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OPINION 6 WHY ARE THE YOUNG NOT JOINING POLITICS?

WORLD 10 ISRAELI OFFICIALS CONCERNED OVER ICC ARREST WARRANTS

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FOCUS ON RAHUL 12 SPORTS

Telangana CM summoned in Shah fake video case

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A day after registering a case on doctored videos of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Delhi Police on Monday asked Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy to join the probe on May 1 and record his statement. Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma wrote on X, informing the arrest of Reetom Singh by the Assam police. Singh is reportedly the War Room Coordinator of the Assam Congress. Flagger the issue in a public rally at Bagalkote (Karnataka), Prime Minister Narendra Modi said there is a habit among people to forward certain information that comes on various platforms without verifying. "Those who have lost elections or have lost (while being in) the fray are using technology to make fake videos. Misusing artificial intelligence they put out wrong things in my voice in social media — this is creating a big threat." Appealing to people to inform police or the BJP about such fake videos and legal action will follow, the PM said the law of this country will not allow people to play such games with anyone," the PM alleged. The BJP on Monday lodged a complaint with the Election Commission against the Congress, alleging that it circulated a "deep fake and morphed" video of Shah to derail the poll process, and demanded strict action against



Delhi Police personnel (L) visit to serve a notice under section 91 of CrPC to Congress' Social Media in-charge Manne Satish in connection with a doctored video of Home Minister Amit Shah over reservation, at Gandhi Bhavan, in Hyderabad, on Monday; and Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy (R) PTI

the party. A BJP delegation comprising Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw and the party's national media department in-charge Anil Baluni also complained against the Trinamool Congress (TMC), alleging that Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee-led party has been using violence as a weapon, and demanded that the poll panel ensure a free and fair election in the state. The Special Cell of Delhi Police had registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and Information Technology Act following a complaint that doctored videos of Shah were being circulated on social media platforms. According to sources, a team of Delhi Police is expected to visit

the Congress office in Telangana by Monday evening. Sources said the police have served notices to five people, including Reddy, who posted the video on X. Reddy has been asked to appear with his mobile phone allegedly used for posting the fake video on X. According to sources, top MHA officials held a high-level meeting with top cops of the Delhi Police regarding Home Minister's doctored video. Sources said that Reddy had shared the video on 'X' (formerly known as Twitter). He has been asked to bring his electronic devices, including his phone, from which the video was posted. Around half-a-dozen

people, including Congress leaders, who shared the doctored videos are also being summoned by Delhi Police. The Special Cell had on Sunday registered an FIR after the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C), which is under the Ministry of Home Affairs, filed a complaint about the doctored video of Shah where he is seen giving a commitment to abolish quota for Muslim community on religious ground in Telangana were changed to make it seem that he was advocating scrapping of all reservations. The complaint filed by Sinku Sharan Singh, DC, Indian Cyber Crime Coordination

Centre (I4C) claimed that some doctored videos are being circulated on social media with "the intent of creating disharmony among communities which is likely to affect public tranquility and public order." Singh also shared links of videos with the police. The Intelligence Fusion and Strategic Operations (IFSO) unit of the Special Cell has now approached social media platforms to identify the source of the video and those who have spread it. "We have formed many different teams to investigate the matter properly and arrest the main culprits. We have written to X, formerly known as Twitter, and other social media regarding the video. We are investigating both the source of the video and those responsible for its widespread circulation," said the sources. The Police has asked Telangana Chief Minister Revanth Reddy to join the probe on May 1 and is headed to the state, according to sources. The authorities have served notices to five people, including Reddy, who posted the video on X. Telangana CM, who also happens to be Congress Telangana Chief, has been asked to appear with his mobile phone allegedly used for posting the fake video on X. The police will also likely go to the grand old party's office in Telangana. The case was registered under various sections of the IPC and the IT Act.

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi being felicitated during a public meeting for Lok Sabha elections, in Bagalkote, Karnataka, on Monday PTI

Congress planning religion based quota, says Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BAGALKOTE (KARNATAKA)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday accused the Congress of planning religion-based reservation in the country for the sake of vote bank politics, but asserted that he will not let it happen. He said this Congress proposal is to appease minorities as the SC/ST and OBC community is now with the BJP. "In Karnataka, Congress has started a campaign to change the Constitution and to snatch away the rights of SC/ST and OBCs. Our Constitution does not accept religion-based reservation. But the Karnataka Government has given part of OBC reservation to Muslims," Modi said. Addressing a mega election rally the PM said, "They (Congress) will not settle with this. They had earlier too in their manifesto said about coming out with a law to provide religion-based

reservation. There is a similar signal in their manifesto this time." "I want to make my Dalit, SC/ST and OBC brothers and sisters aware about Congress' intentions. These people on the basis of religion, to keep their vote bank safe, are planning to loot your right which was given by Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Constitution," he added. Veteran BJP leader B S Yediyurappa, BJP candidates and MPs from Bagalkote (Bagalkot) and Vijayapura (Bijapur) — P C Gaddigoudar and Ramesh Jigajinagi, respectively — were among those present at the rally.

Noting that most of SC, ST and OBC MPs in the Parliament are from BJP, Modi said, "So they feel that as SC, ST and OBC are with BJP. To gain the trust of minorities, they want to loot from SC, ST and OBC and give it to minorities. Will you let this happen

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Rajnath, Smriti file nominations for LS polls

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Union Ministers Rajnath Singh and Smriti Irani on Monday filed their nomination papers for Lok Sabha elections. Rajnath filed his nomination papers for the Lucknow seat, seeking a third consecutive term from the prestigious Lok Sabha constituency. Accompanied by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and his Uttarakhand counterpart Pushkar Singh Dhami, the Union Defence Minister reached the collectorate for filing the nomination paper. Union Minister and prominent BJP leader Irani filed her nomination papers from the Amethi Lok Sabha constituency. Accompanied by Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and several other leaders, Irani led a spirited roadshow from the BJP office in Gauriganj before formally submitting her papers. Before filing his nomination, Singh offered prayers at the Dakshin Mukhi Hanuman Temple and at the Hanuman Setu Temple here. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had in the past represented the prestigious Lucknow constituency.

Irani's decision to contest from Amethi, considered the stronghold of the Gandhi family, comes on the heels of her historic victory over Congress leader Rahul Gandhi in the 2019 elections. "After filing my nomination today, I am committed to serving the people of Amethi," Irani told reporters. "Over the past five years, significant strides have been made in Amethi, including the construction of 1.14,000 houses under the PM Awas Yojana, the provision of electricity connections to 1.5 lakh families, and assistance to over 4 lakh farmers through the PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme. I am confident that the people will once again bless Modi and the BJP." While the Congress has yet to announce its candidate from the seat, speculations abound that Rahul Gandhi will opt to contest from Amethi once more.

Congress jolted with Surat replay in Indore

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ INDORE/NEW DELHI

In a major blow to the Congress in Madhya Pradesh, its Indore Lok Sabha seat candidate Akshay Kanti Bam withdrew his nomination on Monday, a fortnight before polling in the constituency. After withdrawing his nomination, Bam reached BJP office to join the party and later in a photo released on social media, Bam was seen along with MP Deputy Chief Minister Jagdish Devda, State Cabinet Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya and other party leaders. Monday was the last day for withdrawal of nomination in the Indore Lok Sabha seat, where polling will be held on May 13. Indore Collector Ashish Singh confirmed that Bam has withdrawn his nomination. Bam, accompanied by local BJP MLA Ramesh Mendola, reached the collector's office and withdrew his papers. "Congress Lok Sabha candidate from Bam is welcome to the BJP under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, party national president JP Nadda, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and State president VD Sharma," Vijayvargiya said. Police have been deployed outside the house of Bam in Patrakar Colony. Congress had fielded Bam (45), against sitting BJP MP Shankar Lalwani (62) from the Indore Lok Sabha seat, which is a stronghold of the saffron party. Bam has not contested a single election in his political career so far.



