress slogan of 'Garibi Hatao', BJP too has broken a big promise, whereas the government's basic duty is to run the country under the sacred humanitarian and welfare objectives of the Constitution and ensure the development of the Dalits. Then why are the lives of crores of poor, Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes and minorities continuously helpless and miserable?" she further said. "The interest of the country and its nearly 125 crore hardworking people lies in voting to bring 'acche din' that are free of poverty and unemployment,

Bahujan samaj wants Mayawati to be first Dalit PM: Anand

Lucknow (PNS): Akash Anand, Bahujan Samaj Party supreme Mayawati's nephew and her political successor, on Friday said that party chief Mayawati would decide after seeing the results whether the BSP would support any alliance or not. Making the above claim before a new agency soon after casting his vote in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Akash said that they were fighting separately because they do not align themselves with the policy decisions of the National Democratic Alliance or the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA). "Mayawati will decide on the issue of post-poll alliance after seeing the results. We are fighting separately because whether it is INDIA Bloc or

NDA, we do not align with their policy decisions. Our agenda is very clear; we are talking about employment. Education is a big issue for us," he said. He further emphasised that Mayawati has always been a candidate for them. "Bahujan samaj wants Behenji (Mayawati) to be the first Dalit prime minister," he said. The BSP leader also claimed that after seeing the ground situation, he believed that the results would be in their party's favour. "From what we are seeing on the ground, very good results are going to come this time. You all should vote. This is your right. Baba Saheb Ambedkar's Constitution has given you this right," he said.

rather than voting for any particular person or party. Come forward to vote for a 'good government' that is pro-Bahujan. Hence, 'First vote then refreshments', Mayawati added. Earlier on Thursday, UP Congress president Ajay Rai in a post on X said, "There is an appeal to the respected voters of Uttar Pradesh to play an important role in securing the country, Constitution and democracy by casting their invaluable vote to the candidates of the Indi Alliance. Your one

vote can save the country from inflation, atrocities and corruption." There are more than 1.67 crore voters, 7,797 polling stations and 17,704 polling booths in the eight Lok Sabha constituencies where polling was held on Friday. Among the 91 candidates in the fray in this phase are actor-turned-politician Hema Malini, seeking a third term from Mathura on a Bharatiya Janata Party ticket, and actor Arun Govil, who portrayed the role of Lord Ram in television serial 'Ramayan'.

Mishaps waiting to happen at poorly managed LDA apartments, establishments

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Lucknow Development Authority's (LDA) properties, particularly the apartments and commercial establishments, are poorly managed and pose a significant risk of mishaps in the near future. Eighty per cent of the switchboards in the apartments are hanging loosely without proper safety precautions for residents and visitors. Alarmingly, 18 out of 24 commercial units are deemed unsafe in the event of a fire or electrical accident. LDA chief engineer AK Singh, leading an investigative team, presented these findings to Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi, attributing the issue to inadequate maintenance. Furthermore, the condition of commercial properties is reported to be worse than that of the apartments. In March, Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs) lodged complaints with the VC, warning of potential major incidents beyond human control if action is not taken promptly. Expressing concern over the mismanagement of apartments and shopping complexes, Tripathi described the situation as alarming and swiftly formed an investigative team led by the chief engineer. This panel was tasked with identifying properties at risk of significant accidents.

The VC emphasised the urgency of this work, aiming to protect residents and visitors to shopping complexes without delay. In a letter dispatched on Friday evening, he requested cooperation from Lucknow Electric Supply Authorities (LESA) to rectify anomalies, noting that LDA engineers cannot proceed without their assistance. The VC indicated readiness to begin operations pending a response from counterparts and issued directives to shopkeepers and visitors to avoid contact with exposed power cables until repairs are completed.

NOTICE
This is to inform that Original sale deed (chain deed) which was duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar Lucknow bearing doc. no. 9089, dated 26/11/1998, regarding the property house constructed over plot nos. 268/643Ba, 268/643A, situated at New Tilak Nagar, Ward Tilak Nagar, Lucknow was lost with my client namely Arvind Kumar Gupta S/O Kiran Prasad Gupta R/O Hasanagi, Thana, Pargana & Tehsil Hasanagi, District Unnao on 25.04.2024. If any person has any claim or objection to it, kindly inform to Mr. B.N. Tripathi Adv. Res. C-15, Nehru Vihar, Kalyanpur, Lucknow Mob-9336127853

PUBLIC NOTICE
It is to inform general public that Original Sale Deed, dated 23.02.2005, executed by Kallu, in favour of Parasram, registered in the office of Registrar II, Lucknow, in Batti No. 1, Zid No. 4901, on Pages 73-84, at Serial No. 1156 on 23.02.2005 respect of house built on Plot No. 21, Area 800 Sq. Ft. Part of Kharsa No. 14111, Situated at Village Jaharpur, Ward Shankerpurwa, Lucknow now owned by Smt. Sarvesh Upadhyay has been lost by her at Kalyanpur market, Lucknow, on 23.04.2024 around 6 P.M. while going to Kalyanpur Chauraha for getting 18 photocopy from her house. Now, Smt. Sanki Tripathi is purchasing it from Smt. Sarvesh Upadhyay and thereafter it will be merged with PNB Housing Finance Ltd against loan. If any person or financial institution has or found these documents please return to her. In case of objection in this regard then contact to Advocate mentioned below with objection in writing with relevant documents, within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice.
Mr. Amit Kumar Singh Rathaur-Advocate
Chamber No. 7, UGF, Krishna Tower,
Chakbast Road, Quaiserbagh,
Lucknow. Mobile No. 9559811119

HDFC BANK
We understand your world. D-58/52, A-2, A-5, M.S. Plaza, Rathaytra Crossing, Varanasi - 221010

LEGAL CELL
POSSESSION NOTICE APPENDIX IV (RULE 811)
Whereas, the undersigned being the authorized officer of the HDFC Bank Ltd. under the Secularization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, issued demand notice dated 09.10.2023 calling upon the borrower(s) 1. M/s. Om Aditya Trading Company Through Its Proprietor Mrs. Babita Devi 2. Mrs. Babita Devi W/o Mr. Santosh Kumar 3. Mr. Santosh Kumar S/o Late Muralidhar pay the amount mentioned in the notice Rs. 49,56,025.00/- (Rupees Forty-Nine Lakhs Fifty-Six Thousand And Twenty-Five Only) within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower(s) having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower(s) and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under section 13 (4) of the said Act on the read with rule 8 & 9 of the said Rules, on this 25 April 2024. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to charge of HDFC Bank Ltd. for an amount of notice 49,56,025.00/- (Rupees Forty-Nine Lakhs Fifty-Six Thousand And Twenty-Five Only) and interest thereon together with expenses and charges etc. less amount paid, if any.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
Arazi No. 1844, Admeasuring 0.02-3/4 Decimal / 1196.51 Sq.ft. Situated At Maussa Bhandi (chakbandi Area), Pargana-Anguli, Tehsil-Saiganj, District Jaunpur, Uttar Pradesh- 466554. Which is in Name Of Santosh Kumar. Bounded As Under:- East : Land Of Others. West : Road Shaighari- Azamgarh. North: Rest Part Of Land. South : House Of Ramesh.

DATE :- 25-April-2024, PLACE :- Shaighari Jaunpur

Authorized Officer, HDFC Bank Ltd.

Massive roadshow by Modi, Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A massive crowd congregated along the streets of Bareilly on Friday evening, fervently participating in the grand rally led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. Earlier on Thursday also, Prime Minister Modi had addressed a public gathering for the Aonla constituency in Bareilly. Prime Minister Modi, accompanied by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath arrived in Bareilly to hold another roadshow. The streets were so packed that there was barely room to move along the 1.2-kilometre route. Their roadshow, aimed at rallying support for Lok Sabha candidate Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar, commenced from the Swayamvar Banquet Hall in Rajendra Nagar and traversed through Shivaji Chowk to the DD Puram intersection at Shaheed Chowk. Throughout the journey, Modi and Yogi greeted the crowd by waving their party symbol. Stringent security measures were in place along the route and surrounding areas. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath urged the public to elect Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar from Bareilly and send him to the Lok Sabha. Responding to their rallying call, the voters of Bareilly resounded chants of 'Jai Shri Ram' and pledged their commitment to achieving the ambitious goal of 'Abki Baar 400 Paar'. Notably, both majority and minority communities joined hands in welcoming Modi and Yogi during the extensive 45-minute roadshow, underscoring a collective spirit of inclusivity. The huge crowd stretched as far as the eye could see, marking a new record for Modi-Yogi's roadshow. Throughout the roadshow, the public assured Modi



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during a roadshow in Bareilly on Friday

and Yogi that in return for the development, security and good governance they had provided, they (voters) would ensure Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar's victory for the third time in Bareilly under Modi's leadership. Throughout the entire route, a convergence of folk culture was evident as the prime minister and chief minister were welcomed with the resonating sounds of conch shells and damru. At 12 different locations along the roadshow, the prime minister and the chief minister were honoured with showers of flowers. Floral tributes were bestowed upon the dignitaries at intervals along

the roadshow, accentuating the vibrant reception. Houses and shops along the route displayed 'Jai Shri Ram' signs, while saffron flags and posters adorned the area. The air resonated with chants of 'Jai Shree Ram' and musical renditions of devotional songs, enveloping the surroundings in a reverent aura. Enthusiastic slogans of 'Modi-Yogi Zindabad' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' echoed through the streets, igniting a palpable sense of patriotic fervour. People of all ages – women, elders, men, youth, and children – eagerly awaited a glimpse of Modi and Yogi, capturing every moment of

the roadshow on their mobile phones. The Nath Nagri was aglow with saffron hues on Friday as the roadshow unfolded amidst a sacred ambience. Priests and 'batus' bestowed blessings by chanting mantras, adding a spiritual essence to the vibrant spectacle. Twelve intricately arranged platforms showcased the rich cultural tapestry of various regions nationwide, captivating the public with a kaleidoscope of diversity. The public was deeply moved upon witnessing Modi and Yogi. Saffron and Bharatiya Janata Party flags fluttered everywhere, while children and BJP supporters donned saffron attire to express their solidarity with

Modi and Yogi. Both leaders received warm welcomes from not only the majority community but also the minority community. The thoroughfare was illuminated by a celestial glow, punctuated by vast cutouts of Modi and Yogi adorning strategic vantage points. To conclude the event, Modi and Yogi paid floral tributes to the statue of martyr Pankaj Arora. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, BJP state president Bhopendra Singh Chaudhary, MP Santosh Gangwar, and BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Bareilly, Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar, were present alongside the prime minister in the chariot.

Cong wants to divide country on religious lines, says CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Lashing out at the Congress on Friday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said the manifesto of the grand old party was harmful to India, the world's largest democracy. Addressing the media at his official residence here, the chief minister said that the Bharatiya Janata Party had entered the elections with the issues of development, improved security, and good governance under the Prime Minister Narendra Modi government. "But just before the first phase (of polls), the manifesto of Congress, the most important constituent of the Indi Alliance, was announced and it drew the attention of the entire country. The contents of the manifesto bodes danger for India which is the world's largest democracy," he said. "The Congress, in its manifesto, wants to lay the foundation of the country's division on religious grounds by supporting issues ranging from implementation of Taliban rule to personal law. The BJP will strongly oppose it in any case," he added. Chief Minister Yogi remarked that everyone had read the statements of Congress advisor Sam Pitroda. "During the tenure of the United Progressive Alliance government, reports of the Ranganath Mishra Committee and the

Sachar Committee were brought by the Congress. Additionally, in Karnataka, the government led by the Congress is forcibly including Muslims in the reservation for backward classes, thus unfairly dividing the rights of the Other Backward Classes," he said. He further said that by discussing the inheritance tax and plans to conduct an X-ray of properties to seize and redistribute them, the Congress aims to lay the foundation of the country's division on religious grounds. "Along with this, they are also contemplating to take away half of the inheritance property and reintroduce laws such as personal laws. The partition of this country took place due to these reasons. If any political party tries to do this, it will be opposed at all costs," he added. "Naxalism is on the decline in India. If there is any attempt to revive it, we will never accept it. The BJP government has been taking action against corruption from the beginning. However, if anyone tries to loot the property of the common man, we will not allow it to happen," Chief Minister Yogi said. Attacking the Congress and its allies for endorsing a Taliban-like mentality in the country's politics, Chief Minister Yogi said, "They are trying to resurrect the Maoist insurgency and are attempting to demean

women by reintroducing practices like triple talaq through personal laws. Hence, in the present scenario, the BJP is opposing these issues." He said that the Congress and its allies were bringing up these issues to draw public attention. "The public's attention is constantly being drawn to what is the mentality of Congress and the Indi Alliance. To prevent their intentions from materialising, it is imperative for the public to act decisively and thwart them through every vote they cast," he said. "What Chidambaram was saying about the inheritance tax is exactly what Sam Pitroda is saying. It is necessary to counteract their intentions, otherwise, they can pose a danger to this country, to the common man, and to half the population," Chief Minister Yogi added. The chief minister said that there was enthusiasm and a positive atmosphere in the country regarding the works of Prime Minister Modi. "The country wants to see progress, and Prime Minister Modi has provided a new direction to the country in 10 years," he pointed out. He said, "Development has occurred in every sector. India has emerged as a rapidly growing economy in the world. With a resounding victory on June 4, the Bharatiya Janata Party will once again come to power."

'Cong wants to give minorities right to eat beef'

Moradabad/Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Friday said the Congress wants to give minorities the right to eat beef, adding that this amounted to allowing cow slaughter. "These shameless people promise to provide the right to eat 'gaumaans' (cow's meat), whereas our scriptures call the cow mother. They wish to give cows into the hands of butchers. Will India ever accept this?" An Uttar Pradesh BJP statement quoted Adityanath as saying. The chief minister said they wanted to give minorities the liberty to eat the food of their choice, "meaning they are

talking about allowing cow slaughter". Adityanath was addressing an election rally in Bilari in Moradabad district to garner support for BJP candidate Parmeshwar Lal Saini for the Sambhal Lok Sabha seat. Echoing the recent speeches by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the CM alleged the Congress intends to seize the 'stridhan' (women's wealth), and distribute it among Rohingyas and Bangladeshi infiltrators. He claimed the Congress in its manifesto has talked about the X-ray of people's property. "This means that if somebody has four rooms in his home, two of those will be

taken away by them. Not only this, the Congress says that it will take possession of women's jewellery, the country will never accept this," he said. They had made such efforts from 2004 to 2014 under the UPA government, Adityanath said. "They had tried to give a quota to Muslims out of the reservation provided to the SCs, STs and OBCs in Karnataka," he said. He referred to the Sachar Committee recommendations, and said the Congress wanted to implement it by giving six per cent reservation to them out of the quota for the SCs, STs and OBCs. Accusing the Congress of double standards,

he claimed that former prime minister Manmohan Singh had said that Muslims have the first right to the country's resources. The UP chief minister also alleged the Congress is hatching a conspiracy for further division of the country. Adityanath said it is being said that "bhai-bahan" (referring to Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra) are planning to go to Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Ram. "When they had a government, they used to question the existence of Lord Ram. But the deity is for everybody. This is an example of their double standards," he said. PTI

₹127.51 lakh worth of liquor, drugs seized

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The enforcement agencies, in compliance with the directive of the Election Commission of India, seized Rs 127.51 lakh worth of liquor, drugs, and cash on April 25. The seizures were made by the enforcement agencies, including the Excise, Income Tax, Police, Narcotics departments, and others, in statewide drives. From March 16 to April 25, Rs 32,281.70 lakh worth of liquor, drugs, precious metals, and cash, among other items, have been seized. Uttar Pradesh's Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said that the Excise, Income Tax, Police, Narcotics departments and other enforcement agencies in the state were taking continuous actions. He said on April 25, liquor, drugs and cash worth Rs 127.51 lakh were seized. This included Rs 13.93 lakh in cash, 18,628.60 litres of liquor valued at Rs 49.95 lakh, 193,367.70 grams of drugs valued at Rs 63.62 lakh, and other materials valued at Rs 0.01 lakh. In a major seizure on April 25, 1,52,000 grams of drugs worth Rs 38 lakh were seized in the Marhian assembly constituency of Mirzapur district. The CEO said that from March 16 to April 25, Rs 32,281.70 lakh worth of liquor, drugs, precious metals and cash have been seized, including Rs 3,181.54 lakh in cash, Rs 4,435.47 lakh worth of liquor, Rs 21,346.72 lakh worth of drugs, Rs 2,161.59 lakh worth of precious metals and Rs 1,156.39 lakh worth of other materials.

UP yet to see Cong star campaigners

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

With polling for the second phase of the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh completed on Friday evening, Congress star campaigners, including party president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chiefs Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi along with AICC general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, have so far not addressed a single public meeting in the state to woo the voters. Interestingly, the star campaigners did not take any interest even when five of the 17 Lok Sabha seats allotted to the party in UP went to polls in the first two phases. So far, Rahul Gandhi has held a joint press conference with alliance partner and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav on the last day of campaigning for the first phase while Priyanka Gandhi Vadra has held a roadshow in support of party candidate from Saharanpur, Imran Masood. In the second phase, in which party had equal share of four of the eight seats with Samajwadi Party, the top Congress leaders were not seen in the state to boost the winning probability of their candidates. Sources said that so far the campaign trail for the Congress has been handled just by the

AICC general secretary and party in-charge of Uttar Pradesh, Avinash Chandra Pandey and UPCC president Ajay Rai. The two have held about half a dozen meetings in western Uttar Pradesh for the 16 constituencies which went to polls in the first two phases. The sources say that absence of the top Congress leaders from the election scene in the state has badly affected the prospect of the party candidates and as both the alliance partner have not held any joint public rally so far in western UP, it has further dented the winning chances of Congress as well as SP candidates as both the alliance partners have failed to send a positive message to the voters. A senior party leader claims that withholding the announcement of candidates of party's strongholds Amethi and Rae Bareilly, from where Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra are likely to contest the polls, has also adversely affected the morale of party cadre, thus sending a wrong message amongst the voters. "Had the names of Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra been announced, the scenario for the party would have been different as the workers and leaders had started working with their full strength at least in Amethi and Rae Bareilly to ensure victory of the two Gandhi sons,"

the leader said, adding that now the scene might change if Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra would go for darshan of Lord Ram in Ayodhya after announcing to fight from Amethi and Rae Bareilly respectively. Meanwhile, the Congress once again announced its list of 40 star campaigners for the third phase of polls in. The list includes the names of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former party chief Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. The other prominent names in the list are senior Congress leader Salman Khurshid, former chief minister of Rajasthan, Ashok Gehlot, Pramod Tiwari, Sachin Pilot, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate and others.

Dimple draws flak for Pulwama remark

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After making political statements on the Pulwama terror attack, Samajwadi Party leader Dimple Yadav drew flak from several women whose husbands were murdered by SP goons. Former MLA late Krishnanand Rai's wife Alka Rai, late Umesh Pal's wife Jaya Pal and late Anil Singh's wife Sita Singh, responded to Dimple's remarks about the 'mangalsutra' by launching a counter-attack. Jaya Pal, the wife of Prayagraj's late advocate Umesh Pal, remarked, "Pulwama ki baat Dimple Yadav ko shobha nahin deti. Gund, mafia aur apartheid hain ki bhabi hain Dimple Yadav. Today, when all these mafias are being eliminated, they are unhappy. The 'mangalsutra' of many sisters like me has been snatched away by mafias backed by the Samajwadi Party." She continued, "Where was Dimple when my husband and two policemen were being showered with bullets? Many children were left orphaned. Many sisters still weep remembering their brothers' wrists. Mangalsutra utaarne aur chudiyen todne ka dard Dimple nahin samajh sakengi. Unki party desh ka Islamikaran karna chahti hai aur Islam mein mangalsutra ka koi mahatva nahi hai (Dimple can't comprehend the pain of removing mangalsutra and breaking bangles. Her party aims Islamisation of the country, where mangalsutra holds no significance)." Jaya Pal also mentioned the day Dimple Yadav's father-in-law opened fire on Ram devotees, saying who will give the account of the mangalsutras of those widows?

BJP snatched jobs from youth, failed to generate employment: Akhilesh

Etah: Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav on Friday attacked the BJP over the issue of leaked exam papers in Uttar Pradesh and the alleged rising unemployment, accusing the 'double-engine' government of the party of ruining the lives of youths. Addressing an election rally here in support of the party candidate, the SP chief said the BJP government in Uttar Pradesh deliberately leaked exam papers to avoid giving jobs to the youth. "They have snatched your jobs and failed to generate employment. The youth must think seriously about this, the BJP has ruined one-third of your lives," the SP president said. "Without jobs, the future of the youth is dark and they are facing bleak marriage prospects," he added. Recalling how question papers of different exams were leaked in Uttar Pradesh recently, the SP chief alleged that the BJP

did it deliberately as it did not want to provide jobs to the people. Had they acted when the first paper was leaked, it would not have happened again. These people had claimed that the exams would be conducted safely, he said. He said the 'Agnipath' scheme has put the safety of the country in jeopardy and asked the youth to ensure the victory of the INDIA bloc if it wanted to bring back the earlier system of recruitment to the army. Pointing at a group of police personnel deployed at the venue of the rally, he said, "Those in khaki uniforms (police) think their jobs are permanent, but if the BJP comes, they will have jobs only for three years." Attacking the BJP over the issue of farm laws, he said the farmers are unhappy even today as they are not getting the right price for their produce. Industrialists with huge

warehouses are purchasing their produce and controlling the prices, he said. Yadav alleged that the free ration being provided by the government to the poor is of inferior quality. On electoral bonds, he said, "It is not donation but extortion. People often help each other with donations but does give Rs 1,000 crore? The BJP people do not want to talk about it. This too is a reason behind the rising inflation. If someone gives you money, will he not realise it?" The SP president, who saw several of his allies parting ways in the run-up to the elections, said, "Those gone have not left us. We will win the election and bring them to our side." Promising to waive loans of farmers once the INDIA bloc is voted to power, Yadav said Rs 16 lakh crore loans of capitalists were waived by the ruling party. PTI

HDFC BANK Head Office : HDFC Bank Ltd., HDFC Bank House, Senapati Bapat Marg, Lower Panel, Mumbai - 400 013 Branch Office : HDFC Bank Ltd, 2nd Floor, Exporo Building, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226010. **DEMAND NOTICE**

DEMAND NOTICE UNDER SEC 13(2) OF THE SECURITISATION AND RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT, 2002. The following borrowers & co-borrowers availed the below mentioned secured loans from HDFC Bank Ltd. the loans of below mentioned borrowers & co-borrowers have been secured by the mortgage of their respective properties. As they have failed to adhere to the terms & conditions of the respective loan agreements and had become irregular, their loans were classified as NPA's as per the RBI guidelines. Amounts due by them to HDFC Bank Ltd are mentioned in the following table and further interest on the said amounts shall also be payable as applicable and the same will be charged with effect from their respective dates.