The Congress offered him the opportunity to contest from Indore at a time when several party workers, including three former MLAs of the party, have switched sides and joined the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Indore, the largest constituency in the state in terms of number of voters, has 25.13 lakh electors. The BJP has expressed confidence of winning the seat by a margin of eight lakh votes this time. Asked about the development, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said, "The gentleman in question has multiple universities and colleges in the state that we spoke about. One of the charges slapped against him was of murder. It is not natural, normal or ordinary that somebody just withdraws their candidature and joins the BJP." She said those who question the party on where is the threat to democracy, signifies that there is a "threat to democracy".

India slams Canada over Khalistan slogans at Trudeau event

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking exception to reported Khalistan slogans raised in a rally attended by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau there on Monday, India summoned the Canadian Deputy High Commissioner here to register its strong protest. "The Canadian Deputy High Commissioner was today (Monday) summoned to the Ministry of External Affairs with regard to the raising of separatist slogans on 'Khalistan' at an event which was being personally addressed by the Prime Minister of Canada," a statement by MEA said. The Government of India's deep concern and strong

protest was conveyed at such disturbing actions being allowed to continue unchecked at the event. This illustrates once again the political space that has been given in Canada to separatism, extremism and violence. Their continued expressions not only impact India-Canada relations but also encourage a climate of violence and criminality in Canada to the detriment of its own citizens," MEA said. The strong reaction came after reports from Toronto said at the Khalsa Day Celebrations there on Sunday, loud chants of pro-Khalistan slogans were seen being raised in the presence of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, as



well as opposition leader Pierre Poilievre. As Trudeau was about to take the stage for his address to mark Khalsa Day, the chants were heard getting louder till he arrived and commenced his speech in the video released by Canada-based CPAC TV.

Slogans of "Khalistan Zindabad" were heard at the event in which NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh and Toronto Mayor Olivia Chow were also present. A similar instance also occurred when the leader of the official opposition of Canada, Pierre Poilievre walked up to the stage to begin his address to the people gathered at the event. Thousands of people reached downtown Toronto on Sunday for one of the biggest yearly gatherings in the city. According to the Ontario Sikhs and Gurdwaras Council (OSGC), Vaisakhi, also called Khalsa Day, commemorates the founding of the Sikh community in 1699 as well as the Sikh New Year.

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Gowda grandson's scandal sparks outcry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

The alleged sex scandal involving the grandson of JD(S) supremo and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda has led to a massive political uproar across the country with Opposition parties seeking explanation from Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was in Karnataka on Monday and the BJP which has an alliance with JD(S) in the ensuing Lok Sabha polls.

While there was no headway in the matter involving alleged accused Prajwal Revanna, demand has been made for his immediate arrest and bringing him back to India. The BJP is yet to react on this issue and Congress sought to know who helped Revanna escape to Germany. The Opposition sharpened their attack as Modi was in his election campaign in Karnataka and hence



asked why the BJP went ahead with its alliance with the JD(S) when a BJP leader had written to

the party's Karnataka unit president, exposing the presence of a pen drive full of "sleaze videos of Revanna". A case of sexual harassment and stalking has been registered against Revanna. The case was registered on a complaint by their cook, who alleged that four months after she started working for them, Revanna used to sexually harass her and used to make video calls to her daughter and have "vulgar conversations" with her.

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Measures mooted to help zoo animals beat heatwave

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

As temperatures soar and heatwaves become increasingly common and unbearable in various pockets of the country, the Central Zoo Authority (CZA) has issued urgent advisories to State zoos nationwide to help the resident animals beat the heat and stay calm. These measures encompass a range of preventive and emergency actions, from providing electrolyte-rich fluids to installing cool shades, misters, and sprinklers, and offering frozen treats with fruits or vegetables in ice to captive animals. With extreme summer heat expected to intensify across

various regions in the coming days, the CZA, an autonomous body under the Union Environment Ministry, has already raised alarms, warning that the current heat wave conditions pose a significant threat to zoo inhabitants, putting them at risk of heat stress, dehydration, and other heat-related illnesses. They cited the latest advisory from the India Meteorological Department stating that severe heat wave conditions are forecasted to affect extensive areas of eastern India and the Gangetic plain of West Bengal in the upcoming days, potentially surpassing temperature records set in 2023 and making this year the warmest on record. Ditto is with Bihar, Jharkhand and



Telangana among few other States. "It's crucial to prioritise the well-being of zoo inmates during extreme weather conditions like heat waves," emphasized officials. The proactive steps

being taken to ensure the safety and comfort of captive animals aim to mitigate any potential harm caused by the heat wave. Heat stress in animals is considered to be a violation of animal welfare and rights.

An official from Sepahijala Zoological Park in Tripura's Sepahijala district mentioned that they have already initiated several measures to ensure the well-being of their animal residents while an official from the Delhi Zoo said that depending on the species, extreme heat can cause significant stress on animals, from tiny reptiles to large livestock like elephants. "So, we look at all the individual animals, at their natural behavior, their history, and even if they are very old or young to determine how they'll handle the heat. And then we make adjustments to make it cooler for them," he said. The CZA has emphasized the importance of providing

multiple water sources with fresh, cool water in shaded areas and ensuring frequent refills to maintain constant availability. "Handling or manipulation of animals should be restricted to the cooler part of the day. Nocturnal animals should not be disturbed during the daytime. Electrolytes should be added to drinking water, especially for vulnerable animals or those on restricted diets," stated CZA Member Secretary Sanjay Kumar Shukla in the advisory issued to all zoos in the country. Authorities have been advised to improve enclosures with shade cloths, tarps, or trees for natural shade and provide shallow pools for animals to wade and splash in, ensuring safe depths.

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Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited Hanuman temple to seek blessings of the deity and then undertook a massive roadshow on his way to collectorate to file nomination papers on Monday



Pioneer

This party wants to be voice of 'mard' in LS elections

Lucknow: Unlike other political parties, winning or losing elections does not matter to the Mera Adhikaar Rashtriya Dal (MARD), which has jumped into the electoral battle to be the voice of the 'mard' and to defend men's honour. MARD has lost deposits on all seats it has contested so far since it was formed in 2018 but its leaders say they are undeterred by elections losses.

The party has released its 'MANifesto' for the ongoing Lok Sabha polls with the slogan "Beton ke samman me, 'mard' utre maidan me" (In honour of men, men have stepped on to the battleground). The party has so far announced candidates for three seats - Lucknow, Ranchi and Gorakhpur.

The MARD party has previously contested in seven different elections - Lok Sabha polls in Varanasi and Lucknow in 2019, bypoll in Bangarua assembly seat in 2020, assembly polls in Bareilly, Lucknow North, Bakshi Ka Talab (Lucknow) and Chauri Chaura seats in 2022.

"We have jumped into the fray in honour of men, to raise the voice for those who are harassed and exploited in the name of women's security. Winning and losing does not matter to us," MARD party national general secretary Ashutosh Kumar Pandey told PTI. When asked about the fate of his party candidates contesting polls this time, he candidly accepts, "This time too, they can lose their deposits."

"We don't have a lot of resources and we also do not take donations. Our candidates contest on their own expenses. The benefit of contesting the polls is that now more parties are coming to raise the issues of men," Pandey said. Kapil Mohan, the party's national president, said men are "suppressed" in a bid to "empower half the population". The party wants to highlight this issue so that people pay attention to it, he said.

In the party 'MANifesto', the party has promised that a separate Men's Welfare Ministry and National Men's Commission will be created so that before any policy or law is formulated, the point of view of men is taken into account. "It will help in formulating schemes keeping in mind the health, security and honour of men," Pandey added.

The party has also promised a Men's Security Bill to save men from exploitation by "laws made for women".

To ensure that men's side is heard, Pandey said the party has promised for a "Men power line" on lines of Women power line - a helpline which provides immediate assistance to women in cases of harassment, stalking, etc. The party has also promised to promote self-reliance of women so that men are not "harassed in the name of alimony", Pandey said. Pandey claimed over 200 men commit suicide every day "as they are not heard properly" by anyone. People will be more aware about men's rights slowly and that was their objective, he said.

PTI

Congress hits out at Rajnath Singh, Smriti Irani

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Congress on Monday made a frontal attack on Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and asked why the people of Lucknow would vote for a leader who compromised with the territorial integrity and identity of Mother India. Addressing a press conference here on Monday, All India Congress Committee spokesperson Abhay Dubey said that Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Union minister Smriti Irani filed their nomination papers for the Lok Sabha elections from Lucknow and Amethi respectively but the voters had some queries from the two and Congress too sought their replies on them. He said the people wanted to

know from Rajnath Singh why the Central government compromised with the territorial integrity and identity of Mother India while was the defence minister of the country. "The Chinese army has entered the Indian border in Ladakh. Out of 52 patrolling points, our army is not being allowed to patrol at 26 patrolling points. The Chinese army is sitting from Patrolling Point 10 to 13 at the Y Junction below the world's highest airstrip, Daulat Beg Oldi. A new buffer zone has been created from our finger areas 4 to 8, where our army is not allowed to go," Dubey alleged. Dubey cited the claims of Chushul councillor Konchok Stanzin that the statue of Major

Shaitan Singhji of the 13th Kumaon Regiment of the Indian Army was vandalised by the Chinese army. He said Arunachal Pradesh's Bharatiya Janata Party MP Tapir Gao had said several times in the House that the Chinese army had penetrated 40 kilometres deep into Arunachal Pradesh and was kidnapping Indian citizens. He said China had changed the names of 30 places in Arunachal Pradesh in its map and was doing so for the fourth time. "Entire villages have been settled in Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan. The government of Bhutan says that those villages are not on our land, then on whose land have those villages been established?" the Congress leader asked.

Dubey said that the people of Uttar Pradesh and Lucknow were no longer going to accept the country's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who had compromised the territorial integrity and identity of Mother India, and the people of the country and the state also wanted answers to the above questions. Attacking Smriti Irani, the Congress spokesman said that the only work she had done in Amethi was the construction of her luxurious mansion there. "Smriti Irani should tell the people of Amethi about her five achievements as an MP and then go to the elections," Dubey said. He also highlighted the party's achievements claiming that

the Congress established a Rs 367 crore Bharat Heavy Electricals (BHEL) fabrication plant and centralised stamping unit in Amethi, established a plant worth Rs 510 crore of Steel Authority of India Limited, Ordnance Factory (Korwa) worth Rs 408 crore, where army equipment including carbines is manufactured, Rail Neer Plant which has the capacity to manufacture 72,000 bottles, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited, known as the pride of Amethi where many components, including avionic systems of MiG 27 are manufactured, besides Indira Gandhi Eye Hospital, 200 bed Tiloi Hospital, Computer Teaching Centre, Indira Gandhi Nursing School, Paramedical Institute, FDDI, Rajiv Gandhi Petroleum

Technology, Indira Gandhi Rashtriya Udaan Academy, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Technology, Sainik School, six national highways. Dubey also accused Smriti Irani of either cancelling many projects of the Congress government or slowing down their pace like Jagdish Mega Food Park, Jagdishpur Paper Mill, National Automotive Testing and Research and Development Infrastructure Project, Rajiv Gandhi Institute of Technology, Institute of Driving, Training and Research, New Kendriya Vidyalaya, Kendriya Vidyalaya (BHEL) Jagdishpur and others. He claimed that the people of Amethi would teach a lesson to Irani by defeating her with a huge margin.

Dhami says Rahul, Akhilesh have little understanding of country

Lucknow: Uttarakhand Chief Minister and BJP leader Pushkar Singh Dhami on Monday attacked INDIA bloc leaders Rahul Gandhi and Akhilesh Yadav, claiming that they have little understanding of the country as they have studied abroad. In an interview with PTI-Bhasha here, Dhami also alleged that the Congress wants give reservations to a "partic-

ular community" from the quota meant for Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC). On Congress leader Gandhi and Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Yadav alleging "misuse" of central probe agencies such as the ED, the CBI and the Income Tax Department to target leaders of opposition parties, the BJP leader said,

"These agencies are of the Congress era." Dhami was in the Uttar Pradesh capital for the filing of nomination papers of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh who is contesting the Lok Sabha polls from Lucknow. Asked about the alleged sex scandal in Karnataka involving JD(S) supremo HD Deve Gowda's grandson and Hassan MP Prajwal Revanna, he said the law will take its course against anyone who violates it. Dhami also targeted the INDIA bloc, formed by opposition parties to take on the ruling BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, saying, "This is an alliance of people promoting family causes, corruption and appeasement..." This alliance of opposition parties is to safeguard their existence and that is why the country does not believe them, he said. To a question on Gandhi and Yadav alleging that the BJP is seeking more than 400 seats in the Lok Sabha to change the Constitution and end reservations, Dhami said, "They have studied abroad. Hence, they have no proper understanding of the country."

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP are supporters of reservations for SC, ST and OBC. The two have studied abroad. They have little understanding of the country," he said. The Uttarakhand chief minister exuded confidence that the BJP will win all the five Lok Sabha seats in the state. "We don't have to fight with anybody for five Lok Sabha seats in Uttarakhand. Our fight is with ourselves as to who wins with the maximum margin," Dhami said. On the Uniform Civil Code (UCC), he said it has become a legislation in Uttarakhand and "we feel happy that the BJP has taken a vow in its 'sankalp patra (manifesto)' to implement it across the country".

BJP revokes suspension of MLC Yashwant Singh

Lucknow: The BJP on Monday announced the return of Uttar Pradesh legislative council member (MLC) and former minister Yashwant Singh to the party fold two years after his expulsion, a senior party leader said. In 2017, Singh, the then MLC of the Samajwadi Party (SP), had resigned from the legislative council to facilitate Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath become a member of the House. Adityanath was not a member of either of the houses of the UP legislature when he took oath as the chief minister of the state. According to BJP state general secretary Govind Narayan Shukla, state unit president Bhupendra Singh Chaudhary issued a letter to Singh on Monday, ending his expulsion. It is expected from Singh that he will again work with full dedication and devotion towards the ideas of the party, Shukla said. In May 2018, Singh, who was

fielded by the BJP, became an MLC. In April, 2022, the BJP expelled Singh for six years on the charges of anti-party activities. The action against Singh followed complaints that he had fielded his son Vikrant Singh from the Azamgarh-Mau local body seat of the UP Vidhan Parishad against BJP's official candidate and also campaigned for him. It was on the basis of reports from the regional leaders that the then state unit president, Swatantra Dev Singh, had expelled Yashwant Singh from the party. According to a BJP leader belonging to Mau, Yashwant Singh was preparing to contest Lok Sabha election from Ghosi seat which will go to polls in the seventh phase on June 1. The BJP has given this seat to its ally Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP) chief Omprakash Rajbhar's son Arvind Rajbhar in the alliance.

SI hit on head by youth outside police outpost

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a daring incident, a youth allegedly attacked Sub-Inspector Pradeep Yadav, the in-charge of a police outpost, by striking him on the head with an iron rod outside the police outpost opposite Madaion police station on Monday evening. Police said that the attack was unprovoked, and the accused did not have any personal grudge against the SI, dispelling speculation about potential ill-treatment suffered by the attacker at the hands of the police. DCP, North, Abhijeet R Shanker said that the police outpost in-charge sustained a serious head injury requiring eight stitches. "The attacker, identified as Raju Chaudhary, is reportedly mentally unstable and is currently being interrogated.

Legal action will be taken against him," he added. SI Pradeep was stationed at the Naubasta police outpost and was assaulted near the Madaion police station. Eyewitnesses described how the accused approached the SI, who was engaged in conversation with someone, and struck him forcefully with an iron rod, causing a severe injury to the back of his head. The accused attempted to flee the scene but was apprehended by bystanders and commuters. In a separate incident, a student of a coaching institute in Hazratganj was struck by a police jeep reportedly part of a VIP convoy in the area on Monday. Reports said that around 11 am on Monday, Lawrence, a resident of Telibagh in PGI police station area, was on his way to coach-

ing when he was hit by the police jeep moving on the wrong side of the road. Lawrence sustained critical injuries, with X-ray results revealing fractures in his right leg and hand. Lawrence's father Xavier Anthony, a private company employee, mentioned that his son was pursuing BCA at UP Tech Coaching in Hazratganj. He stated that witnesses recorded a video of the incident, indicating that the police jeep belonged to a VIP convoy. Xavier accused the jeep driver of driving on the wrong side and causing the accident, asserting that his son was not at fault. The incident occurred in the Cantonment police station area, and Xavier expressed intentions to file an FIR once his son's condition improves.