Sl. No.	Loan Facility and A/c No.	Name of Borrowers & Co-borrowers/ Mortgageor	Outstanding as per 13(2)/Notice Date	Details of Secured Assets	Date of NPA
1	Loan Against property A/c: 82469015	1. Mr. Abhay Shukla (Borrower & Mortgageor) S/o Mr. Gopi Nath Shukla: 40, Kaiser Bagh Behind BHKhande, Music College, Lucknow-226001, Uttar Pradesh. 2. Mrs. Shruti Shukla (Co-borrower & Mortgageor) W/o Mr. Abhay Shukla: 40, Kaiser Bagh Behind BHKhande, Music College, Lucknow-226001, Uttar Pradesh.	Rs.38,02,932.00/- as on 21-03-2024 / Notice Date: 20-03-2024	H. N. C-757, Admesuring At 202.5 Sq.mtr, Situated At Sector-06, Indira Nagar, Lucknow-226016, Uttar Pradesh. (Property Owned By Mr. Abhay Shukla, Mrs. Shruti Shukla & Mr. Anil Kumar Tiwari) Bounded As Under: East: House No-C-755, North: Road, West: Road, South: House No-C-601	06/03/24
2	STP MORTGAGES A/c: 84228759	3. Mr. Anil Kumar Tewari (Co-borrower & Mortgageor) S/o Mr. Om Dutt Tewari: 289/243 Motinagar, Lucknow-226001, Uttar Pradesh. Also At: Mr. Anil Kumar Tewari S/o Mr. Om Dutt Tewari: b-1105, Near Shoot Nath Mandir, Indira Nagar, So, Lucknow-226016, Uttar Pradesh.	Rs. 1,156.39 lakh worth of other materials.		

Since the notices sent to you in the address in which you originally reside / carry on business / personally works for gain has not returned to us, we are constrained to cause this notice published. You are hereby called upon us 13(2) of the above Act to discharge the above mentioned liability with contracted rate of interest thereon from their respective dates and other costs, charges etc. within 60 days of this notice failing which you shall be exercising all or any of the rights u/ Sec 13(4) of the above Act. You are also put to notice that as per terms of notice as per Sec 13(13) of the above Act, you Bank will not transfer by sale, lease or otherwise the aforesaid secured assets.

Date: 27.04.2024, Place: LUCKNOW, UTTAR PRADESH For HDFC Bank Ltd., Authorised Officer

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Bank of India Zonal Office: "Star House" Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010, Ph.: 0522-2721512. **POSSESSION NOTICE**

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest, Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (2) read the Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, had issued a Demand Notice, calling borrower to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of same. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section 13(4) of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on the dates mentioned hereunder. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India for mentioned amount and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower & Guarantor	Description of Immovable property mortgaged / Owner of the property	Amount o/s as mentioned in the Notice u/s 13(2) Date of Demand & Possession Notice
1	Borrower : Mr. Shambhoo Nath Gupta, S/o Gorakh Nath Gupta, Address : (1) 5/644 Vikas Nagar, Near Jal Sansthan Office, Lucknow. (2) EWS H No. D.S-323/II, Ground Floor, Sector-C, Sitapur Road Yojana, Lucknow	All that part and parcel of the property consisting of EWS H No. D.S-323/II ground floor situated at Sector C Sitapur road yojana Lucknow UP. Mortgagor by : Mr. Shambhoo Nath Gupta S/O Gorakh Nath Gupta. Area- 29.355 sqmt Boundaries : East : House no E/325, West : - H No. 313-320, North : - House No. 329-336, South : -H No. E/321	₹ 8,95,816.07 + interest & other charges Demand Notice dt. 09.01.2024 Possession Notice dt. 25.04.2024

Date : 27.04.2024, Place : Lucknow Authorised Officer, Bank of India

Admn intensifies activities for nomination process in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The district administration has intensified its activities as the day for starting the nomination process for Varanasi parliamentary constituency approaches. According to the District Magistrate/ District Election Officer (DM/ DEO) S Rajalingam, the election for Lok Sabha General Election-2024 for Parliamentary Constituency 77-Varanasi will be conducted in the seventh phase as per the schedule. He said with the issuance of the notification on May 7, the

nomination papers submitted by the candidates contesting the election will be received in the Collectorate auditorium on the appointed date and time.

Meanwhile, under Section (21), (22) and (23) of the Representation of the People Act 1951, he appointed specified SDM Rajatalab Amit Kumar as Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) to assist the returning officer and perform his duties.

The DM/ DEO reiterated that the personnel engaged in election work should gain proficiency and expressed his com-

mitment to conduct the Lok Sabha elections in a safe, fair and well-organised manner. He said the personnel engaged in the election work should take training with full dedication and gain proficiency so that they can discharge their responsibilities with priority during voting. He especially stressed that after the training, the personnel will also be tested, passing which will be mandatory for them.

Rajalingam said on April 29 and 30 and May 1, the training of presiding officers and polling officers- I will be held in Building 'A' and New

Building 'B' of Uday Pratap Inter College, RSMT and Uday Pratap Public School. The first shift of the training programme has been scheduled from 10 am to 1 pm and the second shift from 2 pm to 5 pm. During it is mandatory for the presiding and first polling officers to attend the training in each case on their respective scheduled dates and shifts. He said that strict action will be taken against the personnel found absent from the training programme by registering an FIR under Section 134 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Rally to spread awareness among voters

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A voter awareness rally was taken out by the students of Atal Residential School, Karsada on Friday. The chief guest was SDM Rajatalab Amit Kumar. The students and teachers were walking in the rally with dozens of placards and big banners with slogans regarding awareness about voting written on them. The SDM, who is also given the assignment of Assistant Returning Officer (ARO) of Varanasi parliamentary constituency, flagged off the rally.

The entire school family with zeal and enthusiasm raised slogans from the school like 'chodo apne saare kaam pahle chalo kare matadaan', 'apni sarkar swayam chumunga, main matadaan jarur karunga' etc. They also raised slogans



Students taking out awareness rally from Karsada in Varanasi on Friday.

their gratitude for the successful conduct of the rally. They said the voter awareness rally was highly commendable as along with spreading awareness about voting among the common people, it will prove to be very useful in the future life of the children.

This will prove useful in making them a conscious citizen of Indian democracy and will also prove useful in making this campaign effective in the future in the village or area to which these students are associated, they added. Special contribution was made in this work by school teachers Dr RP Singh, Amar Jeet Singh, Dr Basant Kumar Srivastava, Satya Narayan Jhan, Mata Deen Pandey, Omkar Upadhyay and Vikas Saha. Principal Dr Amar Nath Rai expressed his gratitude to the guests.

appealing to the people to vote as voting is the responsibility of all of us, we have to go to vote and fulfil our duty because voting is our right and participation in democracy is the responsibility of all of us.

While passing through Karsada village and market, the

participants were spreading awareness about voting among the people and the rally returned to the school and during the journey, biscuits, toffee and soft drinking water were provided by the office bearers. The school principal, teachers and staff expressed

Cash, jewellery worth lakhs looted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Armed miscreants looted cash and jewellery worth lakhs of rupees from the house of a sawmill owner in Ganjmuradabad under Bangermau Kotwali police station area of Unnao late on Thursday night. They raided the house around 1.30 am, shot him in the shoulder, collected the keys of almirah and locker to commit the loot. The injured was undergoing treatment in Lucknow. The police suspect the incident and is carrying out probe taking all aspects into consideration. Raju alias Anaruddin (48) of Ganjmuradabad runs a sawmill near his house. On Thursday night after dinner he went to sleep with wife Rehana in a room on the first floor. Around 1.30 am due to pain in the leg of son Kasan alias Arbaz sleeping on the ground floor,

Rehana came down. On hearing the gunshot suddenly Rehana and other family members rushed to Raju's room on the first floor and found him lying on the floor. He had bullet injury on his right shoulder. His kin took him to the Bangermau community health centre (CHC) from where he was referred to the trauma centre, Lucknow. On getting information about the incident CO Arvind Kumar and Kotwali incharge Rajkumar rushed to spot and probed the issue. They also quizzed the kin. The police recovered an empty cartridge from the room and another near the sawmill. The kin said some strangers were seen near their house for the past several days. Taking advantage of the situation, miscreants broke into the room on the first floor through the neighbour Wazir's rooftop and committed the loot. On protest,

they shot at Raju. CO Arvind Kumar said CCTV footages of cameras installed in the house were being checked.

GUTTED: A poultry farm caught fire due to a spark from a pile of garbage in a village of Bilhaur Kotwali police station area on Friday afternoon. By the time villagers extinguished the fire, the entire poultry farm was gutted. Jagdish of Makanpur under Araul police area of Bilhaur had built a poultry farm in his field on the outskirts of the village. On Friday some children set fire to garbage heap outside the poultry farm. The spark from the garbage heap took the form of a devastating fire after it engulfed the nearby poultry farm. On seeing the fire, dozens of villagers rushed to the spot and attempted to control the fire by pouring water from the tube well. By the time they extinguished the fire, the entire poultry farm was gut-

ted. The police rushed to the spot and carried out a probe in the matter. Meanwhile, a fire broke out in the bush inside the closed Elgin Mill campus on VIP Road under Gwaltoli police area on Thursday night. The passersby informed the police which rushed to the spot and seeing the fire, called the fire brigade. Two fire tenders immediately reached the spot and brought the fire under control. The Elgin Mill No.1 set up in Britishers time is lying closed for the past several years. Around 11.30 pm on Thursday, a fire broke out in the bush around the big premises inside the mill campus. Fire brigade team from Colonelganj and Latouche Road fire stations rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control. CFO Deepak Sharma said the fire was spreading rapidly in the bush and was soon brought under control by the firefighters.

Talk on bone health in IMS-BHU

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Dr Sanjay Yadav delivered an unconventional talk on bone health and wellbeing in IMS-BHU on Thursday. Its aim was to diversify the thinking process of students and get more research into medical science. It was held under the aegis of student wellness initiative. The guest lecture was shared by Prof Satyendra Sahu from Department of Chemistry and the coordinator for the activity Dr Amresh Kumar Singh from Department of Zoology, BHU.

Teenager stabbed to death

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A teenaged boy who had gone to watch the orchestra in a wedding procession in Pacheda village under Koraon police station area was stabbed to death by some unidentified miscreants late on Thursday night. The police have detained the friends who accompanied them and they are being interrogated. The police have sent the body for the post-mortem examination after conducting a 'panchnama'. Ritesh Mishra of Marha Meja village under Koraon police station area, lived in his maternal home in Mishrapur. A marriage procession had come to nearby village, Pacheda, on Thursday

night. Ritesh had gone to see the orchestra with his friends. During this time he was mysteriously murdered. Police are yet to ascertain as to who committed the murder and for what reason. Koraon Station House Officer (SHO) Jitendra Bharti said that late on Thursday night, Ritesh who had gone to see the orchestra in a wedding procession was killed by some unidentified goons. However, why he was murdered is not yet clear. Ritesh's friends took him to the CHC Koraon, where doctors declared him dead. The police reached there after receiving information. Police have taken Ritesh's friends into custody. They are being interrogated.

ARRESTED: The Prayagraj police claimed to have busted a drug smuggling gang and arrested its three members at Devataram pond in Nakrapur village under Phulpur police station on Friday. They were identified as Jagdish Kumar Jaiswal of Baida Bazar, under Gopiganj police station, Bhadohi, Ghulam Hasan of Zaidpur under Sarainayat police station and Lalit Singh of Sarayachak, under Sarainayat police station. Inspector in charge Phulpur police station Rakesh Singh said 361 kg of ganja, a truck, ₹16,200 in cash, three mobile phones, a driving license and a PAN card have been recovered from their possession.

Awasthi: Educate first-time voters about importance of voting



The members of Jyoti Mahila Samiti on Friday being administered oath to cast their votes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In view of polling here on May 13, an awareness programme was organised by the Jyoti Mahila Samiti on Friday. During it founder Preeti Awasthi, called upon the members of the samiti to particularly educate the first-time voters about the importance of casting vote. "If you don't vote, you lose the right to complain", she said. On the occasion president of the samiti Anita Agrawal administered oath to the mem-

bers of the society to exercise their franchise to elect members who will be taking care of the interest of the constituency and the nation for the next five years. "By casting your vote for a candidate who in your opinion can represent you in the Lok Sabha, you move forward towards ensuring a happy, prosperous, safe and secular India ensuring protection of rights of every citizen as per the provisions contained in the Constitution of India", she said. Secretary Sita Mishra and coor-

dinator Laxmi Shukla actively participated in the programme.

DEVELOPED: The Department of Hindi, Christ Church College, Kanpur organised the inauguration ceremony of "Parnika: Sahitya Vatika" on Friday. The "Vatika" (garden) has been developed totally by students. It has various species of plants, which have QR codes which can be scanned to know about their mention in literature and other information about them. Various Indian painting styles, all made by students, are on display. MA Student Anjali Sachan was in charge of the assignment. Students from BA, BSC and MA contributed to this exercise. The formal inauguration of this garden was done by college gardener Deshraj, under the guidance of Principal Professor Joseph Daniel. The formal welcome address was made by Professor Sujata Chaturvedi, in charge of the

Department of Hindi. Department's Avdhesh Mishra talked about the vision behind developing the garden. He said the garden provides a combination of literature, art and music in Indian ancient and contemporary culture. Congratulating the students Prof Daniel that they have created a Shantiniketan in the college campus. A 'Rahul Sankrityayan special' edition of the magazine was also inaugurated. It has been prepared by the research scholars of the Hindi Department. The vote of thanks was proposed by the department's Arunesh Shukla.

The students presented a cultural programme under the guidance of Professor Meet Kamal, comprising various performances. At the end, the principal gave away prizes and mementos to students. A large number of teachers, students and research scholars were present on the occasion.

AIIA associate professor inspects Institute of Applied Dermatology

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Associate Professor of All India Institute of Ayurveda (AIIA), New Delhi, Dr Ghalib inspected the Institute of Applied Dermatology (IAD) Centre being operated at Government Ayurveda Hospital, Chowkaghat here on Friday and enquired about the

condition of filariasis patients. He met filaria patients, went to their homes and inquired about their treatment. All the patients explained in detail about the changes in life brought about by proper care of filariasis affected organs and regular yoga. Dr Ghalib said the IAD is making every possible effort to ease the lives of serious

patients who have been living with unbearable pain due to filariasis (hathipaon) for years. The organisation engaged in the treatment of filaria patients with the integrated method of Ayurveda, Allopathy and Yoga has started treatment centers in Varanasi and Lucknow in Uttar Pradesh. He said that regular exercise not only reduces

swelling but also prevents acute attacks. Dr Guru Prasad of IAD said till now 222 filariasis patients have been treated from the Varanasi centre which was started on March 5 last year. On the occasion District Malaria Officer Sharad Chand Pandey, Technical Officer Pragya Tripathi and the entire staff of IAD were present.

Programme on problem solving conducted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

In its ongoing commitment to professional development for non-teaching staff, Banaras Hindu University's Staff Development Cell (SDC) conducted a development programme on problem solving for 50 section officers. Raj Kumar Soni, Assistant Registrar, commenced it by emphasising the importance of such initiatives

and announcing upcoming sessions on public procurement, advanced MS Excel skills and fostering a positive work environment. Soni kicked off the programme with a practical example - the current difficulty in responding to the budget section's requests for details on 2023-24 expenditures at short notice. He emphasised that the programme would equip participants with the skills to

resolve such issues efficiently. Colonel Maneesh Sharma (Retd), programme's facilitator, crafted a comprehensive agenda addressing critical aspects of workplace success. These included fostering a positive work environment, streamlining bureaucratic processes, navigating change initiatives, enhancing communication and collaboration, managing workloads effectively, investing in employee development

and engagement and empowering junior staff through leadership development. The interactive sessions equipped participants with valuable insights and practical strategies to tackle workplace challenges head-on. The participants actively engaged by sharing their own problem-solving experiences, highlighting the importance of both supporting junior colleagues and seeking guidance from superiors.

Health talk organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A health talk was organised at North Central Railway (NCR) Headquarters Aravali conference hall by Central Hospital, NCR, and Indraprastha Apollo Hospital New Delhi on Cardiology and Nephrology here on Friday. NCR General Manager

Nephrology, I P Apollo Hospital presented his talk on the topic "know your kidney". He explained the complicated functions of kidney in simple language. He also briefed importance of dietary restrictions, haemodialysis and kidney transplantation in kidney diseases.

Guest speakers were honoured by GM/NCR. All principal heads of departments, heads of departments and officers and employees of headquarter attended the programme. It was interactive session with audience who cleared their doubts on heart and kidney diseases. Anchoring of the programme was done by Additional Chief Health Director Dr Kalpana Mishra. In the closing session NCR GM gave message for regular health check-up, exercise and management of stress in our day to day life.

16 VEHICLES BURNT: At least 16 vehicles parked in the premises of Khuldebud police station premises caught fire on Thursday evening. Three fire brigade vehicles reached the spot and brought the fire under control. Policemen also struggled to extinguish the fire. The fire was controlled in three hours but till then 16 vehicles were completely burnt. ACP Kotwali Manoj Kumar Singh said that many vehicles were removed from there as soon as possible. The fire spread rapidly due to which at least 16 vehicles were burnt. These vehicles include cars, bikes, e-rickshaws, tempos and three wheelers.



Ravinder Goyal was chief guest. Scientific session started with welcome of chief guest by Principal Chief Medical Director Dr J P Rawat. Medical Director Central Hospital Dr SK Handoo welcomed PCMD Dr JP Rawat. Senior Consultant cardiology, IP Apollo Hospital Dr K K Saxena spoke on the topic "Life style management and prevention of heart disease". He emphasised the importance of blood pressure, sugar and cholesterol control in management of coronary artery diseases. Dr DK Agarwal Senior consultant

IIT-K invites applications for 4th batch of eMasters programme in data science

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In response to the growing demand for skilled professionals in this evolving business landscape, IIT Kanpur is inviting applications for its 4th batch of an innovative eMasters degree programme in Data Science and Business Analytics. Designed to equip professionals with the tools needed to thrive in changing times, this degree programme offers a comprehensive curriculum on data science and analytics applications in business, empowering candidates to harness the power of data for strategic decision-making.

The integration of business analytics has spurred rapid growth in data science. The realisation of the crucial role played by technology has prompted professionals from

diverse fields such as engineering, management, finance, economics, law and public administration to recognise the necessity of advancing their careers by acquiring expertise in data science and business analytics. Projections indicate a remarkable surge in job openings, with an estimated 12 million positions anticipated by 2026, offering experienced professionals the potential to earn up to 25 lakh INR. Additionally, Naukri.com data reveals over 20,000 job listings for data science and analytics roles, underscoring the strong demand for skilled talent in this sector. Programme Co-ordinator, eMasters in Data Science and Business Analytics, Prof Vipin B, said, "The information explosion in the world has provided immense potential for better decision making, driven by data analytics. This

eMasters programme will prepare professionals with the knowledge and skillset for a data-driven business world. The comprehensive curriculum designed and delivered by IITK faculty and other experts will ensure that the candidates gain a deeper understanding of the theory of data science, their tools and techniques and their applications in business." Designed by the Department of Management Sciences (DoMS), this degree programme caters to executives seeking flexibility, allowing them to complete the curriculum within one-three years. The 60-credit, 12-module curriculum of eMasters degree is tailored to meet the industry needs. eMaster graduates can benefit from a credit waiver mechanism while opting for other programmes at IIT Kanpur. Notably, admission

to the eMasters degree programme does not require a GATE score, ensuring accessibility for all professionals. Delivered through dynamic weekend-only live interactive sessions and supplemented by self-paced learning, this degree offers a high-impact learning experience. Candidates gain exclusive access to the extensive resources of the IIT Kanpur placement cell, incubation centre and alumni network, enhancing career prospects and networking opportunities. Additionally, the degree programme includes a campus visit, providing a unique opportunity to engage with distinguished faculty and peers. By enrolling in this degree programme, professionals can gain a competitive career edge. Applications for the July 2024 batch are open until April 30.

Bid to educate students about effects of anaemia

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Adolescent Health Centre of Sir Sunderlal Hospital (SSH), Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU), conducted a health awareness activity at Purnodaya Mahila Maha Vidyalaya, Bacchhwan, here on Friday. Under the guidance of nodal officer Prof Dr Sangeeta Rai, the event aimed to educate students



Counsellor Naveen Pandey about the effects of anaemia on their physical and mental health.

and symptoms at home. Emphasising the importance of a balanced diet, he recommended incorporating green leafy vegetables and vitamin C-rich foods for a healthier lifestyle. Interns from BHU actively engaged in the programme, contributing to the interactive question and answer session. The event provided students with valuable insights into maintaining optimal health and preventing diseases.

Sankat Mochan Sangeet Mahotsav begins today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Stage is all set for the beginning of the 101st edition of internationally famous six-day Sankat Mochan Sangeet Mahotsav at Sankat Mochan Temple premises from Saturday evening. In the festival, the day's cultural programmes begin in the evening and continue throughout the night (till wee hours next day). The rush of music lovers is seen in temple premises throughout the night.