CLASSIFIEDS

सूचना
सर्वोदित हो कि मेरा नाम जाह्नवी सिंह है, जो कि पूर्ण नहीं है। सम्पूर्ण नाम जाह्नवी सिंह चौहान JAHNAVI SINGH CHAUHAN है, जो कि पूर्ण एवं सत्य व सही है - पुत्री-अपिल सिंह, निवासी विला-134, सेक्टर-D पॉस्ट-02, सुरमा गोलक सिटी, अमल एपोजार्ड, लखनऊ-226030

NOTICE
I HAVE CHANGED MY NAME FROM INDO KUAMR TO INDER KUMAR MOTWANI S/O BALDEV PRASAD R/O 111/411, ASHOK NAGAR R K NAGAR KANPUR.

NOTICE
मेरा नाम DILSHAD AHMED S/O SAEED AHMAD है वही से मेरे पासपोर्ट में नाम DILSAD AHMAD S/O SAYEED AHMAD हो गया था मुझे DILSHAD AHMED S/O SAEED AHMAD नाम से जाना पहचाना जाए। R/O 52/2 (17A) RAM RAI KI SARAY JAJMAU KANPUR-208010

NOTICE
I (Gulab Chandra Dubey) have lost my original allotment & possession letter of property (Plot no. 3/496-R Vikalp Khand - 3 Gomti Nagar Yojna Gomti Nagar Lucknow) during photocopy. Gulab Chandra Dubey - 9453186010

NOTICE
Be it known to all that my name is registered as Wasiq Mohammad in my earlier issued passport no. A 3036365 which is wrong. My real name is Mohammad Wasiq. Now I should be known and regarded by this name only for all future purposes. Mohammad Wasiq Son of Late Ainul Haq Resident of - C 80 G.T.B. Nagar, Kareli, P. S. Kareli, Pargana and Tehsil Sadar, Prayagraj

NOTICE
Be it known to all that in my earlier issued passport no. R-884674 my name is registered as Mohammad Wasiq Jafari and my mother's name is Asma Jafari and my father's name is registered as Einul Haq which is wrong. The correct name is Mohd. Wasiq Jafari and Mother's name is Asma Jafari and Father's name is Ainul Haq. Now I should be known and regarded with the same name for all future purposes. Mohammad Wasiq Jafari Son of Late Ainul Haq Resident of - C 80 G.T.B. Nagar, Kareli, P. S. Kareli, Pargana and Tehsil Sadar, Prayagraj

Important Notice
I hereby declare that my mother Nisha Rathaur W/O Rajaram Rathaur was suddenly died on 09 November 2023. There was a loan on my mother's name from Piramal Housing Finance Limited Bank. The full payment has been paid to the bank. Now I am giving information to take original registry of the house from the bank. Sachin Rathaur S/O Late Nisha Rathaur R/O Mohalla Durgapurwa, Tehseel and District-Sitapur

NOTICE
It is informed that I Geeta Bhandari Daughter of Late Heera Singh Residence of New Basti Sarojni nagar Lucknow, my date of birth has been wrongly mentioned as 06/12/2000 in the discharge book whereas the correct date of birth is 18/12/2000. PD(393)C

NOTICE
The fire department will soon utilise remote-controlled robots to swiftly contain fires and access otherwise inaccessible fire sites, as they prepare to introduce these robots for firefighting exercises. A demonstration took place at the Hazratganj fire station on Monday. "Fire emergencies in locations like chemical factories or areas challenging for humans to reach will be managed by robots that can be operated remotely," Director General of Police (DGP), UP Fire and Emergency Services, Avinash Chandra said. "Although this system is already in use by fire services in Delhi and Mumbai, it will be a first for our state. The robots are readily available in the market and will soon be integrated into the UP Fire and Emergency Services fleet," he added.

NOTICE
Remote-controlled robots to be pressed into service in inaccessible sites

enabling them to ascend stairs effortlessly. The front section of these robots houses sensors and cameras. The sensors approach the fire and, based on temperature readings, activate the water spray. With onboard cameras, the robots can comprehensively monitor fire sites, simplifying the detection of individuals trapped inside. Each robot will be equipped with a water pipe at its back for spraying water and collecting water from stationed tankers outside, reducing the time required to extinguish fires safely and swiftly. Additionally, they come equipped with ventilation fans to prevent overheating. "The firefighters will undergo specialised training to operate these robots," the DG said.

Meanwhile, firefighters in Lucknow will soon receive advanced equipment such as a multi-articulated water tower capable of maneuvering like a snake through narrow lanes, rotating 360 degrees, and extending to a height of 24 meters. These devices can be remotely controlled to respond to fire incidents within the city, said Lucknow's Chief Fire Officer Mangesh Kumar, who confirmed a recent demonstration at the Chowk fire station. The acquisition process for these long-awaited robots is in its final stages, with the machines soon to be deployed within the Lucknow fire service. "The advantage of this fire equipment lies in its ability to drill and break through glass walls or any other obstructions," the CFO added.

COURT NOTICE CITATION (BY ADVERTISEMENT)
(Chapter XXX, Rule-21) IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE AT ALLAHABAD ORIGINAL JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY AND INTESTATE JURISDICTION TESTAMENTARY CASE NO. 15 OF 2024 IN THE MATTER OF THE GOODS OF Late Shiv Shankar Mishra, S/o Ram Manohar Mishra, R/o Dubawal, Gairabari Hanumanganj, Phulpur, Prayagraj (Allahabad), Deceased. Smt. Kanti Devi.....Petitioner. WHEREAS an application has been made by Smt. Kanti Devi W/o Late Shiv Shankar Mishra, R/o Village Dubawal, Hanumanganj, Phulpur, Prayagraj, for the probate of the will (or Letters of Administration to the estate) of Late Shiv Shankar Mishra deceased, who died at Dubawal Uperhar, Phulpur, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh on 21.11.2022 AND WHEREAS, the 23 day of May, 2024 has been fixed for hearing of the said application. THIS CITATION is issued calling upon all persons claiming to have any interest to come and see the proceedings if they think fit before the grant of probate (or Letters of Administration). Given under my hand and the seal of the Court this 10th day of April, 2024. **DEPUTY REGISTRAR HIGH COURT, ALLAHABAD** R.K. Mishra Advocate Counsel for the Petitioner.

Attention shifts to Yadav land in UP in third phase

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

As the Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh progress to the third phase, attention shifts from the Jat belt to the influential Yadav land. This phase encompasses 10 crucial constituencies where the intricate Yadav-Muslim equation is set to play a dominant role. The 10 Lok Sabha constituencies slated for polling in this phase include Sambhal, Hathras, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etah, Budaun, Aonla and Bareilly, surpassing the eight Lok Sabha seats contested in each of the first two phases.

The Bharatiya Janata Party has historically maintained dominance in this belt as in 2014, the party won seven out of the 10 seats, further expanding its tally to eight in 2019. However, exceptions in their sweep include Sambhal and Mainpuri in 2019, and Mainpuri, Budaun, and Firozabad in 2014, all secured by the Samajwadi Party. The third phase has dominance of Other Backward Classes, prominently including Yadavs, Lodhs and Kachhi/Shakya/Muraos communities. Alongside, the impact of Muslim and Jat remains significant in select areas. Constituencies like Etah, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Budaun and Sambhal witness a significant Yadav presence, often aligning with Muslim constituents to form a formidable vote bank for SP. Muslim voters also wield substantial influence in Sambhal, Bareilly,

Aonla and Budaun, as well as in Etah, Mainpuri, Fatehpur Sikri, Agra and Firozabad, with their proportions ranging from 5.7 per cent to 12.6 per cent. In Etah, Lodh voters emerge as a decisive force, while Kachhi/Shakya/Muraos communities hold sway in Etah, Budaun, and Mainpuri.