The festival will begin with Odissi dance by famous Pt Ratikant Mohapatra and artistes of Srijan Sansha of Bhubaneswar. It will be followed by a duet by Avantika Maharaj (Varanasi) on tabla and Vinayak Sahay (Jalandhar) on sarangi. Then famous vocalist from Mumbai Nandini Narendra Bedekar will present her programme. She will be supported by Pt Vinod Lele (Delhi) on tabla and Pt Vinay Mishra (Delhi) on samvadini (harmonium). The fourth programme of the day will be presented by famous santoor player from Mumbai Padam Shri Pt Satish Vyas who will be accompanied by Pt Ojas Yogesh Adhiya (Mumbai) on tabla. Then Meenakshi Majumdar (vocal) from Kolkata will present her programme. She will be supported by Devjyoti Bose (Kolkata) on tabla, Pt Dharmmath Mishra (Lucknow) on samvadini and Vinayak Sahay on sarangi. The penultimate programme of the day will be presented on keyboard by

Vijay Chandra and team from Prayagraj and day's last programme will be presented by famous vocalist Padam Bhushan Pt Sajan Mishra (Delhi) along with Swarnash Mishra (vocal), Pt Shubb Maharaj (tabla), both from Delhi, Pt Dharmmath Mishra on samvadini and Vinayak Sahai on sarangi.

Mahant of Sankat Mochan Temple Prof Vishwambhar Nath Mishra said there will be a gathering of artistes from India and abroad during the festival. Sanju Sahai of London and Ustad Akram Khan will present their programmes on tabla. Overall, about 150 artistes from India and abroad will present their programmes in this famous music festival. He said that this year, the young artistes of Banaras Gharana will be given opportunities and more than 10 Padma awardees will participate in the festival. According to him, on the second day, U Rajesh (Mendaliium) and Pt Shivmani (Drum) will present their programmes apart from Pt Vishva Mohan Bhatt (Mohun Veena) and Pt Ajay Pohankar (vocal). The main attraction of the third day will be Malini Awasthi (vocal) while Anup Jalota will present his bhajans on April 30. On the penultimate day, Ullas Kalalkar (vocal) and Rakesh Chaurasia (flute) will be the main attraction while on the last day, Bhawna Ramanna (Bharatnatyam) and famous Bollywood singer Kavita Krishnamurthy will present their programmes.



SC terms apprehensions of petitioners on EVM misplaced

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court cannot allow the entire process of the ongoing general elections to be called into question and upended on mere apprehension and speculation of the petitioners regarding the efficacy of EVMs, apex court judge Justice Dipankar Datta said on Friday. Justice Datta was part of the apex court bench which rejected pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using electronic voting machines (EVMs) with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT).

EVMs in elections violates the principle of free and fair elections nor have they been able to establish a fundamental right to 100 per cent VVPAT slips tallying with the votes cast. "Termining the petitioners' apprehensions as 'misplaced', he said reverting to the paper ballot system, rejecting inevitable march of technological advancement, and burdening the EC with the onerous task of 100 per cent VVPAT slips tallying would be a folly when the challenges faced in conducting the polls are of such gargantuan scale. The top court delivered its verdict on a batch of petitions, including the one filed by the NGO, Association for Democratic Reforms, which

also sought a direction to return to the paper ballot system in elections. Justice Datta noted the petitioning association has also attempted to highlight a public trust deficit with respect to the current voting system by relying on a survey conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies - Lokniti, which concluded that a majority of the Indian population did not trust the EVMs. "It is a private report and I find little reason to trust such a report. Over the years, more and more voters have participated in the election process. Had the voters any doubt regarding the efficacy of the EVMs, I wonder whether the voting percentage would have



seen such increase," he said. "EVMs have stood the test of time and the increased voting percentage is sufficient reason for us to hold that the voters have reposed faith in the current system and that the report to the contrary, which has been relied on, merits outright rejection," Justice Datta said. He noted the petitioners' had

submitted that the right to be informed under Article 19(1)(a) vis-a-vis the electoral process have two facets -- first, a voter has a right to know that the vote is recorded as cast and secondly, that the vote as cast is counted. He said a citizen's right to 'freedom of speech and expression' under Article 19(1) of the Constitution is not absolute and the State by virtue of Article 19(2) can place reasonable restrictions on these rights. "There can be no doubt that the electorate has a right to be informed if the votes, as cast, are accurately recorded. The dispute, in the present writ proceedings, centres around the modality of delivering the information," he said.

Justice Datta noted the petitioners have characterised the present procedure, wherein the voter after pressing the 'blue button' and casting the vote can see his VVPAT slip for seven seconds through an illuminated glass window, as inadequate for the voter to verify if the vote as cast is recorded. "Recording of the vote cast signifying the choice of the voter and its projection on the VVPAT slip, albeit for 7 (seven) seconds, is fulfilment of the voter's right of being informed that his/her vote has been duly recorded," he noted. He said as long as there is no allegation of statutory breach, there can be no substitution of the court's view for the view of the EC that the light in VVPAT

would be on for seven seconds and not more. Justice Datta also addressed the second facet of the argument based on the right guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) - the voter's right to know that his or her vote, as recorded, has been counted. "To deal with this contention, a question comes to my mind - did this right not exist when the 'paper ballot system', which the petitioning association wishes to be reverted to, was in vogue?," he said. Justice Datta observed there is in place a stringent system of checks and balances to prevent any possibility of a miscount of votes and for the voter to know that his or her vote has been counted.

SC seeks EC response on plea seeking re election if NOTA gets majority

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a significant development amid the ongoing general elections, the Supreme Court on Friday asked for a response from the poll panel on a PIL seeking framing of rules to nullify an election and order fresh one if NOTA (none of the above) option gets majority over other candidates. The top court issued notice to the Election Commission on the PIL filed by author, activist and motivational speaker Shiv Khera.



The NOTA option is provided to the voters in the elections in pursuance of the 2013 apex court verdict. A bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra took note of the submissions of senior advocate Gopal Sankaranarayanan, appearing for Khera, and issued the notice. Initially, the bench was reluctant to consider the PIL, saying it was for the 'executive to decide'. "We will issue a notice. This is about the electoral process also. Let us see what the Election Commission has to say...," the CJ said. The senior advocate said that present plea was important keeping in mind the development at Surat in Gujarat where a BJP nominee was declared

winner before polling as some nomination papers were rejected and few withdrew from the race. The top court, in its 2013 judgement, had held that "a provision of negative voting would be in the interest of promoting democracy as it would send clear signals to political parties and their candidates as to what the electorate thinks about them" and directed the Election Commission to provide the option of NOTA in all EVMs. "It is most respectfully prayed that this Court may be pleased to issue a writ... Directing the Election Commission to frame rules to the effect that if NOTA gets a majority, the election held in the particular constituency shall be declared null and void and a fresh election shall be conducted to the con-

stituency," it said. The PIL also sought a direction to the poll panel to frame rules stating that the candidates who poll fewer votes than NOTA shall stand debarred from contesting all elections for a period of five years. It also sought a direction to ensure "proper and efficient reporting/publicity of NOTA as a 'fictional candidate'". The plea referred to the apex court judgement and the report of the Law Commission on the issue in its support. Buttressing the plea for re-election if NOTA wins and barring the candidates from poll process if they poll less than NOTA, the PIL said, "since 2013, the implementation of NOTA has not fulfilled the very purpose that it was supposed to".

Petitions challenging EVM reliability junked on forty occasions by courts: EC

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

On a day the Supreme Court rejected pleas seeking a return to the ballot paper system, Election Commission officials pointed out that constitutional courts on at least 40 occasions have rejected petitions challenging the reliability of the electronic voting machines. The functionaries also referred to the recent remarks of Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar that EVMs are "100 per cent safe" and political parties know in the "heart of their hearts" that the machines are fair.

The top court on Friday rejected pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using EVMs with a Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and said "blindly distrusting" any aspect of the system can breed unwarranted scepticism. Maintaining that "democracy is all about striving to build harmony and trust between all institutions", a bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta delivered two concurring verdicts and dismissed all the pleas in the matter, including those seeking to go back to ballot papers in elections. "Almost 40 times constitutional courts -- the Supreme

Court and the high courts -- have rejected pleas challenging EVMs," CEC Kumar had said addressing a press conference here on March 16 while announcing the schedule for the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. Citing a publication of the EC, he said it shows on how many occasions ruling parties have been voted out in elections where EVMs were used. "Political parties have come into existence due to EVMs. There are many smaller parties, which in the age of ballot paper, might not have come into existence," he had said. He said the EVMs are fair and political parties recognise it in the "heart of their hearts". He also described them as "100 per cent safe, 100 per cent sure".

The apex court bench also issued two directives. Pronouncing his verdict, Justice Khanna directed the Election Commission to seal and store units used to load symbols for 45 days after the declaration of the results on the request of candidates who stood second and third.

Ministry asks CBSE to work out logistics for holding Board exams twice a year from 2025-26 session

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education has asked the CBSE to work out logistics for conducting board exams twice a year from the 2025-26 academic session while the plan for introducing a semester system has been ruled out. Sources said the MoE and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) will hold consultations with school principals next month for conducting board exams twice a year. The CBSE is currently in the process of working out the modalities of how will the academic calendar be structured to accommodate another set of board exams without impacting the undergraduate admission schedule. "The ministry has asked the CBSE to work on the logistics of how will board exams be conducted twice a year. The board is working out the modalities and a consultation will be organised next month with school principals," a source said. "The idea being explored is to conduct two editions of the board exams at the end of the year from the 2025-26 academic session but the modalities still need to be worked out. However, there is no plan to implement the semester system," the source added. The ministry's initial plan was to introduce biannual board

exams from the 2024-25 academic session, however, it has been pushed back by a year. The new national curriculum framework (NCF), prepared by the Union government-appointed national steering committee which was led by former ISRO chairman K Kasturirangan in line with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, proposed a semester system for students of classes 11 and 12. The framework, which was released by the ministry in August last year, also proposed that the students be given the option to write their board exams twice a year. "The CBSE right now is brainstorming on the schedule so students can get maximum benefit and the goal of making board exams stress-free can be achieved. However, logistics is a challenge which needs to be addressed, conducting exams is tiresome so the plan has to be flawless," the source said. However, this is not the first attempt at reforming board exams. The Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) was introduced for Class 10 in 2009 but was revoked in 2017 and the board reverted to the old model of year-end exams. The board exams for classes 10 and 12 were also split into two terms during the Covid pandemic as a one-time measure, but the old format of year-end exams resumed this year.

Zero tolerance of terrorism must for prosperity of SCO nations: Aramane

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Defence Secretary Giridhar Aramane on Friday emphasised the need to adopt a zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism in all its forms for prosperity and development of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states. Making this assertion at the SCO Defence Ministers' meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan, he reiterated India's steadfast commitment towards maintaining peace, stability and security in the SCO region, defence ministry said here. Aramane mentioned about India's long-standing proposal of Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the United Nations. He also highlighted the concept of 'Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)', proposed by India for the Indo-Pacific. During the meeting, a protocol was signed by the Defence Ministers of all SCO Member States. A Joint Communiqué was issued after the meeting, in which the SCO Defence Ministers agreed, amongst other initiatives, to developing the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' which is rooted in the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'.

Congress seeking to snatch rights of SCs, STs, OBCs to benefit Muslims, says Nadda

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

BJP president J P Nadda on Friday accused the Congress of seeking to snatch the rights of SCs, STs and OBCs to benefit Muslims, alleging that it is the hidden agenda of the opposition party. Continuing with the BJP's attempts to project the Congress as a party championing interests of Muslims at the cost of traditionally deprived Hindu groups, Nadda said the Opposition party has long been making the grounds for the minority community to be declared as SCs and give them reservation.



He issued a video statement as the second phase of the Lok Sabha polls got underway. Nadda cited the then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's 2006 statement of minorities, especially Muslims, having the first rights on the country's resources and added that he made similar comments in April 2009. The Congress has accused the BJP of selectively quoting Singh and claimed that the ruling party has resorted to spreading falsehoods and communal division for polarisation during the elections due to a lack of public support to it in the ongoing polls. Nadda, however, noted that the Congress has in some states tried to provide reservation to Muslims, including in Karnataka where the BJP government, he said, had ended the quota but it was brought back by the Siddaramaiah government. It had attempted to give reservations to Muslims in Andhra Pradesh too but could not do due to the Supreme Court's orders, he said. He said the Congress in its 2009 election manifesto had promised reservation for

Muslims in educational institutions and jobs through a sub-quota in the Other Backward Classes category. The BJP president claimed that the Congress' stand against majoritarianism in its 2024 poll manifesto underscores its "hate" for the SCs, STs and the OBCs as they make up for a majority in the society. "False claims were made through the Sachar committee report and it was said that Muslims are worse off than Dalits. It means that the Congress had been making the ground for Muslims to be declared as SCs so that they can give the reservation due to Dalits," Nadda said. The party has this old habit of robbing the SCs, STs and OBCs of their rights, he said, citing B R Ambedkar's criticism of Jawahar Lal Nehru for not speaking about the welfare of Dalits in speeches. Nehru was always in support of Muslims, he claimed. Nadda said he never wanted that Muslims to be neglected but that they should not get undue benefits at the cost of other communities. Those who need more protection should get these benefits, he said, accusing the opposition party of giving the impression that there are

Dalits among Muslims too so that the minority community gets the SC quota benefits. The BJP on its X handle also shared a clip of Manmohan Singh's remarks at a press conference in April 2009 in which he reiterated that minorities, especially poor Muslims, should get priority when it comes to the nation's resources. The BJP claimed, "He categorically stated that he stood by his earlier assertion that Muslims should have first right when it comes to resources." It demolishes the Congress' canards and clarifications on his previous statement, the party said. Senior BJP leader Keshav Prasad Maurya alleged the Congress has "conspired" to snatch the rights of OBCs, SCs and STs, who are in "majority" in the country, and give these to Muslims. The Congress' "dangerous thinking" of taking away the rights of Dalits, the backwards and adivasis (tribals) and hand them over to "infiltrators" is clear from its Lok Sabha poll manifesto, Maurya told a press conference at the BJP headquarters here. "They (the Congress) have clearly said in their manifesto that if given a chance, they

will finish majoritarianism (in the country). The OBCs (Other Backward Classes), SCs (Scheduled Castes) and STs (Scheduled Tribes) are the majority in the country," the Uttar Pradesh deputy chief minister said. The Congress has committed the "sin of doing social injustice" with the country's Dalits, backwards and adivasis by "depriving" them of their rights for 70 years, he alleged and asserted that the grand-old party will be punished in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections for this. Maurya said the Congress has "conspired to snatch the rights of OBCs, SCs and STs, and give these to Muslims". The Congress and the INDIA bloc are "robbing" SCs, STs, OBCs of their rights, he said. This will not be tolerated at any cost, the BJP leader said. "(Congress leader) Rahul Gandhi has said that a caste census will be conducted. You are talking about doing an X-ray while the country's OBCs, SCs and STs are doing an MRI of your conspiracy," he said. Maurya alleged that the Congress' history is filled with "petty and disgusting" politics of appeasement. "The Congress' 'hidden agenda' of the Lok Sabha polls is to grab power 'anyhow' and handover the rights of OBCs, SCs and STs to Muslims so that its vote-bank becomes strong 'forever', he alleged on day when voting is underway in 88 constituencies spread across 13 states and Union Territories, including Uttar Pradesh, in the second phase of the elections. Maurya also said Congress leaders are abusing Prime Minister Narendra Modi and using derogatory words for him as he comes from a poor family, belongs to an OBC community and has worked for the welfare and upliftment of every section of society.

Children from hills in India more likely to have stunted growth: Study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Children living in India's hills and mountains, especially at higher altitudes, are more likely to experience stunted growth, according to a recent research analyzing data from over 165,000 children under five years old in the country. The study found that stunting was more common among third-born children and those with smaller sizes at birth. The prevalence of stunting was 36 per cent, with higher rates among older children. Living at altitudes above 2000 meters increased the risk by 40 per cent, as per research published in the open access journal BMJ Nutrition Prevention & Health. GPS data were used to categorise altitude level while the World Health Organization (WHO) standard was used to define stunting. Most, i.e. 98 per cent (164,874) of the children lived less than 1000 m above sea level while 1.4 per cent (2346) lived between 1000 and 1999m above sea level; and 0.2 per cent (335) lived at or above 2000m. Seven out of 10 lived in rural areas. The overall prevalence of stunting among these children was 36 per cent, with a higher prevalence among children aged 18-59 months (41 per cent) than among those under 18 months of age (27 per cent). Stunting was more common among children of third or higher birth order (44 per cent) than it was among first-borns (30 per cent). And stunting rates were even higher among those children who had been small or very small (45 per cent) at birth. Mother's education emerged as an influential factor: stunting



prevalence fell as maternal educational attainment rose. The proportion of children whose mothers had had no schooling was more than double that of children whose mothers had a higher education. Other protective factors included elements of antenatal care, such as clinic visits, tetanus vaccination, and iron and folic acid supplements; proximity to health facilities; and not belonging to a particular caste or indigenous tribe. This is an observational study that captured a snapshot of the population at a specific point in time, making it difficult to confirm altitude as a cause of stunting, acknowledged the researchers. But there are plausible explanations for their findings, they suggested. For example, chronic exposure to high altitude can reduce appetite, restrict oxygen delivery to tissues, and limit nutrient absorption. Food insecurity also tends to be greater at higher elevations where crop yields are lower and the climate is harsher. Similarly, healthcare provision, including implementing nutritional programmes, and healthcare access are also more challenging, they suggest. "In summary, concerted efforts are needed across health and nutrition sectors to address stunting, tailored to focus on higher-risk children in vulnerable areas," said the researchers.

More Indian youths are enrolling to learn Korean language, Taekwondo

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Extending beyond the world of K-Drama and K-Beauty, Indian youth interest towards Korean culture is expanding to also include learning the Korean language and Taekwondo, a great tradition of Korean martial arts. In the domain of martial arts, the demand for learning Taekwondo has experienced a remarkable surge. Drawing a comparison with the previous year, the statistics paint a compelling picture: in 2023, a total of 1,530 students were enrolled in Taekwondo classes across 31 schools. This figure has more than doubled in the current year, with an impressive 3,536 students now enrolled across 47 local schools in Delhi alone. This surge in interest has been facilitated through strategic partnerships between the KCCI and local associations such as the Delhi Taekwondo Association, underscoring the collaborative efforts to meet the growing demand for Taekwondo instruction, said an official from the KCCI. Likewise, the appeal of learning the Korean language has experienced a meteoric rise. The numbers speak volumes: from 1,535 students enrolled in Korean language classes across 20 schools last year, the figure has surged to 2,572 students across 32 schools this year. This exponential increase underscores the growing fascination with Korean culture and the eagerness of Indian youth to delve deeper into its linguistic nuances. Hwang Il Yong, Director of KCCI said, "Korean is one of the fastest-growing foreign languages in India, and the



demand to study the language has constantly been on the rise. Both Taekwondo and Korean language classes in Indian schools will further expand opportunities for students to experience Korean culture and will become a starting point for achieving their dreams." In line with this trend, the KCCI has taken measures to support and nurture this growing interest. For instance, the Centre has spearheaded initiatives to distribute 2,000 newly designed Korean language textbooks, meticulously crafted in collaboration with the National Institute of Korean Language. These textbooks, adorned with illustrations featuring quintessential Indian elements such as 'Naan', 'Samosa', and 'Mojarri', serve as a testament to the harmonious fusion of cultures and the inclusive nature of language learning. In fact, learning language demand surprised everyone when the 93rd Korean Language Proficiency Test was organised. KCCI simultaneously organized the test in threefold pg 2 regions in India - Delhi, Chennai and Imphal, Manipur and the centre had to announce that the Korean Language Proficiency Test will be conducted one more time this year in October.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

All is well

India shows the mirror to the US, rejects its report on rights violations in Manipur as 'deeply biased'

Soon after the US pointed the finger at India for alleged incidents of human rights violations, particularly in Manipur, India has vehemently criticised the State Department report. The Indian Government has denounced the report as "deeply biased" and asserted that it reflects a "significant misunderstanding of the ground realities". Seeking to show the mirror to the US instead, it questioned the US administration's response to the recent killing of Indian students on its soil. The MEA emphasised the "deeply biased" nature of the report, saying the report misrepresents the situation in Manipur and demonstrates a "lack of comprehension" regarding India's efforts to address human rights issues within its borders. The report, which is not limited only to Manipur, talks about other issues too that have apparently undermined Indian democracy in the recent past. One of the key points raised in the State Department's report pertains to the raids conducted by the Indian Income Tax authorities on the offices of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), alleging that the raids extended to journalists not involved in the organisation's financial affairs. Furthermore, the US report claims that the Indian Government used emergency powers to ban the screening of a BBC-produced documentary. The report highlights the concerns of local human rights organisations, minority political parties and affected communities regarding the Government's alleged "delayed response" to violence and its failure to provide adequate humanitarian assistance in Manipur.



It also cites instances of disinformation tactics being employed against civil society organisations, religious

minorities such as Sikhs and Muslims, and political opposition groups. The Indian reaction to the US report is laudable as it defends and protects the boundaries of Indian sovereignty and sends across the message that no country has any business to meddle in India's domestic affairs. The Government must also ensure that foreign powers do not get a chance to sermonise India on human rights. It is an established maxim that human rights issues transcend political boundaries. Besides, the Government should be mindful of criticism by the Indian civil society, which has been airing similar sentiments. They should not be summarily rejected and branded as anti-national and harassed, a routine thing in autocratic systems. Indeed, India's reaction to the State Department's report underscores its commitment to safeguarding its sovereignty and ensuring that international assessments accurately reflect the country's efforts to uphold human rights. India has consistently maintained that it is committed to addressing any legitimate concerns regarding human rights violations through its robust legal framework and democratic processes. In light of these developments, it is imperative for the international stakeholders to engage with India in a constructive dialogue based on mutual respect and understanding.