PROFILES OF CONSTITUENCIES

SAMBHAL: An old Yadav stronghold, Sambhal sent SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav to the Lok Sabha twice in 1998 and 1999 and another SP veteran Ram Gopal Yadav once in 2004. The Bahujan Samaj Party won the seat twice in 1996 and 2009. The lotus blossomed here only once in 2014 while the Congress last won

this seat in 1984. In 2019, veteran SP leader Shafiqur Rahman Barq won this seat. After the demise of its sitting MP, the SP has fielded his grandson Zia-ur-Rahman Barq from Sambhal. The Bharatiya Janata Party has relied on its old candidate to reclaim the seat. The BSP has fielded a Muslim candidate, Shaulat Ali, making the contest triangular. **HATHRAS:** A bastion for the BJP since 1991, Hathras, a seat reserved for Scheduled Castes, has seen uninterrupted victories of the party. The SP and BSP have struggled to make inroads here. In 2009, the Rashtriya Lok Dal won this seat as a pre-poll ally of the BJP. The Congress last won from here in 1971 while the SP and the BSP have never won from

Hathras. In 2019, BJP's Rajvir Singh Diler defeated Ramji Lal Suman of the SP. In 2024, the BJP has fielded Anoop Valmiki from Hathras while the SP and the BSP have given their tickets to Jasveer Valmiki and Hembabu Dhangar, respectively. Diler died of a heart attack last week. **AGRA:** The BJP has won this reserved seat five times since 1991, three times in a row since 2009. BJP's SP Baghel, Union minister of state, won the Agra seat in 2019. The BJP has repeated the same candidate this time. The SP has chosen Suresh Chandra Kardan while the BSP has fielded Pooja Amrohi from Agra. **FATEHPUR SIKRI:** The BJP won this seat twice in 2014 and 2019 and the BSP in 2009. In 2019, BJP's Raj Kumar Chahar

won this seat, defeating the Raj Babbar of the Congress. Chahar polled 64.23 per cent votes. The BJP has retained Raj Kumar Chahar and the Congress has fielded Ramnath Sikarwar. The BSP has relied on a Brahmin candidate Ram Niwas Sharma. **FIROZABAD:** A part of Yadav land, this seat elected SP chief Akhilesh Yadav in 2009 and his cousin Akshay Yadav in 2014. Congress candidate Raj Babbar defeated SP's Dimple Yadav in a bypoll in 2009. For 2024, the BJP has announced Vishwadeep Singh as its candidate while the SP has repeated Akshay Yadav. **MAINPURI:** A Yadav citadel, Mainpuri sent SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav to the Lok Sabha at least five times. The SP has been winning this

seat since 1996. The Congress last won from here in 1984. In 2019, Mulayam Singh Yadav won by defeating BJP's Prem Singh Shukla. In 2024, BJP's Jaiveer Singh is challenging Dimple Yadav of the SP. Dr Gulshan Dev Shukla is the BSP candidate from Mainpuri. **ETAH:** The BJP won from here six times since 1989. In between, the SP won this seat twice. In 2009, Kalyan Singh won this seat as an independent supported by the SP. BJP's Rajveer Singh, son of Kalyan Singh, won this seat in 2014 and 2019. The party has made him its candidate again in 2024. Davesh Shukla is SP candidate. **BUDAUN:** The SP won the Budaun seat continuously from 1996 to 2014 but it lost to the BJP in 2019. This time, the BJP

has replaced the sitting MP Sanghmitra Maurya with Durvijay Shakya. Aditya Yadav, son of Shivpal Singh Yadav, is the SP candidate from Budaun. **AONLA:** The BJP has won this seat six times since 1989 and three times since 2009. The SP has won this seat twice. The Congress won from here last in 1984. Dharmendra Kashyap (BJP), Neeraj Maurya (SP) and Abid Ali (BSP) are the main contestants. **BAREILLY:** In Bareilly, the BJP has replaced its eight-time MP Santosh Gangwar, who continuously won from 1989 till 2019, barring in 2009 when Praveen Aron of the Congress defeated him by a narrow margin. Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar is the BJP candidate who is pitted against Praveen Aron.

Sonia's 'Special 24' for win in Rae Bareilly

PREETAM SRIVASTAVA ■ LUCKNOW

Even when the Congress high command has withheld the announcement of the party's candidates from Rae Bareilly and Amethi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra is likely to contest from Rae Bareilly and to ensure her victory, her mother and sitting MP Sonia Gandhi has chalked out a strategy. Sonia has constituted a team of 'Special 24' which will work as per her plan and ensure a grand entry for Priyanka into Lok Sabha by retaining her mother's seat and winning the election with a huge margin. The coordination committee of 'Special 24' includes members from every assembly segment, Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee, All India Congress Committee, District Congress Committee and senior Congress leaders. Along with this, five big faces of Congress will be in backup. Prominent among them is Sunil Kanugolu, who will play the role of

Chanakya in view of the electoral equations of Rae Bareilly, along with the party's information technology war room. The decision regarding who will contest from Rae Bareilly is in the hands of Congress national president Mallikarjun Kharge. In the meeting of the Congress Central Core Committee last Saturday night, the party handed over the authority of finalising the ticket to him. There has been an increase in activity regarding 'Mission Rae Bareilly' for the last two days. The Delhi Core Committee is active along with the District Congress Committee. Everyone's eyes are fixed on the announcement of the ticket from Rae Bareilly. At present, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's name is considered to be final, but those responsible for announcing the candidate are still silent. Besides Sonia Gandhi, the 'Special 24' coordination committee for Rae Bareilly elections has her representative KL Sharma, Congress District



president Pankaj Tiwari, Congress City president Dheeraj Srivastava, Sushil Pasi, Harchandpur Surendra Vikram Singh, Dr Manish Singh Chauhan, Sudha Dwivedi, Atul Singh, Sahabsharan Paswan, Shatrughan Sonkar, Sarita Gupta, Mohammad Ilyas, Kalyan Singh Gandhi and VK Shukla. According to sources in the party, Congress general secretary KC Venugopal, DK Shivakumar, Uttar Pradesh in-

charge Avinash Pandey, UP Congress general secretary Aradhana Mishra will play an important role in the elections as strategists. The sources further confirmed that survey expert Sunil Kanugolu is one of the important strategists of the Congress. The Telangana elections were fought as per his strategy and the Congress got great success. Kanugolu will also play a big role in the Rae Bareilly election. He had conducted the first survey of Rae Bareilly after which there was a consensus on the name of Priyanka Gandhi Vadra as party candidate from Rae Bareilly. During the Bharat Jodo Yatra also, Kanugolu's team had reached Rae Bareilly to conduct a survey. "Congress is fully prepared in Rae Bareilly. The margin of victory in this election will be big. Guidelines have been given to everyone. The party is working on the strategy along with campaigning from booth to ward," disclosed Vinay Dwivedi, media incharge of Congress in Rae Bareilly. It may be mentioned that last Saturday, Mallikarjun Kharge had talked about giving a surprise in Delhi, due to which discussions kept gaining momentum in the political corridors of Rae Bareilly. Some people also kept talking about Varun Gandhi contesting from Amethi and Rahul Gandhi from Rae Bareilly. However, Congress officials denied any such possibility.