PICTALK



A man bathes an elephant at the Veermata Jijabai Bhosale Botanical Udyan and Zoo, in Mumbai

PTI

Robotics: Predictable and optimal surgical success

Today, India is leading globally with advancements in robotic surgery and making a difference in critical surgical procedures

Robotic surgery, also known as robot-assisted surgery, has revolutionised the field of surgical procedures by offering increased precision, flexibility and control compared to conventional techniques. Typically associated with minimally invasive surgery, robotic surgery utilises a system consisting of a camera arm and mechanical arms with surgical instruments attached, all controlled by the surgeon seated at a computer console. This setup provides high-definition, magnified, 3D views of the surgical site, enhancing the surgeon's ability to perform delicate and complex procedures. Minimally invasive surgery is now the standard of care across various surgical specialties. Introduced four decades ago, Laparoscopy changed our approach and outcome in surgical patients. Robotic surgery introduced two decades ago, was the next step in the evolution of minimally invasive surgery. Now, the time has come when a surgeon avoids leaving anything on chance. Advanced, stable and predictable robotic surgery can ensure success



in each case. The primary motivation for opting for robotic surgery is the enhanced precision, flexibility and control it offers to surgeons during operations. The precision and minimally invasive nature of robotic procedures contribute to a lower risk of infection and other complications. In India, the Da Vinci system is commonly used for robotic surgery across various specialties, including urology, gynaecology, cardiothoracic and general surgery. In urology, robotic surgery has emerged as a significant advancement, offering several advantages over open or laparoscopic procedures. These advantages include reduced blood loss, decreased patient discomfort, minimised use of painkillers, shorter hospital stays and faster healing times. Urological surgeries com-

monly performed using robotic technology include robotic prostatectomy, robotic cystectomy, robotic partial nephrectomy, robotic pyeloplasty and other procedures such as nephroureterectomy, adrenalectomy, ureteric reimplantation and kidney transplantation. Even in the case of frequently performed non-cancerous gastrointestinal surgery like cholecystectomy gall bladder removal or hernia, innumerable challenges can be countered including some very serious injuries, which may result in longer hospital stays or life-threatening situations. Robotic surgery filters out the struggle happening at the surgeon's end while ensuring smooth outcomes with ultimate safety for the patients. Our understanding of robotic surgery benefits originated from cancer patients in uro-surgery and onco-surgery. Today non-cancerous surgeries deserve and demand equal precision and safety. Prevention of complications and quick recovery are the new points. Due to the sheer number, improvement of outcomes in benign surgeries would translate into a large

number of healthier and happier patients. While technology remains premium, the health insurance companies do understand and approve of such advanced technology. For instance, Narayana Health offers robotic-assisted procedures for various gastrointestinal conditions. The robotic surgery program has an experienced team specialising in using the da Vinci surgical system for minimally invasive general surgeries. With the surgeon controlling robotic arms from a console while watching the operative field through a video camera, patients experience shorter recovery times, with most returning to normal activities within two to three weeks instead of the six to eight weeks typically associated with standard open surgery. Indeed, constant innovation and development in the field of robotic surgery will result in lowering the cost with wider applications.

(The writer is a consultant-general, Robotic and Renal Transplant Surgery at Narayana Hospital - RN Tagore Hospital, Mukundapur, Kolkata; views are personal)



FORQAN BABU SHAIKH

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and making a difference in critical surgical procedures

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Role of AI in Lok Sabha elections

From personalised voter outreach to the menacing potential of deepfake videos, Artificial Intelligence's influence is palpable, promising both innovation and ethical dilemmas



KALYANI SHANKAR

Artificial Intelligence, a game-changer in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, has revolutionised traditional campaign strategies. The era of candidates personally visiting voters' homes and engaging in conversations over tea, even after a five-year hiatus, has given way to a more technologically advanced approach. Social media played a pivotal role in the 2014 election. However, the advent of AI and the potential use of deepfake videos in India's 2024 elections could be game-changers. These videos, capable of blurring the lines between truth and falsehood, have the potential to significantly impact the trust and integrity of the electoral process.

Political parties and candidates have understood the power of AI in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. They use AI to analyse voter data, enabling them to develop effective campaign strategies. Additionally, AI-powered chatbots and virtual assistants have been deployed to engage with voters on social media, providing real-time responses to their queries and concerns.

The use of AI technology can help with election processes in several ways:

AI can predict election outcomes. AI chatbots and virtual assistants can communicate with virtual media.

AI can prevent election fraud and regulate political advertising campaign finance violations.

Political parties can now customise their calls to individual voters, potentially harming their opponents' reputations. In India, more than 50% of the population uses the internet, which may increase to 900 million by 2025. The upcoming election in India is expected to generate a market worth Rs 500 crore.

Political parties are using AI to reach voters via social media. Congress and BJP used AI in last year's State elections, the first time false videos and parodies were used in political campaigning. Parties like BJP, Congress, AAP, DMK and AIADMK use AI technology to engage with their supporters. For example, the BJP uses AI to translate PM Modi's speech-



es into eight regional languages. However, some campaigners misuse AI-generated videos, including deepfakes, to spread misinformation. These videos are targeted at the 18-25 age group and are being shared on platforms like WhatsApp.

Parties in India use various tools to influence voters. They share fake images and videos on social media platforms. For example, the Congress party shared a phony photo of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. At the same time, the BJP posted a false video of Rahul Gandhi on Instagram. In Tamil Nadu, the DMK and AIADMK parties used recordings of their deceased leaders for voter support in this election. The Communist parties have also employed AI technology in their campaigns. One video shows Asaduddin Owaisi, the leader of the AIMIM party, singing Hindu devotional songs. Regional leaders like Akhilesh Yadav, Naveen Patnaik and Mamata Banerjee also applied similar tools to influence voters.

The use of AI for malicious purposes is a significant concern. With advanced AI, it has become possible to impersonate anyone, including voters or candidates, which can lead to identity theft and manipulation of the electoral process. This underscores the



POLITICAL PARTIES ARE USING AI TO REACH VOTERS VIA SOCIAL MEDIA. THE CONGRESS AND THE BJP USED AI IN LAST YEAR'S STATE ELECTIONS

need for clear regulations to ensure a fair and transparent electoral process, making the audience more aware of the potential risks and the importance of addressing them, fostering a sense of vigilance.

The use of AI in political campaigns raises valid concerns about privacy and the potential for unfair competition and misinformation. Therefore, it's imperative that clear regulations are implemented to ensure a transparent electoral process. Governments must take the lead in regulating AI use to promote fairness.

The IT Minister has already issued warnings to social media companies, instilling confidence in the audience about the security and integrity of the electoral process. The Election Commission must issue clear guidelines to regulate AI-generated information for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. These guidelines should address ethical AI use in campaigns and voter data analysis. Strict rules are necessary to maintain the integrity of the electoral process, protect voters' rights and ensure fairness and transparency. Without these regulations, there could be doubts about the legitimacy of the election results.

While there are valid concerns about AI, it's crucial to recog-

nise its potential for positive change. Certain AI-generated technologies have the power to revolutionise how we conduct free and fair elections. As these technologies gain wider acceptance, they could pave the way for e-elections, a future where elections are conducted online, ensuring a more transparent and accountable electoral process. This potential for positive change should inspire optimism and hope, reassuring the audience about the future of elections.

During the Bihar elections, the Election Commission used an AI-powered system to ensure transparency and prevent manipulation. The system detected and flagged misinformation and hate speech cases, expediting the counting process and curbing hate speech during the election. This demonstrates how AI can be used effectively and instils confidence in the electoral process.

Presidents, prime ministers, or legislators could win or lose based mainly on the success or failure of their AI campaign. Gullible voters can be fooled easily. Technological advancements can bring about significant changes and AI is no exception.

(The writer is a popular columnist; views are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

REVIVAL OF EDUCATION IN BIHAR

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Bihar's educational reforms cock a snook at private players", published on April 26, this is my response. The narrative underscores Bihar's struggle with governance failures, notably in areas like liquor laws and rural migration. However, amidst this backdrop of challenges, the Government's focus on education emerges as a beacon of hope. In a landscape where education is increasingly commodified, Bihar's commitment to public education stands out as a bold counterforce to market forces.

By prioritising education, the Government aims to address deep-rooted social and economic inequalities. The recruitment of teachers and infrastructural improvements demonstrate tangible progress. Yet, sustaining these reforms remains a concern, particularly regarding the absence of a robust mechanism. Additionally, while efforts to combat corruption and enhance accountability are commendable, ensuring the continuity of initiatives like the Mid-Day Meal program is crucial. Ultimately, Bihar's journey towards educational reform signifies a vital step towards empowering marginalised communities and challenging the dominance of private institutions driven by profit motives.

Rajiv Mishra | Lucknow

PERSPECTIVES ON CONSCIOUSNESS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "The Essence of Consciousness", published on April 26, this is my response. The journey of understanding consciousness is a profound one, intricately woven with the fabric of human existence. In the hustle of modern life, terms like consciousness often float around without genuine comprehension. Yet, beneath this veneer lies a profound truth: consciousness is the essence of our being, the awareness that shapes our reality. In a world bombarded with information, it's easy to overlook the depth of our existence. From the wisdom of Buddha to the revelations of quantum physics, consciousness permeates every aspect of our lives. Like Arjuna on the bat-

Ensure representation of the disabled



Apropos the news article, "The marginalisation of disabled in politics", published on April 26, this is my response. The stark absence of political representation for persons with disabilities in India's democratic landscape is a glaring issue. Despite a substantial population, their needs are sidelined, reflecting a systemic failure. Political parties overlook their demands, perpetuating exclusion and reinforcing stereotypes.

field or King Janaka in his kingdom, we grapple with doubts and fears until a moment of awakening shifts our perception.

True consciousness is not merely being awake but being truly alive, attuned to both internal thoughts and external surroundings. It's the clarity that arises when we shed the layers of ignorance and embrace the purity of our being. In this journey towards enlightenment, let us not merely skim the surface but dive deep into the ocean of consciousness, where every wave carries the promise of a profound revelation.

Vikram Singh | Delhi

THE INDIAN PARADOX

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Why do Indians excel abroad and fail back home?", published on April 26, this is my response. India's global footprint shines brightly across diverse fields, yet a puzzling paradox persists: why do Indians thrive abroad while facing challenges at home? This conundrum demands urgent attention and a deep dive into the complexities

Physical barriers at polling stations compound their challenges, stripping away dignity and agency. Anita's experience exemplifies this neglect. Moreover, those with lesser-known disabilities face additional hurdles, such as a lack of sign language interpreters during campaigns. The dearth of accurate data further complicates policy formulation and budget allocations.

However, amidst these challenges lies an opportunity for transformation. A shift towards a rights-based approach is imperative, with persons with disabilities actively involved in policy development. Integration across governance facets is essential for true inclusivity. Respecting their fundamental rights and ensuring their participation in civil and political systems is crucial as India celebrates 75 years of independence. Only then can the nation progress towards its economic aspirations while truly embracing diversity in a democracy.

Aarav Patel | Mumbai

at play. The link between India's international success and domestic hurdles lies largely in the shortcomings of the public education system. Insightful analyses pinpoint the dire State of education as the root cause, a truth echoed by credible sources. Education stands as the linchpin connecting governance, socio-economic stability and prosperity. The nation's future hinges on the quality of primary and secondary education, a reality starkly revealed by surveys.

Moreover, the disconnect between higher education and employability exacerbates the brain drain dilemma. To reverse this trend, India must foster an environment that retains talent and promotes innovation. Embracing change is paramount. Reimagining education to nurture creativity and entrepreneurship can steer India towards global competitiveness. It's time to forge a path towards a brighter, more inclusive future.

Nandini Rao | Bengaluru

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

WORK WITH ALLIES FOR SEMICONDUCTORS

It is time to let go of the regulatory bottlenecks to make a mark



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

One of the most common reasons cited by foreign investors, against investing in India is too complex regulatory processes and multiplicity of overlapping compliances. The latest to join the bandwagon is Taiwanese Foreign Minister Joseph Wu. The minister was responding to questions from a journalist on the reason for Taiwanese companies not warming up to India's constant welcome mat for attracting investments in the new age technology, building block and semiconductors space.

To be sure Taiwan is home to the largest chip manufacturing facilities in the world, a key component of the digital economy, ranging from mobile phones to satellites. Wu during his interaction with the journalist quoted "India is cumbersome in its administrative structure and it would require for Indian Government to look at that too, to streamline all kinds of laws and regulations to help semiconductor investors coming to the country". He has further in the same interview talked about the lack of skilled engineers to work in the chip-making factories, even though India doesn't fall short of chip-designing talent.

What Mr Wu highlighted, isn't something new, as it is a similar caution from many other potential investors interested in India. This author spoke with several high-ranking officials in several new and emerging technology manufacturing companies, who complained about complex time-consuming administrative processes in India and echoed that, when compared to competing economies such as Singapore, Vietnam etc. A new department called Invest India (a public-private joint venture) was created, early on in the current Government's regime, to assist potential investors through the difficult, regulatory regime. Even for semiconductors, where, India is the preferred potential partner, a dedicated business division has been created in the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, in the form of India Semiconductor Mission (ISM).



The recent trade policy agenda 2024 released by the Biden administration highlighted "Since announcing the negotiating mandate in August 2022, the two sides have pursued an ambitious schedule of meetings to make progress as quickly as possible. In June 2023, AIT and TECRO signed the first agreement under the Initiative. This agreement includes high-standard commitments and economically meaningful outcomes in a number of trade areas, including customs administration and trade facilitation, good regulatory practices, services domestic regulation, anticorruption and small and medium-sized enterprises", underscoring the importance of the partnership between the two countries.

The US supports India's ambitions to develop into a significant player in semiconductor design and manufacturing space, as an alternative to China. India US trade relationship, which has been in limbo has been energised in the last two years after a formal Trade policy forum came into existence, which has had regular meetings on several bilateral issues. In the 2024 trade policy agenda document, US mentions, "We committed to pursue enhanced engagement leading to mutually beneficial outcomes in several areas, with a view to deepening the trade relationship for the benefit of working people. We identified certain areas, including critical minerals, customs and trade facilitation, supply chains and trade in high technology products, in which our Governments intend to develop an ambitious and forward-looking roadmap for enhanced cooperation in order to achieve economically meaningful outcomes."

Given the convergence of interests and the willingness of like-minded partners and allies to invest and support India in the race of semiconductors, the next Government could do well to include removing regulatory bottlenecks in its 100-day agenda. It would be a good start towards a Stated Vikist Bharat target.

(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)

Sri Lanka's Easter attack revisited



NILANTHA LANGAMUWA

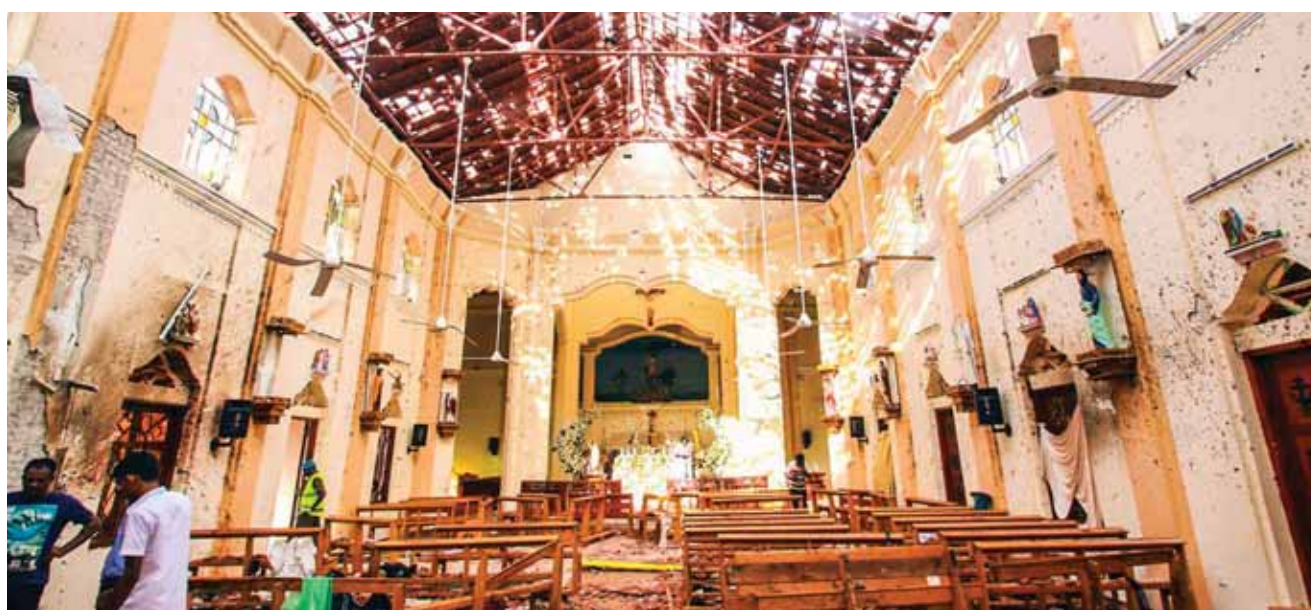
As the island nation grapples with the aftermath of the attack, the intricate web of extremism and intelligence failures continues to haunt it even five years later

When conspiracy theories gain traction and permeate the public consciousness, they inevitably taint the discourse surrounding the event in question. This phenomenon is especially pronounced in politically charged contexts. Five years ago, amidst the Easter attack on tourist hotels, two Catholic churches and a Zion church in Western and Eastern provinces, a plethora of conspiracy theories surfaced. Initially, speculation swirled suggesting the involvement of a powerful Western nation, followed by theories positing the attack as a ploy to consolidate political power. More recently, local politicians and various social groups have propagated the notion that India orchestrated the attack. Yet, none of these claims have been substantiated with credible evidence. Meanwhile, the culpability of the investigating officers' negligence, which played a role in the tragedy, has been overshadowed by these baseless allegations. Instead of being held accountable, those partially responsible have reshaped the narrative to deflect blame onto others.

However, in the aftermath of the attack, public media reports surfaced alleging that prominent politicians and Government officials were aware of the impending threat. Some even openly discussed this matter. Additionally, a leaked classified document from the police indicated forewarning of an imminent attack. What followed was not just the proliferation of various interpretations but also the dissemination of misconceptions. For instance, blame was swiftly pinned on the State Intelligence Service, the country's premier intelligence agency, extending to judicial indictments. However, a more rational examination, grounded in verifiable data, reveals a different societal reality. It uncovers a systemic failure across institutions tasked with national security and a disregard for prior warnings. Furthermore, it exposes concerted efforts to downplay this negligence for political gain. In a nation scarred by nearly four decades of internal conflict and widespread devastation, such institutional negligence sadly becomes almost unsurprising. It's crucial to highlight overlooked facts concerning the attack in question.

Leading up to the incident in question, there was a noticeable proliferation of extremist factions advocating violence across Sri Lanka. This surge wasn't limited to Muslim extremist groups but encompassed various ideological factions, each pursuing distinct political agendas. The emergence of the Islamic State in West Asia particularly bolstered the prospects of extremists across different nations, with Sri Lanka serving as a pivotal transit hub.

Investigations have revealed a significant influx of extremists from regions like Kerala, as well as countries such as the Maldives, into Sri Lanka. It's evident that intelligence agencies within the region, including those of Sri Lanka and Western nations, amassed substantial intelligence on these activities and collaborated in information sharing. Testimony from the wife of Zahran Hashim, a ringleader of the carnage, attests to the financial backing he received from a Singaporean national to establish his initial mosque. She further detailed Zahran's extensive involvement in extremist endeavours, including recruiting adherents and garnering financial and logistical support throughout the country. This revelation sheds light on the proliferation of extremism in Sri Lanka, culminating



SINCE MARCH 2017, THERE HAVE BEEN 11 SIGNIFICANT INCIDENTS LEADING UP TO THE EASTER ATTACK, YET NONE HAS UNDERGONE THOROUGH INVESTIGATION

ing in the Easter attack and subsequent incidents like the suicidal blast at the Sainthamaruthu house, where Zahran's family last resided. Zahran and his cohorts have exhibited affiliations with extremist ideologies and have been inspired by the Islamic State. Moreover, Sri Lankan nationals who joined the organisation's ranks in Syria have been observed exerting influence on local activities. Between 2014 and 2018, a staggering 41,490 individuals from 91 nations travelled to Syria to support the Islamic State, including 32 Sri Lankans.

Exploiting this influx, organisations espousing extremist ideologies, under various guises, began proliferating throughout Sri Lanka. Additionally, individuals of Sri Lankan origin who attempted to travel to Syria via Turkey but were unsuccessful have returned home and aligned themselves with figures like Zahran. Simultaneously, the ideological backing of Mohamed Naufar, known as the "second emir" and a close relative—specifically, the husband of Zahran's maternal aunt—played a pivotal role. Naufar, identified by the FBI as the mastermind behind the attack, exerted significant influence on the events.

Since March 2017, there have been eleven significant incidents leading up to the Easter attack, yet none have undergone thorough investigation. This failure on the part of investigative agencies, which were supposed to act on precious intelligence passed on to them, has been perceived as a deliberate effort to conceal the underlying truth of the entire episode from society, thereby impeding the crucial lessons to be gleaned from this tragedy.

The series of events began with a clash at Kattankudy Aliyar junction on March 10, 2017. Following this conflict, police attempted to arrest Zahran, but their efforts proved unsuccessful. Subsequently, on May 17, 2017, a member of National Thowheeth Jama'ath was shot. This was followed by a bomb thrown at the National Front for Good Governance (NFGG) Mohammad Farzan's house on February 06, 2018 and another bomb thrown at

the NFGG Kattankudy office on February 12, 2018.

Further escalations occurred with the shooting of Palani Bawa in Kattankudy on June 08, 2018 and the detonation of a bomb by Zahran's brother Rilwan in Arayampathy on August 26, 2018, resulting in injuries and fatalities at Wavnathiv police post on November 30, 2018. The incidents continued with the vandalism of religious statues in Mawanelle on December 23, 2018 and further vandalism on January 16, 2019, related to providing information about the destruction of statues and concealment of explosive materials in Vanathavilluwa of Puttalam District. The situation intensified with the discovery of material and the shooting of informant Raziq Mohammad Taslim on March 08, 2019, resulting in permanent disability. Finally, a motorcycle explosion in Thalankudah on April 16, 2019, just five days before the Easter attack, marked the culmination of these incidents. Numerous intelligence reports concerning these events have been received by the commissions tasked with investigating them, shedding light on the negligence of the officers responsible for the criminal investigation.

One of the most significant incidents out of these eleven took place in August 2018, involving Rilwan, who mishandled explosives, resulting in an accident. After the explosions in the Arayampathy area, Rilwan was taken to Colombo National Hospital and admitted under the name Zaeed on 26 August 2018. Investigations have confirmed that Zahran, conducting a training camp in the Hambantota area at the time, visited his brother in Colombo. The following day, 27 August 2018, Rilwan was admitted to the National Eye Hospital. Subsequently, he visited the clinics of the National Hospital on 27.09.2018, 04.10.2018, 11.18.26 and 15.03.2019. This incident occurred eight months prior to the attack, yet neither the training camps nor the incident itself were reported to any police or intelligence agencies.

Remarkably, the individual managed to conceal his identity from the National Hospital and Eye Hospital for several days. The doctor suspected of aiding in this matter has later fled the country.

Later, there was another incident identified as a dry run, which the State Intelligence Service formally reported to the Inspector General of Police as well as the head of CID, stating that the incident on 2019.04.18 was an explosive test. However, due to the lack of proper investigation into the incident until the Easter Sunday attack, a key opportunity to apprehend the perpetrators was missed.

Upon examination of the intelligence reports submitted to the investigative commissions regarding the attack, it becomes evident that not only did the local intelligence agency provide information, but also the Indian Intelligence Bureau (IB), India's internal security and counter-intelligence agency under the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs, accurately foresaw the impending attacks. This information was disseminated not only to the then Inspector General of Police and the Secretary of the Ministry of Defense but also to the officers responsible for crime and investigation.

Their acknowledgement of receiving this crucial information is documented. Despite being forewarned, no preventive measures were taken to thwart the attack. This apparent failure to act raises serious questions about accountability and highlights a disturbing trend of negligence. That was a collective failure.

The balance sheet of five years since this tragedy is that there has been a concerted effort to obscure the truth by proliferating conspiracy theories, thereby masking this dereliction of duty. This deliberate attempt to deflect attention from institutional failures through the propagation of unfounded narratives not only undermines public trust but also obstructs the implementation of preventive mechanisms to ensure non-recurrence.

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

The U-turns and contradictions in Antony's political journey

From advocating communal harmony to his stance on Hindu-Muslim relations, Antony's journey reflects his love for courting controversies

The year was 1993. The Kerala Press Academy (since renamed as Kerala Media Academy) under the ownership of the Kerala Government was having the Mathai Manjooran Memorial Day. Mathai Manjooran was a socialist party leader and was a member of the EMS Namboodiripad-led coalition Government during the 1967-69. He was also a trade union leader who never hesitated to speak his mind. It is unfortunate that he passed away in 1970 at the age of 58.

A K Antony, the quintessential Congress leader was the speaker who delivered the Manjooran Memorial speech and as a journalist, I was there to cover the event. The country was yet to come out of the impact of the demolition of the



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

disputed structure at Ayodhya and the entire secularist forces were up in arms against the Hindus for the "barbaric" act. Not a single day passed in Kerala without communal harmony meetings and all speakers were vying with one another in blaming the Sanatanis for the heinous act and praising Islam as the religion of peace. But Antony chose a different approach in his 45 minutes. He warned the minority com-

munities (read Christians and Muslims) from attacking the Hindus and reminded the two communities that they should be grateful to the Sanatanis for their magnanimity in offering the minorities more than what the Hindus themselves enjoyed. "The minorities have been given more rights and privileges to run their own educational institutions and hospitals while the Hindus were denied the same. We should always bear in mind the truth that the minorities in India enjoy unique rights and privileges that the Hindus do not have and we should be grateful to them for their broad-mindedness," said Antony, which made the next day's headlines.

Antony became the chief minister of Kerala for the third

time in 2001 but he quit in 2004 for reasons best known to him, the then Congress president Sonia Gandhi and the then Muslim League boss Mohammed Shihab Ali Thangal. Eight Hindu fishermen were butchered by members of a Muslim extremist organisation at Maradu in Kozhikode district in May 2003 and there was a demand for a CBI probe into the massacre. A prominent Muslim League leader, who later on became a Union Minister in the Manmohan Singh Government played a significant role in offering shelter in a mosque to the assassins.

When the issue of the CBI probe came for consideration in the liaison committee meeting of the UDF, the Muslim League leaders warned Antony



who was the then Chief Minister against an investigation by the Central agency. The UDF had won 99 out of the 140 seats at stake and was in a comfortable position. The Muslim League ultimatum against the CBI probe angered Antony and he announced in a public meeting the next day

that political parties, especially the caste and community-based outfits, should not make the Government dance to their tunes with organised bargaining power. That turned out to be the nemesis for Antony as the Gods in Malappuram asked Sonia Gandhi to remove him from the post of chief minister. Despite Antony tendering an apology, the chiefs of the Muslim League, controlling Kerala politics from the Kudappanakkal castle in Panakkad, were not humoured and they insisted on the former's ouster. That was how Antony resigned as the Chief Minister and shifted camp to Delhi. The Sulthans of Malappuram had the last laugh.

Antony knows very well that his shirt and dhoti should be

more secular than that of the CPI(M) and other outfits to stay in the reckoning. That is why the person who wanted the minority communities to be grateful to the Hindus wants the Sanatan Dharma to be demolished. There is nothing surprising in Antony's stance as he was always against the Hindus even as the president of Kerala Students Union, the feeder organisation of the Congress party in Kerala. The group in the Congress party in Kerala has its roots in Antony's grievances over the status enjoyed by Hindu leaders like K Karunakaran and their clout in the High Command. The group in Congress has nothing to do with ideology and Antony's hatred towards Hindus is reflected in his cursing his son Anil Antony join-

ing the BJP. What Antony should have done is to give freedom to 38-year-old Anil to select the party of his choice and wish him all success. Instead of that what Antony has done is to demand the Nehru-Gandhi clan to field candidates for the Lok Saba election from Amethi and Rae Bareilly. He also declared that the Congress party cannot exist without the Nehru-Gandhi family. Isn't this another way of telling that India is Indira and Indira is India? Remember, this is the same Antony who ridiculed Indira Gandhi cast his lot with the CPI(M) in 1980 and formed a Government with the Marxists during 1980-1982.

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)



Nearly 53.51 per cent polling on eight seats in Maharashtra

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

Amid reports about one electronic voting machine (EVM) in a polling booth in Nanded district being damaged by an aggrieved voter and malfunctioning EVMs at a few places, nearly 53.51 per cent of the total 1.5 crore voters exercised their franchise till 5 pm, in eight of the Lok Sabha constituencies that went to polls in Vidarbha and Marathwada regions. Available indications suggested the final voting percentage may either touch cross 60 per cent, which is significant considering that voters turned at the polling booth braving the hot weather conditions that prevailed in all the poll-bound constituencies. In the second phase of Lok Sabha elections, Buldhana, Akola, Amravati, Wardha, Yavatmal-Washim — all in Vidarbha region, Hingoli, Nanded, and Parbhani — in Marathwada region went to polls on Friday. Of the average of 53.51 per



cent polling reported till 5 pm, Wardha accounted for a maximum of 56.66 per cent voting, followed by Amravati - 54.50 per cent, Yavatmal-Washim - 54.04 percent, Parbhani - 53.79 per cent, Akola - 52.49 per cent, Nanded - 52.47 per cent, Buldhana - 52.24 per cent and Hingoli - 52.03 per cent. In an untoward incident, an aggrieved voter - identified as one Bhaiyyasaheb Edke (26) - broke an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) by hitting with a hammer at a polling booth at Rampuri in Nanded district in Nanded constituency of Marathwada region.

Immediately after the incident, Edke was arrested by the local police. The polling was suspended for some time in that booth. However, after the damaged EVM was replaced with a new one, the voting resumed in the affected booth. Edke, who gave vent to his anger by breaking the EVM, said that he was looking forward to people electing a pro-farmer and pro-labourer government in the country. The police are investigating the credentials, the motive behind his act of breaking the EVM and if he belonged to any political party. There were

reports from Buldhana constituency that owing to malfunctioning of EVMs at a few booths, the voting had to be suspended for a while. However, the voting passed off peacefully in all the affected polling booths. In Parbhani, the people in Balsa village had announced a boycott of the poll. However, the district collector reached out to the villagers personally and prevailed on them to cast their votes. After the district collector's intervention, the voting took place in the village without a hitch. Of the eight constituencies that went to polls, three constituencies — Buldhana, Yavatmal-Washim and Hingoli — are witnessing a direct fight between the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena (UBT). This is the first major elections that the two Shiv Sena outfits are clashing against each other after the Shiv Sena split that saw senior party leader Eknath Shinde rebel against Uddhav Thackeray, walk out of the party along with 40-odd

MLAs team up with the Opposition BJP to form a government in Maharashtra in June 2022. In Buldhana, Shiv Sena (UBT), three-time Shiv Sena MP Prataprao Jadhav is taking on Narendra Khedekar of the Sena (UBT). In the neighbouring Yavatmal-Washim, the Shinde Sena has dropped its five-time MP Bhavana Gwali and fielded Rajashree Patil, wife of the party's Hingoli MP Hemant Patil against Sanjay Deshmukh of the Sena (UBT). In Hingoli, the Shinde Sena has nominated Baburao Kolatkar against Nagesh Patil Ashtikar of the Sena (UBT). In Amravati and Nanded, a close contest is being witnessed between the ruling BJP and Congress. Both the constituencies are important because: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi addressed a massive gathering at Amravati and his speech found traction with the voters, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi tore into Rahul at Nanded in his election speech.

Brisk polling in Bengal sans violence in Phase II

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KOLKATA

Brisk and near-peaceful polling was witnessed in three seats of Darjeeling, Balurghat and Raiganj which went to polls on Friday in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections. Barring perhaps of some stray complaints of rigging and heckling of BJP State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar the polling went off nearly peacefully, sources said. A bunch of TMC workers blocked the path of Majumdar at Tapan Assembly segment where he went following complaints of rigging, sources said. The EC had sought reports from the Returning Officer regarding the incident sources said. At Darjeeling to TMC protesters raised slogans against BJP MP and candidate Raju Bishta when he went to cast his vote, source said. Till 2 in the noon the percentage of voting at Darjeeling was 49 whereas Balurghat saw 44 per cent polling.

UTTAR PRADESH

From Page 1

In Amroha, a woman, Ameena Khatoun aged 70 years, collapsed inside the polling booth after casting her ballot. She died of cardiac arrest. At Lalgarhi village in Khair Assembly segment of Aligarh Lok Sabha constituency, the villagers boycotted the polling in protest against the lack of development in their village. The district officials tried to pacify the angry villagers and persuaded them to vote. Later, out of 850 voters nearly 200 cast their votes. Under the seat-sharing arrangement between the Samajwadi Party and Congress in Uttar Pradesh, the grand old party is contesting in 17 constituencies while the SP has fielded its candidates in the remaining 63 seats. In the 2019 general elections in Uttar Pradesh, barring Amroha, the Bharatiya Janata Party had won rest of the seven Lok Sabha constituencies that went to poll on Friday. Uttar Pradesh has already completed the first phase of voting on April 19. The

remaining constituencies will vote in subsequent phases on May 7, May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1. A three-cornered fight was witnessed in the eight Lok Sabha constituencies that went to polls in the second phase of election on Friday. According to the Election Commission of India, till 5 pm, Amroha recorded maximum turnout at 61.89 per cent, followed by Meerut (55.49 per cent), Aligarh (54.36 per cent), Bulandshahr (54.34 per cent), Baghat (52.74 per cent), Gautam Buddha Nagar (51.66 per cent), Ghaziabad (48.21 per cent) and Mathura (46.96 per cent). "In the second phase, a strange trend was observed throughout the day. The number of voters from all communities and classes voting in support of the INDIA bloc kept on increasing at every booth, while on the other hand, the number of Bharatiya Janata Party voters kept on decreasing," Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav said in a post.

BMC connects Mumbai coastal road with Bandra Worli sea link

T N RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

In a significant milestone in the bridge-construction history of the country, the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) on Friday connected the Mumbai Coastal Road (MCR) with the existing Bandra Worli Sea Link (BWSL) using 'tidal wave conditions' in the Arabian Sea. The breakthrough, which was achieved between 2 am and 3.25 am, involved the installation of a gigantic 136 metre-long Bow Arch String Girder, made of steel, weighing around 2000 tonnes, linking the two

important routes in south Mumbai, through India's biggest 'arch bridge'. The installation of girder, which is 18-21 meter wide, was witnessed by Mumbai Municipal Commissioner Bhusan Gagrani, Additional Municipal Commissioner Dr. Amit Saini and other officials. The girder commenced its voyage on a 25,000 tonne-barge from Mazagon Docks on Wednesday at 12.30 pm and reached the Worli bay at 4 am the next day, awaiting the further process. Keeping a close watch on the prevailing tidal conditions there, the work of setting up the

girder was taken up at 2 am on Friday, it was gradually brought to the midpoint of the MCR and the BWSL on the barge, and expertly stabilised amid the sea waves and the winds to ensure optimal conditions for the final set-up. For the purpose, the BMC's engineering teams had set up four 'mating units', two each on the MCR and the BWSL measuring 2 metre and 1.8 metres cones, and they were precisely mated at 3.25 am, completing the connectivity. The achievement was greeted by a huge round of applause, cheers and shouts of 'hip hip hurray'.

NSG rushes in after CBI digs up arms, explosives at Sandeshkhali

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Bitter political slugfest ensued after the Union Home Ministry on Friday deployed National Security Guard commandos to defuse explosives recovered by the Central Bureau of Investigation at Sandeshkhali leading the Trinamool Congress to term it all an "election-time high drama in order to influence voters" while the BJP promptly demanding Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's resignation. Earlier on the day the CBI dug up about 10-15 guns of foreign make and a large quantity of explosives hidden under the floor of the house of a local TMC worker Abu Taleb Molla, 55 known for his proximity to arrested TMC strongman Sheikh Shahjahan. As the Home Ministry was informed about the cache of a posse of NSG commandos were deployed for recovering the explosives and defuse them. A robot was used for the purpose. Sandeshkhali a riverine semi-urban block in North 24

Parganas has been on the national news since January 4 when the supporters of Shahjahan roughed up the officials of Enforcement Directorate and in subsequent weeks local women rose up in rebellion against alleged mass land-grab sexual harassment by Shahjahan's men. The two incidents were not totally unrelated. A riverine island at the mouth of Sunderbans bordering Bangladesh the investigating agencies were taking the issue of recovery of foreign made arms seriously. The officials were tight-lipped about the class of explosives. "Information were received about a stockpile of arms and explosives at Sarberia village in Sandeshkhali area of Najat Police Station area... subsequent raids yielded the stockpile of arms and explosives," police officials who too backed the agencies in their operation. "While the arms were found hidden under the floor inside a room the explosives were kept inside a box in an adjacent semi-pucca room.

KARNATAKA

From Page 1 Bangalore Rural that is witnessing a tough contest between Congress' D K Suresh, MP and brother of Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, and Dr C N Manjunath, a noted cardiologist and son-in-law of former PM H D Deve Gowda, on a BJP ticket, recorded 61.78 per cent till 5 pm. A total of 247 candidates -- 226 men and 21 women -- are in the fray for the first phase covering most of the southern and coastal districts, where more than 2.88 crore voters were eligible to exercise their

franchise in 30,602 polling stations. Friday's elections witnessed a straight fight between the ruling Congress and the BJP-JD(S) combine unlike the Assembly elections in May last year which witnessed a triangular contest among the three parties. In the first phase, the Congress contested in all 14 seats, while BJP fielded nominees in 11 and its alliance partner JD(S), which joined the National Democratic Alliance in (NDA) in September last year, in three -- Hassan, Mandya and Kolar.

SC to consider listing Delhi...

From Page 1

Prior to this, the CJ-1 bench had permitted the Delhi Government to amend its petition challenging the Central Government's ordinance establishing pre-eminence of the lieutenant governor over the elected dispensation in controlling services. Amending the petition became necessary after the ordinance was replaced by a law.

NORTH EAST

From Page 1 The Tripura East Lok Sabha constituency recorded a voter turnout of 79.50 per cent as polling remained peaceful, an official said. Voters came out in large numbers to exercise their democratic right since morning. Nearly 14 lakh voters in the constituency, including 6.94 lakh women and 13 persons of third gender, will decide the fate of nine candidates in the second phase of the Lok Sabha polls. An estimated 70.06 per cent of 77,26,668 voters exercised their franchise till five pm in

the five parliamentary constituencies of Assam. The turnout was expected to increase as those in queue before 5 pm would be allowed to vote, they said. Polling began at 7 am and no untoward incident was reported so far. A total of 61 candidates are in the fray in the second phase. Darrang-Udalguri Lok Sabha seat recorded the highest turnout of 72.9 per cent, followed by Nagaon (71.84), Karimganj (71.12), Diphu (69.62) and Silchar (53.06). Assam Transport Minister

Parimal Suklabaidya is pitted against Surya Kanta Sarkar of Congress in Silchar, while BJP's Amarsing Tisso is contesting against Congress's Joyram Englung in Diphu. Nagaon's sitting Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi is contesting against BJP's Suresh Bora, while Karimganj's BJP MP Kripanath Malla is pitted against Congress's Hafiz Ahmed Rashid Choudhury. In Darrang-Udalguri, the main contest is between BJP MP Dilip Saikia and former Congress MP Madhab Rajbongshi.

Gautam Buddha Nagar sees 52.46 per cent voter turnout

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI /NOIDA

The voting percentage in Gautam Buddha Nagar seat stood at 52.46 per cent till 9 pm. According to Election Commission, polling was passed peacefully on Friday. They said voting started peacefully in Noida and other parts of the constituency in the morning as people were seen standing outside the polling booths.

The Noida administration claimed to make all necessary arrangements to facilitate the voters at polling stations and to avoid any untoward incident. A total of 15 candidates are in the fray for the Gautam Buddha Nagar seat, with over 26.75 lakh people eligible to decide their fate. Till 9 am, nearly 12 per cent voting was recorded in all five assembly constituencies (Dadri, Noida, Jewar, Sikandrabad and

Khurja). Till 11 am, total turnout was nearly 24 per cent. The voting percentage was nearly 35 per cent till 1 pm and till 3 pm, it was nearly 44 per cent. The latest data of EC reflected 51.60 per cent voting till 5 pm. Since Gautam Buddha Nagar comprises five assembly constituencies with a mix population, urban as well as rural, of voters, the political parties tried to convince them in the favour through issues related to their areas.

JAMMU

voters exercised their right to vote without facing any inconvenience. The Election Commission had made special arrangements to facilitate senior citizens and specially-abled voters. Compared to voters in the urban centres the rural population showed more enthusiasm in the periphery of the Jammu district. The border belt of Samba and RS Pura also recorded a healthy voter turnout. The newly carved Shri Mata Vaishno Devi Assembly segment in the Reasi district recorded over 75 per cent polling followed by Akhnour where 74 per cent of voters exercised their right to franchise. The Lok Sabha poll is the first major electoral battle in Jammu and Kashmir after the bifurcation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of the erstwhile state into Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh -- on August 5, 2019. For the first time after the 1967 polls, the

Rajouri and Poonch districts were not part of the Jammu Lok Sabha seat as the frontier districts were removed and attached to the Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat during the marathon exercise. "Similarly, the whole of Reasi district has been removed from Udhampur constituency and allocated to Jammu. Union Minister Jitendra Singh stepped out to vote in the Trikutanagar area of Jammu. Sitting BJP MP Jugal Kishore Sharma accompanied his family members at a polling booth set up at the Kishenpur government high school in Nagrota. Congress candidate Raman Bhalla, who visited several polling booths, also expressed happiness over the smooth polling in the constituency. Jammu and Kashmir BJP chief Ravinder Raina thanked people for coming out in large numbers to vote.

KERALA

From Page 1 Former Defence Minister and oldest surviving Congress leader A K Antony (84) cast his vote, most probably the last time in his life, at Thiruvananthapuram accompanied by wife Elizabeth and long-time friend M M Hassan. "This is our last chance to save secularism, socialism, pluralism and democracy in India. This time Narendra Modi would be voted out and a new government led by the Congress would come to power in the Center," said Antony even as he cursed the BJP and its leaders. Antony's son Anil is contesting as a BJP candidate from Pathanamthitta. Both the CPI(M) and the Congress claimed that they would sweep all the 20 seats at stake from the State. The BJP camp too is confident of improving their vote share. In 2019, the Hindutva party had polled 13 per cent votes and the NDA front led by it had polled 15.64 per cent. The NDA front had drawn a blank

in the score board having failed in winning at least one seat. The Congress-led UDF had polled 47.48 per cent and the front won 19 seats leaving a lone seat to the CPIM. The BJP is yet to open its account in the State till date. The fates of Sasi Tharoor, union ministers Rajiv Chandrasekhar and V Muraliedharan, senior parliamentarian N K Premachandran, former union minister Kodikkunnil Suresh, film actor-turned-politician Suresh Gopi, the Romeo of Kerala's Love Jihad Abdussamad Samadani, were among the candidates whose fates were sealed on Friday. Samadani's name had figured prominently in author Kamala Das' conversion to Islam. Efforts to elicit information about which way the wind was blowing remained unclear as most of those who cast their votes were reluctant to disclose information about whom they voted for. "We are caught between the deep sea and the devil.