15 MLAs in poll fray in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

After a decade, history is likely to be repeated in Uttar Pradesh after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections as bypolls to several state assembly seats may be held as many sitting MLAs are in the fray. In 2014, as many as 14 Bharatiya Janata Party MLAs were elected to Lok Sabha. In 2024, besides other legislators, leader of opposition in UP assembly Akhilesh Yadav, who is MLA from Karhal, is seeking election to Lok Sabha from Kannauj. As many as 15 legislators, including three ministers of the Yogi Adityanath government, are in the poll fray to enter the Lower House of Parliament. Bharatiya Janata Party Raja Sabha member Neeraj Shekhar is also in the fray from Ballia. His Raja Sabha term ends on November 25, 2026. Besides the BJP, Samajwadi Party, Congress, Rashtriya Lok Dal and NISHAD Party have fielded their MLAs in Lok Sabha election. Though major parties are still in the process of finalising their candidates for all 80 Lok Sabha seats in UP, of the candidates announced so far, 13 are members of the legislative assembly and two are members of the legislative council. BJP has fielded Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiveer Singh of the Yogi government to contest the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat against Dimple Yadav, sitting MP and wife of SP chief Akhilesh Yadav and daughter-in-law of SP founder late Mulayam Singh Yadav. Jaiveer, who was elected to the state assembly from Mainpuri in the 2022 elections, now

Besides other legislators, leader of opposition in UP assembly Akhilesh Yadav, who is MLA from Karhal, is seeking election to Lok Sabha from Kannauj in the forthcoming polls

faces the challenge of hoisting the BJP flag in the Mainpuri Lok Sabha constituency. Anoop Pradhan Valmiki, the Minister of State for Revenue in the Yogi government, is BJP candidate from Hathras reserved seat. Anoop Valmiki is MLA from Khair reserved seat in Aligarh district. Similarly, Ghaziabad MLA Atul Garg is the BJP candidate for Ghaziabad Lok Sabha seat. In Nagina reserved Lok Sabha seat currently held by Bahujan Samaj Party, BJP has placed its bets on its MLA Om Kumar, who was elected from Nahtaur reserved assembly constituency in Bijnor district. Praveen Patel, MLA from Phulpur assembly constituency in Prayagraj district is contesting as a BJP candidate from Phulpur Lok Sabha seat. One MLA each from RLD and NISHAD Party, who are part of BJP's allies, are also in the fray. RLD has fielded its MLA Chandan Chauhan, from Bijnor Lok Sabha seat. He was elected to the UP assembly from Meerapur seat in Muzaffarnagar district. NISHAD Party's MLA from Mahwan seat in Mirzapur district, Dr Vinod Kumar Bind, is the BJP candidate from Bhadohi Lok Sabha seat. The SP has also fielded five of its MLAs in the Lok Sabha elections. Leading from the front is SP president and

leader of the opposition Akhilesh Yadav, who is contesting the Lok Sabha election from Kannauj. SP has fielded Ravidas Mehrotra, MLA from Lucknow Central assembly seat, from Lucknow Lok Sabha constituency to contest against Defence Minister Rajnath Singh of the BJP. Another SP MLA, Awadhesh Prasad, who represents Milkipur reserved seat in the Assembly, is contesting against the sitting BJP MP Lallu Singh from Faizabad Lok Sabha seat in Ayodhya. SP has also given its ticket to Katehari MLA Lalji Verma from Ambedkar Nagar Lok Sabha seat. Ziaur Rahman, SP MLA from Kundarki in Moradabad district, is party candidate from Sambhal Lok Sabha seat. Congress MLA from Farendia, Virendra Chaudhary, is contesting the Lok Sabha election from Maharajganj. The two members of the UP Legislative Council contesting the parliamentary elections are BJP's Jitin Prasada and Bhimrao Ambedkar of the BSP. Jitin Prasada's tenure as a member of the Legislative Council ends on September 26, 2027. BSP has fielded its legislative council member Bhimrao Ambedkar from Hardoi seat Lok Sabha seat. His term in the legislative council ends on May 5.

BSP relying on Muslim, OBC votes in 3rd phase

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The third phase of the Lok Sabha elections does not seem easy for the Bahujan Samaj Party which showed its influence and strength in the first two phases of the polls in west UP. The BSP is relying on Muslim and Other Backward Classes votes in most of the constituencies going to polls in the third phase and. Accordingly, it has fielded its candidates. But, these constituencies being in Yadav land and lack of cadre vote bank is creating hurdles in the path of the elephant. At the same time, the BSP has been out of the contest due to cancellation of the nomination of its candidate in Bareilly. In the 2009 Lok Sabha elections, the BSP had won Sambhal and Fatehpur Sikri seats. In the third phase, elections are to be held in Sambhal, Hathras, Agra, Fatehpur Sikri, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Etah, Budaun, Aonla and Bareilly. However, the BSP is contesting elections on only nine seats. The Yadav vote bank has always dominated half of these seats. In Sambhal and Budaun, the Muslim vote bank plays a decisive role, while in Bareilly and Aonla, the OBC vote bank dominates. Agra and Fatehpur Sikri seats are slightly favourable for the BSP due to the high number of Dalit voters. Victory is not easy for the BSP in Firozabad and Mainpuri as these are VVIP seats. However, this time BSP has taken special care in selecting its candidates on these seats. In Sambhal, Aonla, Etah, Firozabad and Budaun, it has challenged the Samajwadi Party-Congress alliance by fielding Muslim candidates. In Agra, the BSP has given its ticket to young Dalit leader Pooja Amrohi, whose family has been associated with the Congress. In Fatehpur Sikri, the BSP has made the contest interesting by giving its ticket to a Brahmin candidate. In Mainpuri, it has fielded a Yadav candidate, and this can become a cause of trouble for SP candidate Dimple Yadav. The BSP has given ticket to Chhotelal Gangwar in Bareilly, but his nomination has been rejected. The Bharatiya Janata Party has fielded Chhatrapal Gangwar from this seat, while former MP Praveen Singh

Don't feel obliged to vote for BJP for free rations: Mayawati

Budaun: Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati on Monday asked poor people not to feel obliged to vote for the Bharatiya Janata Party because of the free rations they get from the Central government. "Since some time, the BJP-led Centre has been providing small amounts of ration to the poor families and during elections, the BJP and RSS people go to villages and ask them to repay the debt by giving their votes to the BJP," Mayawati said while addressing an election rally here in support of her party nominees. People should not get misguided by this as the free ration being provided is not coming from the pockets of Prime Minister Narendra Modi or BJP, but from the taxpayers' money, the BSP supreme added. "You need not think that it has to be repaid. This is your own money," she said. In November last year, the Centre extended the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) scheme to provide 5 kilograms of free foodgrains per month to 81.35 crore poor for another five years that would cost the exchequer about Rs 11.80 lakh crore. The scheme was last extended till December 31, 2023. Mayawati also stressed that the problems of the poor people would end only by providing them employment, and said that if given a chance her party's government would pay attention to it. Attacking the Samajwadi Party, Mayawati alleged that it has been seen mostly that where Muslims are more in majority, the SP gives tickets to Hindu and where Hindus are more in number, they field a Muslim candidate. "This is the character of the Samajwadi Party," she said. In Budaun, which has a



sizable Muslim population, the SP decided that the candidate will be that of "their own family, of their own caste", the BSP chief alleged and stressed that there is no discrimination in her party over ticket allocation and proper representation is given to everyone. Attacking her political opponents, the BSP president alleged that like the Congress, the BJP too has politicised the investigating agencies. She said in the last few years, the development and progress of Muslims and religious minorities had stopped and atrocities and oppression under the guise of Hindutva was at its extreme. Urging the voters to stop supporting the Congress, BJP and their allies, Mayawati said that these parties would try every means to come to power. **AMETHI CANDIDATE CHANGED** A day after announcing the party's candidate from Amethi, Bahujan Samaj Party chief on Monday changed the candidate. The party had on Sunday announced the name of Ravi Prakash Maurya as its candidate from Amethi but on Monday, Mayawati replaced him with Nanhe Singh Chauhan. **PTI/PNS**

Yogi: 'Accidental Hindu' should talk about atrocities by Mughals

Lucknow: Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday, saying the leader who had called himself an "accidental Hindu" should talk about great Hindu kings and the destruction of temples in Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura by Mughal emperors. On the Congress's objection over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), Adityanath said it is an issue of humanity and alleged that the opposition party's protest is due to "pressure" from "radical elements". Gandhi makes "baseless" comments because he does not have proper knowledge of India's history and geography, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader told reporters here. "Rahul Gandhi remains in discussion because of his baseless comments," he said. "The one who had called himself an accidental Hindu will sound

funny if he talks about India's history and culture," Adityanath added, taking a dig at the former Congress chief. While delivering speeches, Gandhi should have mentioned great Hindu rulers, such as Chandragupta Maurya, Ashoka, Maharaja Bhoj, Prithviraj Chauhan, Chhatrapati Shivaji and Jhansi ki Rani, among others, who contributed in the making of India, he said. Adityanath further claimed that Gandhi has forgotten about the "atrocities" committed by Mughal emperors in the medieval period. "He should have said who was responsible for destroying temples in Ayodhya, Kashi and Mathura," the chief minister said, adding that the Congress leader should also make references to those responsible for causing destruction in the Nalanda and Takshila universities in the past. **PTI**