Opposition...

From Page 1 Asked about the Prime Minister's attack on the Opposition, Congress spokesperson Pawan Khera said similar doubts against the EVMs were made by BJP stalwart LK Advani and advised the ruling party to start with him. "So, in 2009, was Advani misleading the nation? When he released the book of GVL Narasimha against EVMs, when Advani was championing the cause of leading a protest against EVMs, was he misleading the nation? The Prime Minister should do a basic homework, instead of focusing on Nehru, he should start focusing on Advani. He will stop talking irresponsibly," Khera said. Samajwadi Party leader Akhilesh Yadav, when asked about the decision on the sidelines of a poll rally in UP's Kasganj, urged the people to make the INDIA Bloc victorious and do away with the EVMs.

Supreme Court rejects 100 per...

From Page 1 Notably, the bench also gave candidates the option to get a proportion of the EVMs "checked and verified by a team of engineers from EVM manufacturers post the announcement of results" on a written request, expenses for which will be notified by the Election Commission of India (ECI). Additionally, the SC directed that there will be an option for candidates to get the microcontroller program of EVMs to be checked by a team of engineers after the declaration of results. The Supreme Court also issued two directions issued - containers carrying the symbol loading unit should be sealed in the presence of polling agents and candidates and be kept secured for 45 days and the control unit, ballot unit and VVPAT shall be verified by engineers of the manufacturing companies post the result of the counting on a written request to be made within seven days of the declaration of results. Rejecting pleas seeking complete cross-verification of votes cast using electronic voting machines (EVMs) via VVPAT machines, the Supreme Court observed that blindly trusting any aspect of the system can lead to unwarranted skepticism. Pronouncing his verdict, Justice Khanna directed the EC to seal and store units used to load symbols for 45 days after the symbols have been loaded to electronic voting machines in strong rooms. "The burnt memory/microcontroller in 5 per cent of the EVMs, that is, the control unit, ballot unit and the VVPAT, per assembly constituency/assembly segment of a parliamentary constituency shall be checked

and verified by the team of engineers from the manufacturers of the EVMs, post the announcement of the results, for any tampering or modification, on a written request made by candidates who are at SL.No.2 or SL.No.3, behind the highest polled candidate. Such candidates or their representatives shall identify the EVMs by the polling station or serial number. All the candidates and their representatives shall have an option to remain present at the time of verification. Such a request should be made within a period of 7 days from the date of declaration of the result," the court said in the judgement. The top court also allowed engineers of the EVM manufacturers to verify the microcontroller of the machines after declaration of the results on the request of candidates who stood second and third. Requests for the verification of the microcontroller can be made within seven days of declaration of the results after payment of fees, the court said. "If EVM is found tampered during verification, fees paid by the candidates will be refunded," it said. An EVM comprises three units -- ballot unit, control unit and the VVPAT. All three are embedded with microcontrollers which have a burnt memory from the manufacturer. Currently, the Election Commission conducts random matching of VVPAT slips with EVMs at five polling booths per assembly constituency. "The credibility of the ECI and integrity of the electoral process earned over years cannot be chafed and overridden by baroque contemplations and speculations," the court said.

From Page 1 Out of the total votes polled till 5.00 pm 50.69 per cent were male and 49.30 per cent were female voters. Out of 18, eight Assembly segments recorded over 70 per cent voter turnout while four others recorded over 65 per cent till 5.00 pm. All three Assembly segments of the Reasi district recorded over 70 per cent polling. Several centenarians stepped out to vote while motivating others to participate in the festival of democracy. In a polling station in Reasi district, 102-year-old Haji Karamdin exercised his right to franchise and said, "I am very happy to vote at this polling station at this age." More than 15,000 polling staff were deployed to ensure free and fair polling. Of the 2,416 polling stations 158 booths were set up along the International Border and the Line of Control (LoC). The first-time voters accompanied by women

Nearly 61 per cent voter turnout...

From Page 1 The Election Commission (EC) said polling remained largely peaceful. The tentative figure at 7 pm of voter turnout of 60.96 per cent is likely to go upwards when reports from all polling stations are obtained, the EC said, adding voters reaching polling stations till the end of polling hour are allowed to cast their vote. According to EC, voters from 46 villages in Bastar and Kanker PCs in Chhattisgarh cast their vote in a polling booth set up in their own village for the first time in a Lok Sabha

Election. The Lok Sabha polls are the first major electoral battle in Jammu and Kashmir after the abrogation of Article 370 and the bifurcation of the erstwhile state into Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh -- on August 5, 2019. For the first time after the 1967 polls, the

Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar's brother DK Suresh (Cong), and former Karnataka chief minister HD Kumaraswamy (JDS) are among the key candidates. In restive Manipur, where polling is being held under high presence of security personnel, the turnout was a high 77.18 per cent. In Kerala, the turnout was 63.97 per cent. One person each reportedly died at Palakkad, Alappuzha and Malappuram after casting their vote and a polling agent died after collapsing at a booth in Kozhikode. While Karnataka recorded

63.90 per cent voter turnout till 5 pm, Rajasthan recorded 60.61 per cent voter turnout was recorded in the 13 constituencies. Six Lok Sabha constituencies in Madhya Pradesh recorded a voter turnout of 58.35 per cent in the second phase. West Bengal recorded voter turnout of 72 per cent till 5 pm which included Balurghat recorded the highest polling percentage at 72.30, followed by Raiganj at 71.87 and Darjeeling at 71.41. Bihar recorded voter turnout of 58.58 per cent, almost 4.34 per cent lower than that of the 2019 general elections.

FIR filed against one for power theft in Amritsar

PNS ■ AMRITSAR

One person was caught tampering with smart meter and another escaped when an official of Punjab State Power Corporation Limited (PSPCL) in Amritsar was inspecting the power sub-division. SE sub urban circle Amritsar was doing routine inspection of West sub-division for preparation of giving uninterrupted supply in the upcoming summer season when he suddenly saw two private persons near the metre pillar box and they were tam-

pering with smart metre. "The SE stopped there and questioned them. One of them escaped and the other was caught by the SE and his team and they handed over this person to the SHO anti power theft VERKA. He didn't divulge any details and FIR has been lodged by the SHO and he will seek police remand," said the PSPCL. Thorough investigation is required to bust the whole gang of this person and to know the modus operandi by which they are tampering with smart metres, it said.



People tasted real democracy under Modi: Jitendra Singh

PTI ■ JAMMU

The people of the country, especially those in Jammu and Kashmir, tasted "real democracy" under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Friday.

On a day when voting is underway in 88 constituencies spread across 13 states and Union Territories in the second phase of the Lok Sabha elections, Singh said the BJP will register a "landslide" victory and form a "stable and strong" government for the third consecutive term.

"After Modi took over in 2014, the people got a feel of real democracy, especially in Jammu and Kashmir where the grassroots level democracy was strengthened



with the holding of panchayat and urban local bodies elections and implementation of the 72nd and 73rd constitutional amendments after the Congress deprived the people of these benefits," Singh told reporters here after casting his vote in Jammu Lok Sabha constituency.

The minister and his wife and children cast their ballots at a polling station in Trikuta Nagar.

"There is enthusiasm among the voters, especially the first-timers. The country has witnessed revolutionary transformation in the past 10 years under the leadership of Modi.

"In 2014, the youth of the country was disappointed and looking for opportunities to leave the country but today the situation is such that the youth working outside the

country wants to return," Singh, who is contesting the elections from Udhampur parliamentary constituency, said.

Udhampur went to polls in the first phase on April 19 and registered 68.27 per cent polling, sealing the fate of the Union minister and 11 other candidates.

He said the self-esteem of the people living outside the country has increased with startup initiatives increasing from 150 in 2014 to 1.50 lakh.

"Today, the world is looking up to India because they know that they are dealing with a prime minister who has a stable government and is going to be there for the next term and can do business with any country. They are comfortable with a strong prime minister rather than having a new prime minister

every year," he said.

Singh said the people are "enthusiastic" about giving a third term to Modi as they know that India has gained global stature under the prime minister's leadership and acknowledge his efforts to achieve a better future for the youth.

Referring to the abrogation of Article 370, he said Jammu and Kashmir has joined the mainstream and became part of the development endeavour after the Modi government's decision.

"Every section of the society, irrespective of religion and region, is going to vote for the BJP because Modi united the people of the country in a single thread post-independence," he added.

Asked about the possibility of assembly elections after the completion of Lok Sabha polls

in Jammu and Kashmir, he said the prime minister has already assured the people about it along with the restoration of statehood and "there is nothing more to add to his statement".

He also took a dig at the Congress over the controversial statement by one of its leaders on inheritance tax, saying "Inheritance tax is alien to democratic values, Indian culture and Indian civilisation. We have a family system in place which has a legacy so it is quite incompatible with our system."

"What is being said is with a certain political design to appease certain sections of the society and so it is a part of appeasement policy which congress has been following since decades," he said.

70.6 per cent turnout recorded in five LS seats in Assam till 5 pm

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

An estimated 70.6 per cent of 77.26 lakh voters exercised their franchise in five Lok Sabha seats in Assam till 5 pm on Friday, election officials said.

The turnout was expected to increase as those in queue before 5 pm would be allowed to vote, they said.

Polling began at 7 am and no untoward incident was reported so far.

Darrang-Udalguri Lok Sabha seat recorded the highest turnout of 72.9 per cent, followed by Nagaon (71.84), Karimganj (71.12), Diphu (69.62) and Silchar (53.06).

A total of 61 candidates are in the fray in the second phase.

Assam Transport Minister Parimal Suklabaidya is pitted against Surya Kanta Sarkar of Congress in Silchar, while



BJP's Amarsing Tisso is contesting against Congress's Joyram Engling in Diphu. Nagaon's sitting Congress MP Pradyut Bordoloi is contesting against BJP's Suresh Bora, while Karimganj's BJP MP Kripanath Malla is pitted against Congress's Hafiz Ahmed Rashid Choudhury.

In Darrang-Udalguri, the main contest is between BJP MP Dilip Saikia and former Congress MP Madhab Rajbongshi.

Altogether 77,26,668 voters, including 38,61,559 women and 179 persons of third gender, are eligible to exercise their franchise at 9,133 polling stations.

53.03 per cent voter turnout recorded in five seats of Bihar till 5 pm

PTI ■ PATNA

A voter turnout of 53.03 per cent was recorded till 5 pm in the five Lok Sabha constituencies in Bihar where polling was underway in the second phase on Friday, officials said.

The polling started at 7 am in Kishanganj, Katihar, Purnia, Bhagalpur and Banka constituencies, and would continue till 6 pm, they said.

Fifty candidates are in the fray in these five seats, and over 93 lakh people are eligible to decide their fate, they added.

Kishanganj recorded a voter turnout of 56.12 per cent, Katihar registered 55.54 per cent, Purnea recorded 55.14 per cent, Bhagalpur registered 47.26 per cent and Banka recorded 49.50 per cent till 5 pm, officials said.

Earlier in the day, speaking to reporters in Lakhisarai,



Deputy Chief Minister Vijay Kumar Sinha said, "I urge people to exercise their franchise in large numbers. People must vote for the overall growth of the country as well as Bihar."

Meanwhile, Congress's Kishanganj MP Mohd Javed,

who is seeking re-election, filed a police complaint, alleging that his opponents issued a fake statement in his name asking voters to vote in favour of another candidate.

"It was an attempt by my opponents to mislead voters of Kishanganj. I filed a complaint against the suspects last night," he told reporters.

More than 150 companies of paramilitary forces are assisting the state police in ensuring free and fair elections in this phase, officials said.

The polling was underway amid intense heatwave conditions with the mercury shooting past the 40-degree Celsius mark in most parts of the state.

Arrangements for tents and drinking water have been made at the polling stations, officials said.

Another BJD MLA joins BJP ahead of polls in Odisha

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

Weeks after resigning from the ruling BJD, Soro MLA Parshuram Dhada on Friday returned to the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha and assembly polls in Odisha. Dhada joined the saffron party at an event organised at the BJP's headquarters here in the presence of its state president Manmohan Samal, former president Samir Mohanty and other leaders.

The legislator quit the BJD on April 3 after being denied a ticket to contest the upcoming polls.

He had successfully contested the assembly polls in 2014 and 2019 from Soro constituency on a BJD ticket.

The BJP has already fielded Raju Das as its candidate from the Soro assembly segment, but the party has yet to announce candidates from Nilagiri, Balasore Sadar, Jaleswar and Basta under the Balasore Lok Sabha seat.

Earlier, BJD MLAs Arabinda Dhali, Premanda Nayak, Ramesh Chandra Sai, Simarani Nayak and two MPs Bhartruhari Mahtab and Anubhav Mohanty have resigned from the regional outfit and joined the BJP.

Dhada said, "I am happy that senior BJP leaders gave me an opportunity to return to the party after 10 years. I will take up whatever responsibility is assigned to me."

Nearly 60 per cent voter turnout recorded in Rajasthan till 5 pm

PTI ■ JAIPUR

Nearly 60 per cent voter turnout was recorded till 5 pm in 13 Lok Sabha seats of Rajasthan where polling is underway under the second phase on Friday.

Barring a few incidents of confrontation and complaints of fake voting in Barmer-Jaisalmer, the voting is being held peacefully.

According to the official data, 59.19 per cent voter turnout was recorded in 13 constituencies of Barmer-Jaisalmer, Jodhpur, Jalore, Chittorgarh, Banswara, Kota-Bundi, Tonk-Sawai Madhopur, Ajmer, Pali, Udaipur, Rajsamand, Kota and Jhalawar-Baran.

At the same time, 73.25 per cent voting took place in the byelection for Bagidora assembly constituency of Banswara district.

The voting in the second phase of Lok Sabha elections is higher than the first phase which 12 seats went to poll on April 19. Voter turnout was 50.27 per cent by 5 pm in the first phase.



Around 2.8 crore voters are eligible to vote in the second phase of the polls.

Voting began at 7 am and was set to continue till 6 pm.

Those who reached the polling booths and standing in queue by 6 pm will be allowed to vote.

Highest voter turnout by 5 pm was recorded in Barmer-Jaisalmer, where 69.79 per cent votes were polled and the voting percentage was 68.71 in Banswara-Dungarpur. Pali recorded the lowest

turnout of 51.75 per cent till 5 pm, according to official data. Voting percentage in other constituencies till 5 pm stood at 52.38 in Ajmer, 54.67 in Bhilwara, 61.81 in Chittorgarh, 57.75 in Jalore, 65.23 in Jhalawar-Baran, 58.35 in Jodhpur, 65.38 in Kota, 52.17 in Rajsamand, 51.92 in Tonk Sawai Madhopur and 59.54 in Udaipur.

Enthusiasm was seen among the people who lined up at the polling booths to cast votes.

However, in Banswara, no voter reached the Adibheet polling booth during the initial hours. The locals have certain demands regarding compensation against land acquired for a power plant and have declared to boycott the elections.

The officials said they are trying to convince the voters to exercise their franchise.

In the first two hours of the voting, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla, who is contesting from Kota-Bundi, BJP state president C P Joshi contesting from Chittorgarh and Union minister and BJP candidate from Jodhpur Gajendra Singh Shekhawat cast their votes.

Assembly speaker Vasudev Devnani cast his vote in Ajmer while former chief ministers Vasundhara Raje and Ashok Gehlot exercised their franchise in Jhalawar and Jodhpur respectively.

A 108-year-old woman, Bhuri Bai, cast her vote at the Gunjara polling booth in the Kota-Bundi constituency. She was brought to the polling booth in a wheelchair by her family members.

Smooth sailing for BJP's Vishnu Sharma in MP

GIRISH SHARMA ■ BHOPAL

In absence of strong opposition in Khajuraho Parliamentary constituency, there is smooth sailing for Vishnu Dutt Sharma, the State president of Bharatiya Janata party (BJP).

He is sitting MP from this constituency. He won this constituency in 2019 with a huge margin of over 4.92 lakh votes by defeating Congress' Maharani Kavita Singh Natiraja.

In this election, Samajwadi Party (SP) had fielded its candidate Meera Deepak Yadav, as a joint candidate for INDI Alliance. However, at the last minute, during the scrutiny of the nomination papers, the District Returning officer found her nomination papers as invalid.

Being former MLA, Meera was a strong candidate in Khajuraho, but after her nomination was rejected, there has been no strong opposition to BJP's VD Sharma. After Meera Yadav's nomination was cancelled, The Congress and the Samajwadi Party extended their support to RB Prajapati, the All India Forward Bloc



candidate.

Both the parties did extend their supports to Prajapati, but factually in the field, both the parties were not witnessed making genuine efforts toward Prajapati's victory. On the contrary, BJP did not leave any stone unturned.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, National BJP leader JP Nadda and other prominent leaders addressed election meetings in Khajuraho.

After the nomination of Meera Yadav was rejected, Congress and SP had conducted a joint press conference in Bhopal. SP's State president Manoj Yadav had alleged that a well-planned "conspiracy" was

behind the rejecting of party candidate Meera Yadav's nomination.

The only reason behind rejection of Yadav's nomination was that her signature was absent at a required spot on the form and non-submission of the official voter list as per the 2023 State Assembly Elections.

Madhya Pradesh BJP media in-charge Ashish Agrawal told *The Pioneer* that his party president is winning the election with huge margin. Congress and Samajwadi party (SP) were nowhere in the contest.

Even when there was no strong opposition in the constituency, the BJP fought the election like elections are contested," Agrawal added.

Man damages EVM at polling booth; detained

PTI ■ CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

A 26-year-old man allegedly damaged an Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) by hitting it with an iron object when he came to cast his vote at a polling booth at Rampuri in Maharashtra's Nanded district on Friday, a police official said.

The police detained the man, who told them that he wanted a pro-farmer and pro-labourer government, he said.

"The man, Bhaiyasaheb Edke, is a local resident and a registered voter of Rampuri booth. He came to the polling booth to cast his vote, but damaged an EVM with an iron object.

"He was immediately detained and the voting process continued soon afterwards as the broken machine was replaced with a new one," Nanded Superintendent of Police (SP) Shrikrushna Kokate told PTI. Police have launched an investigation to know the motive behind his act of damaging the EVM, he said.

Shah attacks Congress over Ram Temple

PTI ■ RAJGARH (MP)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday slammed senior Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Digvijaya Singh for declining the invitation to attend the consecration of Ram Lalla's idol in Ayodhya, saying their move was guided purely by vote-bank politics.

The BJP leader said the Congress neglected the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya for nearly 70 years and it was Prime Minister Narendra Modi who made it a reality and paved the way for consecration of Ram Lalla's idol on January 22. Campaigning in Khilchipur, which is part of Rajgarh Lok Sabha seat, Shah also mocked Congress candidate and former MP chief Digvijaya Singh and asked the gathering to give the latter's political career a "grand farewell".



Shah recited the Urdu couplet "aashiq ka janaaza hai, zara dhoom se nikle" (it is a lover's funeral procession, let it move ahead grandly) to take a swipe at Singh, who is up against BJP's sitting MP Rodmal Nagar.

"Do you know why shehzada Rahul Gandhi and Diggi Raja (Digvijaya Singh) did not attend the consecration of Ram Lalla's idol at Ayodhya? Because they are afraid of their vote-bank and therefore, they should never be pardoned," he noted.

Shah lashed out at the Congress for continuing with the Article 370, that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir, for a long time because of which, he said, terrorism flourished in the erstwhile state and people were unable to even hoist the national tricolour.

The Home Minister pointed out that the Modi government not only abrogated the contentious constitutional provision on August 5, 2019, but also ensured the tricolour flew high on the country's head (J&K).

Shah maintained the Modi

government ended terrorism and Naxalism by entering their den (ghar me ghuskar) and conducting a surgical strike inside Pakistan post-Pulwama terror attack. Rahul Gandhi, on advice of Singh, included in the Congress manifesto a promise that if a party-led government came to power at the Centre, it will "introduce personal law in the country," the BJP's star campaigner claimed.

Shah asked people whether controversial practices like instant triple talaq, banned by the Modi government in 2019, should be reintroduced, and criticised Singh for linking "bhagwa" (saffron) colour with terrorism.

Hitting out at Digvijaya Singh, the Union Home Minister said, "Tell bantadhar, we won't allow you to turn Rajgarh into a BIMARU (term used to describe socially and

economically unwell areas) district." "Bantadhar" is a term the BJP uses for Singh to allege that his 10-year rule as CM between 1993 and 2003 was all about development works getting stalled and wrecked. "The time has come to give him a permanent farewell from politics. But I have a request. Aashiq ka janaaza hai, zara dhoom se nikle. Defeat him with a massive margin and make him sit at home," Shah told the gathering.

Shah said Singh coined terms like "bhagwa atankwaad" (saffron terror), used 'saheb' while referring to Pakistani terrorist Hafiz Saeed. Hugged Zakir Naik (Islamic television evangelist accused of brainwashing youths), opposed the hanging of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru as well as ban on PFI. Rajgarh along with eight other Lok Sabha seats will vote on May 7 in the third phase of Lok Sabha elections.

Filing of nomination for 5 Odisha LS seats, 35 Assembly segments begins

PTI ■ BHUBANESWAR

The process of filing nomination papers for five Lok Sabha constituencies and 35 Odisha Assembly segments to be held on May 20 started on Friday with the Election Commission of India and Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) issuing the notification in this regard.

The five Lok Sabha constituencies are Bargarh, Sundergarh (ST), Bolangir, Kandhamal and Aska Lok Sabha constituencies along with 35 assembly segments under the Lok Sabha constituencies.

"As recommended by the Election Commission of India, in pursuance of sub-section (2) of Section 15 of the

Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951), the Governor of the State of Odisha is, hereby, pleased to call upon..." the chief secretary said in a notification. As per the notifications, May 3 is the last date for making nominations while scrutiny of nominations will be done on the next day. Candidates can withdraw their nominations on or before May 6.