Crackdown on illegal activities intensified

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In compliance with the instructions of the Election Commission of India to ensure free, fair and peaceful Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh, the law enforcement agencies have intensified crackdown on illegal activities like distribution of cash and liquor in the state. Liquor, drugs, precious metals and cash worth Rs 32,977.30 lakh have been seized in the state from March 16 to April 28. On April 28 alone, liquor, drugs, and cash worth Rs 182.07 lakh were seized across the state. Chief Electoral Officer of Uttar Pradesh, Navdeep Rinwa, said, "The stringent enforcement of the model code of conduct in the state aims to ensure a fair, inclusive, and secure electoral process free from inducements. From March 16 to April 28, a concerted effort by various enforcement agencies, including Excise, Income Tax, Police and Narcotics departments, led to the confiscation of

items valued at a total of Rs 32,977.30 lakh. This seizure included Rs 3,211.02 lakh in cash, liquor worth Rs 4,583.70 lakh, and significant quantities of drugs worth Rs 21,850.88 lakh, alongside valuable metals worth Rs 2,175.30 lakh and other miscellaneous items totaling Rs 1,156.39 lakh." On April 28, Excise, Income Tax, Police, Narcotics departments and other enforcement agencies seized a total of Rs 182.07 lakh worth of liquor, drugs, and cash. This included Rs 4.39 lakh of cash, 18,989.75 litres of liquor worth Rs 51.58 lakh, 4,41,702.58 grams of drugs worth Rs 112.38 lakh, and 5,916 grams of precious metals worth Rs 13.72 lakh. On April 28, authorities seized 3,61,700 grams (361.70 kg) of drugs valued at approximately Rs 90.42 lakh in the Phulpur assembly constituency of Prayagraj. Additionally, 5,916 grams of drugs worth around Rs 13.71 lakh were confiscated in the Agra South assembly constituency.

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NOTICE U/S 13(2) OF SECURITISATION & RECONSTRUCTION OF FINANCIAL ASSETS AND ENFORCEMENT OF SECURITY INTEREST ACT 2002 (HEREINAFTER CALLED 'ACT')

It is to bring to your notice that your loan account has been declared as NPA by secured creditor Shubham Housing Development Finance Company Limited having its registered office at 608-609, 6th Floor, Block - C Ansal Imperial Tower, Community Centre, Naraina Vihar, New Delhi - 110028. (herein after called 'SHDFCL') and you are liable to pay total outstanding against your loan to SHDFCL. You are also liable to pay future interest at the contractual rate on the aforesaid amount together with incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. Therefore, we hereby call upon you to discharge in full your liabilities to SHDFCL within 60 days from the date of this notice failing which SHDFCL will be empowered to exercise the power under Section 13(4) of the ACT. The details of borrowers and secured assets are as under:

S. No.	Loan Account No. Borrower(s) Name	Applicant Address	Demand Notice Amount & Date	Secured Asset
1.	OALB210200005035226, Abdul Gaur, Kameez Fatima	G1/165 Kalindipuram Rajpooor Jagriti Chauraha Allahabad Uttar Pradesh - 211011	Rs. 15,43,911/- & 25/04/2024	House No. G 1 / 165 Basera Sector Gaverdhan 1st Mauza Kalindipuram Housing Scheme Allahabad Pargana and Tehsil Sadar Allahabad Uttar Pradesh-211011
2.	OLK0210100005034139, Ashesh Tripathi, Pratibha Tripathi	566/525 A/2, Jal Prakash Nagar, Near Jal Mata Di Nursing Home Allahabgh LKO Indian Public School Lucknow Uttar Pradesh - 226005	Rs. 2,92,197/- & 25/04/2024	Residential Plot No.14 Kharsa/Gata No.539, at Gram/Mohalla: Bhuhar, Ward-Haiderganj, Pargana, Tahsil & District-Lucknow Uttar Pradesh-226001
3.	OLKW170500005006048, Laxmi Sharan Awasthi, Harsh Narayan Awasthi	H.No. 19/890 Indra Nagar Sec-19 Fling Road Pani Ki Tanki Lucknow Uttar Pradesh - 226016	Rs. 15,41,608/- & 25/04/2024	Shop No. 03, With Land at Ismailganj Sector -15 Indira nagar Yojna Kti. No. 30 Tehsil & Dist Lucknow Uttar Pradesh-226012

PLACE: GURGAON, DATE: 29-04-2024

AUTHORIZED OFFICER, SHUBHAM HOUSING DEVELOPMENT FINANCE COMPANY LTD.

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India
Branch Office : 55/109, Generalganj, Kanpur
Regional Office : 117/1H-1/240, Pandu Nagar, Kanpur
Head Office : 239, Vidhan Bhawan Marg, Nariman Point Mumbai

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Property) Branch : Generalganj, Kanpur

[Rule-8(1)]

Whereas the undersigned being the authorized officer of Union Bank of India, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors of account to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being of dues with contractual rate of interest within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount in full, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantor and public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him u/s. 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules. The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with property and any dealing with the property will subject to the charge of Union Bank of India, for an Amount and Interest thereon.

We also wish to draw kind attention of all concerned towards section 13(8) of the Act in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property and O/S Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand & Possession Notice Date

Borrower : Shri Karuna Shankar Bajpai S/o Late Shailendra Nath Bajpai, R/o : House No. 62/113-B, Harbansh Mohal, Kanpur.

Demand Notice Date: 10-11-2023 • **Date of Constructive Possession:** 26.04.2024

Property : House No. 62/113-B, Harbansh Mohal, Kanpur Nagar. **Owner of Property :** Shri Karuna Shankar Bajpai S/o S/o Late Shailendra Nath Bajpai, Area : 39.019 Sq. Mtr. / 46.66 Sq. Yards, **Bounded -North :** 10 Ft. Wide Road then Bargad Tree and Vidhata Devi Temple, **South :** Part of House No. 62/113 of Shri Shankar Gupta (Nintin Kumar Gupta), **East :** House No. 62/114 (Control Shop) Anshul Gupta, **West :** House No. 62/113 of Shri Shankar Gupta (Nintin Kumar Gupta), **Outstanding Amount as per Demand Notice: Rs. 11,30,298.83 + Intt. + Other Charges**

Date : 29-04-2024 Place : Kanpur Authorized Officer, Union Bank of India

Ujjwal Raman files nomination from Allahabad LS seat

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The process of filing nomination papers for the sixth phase of Lok Sabha elections started on Monday. On the first day, Congress candidate Ujjwal Raman Singh filed nomination papers from Allahabad Lok Sabha seat. Ujjwal reached the Collectorate with a long convoy of vehicles and huge supporters and filed his nomination before the returning officer. Leaders of both SP and

Congress parties were present with Ujjwal. On the first day, only Ujjwal filed his nomination papers. Extensive security arrangements were made at the Collectorate for the filing of nominations.

Congress District City Committee spokesperson Haseeb Ahmed said Ujjwal filed his nomination papers in three sets. Meja MLA from SP Sandeep Patel, former MLA Haji Parvez Ahmed, Legislative Council member Man Singh

Yadav were present there. Besides leaders like Anugrah Narayan Singh, Mukund Tiwari, district president Suresh Yadav, city president Pradeep Mishra Anshuman, Fujail Hashmi, Harikesh Tripathi, Shekhar Bahuguna, Manoj Pasi among others were present from the Congress side. On the first day of Lok Sabha elections, only one nomination was filed by Ujjwal Raman Singh for Allahabad parliamentary seat. Apart from

this, 19 candidates bought tickets for Allahabad seat. Besides 25 people bought nomination papers for Phulpur seat. BJP leader Kavita Yadav Tripathi said her husband Neeraj Tripathi and Phulpur candidate Praveen Patel will file nomination on May 1. Regarding Amarnath Maurya's nomination, SP media in-charge Dan Bahadur Madhur said that he will get the symbol on Monday. Thereafter, he will file his nomination.