The Election Commission has made different schedule for voting in the 35 Assembly constituencies that come under the five Lok Sabha constituencies. The usual voting timing is 7 am to 6 pm. However, it has been revised for some areas keeping security and other points in view, sources said.

University responses vary: Dialogue or police for pro-Palestinian protests

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The students at Columbia University who inspired pro-Palestinian demonstrations across the country dug in at their encampment for the 10th day on Friday as administrators and police at campuses from California to Massachusetts wrestled with how to address protests that have seen scuffles with police and hundreds of arrests.

Officials at Columbia and some other schools have been negotiating with student protesters who have rebuffed police and doubled down. Other schools have quickly turned to law enforcement to disperse demonstrations before they can take hold.

As the death toll mounts in the war in Gaza and the humanitarian crisis worsens, protesters at universities across the country are demanding schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies they say are enabling the conflict. Some Jewish students say the protests have veered into antisemitism and made them afraid to set foot on campus, partly prompting the calls for police

intervention.

After a tent encampment popped up Thursday at Indiana University Bloomington, police with shields and batons shoved into protesters and arrested 33. Hours later at the University of Connecticut, police tore down tents and arrested one person. And at Ohio State University, police clashed with protesters just hours after they gathered Thursday evening. Those who refused to leave after warnings were arrested and charged with criminal trespass, said university spokesperson Benjamin Johnson, citing rules barring overnight events.

The clock is ticking as May commencement ceremonies near, putting added pressure on schools to clear demonstrations. At Columbia, protesters defiantly erected a tent encampment where many are set to graduate in front of families in just a few weeks.

Columbia officials said that negotiations were showing progress as they neared the school's deadline of early Friday to reach an agreement on dismantling the encampment.



An Israeli police officer searches an activist before she is taken away by police car after she was blocking a road along with a delegation of American and Israeli rabbis from Rabbis for Ceasefire marching towards the Erez crossing to the Gaza Strip with food aid for Gaza civilians and to call for a ceasefire, in southern Israel, on Friday.

US effort to bring aid to Gaza by sea moving forward but concerns remain

AP ■ JERUSALEM

The construction of a new port in Gaza and an accompanying US military-built pier offshore are underway, but the complex plan to bring more desperately-needed food to Palestinian civilians is still mired in fears over security and how the humanitarian aid will be delivered. The Israeli-developed port, for example, has already been attacked by mortar fire, sending high-ranking UN officials scrambling for shelter this week, and there is still no solid decision on when the aid deliveries will actually begin. While satellite photos show major port construction along the shore near Gaza City, aid groups are making it clear that they have broad concerns about their safety and reservations about how Israeli forces

will handle security. Sonali Korde, an official with the US Agency for International Development, said key agreements for security and handling the aid deliveries are still being negotiated. Those include how Israeli forces will operate in Gaza to ensure that aid workers are not harmed. "We need to see steps implemented. And the humanitarian community and IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) continue to talk and engage and iterate and improve the system so that everyone feels safe and secure in this very difficult operating environment," Korde said. A senior US military official said on Thursday the US is on track to begin delivering aid using the new port and pier by early May. The official, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity to discuss

details not yet made public, said deliveries through the sea route initially will total about 90 trucks a day and could quickly increase to about 150 trucks daily. The senior official acknowledged, however, that the final installation of the US-built causeway onto the beach at the port will be governed by the security situation, which is assessed daily. The Israeli Defense Forces has a brigade — thousands of soldiers — as well as ships and aircraft dedicated to protecting the deliveries, the official said. Asked about the recent mortar attack, the military official said the US assesses that it had nothing to do with the humanitarian mission, adding that security around the port will be "far more robust" when the deliveries start.

China is not afraid of competition, Xi Jinping tells Antony Blinken

AP ■ BEIJING

Sparring over a host of differences, including China's support to Russia over the Ukraine war and mounting US pressure on Beijing to stop flooding global markets with cheap goods, China and the US on Friday managed to reach a five-point consensus to stabilise strained ties after a testy meeting between President Xi Jinping and Secretary of State Antony Blinken here.

A defiant Xi told Blinken that China is not afraid of competition as the US top diplomat raised concerns about Beijing's support for Russia in the Ukraine war and the country's "dangerous actions" in the South China Sea in its escalating conflict with the Philippines as well as tensions in the Taiwan Strait in recent months. Xi told Blinken that China is willing to cooperate with the US but cooperation



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken with Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Great Hall of the People, on Friday.

should be a two-way street. "China is not afraid of competition, but competition should be about common progress, not a zero-sum game," Xi said, official media reported. Xi said China is committed to non-alignment but the US

should not form small circles — an apparent reference to the AUKUS, (Australia, the UK and the US) nuclear submarine deal as well as the Quad (the US, India, Australia, Japan) which Beijing alleges is aimed at containing its rise.

Xi said both sides can have their friends and partners and should refrain from targeting, opposing or damaging each other. He also called on the US to be a partner of China and not to "say one thing and do another". "The two countries should be partners, not rivals.. they should be true to their words and be resolute in deeds, rather than saying one thing and doing another," Xi said. He asked the US to view China's development positively so that bilateral relations could be stabilised. In his media interaction after meeting Xi, Blinken did not mince words asserting that the US, EU and NATO countries want China to stop Russia's defence industrial base funding which Beijing has to face additional measures.

The US has already imposed sanctions on more than 100 Chinese entities export controls etc, Blinken said.

'United Team Pak could defeat negative forces'

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD/ LAHORE

Pakistan's Army chief General Syed Asim Munir said on Friday that a "united team Pakistan" could defeat "negative forces", as he asserted that negative propaganda and social media trolls could not distract the nation from marching towards its development and prosperity.

Addressing the Green Pakistan Initiative conference, Gen. Munir said that the country's armed forces, with the nation's support, would defeat all the inimical forces bent on impeding Pakistan's development and prosperity, Geo News reported. He asserted that negative propaganda and social media trolls could not distract the nation from marching towards its development and prosperity. "Let us all reject negative forces together and focus on Pakistan's journey of development and stability," he was quoted as saying. "We are all a united team Pakistan - InshaAllah (God

willing), with the cooperation and support of the people, all efforts of those who distract and obstruct Pakistan's development journey will fail," he said. Stressing the need for over-powering economic challenges, Gen. Munir said that complete independence without economic stability is not possible. "In today's era, complete independence is not possible without economic stability," he said, warning that "no instability will be tolerated" in the country's journey towards prosperity and development. Last month, the Army chief assured the unwavering resolve of the Army to support the new Pakistan government's initiatives aimed at the cash-strapped country's economic recovery. He made the remarks during a high-level meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

Pakistan's powerful Army, which has ruled the country for more than half of its 75-plus years of existence, has wielded considerable power in matters

of security and foreign policy.

SHARIF SET TO BECOME PARTY PRES, YET AGAIN

Three-time former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is all set to become the president of his party, PML-N, seven years after he was disqualified by the apex court from holding any public post, the party announced here on Friday.

A senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader told PTI that Nawaz, 74, will be elected president of the ruling party on May 11 in a meeting of the party leadership. In 2017, the Supreme Court of Pakistan disqualified Nawaz as premier and party president for his alleged corruption in cases related to the Panama Papers revelations about his illegal wealth stashed abroad.

PML-N Punjab president Rana Sanaullah told a press conference that a decision to make Nawaz Sharif president of the party again has been taken at a party meeting.

London resident arrested by NIA in Indian mission attack case

London (PTI): A man who was arrested for unlawful activities by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) as part of its investigations into the attack on the High Commission of India here in March 2023 had previously been detained at the Attari border while entering India from Pakistan last year. Inderpal Singh Gaba, a resident of Hounslow in west London, was arrested in India on Thursday for committing offences under Section 13(1) of UA (P) Act, Section 2 of the Prevention of Insult of National Honour Act and Section 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC), official sources here said. There were two major violent protests in front of India House in London on March 19 and 22, 2023. On March 19, a large group of protesters were found to have attacked Indian officials, damaged the High Commission building and insulted the Indian National Flag.

On March 22, they chanted anti-India slogans, insulted the Indian National Flag again and indulged in unlawful and threatening behaviour, according to the reports logged by the NIA following the incidents. As part of the investigation, several suspects were examined, and seizures were made after conducting searches at 31 locations in Punjab and Rajasthan. An investigation team of the NIA had also visited London, sources said. LOC [Look Out Circular] was opened against several suspects, including Inderpal Singh Gaba. Singh was detained at the Attari border on 09.12.2023 when he entered India from Pakistan. As part of the investigation, his mobile phone was seized and data was extracted and analysed. Investigation revealed that protests on 19.03.2023 and 22.03.2023 were part of the larger conspiracy to attack Indian missions and its officials, they said. The violent protests in March last year were repeatedly raised in the British Parliament and there has since been a very visible Metropolitan Police security presence outside the High Commission of India in London.

Trump's lawyers to grill ex-tabloid publisher

AP ■ NEW YORK

After prosecutors' lead witness painted a tawdry portrait of "catch-and-kill" tabloid schemes, defence lawyers in Donald Trump's hush money trial are poised on Friday to dig into an account of the former publisher of the National Enquirer and his efforts to protect Trump from negative stories during the 2016 election.

David Pecker will return to the witness stand for the fourth day as defence attorneys try to poke holes in his testimony after he described helping bury embarrassing stories that Trump feared could hurt his campaign.

It will cap a consequential week in the criminal cases the former president is facing as he vies to reclaim the White House in November. At the same time jurors listened to testimony in Manhattan, the Supreme Court on Thursday signalled it was likely to reject Trump's sweeping claims that he is immune from prosecution in his 2020 election inter-



ference case in Washington. But the conservative-majority high court seemed inclined to limit when former presidents could be prosecuted — a ruling that could benefit Trump by delaying that trial, potentially until after the November election. In New York — the first of Trump's four criminal cases to go to trial — the presumptive Republican presi-

dential nominee faces 34 felony counts of falsifying business records in connection with hush money payments meant to stifle negative stories from surfacing in the final days of the 2016 campaign. Trump denies any wrongdoing. Before entering the courtroom on Friday, he told reporters he believes Thursday's proceedings went

"very well" for the defense, adding that "the case should be over". Prosecutors allege that Trump sought to illegally influence the 2016 race through a tabloid industry practice that involves catching a potentially damaging story by buying the rights to it and then killing it through agreements that prevent the paid person from telling the story to anyone else. Over several days on the witness stand, Pecker has described how he and the tabloid parlayed rumour-mongering into splashy stories that smeared Trump's opponents and, just as crucially, leveraged his connections to suppress seamy stories about Trump. The charges centre on USD 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 encounter ever happened.

During the cross-examination that began Thursday, defence attorney Emil Bove grilled Pecker on his recollection of specific dates and meanings. He appeared to be laying further groundwork for the defense's argument that any dealings Trump had Pecker were intended to protect himself, his reputation and his family — not his campaign. Pecker recalled how an editor told him that Daniels' representative was trying to sell her story and that the tabloid could acquire it for USD 120,000. Pecker said he put his foot down, noting that the tabloid was already USD 180,000 in the hole for Trump-related catch-and-kill transactions. But, Pecker said, he told Cohen to buy the story himself to prevent Daniels from going public with her claim. "I said to Michael, my suggestion to you is that you should buy the story, and you should take it off the market because if you don't and it gets out, I believe the boss will be very angry with you."

Claims of double standards in Sydney stabbing incidents

Newcastle (Australia) (AP): Muslim groups in Australia on Friday criticized the disparity in the police response to two stabbing attacks in Sydney this month, saying it had created a perception of a double standard and further alienated the country's minority Muslim community. The Australian National Imams Council said an attack at a Bondi Junction shopping center was "quickly deemed a mental health issue" while the stabbing of a Christian bishop at a Sydney church two days later was "classified as a terrorist act almost immediately." "The differing treatments of two recent violent incidents are stark," the council's spokesperson, Ramia Abdo Sultan, said in a statement with the Alliance of Australian Muslims and the Australian

Muslim Advocacy Network. "Such disparities in response create a perception of a double standard in law enforcement and judicial processes," she said. A 16-year-old boy is accused of repeatedly stabbing Bishop Mar Mari Emmanuel and a priest at the Christ the Good Shepherd Church on April 15, two days after the Bondi Junction attack, in which six people were killed and a dozen others seriously wounded by a lone assailant with a history of mental illness. The boy was charged last week with committing a terrorist act, a crime that carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Five teenage boys aged from 14 to 17 have also been charged with terrorism offenses in connection with the church stabbings.

UK cancer patient joins trial for world's first skin cancer vaccine

PTI ■ LONDON

An international clinical trial testing a novel cancer immunotherapy, which may prevent skin cancer from recurring, has recruited its first patient in Britain this week. The mRNA-based technology, the vaccine test used for some COVID vaccinations, is aimed at people who have already had high-risk melanomas — the most serious form of cancer — removed.

For the trial, University College London Hospitals (UCLH) doctors are giving it alongside another drug, pembrolizumab or Keytruda, that also helps the immune system kill cancer cells. One of the first patients to sign up for the trial is British musician Steve Young, 52, from Hertfordshire, east England,

who was diagnosed with stage II melanoma, which was removed. "I feel lucky to be part of this clinical trial. Of course, I did not feel so lucky when I was diagnosed with skin cancer, in fact, it came as quite a shock, but now that I've had treatment, I'm keen to ensure it does not recur. This is my best chance at stopping the cancer in its tracks," Young said. The personalised treatment works by instructing the body to make up to 34 proteins, each targeting "neoantigens" identified by gene sequencing and thought to be driving the cancer in that particular patient. The neoantigens are proteins found only on the cancer cells, and the individualised neoantigen therapy is designed to prime the immune system to attack the tumour cells in each patient, while Keytruda

blocks an immunological "brake" that protects the cancer. "The idea behind this immunotherapy is that, by prompting the body to make these proteins, it can prepare the immune system to quickly identify and attack any cancer cells bearing them, with the aim of preventing recurrence of melanoma," said University College London medical oncologist Heather Shaw, the national coordinating investigator of the new trial. The new Phase 3 clinical trial, being led by UCLH, is evaluating the combination of mRNA-4157 (V940) and Keytruda (pembrolizumab) versus a current standard of care (pembrolizumab) as a risk-reducing treatment option for patients with resected high-risk, stage IIB to IV melanoma.

US probes Tesla autopilot recall on attention

AP ■ DETROIT

The US government's auto safety agency is investigating whether last year's recall of Tesla's Autopilot driving system did enough to make sure drivers pay attention to the road. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration says in documents posted on its website on Friday that it has concerns about the December recall of more than 2 million vehicles, nearly all the vehicles that Tesla had sold at the time. The agency pushed the company to do the recall after a two-year investigation into Autopilot's driver monitoring system, which measures torque on the steering wheel from a driver's hands. The fix involves an online software update to increase warnings to drivers. But the agency said in documents



that it has found evidence of crashes after the fix, and that Tesla added updates that weren't part of the recall. "This investigation will consider why these updates were not part of the recall or otherwise determined to remedy a defect that poses an unreasonable safety risk," the agency wrote. A message was left early Friday seeking comment from Tesla.

NHTSA said that Tesla reported 20 crashes that apparently happened after the recall remedy was sent out. The agency has required Tesla and other automakers to report crashes involving partially and fully automated driving systems. NHTSA said it will evaluate the recall, including the "prominence and scope" of Autopilot's controls to address misuse, confusion and use in environments that the system

is not designed to handle. It also said that Tesla has stated that owners can decide whether they want to opt in to parts of the recall remedy, and that it allows drivers to reverse parts of it. Safety advocates have long expressed concern that Autopilot, which can keep a vehicle in its lane and a distance from objects in front of it, was not designed to operate on roads other than limited access highways. The Associated Press reported shortly after the recall that experts said it relied on technology that may not work. Tesla, the leading manufacturer of EVs, reluctantly agreed to the recall last year after NHTSA found that the driver monitoring system was defective and required a fix. The system sends alerts to drivers if it fails to detect torque from hands on the steering wheel, a system that experts

describe as ineffective. Government documents filed by Tesla say the online software change will increase warnings and alerts to drivers to keep their hands on the steering wheel. It also may limit the areas where the most commonly used versions of Autopilot can be used, though that isn't entirely clear in Tesla's documents. NHTSA began its investigation in 2021, after receiving 11 reports that Teslas that were using the partially automated system crashed into parked emergency vehicles. Since 2016, the agency has sent investigators to at least 35 crashes in which Teslas that were suspected of operating on a partially automated driving system hit parked emergency vehicles, motorcycles or tractor trailers that crossed in the vehicles' paths, causing a total of 17 deaths.



FEAST ON HOT SUMMER MENUS

Embark on a culinary journey through Delhi NCR's finest dining experiences, discovering the hottest summer menus in the vibrant city's gastronomic scene.

BY AKANKSHA DEAN

SEASONAL AND LOCAL AT OLLY, OLIVE'S ALL-DAY CAFE & BAR, GURGAON

Like a second home Olly is a peaceful escape from the city's hustle and bustle. With a cafe menu featuring classics, fresh coffee, unique beverages, and homemade cold-pressed juices, on offer is a delightful everyday experience. The summer menu is influenced by seasonal and local produce, aimed at ensuring a light and refreshing dining experience during the warmer months. Abundant with fresh salads, bowl food, and light grills, the menu promises to be both satisfying and light.

The culinary inspiration



stems from a desire to cater to the most discerning palates, offering a diverse selection that caters to all tastes. Olly's offerings encompass world cuisine crafted from the finest quality ingredients. Their charming terrace provides a cool retreat, complete with live music on Monday, Tuesday, and Friday evenings.

Must Try: Baked Crispy Sweet Potato Skins, Prawn, Mango & Avocado Salad, The Forbidden Rice Salad, Asian Style Buddha Bowl & Almond Crusted Baked Sole Fish

A TANTALIZING JOURNEY AT THE CHINA KITCHEN, THE HYATT REGENCY NEW DELHI

The China Kitchen offers a unique Chinese dining experience that sets it apart. Diners get to enjoy their meals right in the kitchen, giving a fresh and authentic touch to their dining experience. With a strong emphasis on using fresh, quality ingredients and expert culinary methods, The China Kitchen serves up an immersive culinary journey through Chinese cuisine. Their famous Peking duck and specially curated menu by Chef Zhang are highlights not to

be missed. Experience a tantalizing voyage through Chinese culinary delights with the new summer lunch menu. Infusing traditional flavours with a touch of innovation, each dish reflects the rich tapestry of Chinese cuisine. Meticulously chosen ingredients and expert cooking methods elevate classics like the Beijing-style chilled cucumber salad and the fragrant Sichuan fried rice. Delve into specialties such as the Southern-style lotus root fritter and the luxurious Gong bao diced chicken, celebrating diversity and authenticity. Embark on a culinary escapade that captures the essence of summer in every flavourful bite.

Must Try: Southern Style Lotus Root Fritter, Sizzling Sliced Lamb, Gong Bao Diced Chicken Clay Pot, Braised Tofu is a hearty vegetarian option with tofu, vegetables, and aromatic sauces. And the Wok-Fried String Beans, stir-fried with chili and garlic chip, make for a savoury and spicy side dish.

SUMMER IN MY HEART AT VIET: NOM, CYBER HUB, WOLDMARK & DLF SAKET

As the sun casts its golden rays to signal a new season, Viet:nom unveils a tantalizing array of seasonal delights, marrying traditional Vietnamese flavours



with a modern flair. With a steadfast commitment to authenticity and culinary mastery, it presents a menu that invites guests on a sensory journey through the symphony of tastes and textures embodied in their signature Banh Mi sandwiches. Combining tender proteins, crisp vegetables, and house-made spreads, these sandwiches redefine street food with sophistication. Complimenting this epicurean adventure are the meticulously crafted cocktails and mocktails, skilfully prepared with premium spirits, fresh herbs, and homemade cordials. From refreshing fruit-infused mocktails to innovative cocktail creations inspired by Vietnamese flavours, each sip offers a refined experience of taste and creativity.

The menu is a celebration of the season's abundance and Vietnamese culinary art. **Must Try:** From crisp salads brimming with seasonal produce to delicate summer rolls bursting with succulent fillings and fragrant herbs, each dish is a harmonious blend of tradition and innovation.

SALADS AND SAVOURY AT L'OPERA, MULTIPLE OUTLETS

At this revered French Boulangerie, Pâtisserie, and Salon de Thé, the seasonal selection

features an array of refreshing salads tailored for the summer, light and delectable meals catering to diverse palates, and a fresh assortment of summer coolers perfect for savouring on hot summer days and evenings. The new menu is artfully complemented by Lopera's renowned seasonal mango collection, presented in captivating new presentations. Adding to the culinary experience, the savoury offerings introduce enticing additions such as Alfredo Pasta in Fettuccine - a creamy fettuccine pasta bathed in a luscious Alfredo sauce and adorned with Parmesan cheese and Panzanella Salad - a lively and tangy ensemble of seasonal vegetables, fresh basil, Parmesan cheese, and crispy bread croutons, among other delightful surprises.

Must Try: Alfredo Pasta in Fettuccine, Herbed Risotto with Pesto Prawns is a harmony of flavours and textures, Panzanella Salad, a vibrant tangy salad with seasonal vegetables, fresh basil, Parmesan cheese and crunchy bread croutons.

VIBRANT ESSENCE OF SADDI DILLI AT CAFE DELHI HEIGHTS, MULTIPLE OUTLETS

Reflecting the Capital's generous spirit through its generous servings of exquisitely prepared dishes. Constantly evolving with a new outlet each month and revamped aesthetics across many locations, Café Delhi Heights has unveiled an enticing New Menu designed to tantalize the taste buds of discerning food enthusiasts.

Founder Mr. Vikrant Batra proudly champions the diverse and imaginative culinary offerings at CDH that aim to delight all five senses. Chef Ashish Singh has consistently impressed food aficionados since the brand's inception, and the latest menu is poised to continue this tradition of culinary excellence. Featuring delectable



specialties such as the healthy Italian Chicken Salad and the Miso Avocado & Tofu Bowl, the menu also showcases a range of gourmet options including savoury wraps, flavourful Mexican dishes, and tantalizing meal bowls crafted for the pleasure of the palate. **Must Try:** Health-conscious patrons can savour the Protein Bowl or Poke Bowl, while dessert lovers can indulge in the luscious Red Velvet Lava and Fruit Truffle creations, adding a sweet conclusion to the culinary journey at Café Delhi Heights.

Akanksha Dean is an independent food & travel writer, a chef and a catalyst and is the first Indian to have trained at Osteria Francescana, in Modena, Italy, rated as the world's best restaurant in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, in 2016 and 2018 and currently in the Best of The Best Category.



INTERNATIONAL STREET FOOD FESTIVAL

THE WORLD ON THE PLATE



Known for its versatility, dynamism and one of the best food ethos, the most loved café of Delhi - Café Delhi Heights is introducing the most dynamic food festival - International Street Food Festival. Scheduled from April 20th to May 10th, Café Delhi Heights is inviting patrons on an epicurean journey through the International Street Food Festival. Vikrant Batra, founder of Café Delhi Heights says, the idea of a food festival is to celebrate the diversity of food. Food festivals are those special occasions where we celebrate specially curated menus that are otherwise not part of our routine menu. We at CDH take our festivals seriously, and each menu is a serious attempt to do something new and exciting for our customers. We are bringing the International street festival for the first time, and this brings street delicacies from different countries on the gourmet front. Whether you're a seasoned epicurean or a curious adventurer, Café Delhi Heights' International Street Food Festival promises an unforgettable dining experience that will transport you to distant lands and leave you yearning for more. Come, indulge your senses and savor the flavors of the world at Multiple outlets of Pan India Brand, Café Delhi Heights. Drawing inspiration from

bustling food markets and vibrant street stalls around the world, Café Delhi Heights presents a carefully curated menu that showcases the rich tapestry of global cuisine. Each dish is a masterpiece, crafted with precision and passion by the café's talented chefs, ensuring an authentic and immersive dining experience for all. From the bustling streets of Bangkok to the sun-kissed shores of Greece, guests can embark on a culinary voyage like no other, sampling iconic street foods from Thailand, Greece, Japan, Latin America, Canada, Lebanon, Russia, and Spain-all within the cozy confines of Café Delhi Heights Dehradun.

Savor the bold flavors of Thailand with the signature Pad Thai, an irresistible blend of stir-fried rice noodles, succulent shrimp or chicken, and crunchy peanuts. Transport yourself to the Mediterranean with Gyros,

tender grilled meat nestled in warm pita bread and topped with fresh vegetables and creamy tzatziki sauce. Japan's culinary artistry shines through in the comforting embrace of Ramen, a soul-warming noodle soup adorned with slices of grilled chicken breast, soft-boiled eggs, and fragrant green onions. Meanwhile, Latin America beckons with the savory indulgence of Empanadas, golden pastry parcels brimming with flavorful filling. Canada's beloved Poutine

offers a hearty treat with its crispy fries, gooey cheese curds, and savory gravy. At the same time, the Middle Eastern delight of Shawarma promises a symphony of flavors with its tender grilled meat and creamy tahini sauce. From the heart of Russia come Pelmeni, delicate dumplings filled with savory delights, while Spain's Churros provide the perfect sweet finale-a crispy delight coated in cinnamon sugar and served with a decadent chocolate dipping sauce. "As we celebrate culinary diversity with our International Street Food Festival, we invite our guests to embark on a journey of flavors and discoveries," says Brand chef Ashish Singh of Café Delhi Heights.



Chef ASHISH SINGH Corporate Chef

At Café Delhi Heights Multiple outlets Meal for two- ₹1500 plus taxes For reservations please contact- 8800691812 Instagram page- @cafedelhiheights



About Chef VARUN TOTLANI

Born and brought up in Mumbai, Chef Varun Totlani moved to Hyderabad to study at the Culinary Academy of India and later graduated from the Culinary Institute of America in New York. Upon returning to Mumbai, he joined the opening team at Masque and steadily rose through the ranks, becoming Sous Chef in 2021 and Head Chef in 2022. Chef Varun is passionate about showcasing the diversity of India's produce and culinary prowess, contributing to the country's ever-evolving contemporary foodscape. For reservations please contact +91 8586972078.



The Story Club at WESTIN

Gurgaon hosts a Pop Up by Masque Restaurant's Chef VARUN TOTLANI

Savour a 10-Course Tasting Menu: Traditional Flavours Meet Innovation

Embark on a culinary adventure at an exclusive 2-day pop-up at The Westin Gurgaon, New Delhi, featuring Chef Varun Totlani from Masque Restaurant, India's Best Restaurant for the third consecutive year at Asia's 50 Best 2024. Guests can enjoy a 10-course Tasting Menu that showcases innovative twists on traditional Indian flavours, all thoughtfully paired with fine beverages.

The menu promises a keen exploration of India's diversity, embodying Chef Varun's culinary style that harmonises technique and intuition. It blends the ever-evolving landscape of contemporary Indian cuisine, offering a range of tantalising dishes. Dive into a world of flavours with options like Purple Corn, Charred Baby Corn, and Corn Mousse. Veggie lovers can savour Pura Poli with Amti and Green Peas, while non-vegetarians can indulge in Mud Crab. Don't miss the must-tries: Jicama with Coconut Malai Momo and Passionfruit Thukpa. Barbecue enthusiasts can enjoy BBQ Sweet Potato or Pork paired with tangy Tamarind and crispy Rice. Tantalise your taste buds further with Jackfruit Peppery or Duck Peppery served with Malabar Paratha and Mustard, complemented by refreshing Green Mango, Aam Papad, and Apples. For the main course, vegetarians can relish Butternut Squash, and non-vegetarians can try Clams with Karandi Loncha and Goda Masala. Don't miss the enticing Mushroom Bhutwa or Lamb Bhutwa with Potato

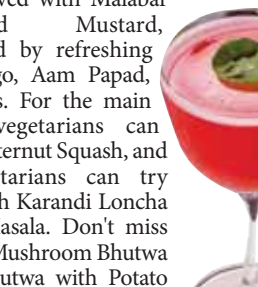
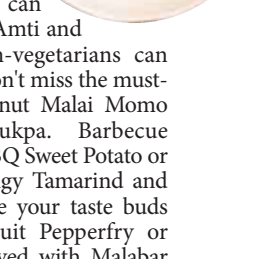
and Hemp Seed. Rice lovers can savour the flavorful Ladi Poa paired with Black Garlic Pulao. Conclude your meal perfectly with Gongura with Mulberry and White Chocolate or the rich Cacao.

The event is priced at INR 8250 plus taxes per person for food & beverages. It will be hosted at Story Club & Lounge, The Westin Gurgaon New Delhi, Number 1 MG Road, Sector 29, Gurugram, Haryana 122002, on April 26th & 27th, 2024, from 7:30 pm to 11:30 pm.

ABOUT MASQUE

Located in a Mumbai textile mill, Masque is an ingredient-driven restaurant founded by Aditi Dugar and Chef Varun Totlani. Since 2016, their seasonal 10-course menus have featured farm and foraged ingredients, reflecting a commitment to local produce.

For more information, please contact: PRERNA DAGA Associate Director of Marketing Prerna.Daga@westin.com +91-99990 45851 SUNAKSHI SONI Sunakshi@quirkindia.com +91-9899928231





BAIRSTOW LEADS PUNJAB KINGS TO HISTORIC RUN-CHASE

Overshadows Sunil Narine's 71-run knock to overcome KKR's 261 with eight balls to spare

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Jonny Bairstow lit the Kolkata skyline with a monstrous century as Punjab Kings owned the 'City of Joy' with a world record chase of 262 against a completely befuddled Kolkata Knight Riders in an IPL match here on Friday.

On a sultry evening in a parched Kolkata, Punjab Kings batters rained sixes — 24 of them all as a target of 262 was overhauled in 18.4 overs, courtesy Bairstow's unbeaten 108 off 48 balls, well supported by Shashank Singh 68 not out off 28 balls and pint-sized Prabhshimran Singh's punchy 54 off just 20 balls.

When Sunil Narine (71 off 32 balls) and Phil Salt (75 off 37 balls) smoked the Punjab bowlers in 40 degree plus temperature in the early evening, little did Shreyas Iyer envisage what awaited fate awaited him and his men at night. The night never belonged to Knights as Bairstow had earmarked the Friday night for his redemption with a 'Shashank' for company.

No credit is enough for Prabhshimran, who started in earnest making a mince-meat of KKR attack on a flat deck, giving Bairstow some time to get

his bearings right.

After Prabhshimran's departure, Rilee Rossouw struck a 16-ball 26, while in-form Shashank blasted eight sixes, only one less than Bairstow's nine in what turned out to be a walk in the park.

The match also witnessed 523 runs and an all time IPL record sixes of 42 maximums.

Both the record chases now have come against KKR in space of 10 days and at the same venue of Eden Gardens. It was on April 16, KKR had failed to defend 223/6 with another Englishman — Jos Buttler — who smashed a 55-ball century to pull off the heist.

It was IPL's joint record chase till then and both by with Rajasthan Royals — first against Mumbai Indians in 2000 and then vs KKR in 2024.

The two defeats also highlighted KKR's bowling plight this season as their 24.75 crore buy Mitchell Starc has failed to live up to his big prize purse, something that may be a big concern for the team poised to make the playoffs.

This win may be a little too late for PBKS to make the playoffs. This was their third win from nine matches as

they improved their position to eighth spot in the 10-team standings.

For KKR, this was their third loss from eight matches as they have 10 points, occupying the second spot behind Rajasthan.

Prabhshimran made the perfect impact at the top replacing pacer Arshdeep Singh when he creamed an 18-ball fifty with five sixes and four fives to give PBKS an ideal start to the massive chase.

Prabhshimran teed off against Harshit Rana, smoking him for two sixes in three balls, before Dushmantha Chameera bore his burnt and conceded 23 runs in his over.

On six off five balls, Bairstow was a mute spectator at his end with Prabhshimran blazing all guns.

Down on one knee, Prabhshimran launched into Narine for a six over backward square leg that summed up the effortlessness with which the batters had their way while wielding the willow.

Bairstow came on his own in the next over when he went ballistic against KKR's 'Impact Player', left-arm spinner Anukul Roy, who leaked three fours and two sixes in his first five balls.

The only respite was Narine's direct hit from short fine-leg in the final delivery of that Roy over that brought an end to Prabhshimran's blazing knock.

Before this match, Bairstow's highest this season was 42 as he got out for single digit scores twice and managed just 96 runs to be dropped in their last two matches.

But nothing went wrong for the 34-year-old Englishman who single handedly steered the chase.

Earlier KKR's posted their second ever 250-plus total, both coming during the current season.

Narine blasted nine fours and four sixes — his third fifty plus score of the season after 85 against Delhi Capitals and 109 versus Rajasthan Royals previously.

Narine also jumped to second spot in the race for the 'Orange Cap' for leading run-getters with 357 runs from eight matches, 73 runs behind Virat Kohli (430 runs) who has played one match extra.

Salt also was at his explosive best and blazed his way to his third fifty of the season in his 37-ball 75, studded with six fours and half a dozen sixes.

Narine's fifty came off just 23 balls,



while Salt took two more deliveries to complete the milestone as the KKR opening duo reeled off 100 runs in just eight overs.

They also posted season's highest opening partnership of 138, eclipsing 134 by Lucknow Super Giant's KL Rahul and Quinton de Kock in their match against Chennai Super Kings on April 19.

At 190/2 from 15 overs, KKR seemed well on course to improve upon their highest total of 272/7 that came against Delhi Capitals in Visakhapatnam on April 3.

But their middle and lower order failed to capitalise and it was Shreyas Iyer's 10-ball 28 (1x4, 3x6) which went a long way in taking them past 260-run mark.

Upbeat Delhi Capitals take on struggling MI as playoff race intensifies

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Bolstered by Rishabh Pant's brilliant batting form and inspiring leadership, the resurrected Delhi Capitals will aim to continue their upward march in the IPL points table when they take on an inconsistent Mumbai Indians here on Saturday.

The Capitals have endured a rollercoaster season so far, showing flashes of brilliance while also succumbing to embarrassing defeats. But three wins in the last four matches have helped them climb to the sixth spot and a win against MI will strengthen their claim to a play off spot.

On the other hand, after a familiar poor start, MI bounced back with three wins in their next four

matches but a comprehensive nine-wicket thrashing by Rajasthan Royals put an end to their resurgence. They are tottering on the eighth place on the points table and can ill-afford to lose.

DC's biggest positive has undoubtedly been skipper Rishabh Pant's form, which appears to be improving with each game.

He has looked sharp behind the stumps and seems to be batting with freedom. He was at his belligerent best during a match-winning unbeaten knock against Gujarat Titans on Wednesday.

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, Dinesh Karthik and Ishan

Kishan.

In Jack Fraser-McGurk, DC have found an able top-order batter who can exploit the powerplay but more is expected of opener Prithvi Shaw, given that his only responsibility is to bat as he is used as an Impact Substitute.

David Warner missed out the previous game, making way for Shai Hope, who couldn't capitalise on the opportunity, and the veteran Australian might be brought back in the playing XI.

Tristan Stubbs has time and again proved he can be brutal with the bat while Axar Patel also showcased his batting prowess when he was elevated up the order in the four-run win against GT.

While the spin duo of Kuldeep Yadav and Axar have bowled economically,

DC's fast bowling unit needs to step up.

Pace spearhead Anrich Nortje is having a forgettable season and has leaked runs at 13.36 which has been a major problem for Delhi.

The likes of Khaleel Ahmed, Mukesh Kumar and Ishant Sharma have been plagued by injuries leading to inconsistent runs.

They were taken to the cleaners by MI batters, who piled on 234/5 earlier in the season. And DC would be wary of a similar performance. MI's resurgence this season began with a win against DC and the five-time champions would hope for an encore in the crucial clash.

For Mumbai, Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav and Tilak Varma have got runs but all of them have found form in

patches.

It's time for the likes of Tim David, Ishan Kishan and skipper Hardik Pandya to contribute a big way and take some pressure off the top trio. While the batting department has occasionally looked good, the bowling remains a massive cause of concern.

Jasprit Bumrah has expectedly been MI's standout bowler. He has led the attack with 13 wickets at an economy rate of 6.37.

However, new addition Gerald Coetzee has been inconsistent in his maiden IPL. Though he has an economy of 10.10, the South African pacer has accounted for 12 wickets in eight games.

But barring the two seamers, Mumbai's bowling has disappointed.

RR look to maintain winning run

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

High-flying Rajasthan Royals will look to continue their winning momentum and consolidate their position at the top when they take on a resurgent Lucknow Super Giants, who would be gunning for revenge at home in an IPL match here on Saturday.

Former champions RR have looked in ominous form this season with seven wins from eight games, and they could be a tough nut to crack for LSG.

LSG, meanwhile, too have played some good cricket and are placed fourth with five wins from eight games.

But going into Saturday's match, RR would certainly be the favourites as they have registered a hat-trick of victories after a rare blip against Gujarat Titans.

Assam batter Riyan Parag has been the flavour of the season for RR in the batting department. The youngster reinvented himself and has been the team's highest scorer with 318 runs from eight games.

The return to form of Yashasvi Jaiswal, who was struggling a bit this season, has further strengthened RR's batting. While chasing a 180-run target in the last game against Mumbai Indians, Jaiswal smashed an unbeaten 104 off 60 balls to power his side to a comfortable nine-wicket win.

Jaiswal's return to form is something RR's opponents should really be worried about given the devastation the youngster and Jos Buttler



can wreak at the top of the order.

RR's batting typically revolves around skipper Sanju Samson, who has scored 314 runs so far, and with West Indian Shimron Hetmyer capable of hitting top gear, the 2008 IPL champions have a potent lineup.

The likes of Rovman Powell and Dhruv Jurel, though, need to contribute more.

RR also boast of a potent bowling attack comprising the experienced Trent Boult, Avesh Khan and Sandeep Sharma, whose 5 for 18 against Mumbai Indians has really fired up the side.

The team's spin department is also in the safe hands of the experienced duo of Yuzvendra Chahal and R. Ashwin, although the latter has struggled this season.

Chahal, however, is RR's best bowler with 13 wickets from eight games.

LSG, on the other hand, would be seeking revenge after having lost the first tie to RR by 20 runs this season.

Besides revenge, LSG would look to register a hat-trick of victories and scale up in the leaderboard.

KL Rahul's side is also on a high after two successive wins, but the India player knows the shortcomings in the top order.

When Rahul and his opening partner Quinton de Kock are on fire, LSG's batting looks ominous. The problem arises when the opening duo has an off day.

That area was, however, covered by Marcus Stoinis in their last game against Chennai Super Kings, where the Australian scored an unbeaten century.

Despite losing Rahul and de Kock early in the chase of 210/4, Stoinis played one of the best knocks in this IPL, remaining unbeaten on 124 off 63 balls to hand LSG a six-wicket win.

Stoinis' return to form augurs well for LSG middle-order, where the likes of Devdutt Padikkal, Nicholas Pooan and Deepak Hooda need to take up more responsibility.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former India star Yuvraj Singh has identified the swashbuckling Suryakumar Yadav and pace ace Jasprit Bumrah as key to the team's prospects in the upcoming T20 World Cup owing to their ability to "change the complexion of a game" in a jiffy.

Yuvraj, who was pivotal to India's title triumph in the inaugural edition of the tournament back in 2007, said Suryakumar will need to have a good outing for the team to win the cup for the second time while also suggesting that Bumrah needs to be at his best.

"Suryakumar Yadav (is India's key player)," Yuvraj was

Yuvraj identifies Surya, Bumrah as key to India's prospects in T20 World Cup



quoted as saying by ICC.

He added, "Because the way he plays, he can change the complexion of a game in 15 balls. And he is definitely a surety... for India to win this T20 World Cup, Surya is going to be the key."

"I think Jasprit Bumrah is also the key with the bowling and I would like to see a leg-spinner in the squad as well, like Yuzvendra Chahal as he has been bowling really well."

"But being a batter, I would say Suryakumar Yadav (is the key player)."

While dissecting the options of who should be India's first-choice wicket-keeper, Yuvraj expressed satisfaction with veteran Dinesh Karthik's form in the IPL but said if he is not part of the playing XI, there is no point picking the 38-year-old in the squad as the younger Rishabh Pant and Sanju Samson have been playing extremely well.

"DK (Karthik) has been batting well, but the thing with DK is that the last time (2022) they picked him and the T20 WC was on he didn't get to play," Yuvraj noted.

"If DK is not in your XI I don't think there is any point in picking him. There is Rishabh Pant, Sanju Samson and both guys are in great form and obviously they are younger."

OTHER SPORTS

World Cup: Deepika ousts Korean rival to make semis; archers confirm four medals

PTI ■ SHANGHAI

Continuing her spirited progress post motherhood, former world number one Deepika Kumari eliminated Korean Jeon Hunyoung to storm into the semifinal, while compound archers continued to shine to assure India a fourth medal in the World Cup Stage 1 here on Friday.

Deepika, the three-time Olympian, who has slipped to world No. 142 and qualified as 30th seed in the rankings round, overcame a 1-3 deficit to defeat Jeon 6-4 (27-28, 27-27, 29-28, 29-27, 28-28) in the

women's recurve individual quarterfinal.

Having started off with an eight, Deepika lost the first set 27-28, but the 29-year-old continued to improve and levelled the second at 27-all, before taking the third (29-28) by dropping just one point.

From three-all, there was no stopping Deepika who went on to drill in four 10s including two X (closer to centre) from six arrows to make the semis.

Deepika, who embraced motherhood in December 2022 and returned to win the Asia Cup gold in Baghdad in February this year, may have to

overcome two more Korean rivals in her bid to win a first World Cup individual gold medal since the Paris Stage 3 in June 2021. Korean teenager Nam Suhyeon, who qualified as the seventh seed, stands in Deepika's way in the semifinal.

The other half will feature top seed and 20-year-old world No. 2 Korean Lim Sihyeon taking on Li Jiaman of China.

JYOTHI, VERMA CONFIRM FOURTH MEDAL: The day began with Jyothi Surekha Vennam and Abhishek Verma advancing into the compound mixed team final.



The world No. 2 Indians dropped just five points to prevail over their Mexican opponents Andrea Becerra

and Lot Maximo Mendez Ortiz 155-151. They will face lower-ranked Estonia in the gold-medal

clash on Saturday. Jyothi is also a member of the women's compound team, which had entered the final on Wednesday.

With Jyothi also securing a semi-final spot in the individual section on Thursday, the World No. 3 and Asian Games gold medalist is in the hunt for a hat-trick of top podium finishes. Overall, Indian archers have qualified in four finals, all in the team events, and are in the hunt for two medals in compound individual events — where Jyothi and Priyansh have made the semifinals. The four events

where Indian teams have made the gold-medal round are compound men's, women's, mixed categories and men's recurve. Having got an opening round bye, the second-seeded Indian pair of Jyothi and Verma started off by producing a flawless 160 out of 160 to knock out the lower-ranked Australian pair of Geogina Graham and Brandon Hawes by eight points.

Next up, 10th ranked Luxembourg's Mariya Shkolna and Gilles Seywert were also no match for the Indian pair, which dropped just five points from 16 arrows to storm into

the semi-finals with a 155-151 win.

In the semi-final, the Indians started on a back-foot after Andrea and Mendez Ortiz capped three 10s and one nine to take the opening end 39-38. But the Mexicans slipped in the next set of arrows as Jyothi and Verma snatched the lead by dropping one point.

The Indians then extended their lead by three points in the penultimate round after another slip-up by the Mexicans.

Jyothi and Verma sealed the issue with a perfect 40 in the fourth end.

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