Cow Alliance fields candidates in 50 constituencies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To raise the issue of imposing a complete ban on the killing of cows across the country and to declare cow as the 'Mother of the Nation', on the initiative of Shankaracharya of Jyotish Peeth Swami Avimuktেশ্বরानानदा Saraswati, the Cow Alliance is contesting the ongoing Lok

Sabha elections by fielding its candidates in about 50 constituencies across the country.

Giving this information here on Monday, Sanjay Pandey, spokesman of the Shankaracharya, said this Cow Alliance has entered the electoral fray in this Lok Sabha elections in alliance with 76 parties. "It has received unprecedented support from

crores of religious Sanatan Dharma followers and about 50 Cow Alliance candidates are contesting elections in different Lok Sabha constituencies for the protection of cows," he said. According to Pandey, 39 parties are included in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) while 41 parties in the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) block where

as 76 parties have accepted inclusion in the Cow Alliance by showing their loyalty and dedication. "This just shows that the Cow Alliance is bigger than NDA and INDIA bloc," he claimed and added that in Kashi, Cow Alliance has extended its support to Yug Tulsati Party's cow devotee candidate Shivkumar Koli Shetty, whose election symbol is 'Road Roller'.

Guidelines given to master trainers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

To ensure fair and smooth conduct of Lok Sabha General Elections-2024 in the district, Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) training was given to master trainers and general master trainers in the Commissioner Auditorium here on Sunday.



DEO S Rajalingam addressing master trainers in Varanasi on Sunday.

District Magistrate/District Election Officer (DM/DEO) S Rajalingam, while giving necessary guidelines related to EVMs to the master

trainers, said that they should get proper training on EVMs and there should not be any

kind of negligence during voting. He said that everyone should read and understand

even the most minute instructions and if there is any problem then inform the senior officials.

He further said that all the master trainers must download the Voter Helpline App in their mobile phones. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal said all master trainers should read the PPT (Power Point Presentation) related to training thoroughly. The PPT contains detailed information about the entire voting process.

Dixit encourages people to work on interdisciplinary innovation

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The five-day Innovation Design and Entrepreneurship (IDE) Bootcamp Phase III began at Seminar Complex, Mahamana Hall, Institute of Science, BHU, here on Monday under the joint auspices of Innovation Cell of Institution Innovation Council and Design Innovation Centre, BHU in association with Union Ministry of Education. The bootcamp will continue till May 3. The programme was inaugurated in two sessions in which the first session was attended by Prof TG Sitaram, Chairman of All India Council for Technical Education, through video conferencing from 9:30 am and the second session was inaugurated at 10 am by chief guest and Director, Institute of Environment and Sustainable Development, BHU, Prof AS Raghuvanshi and special guest was Dean, Faculty of Visual Arts, BHU, Dr Uttama Dixit. They garlanded the statue of Mahamana Malviya and lit the lamp. In the beginning, Prof S Shri Krishna welcomed the present participants and informed them about the Innovation Cell, Institute



Innovation Council of BHU. Special guest Dr Uttama Dixit laid special emphasis on the initiative of innovative thinking and encouraged people to work on interdisciplinary innovation. Shivani, who is the nodal centre head of the Innovation Cell of the All India Council for Technical Education, discussed the work of the Innovation Cell and told about the documentation on various innovation works being done in BHU. As chief guest, Prof Raghuvanshi encouraged the group present with examples of the innovative work done by them in the beginning and the creative innovations that have taken place during the last 100

years. Chief experts Dr Neelam Saxena and Subroto Bhattacharya of Wadhvani Foundation were present in the programme. Programme coordinator Dr Manish Arora said that this time nine centres are organising bootcamps specifically on entrepreneurship and innovation for 2,000 undergraduate students and more than 200 school children. In the bootcamp being organised at BHU, 300 students and teachers from various higher education institutions, colleges and schools of North India organised by Atal Tinkering Lab are participating. The programme will also feature inspirational talks from successful entrepreneurs and visits to local incubators.

Traditional clothing fest held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Rajiv Gandhi South Campus (RGSC), Banaras Hindu University (BHU) successfully organised the Traditional Clothing Festival: Ethnic Day - 2024 this year for the students of the campus on Sunday. The event was inaugurated by Professor-in-charge of the RGSC Prof Vinod Kumar Mishra. The chief guest was CEO of Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust Vishwa Bhusan Mishra while guests of honour were former Director of Bharat Kala Bhavan Prof AK Singh, former Head of Sociology department, BHU, Prof Manjula Chaturvedi and Charulata Mishra. The coordinator of the programme was Deputy Security Officer Dr Manoj Kumar Mishra and Student Advisor of South Campus Dr Ashish Latare.

Banaras Junior Group 2023), Miss Banaras 2023 Yasoji Ojha, Saurabh Srivastava, AFD Noida and Suchita Gupta, Head, Fine Arts, Tibetan Institute, Varanasi. The jury observed and evaluated each student and presented its decision. A group of 10 from FDDI, Noida, presented self-made costumes. The state level designer presented his clothes through 12 student models of the campus. Besides 150 students from various courses of the campus participated in this costume display. The retro themed display from the Modern Office of Management Group stood first and B Com Group's horror theme stood second. Programme director Arpita Veer welcomed all the participants. From the organising committee, Dr BMN Kumar (Hostel Coordinator), Dr Sandeep Chaudhary (Deputy Security Officer), Dr Rajni Srivastava, Dr Kaustubh Chatterjee, Dr Raghavendra Raman Mishra, Dr Priya Singh, Dr Shruti Singh, Dr Pragna Mishra, Dr Ashish Gautam, Dr Sushma, Amit Bikram, Ravi, Sakshi Tiwari, Vikas, Gaurav, Shailja etc were present with their various participating groups. The vote of thanks was given by Dr Ashish Latare, Student Adviser, South Campus.

Ways to live stress-free life explained

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In order to ensure that railway Officers, employees and their families remain stress-free, a seminar titled 'Stress Free' was organised by Prayagraj Division of NCR in the lobby of Prayagraj Junction here on Monday. In it the running staff were especially taught the tricks to remain stress free. A discussion about living a healthy and happy life was also held.

Senior Divisional Electrical Engineer (SDEE) of Prayagraj Division Pradeep Sharma presented his views. He said the role of families is important in the safe operation of the railways. The manager of the Divisional Railway Manager branch of SBI Bank also spoke on the occasion. The bank team gave information related to home loan. Loco pilots SK Mishra and AK Singh while explaining ways to live a stress-free life advised to always create a happy atmosphere in the family. Loco pilot (Goods) Mrinal Kumar, Poonam Yadav, Yash Verma and Neha Sharma raised many points.

Farmer killed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 32-year-old farmer, who was kidnapped from a wedding ceremony in Garapur of Tharwai police station on Saturday night, was murdered. The killers buried the body under sand at Yamuna Ghat in Nagarwar village of Lalapur. The police recovered the body. Reports said that Lalmani was a resident of Ismailganj Tikri in Tharwai. On the night of April 27, he had gone to a wedding ceremony near Garapur intersection and was kidnapped. When he was not found even after searching throughout the night, wife Rekha Patel informed the police. A case was registered Sunday morning and the search began.

His wife had named Pattidar Ajay and Dilip Patel in the FIR. According to sources, when the investigation started, the involvement of a person resident of Ghurpur in the incident came to light. The police took him into custody on Monday. When interrogation was started, he told that Lalmani had been murdered.

He told the police that he and his three other companions kidnapped him from the car and took him to Nagarwar Ghat. There they killed him, then buried his body in sand and ran away. Police reached Lalapur on Monday afternoon and recovered the body. There were serious injury marks on the head and face of the deceased. His shoes were also recovered from the spot.

DCP Ganganagar Ashutosh Dwivedi said that search is on for the two accused named in the crime and others. Along with Tharwai police, SOG teams have also been deployed. The post-mortem examination will be conducted on Tuesday.

Hosiery unit catches fire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A hosiery manufacturing unit caught fire in Chamanganj police station area early on Monday morning. Fire brigade rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after about an hour of effort. The building is situated near Halim Muslim College chauraha, Chamanganj where the fire broke out around 4 am on Monday. Fire tenders rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control. CPO Deepak Sharma said no one resided in the building. However, a hosiery manufacturing unit is situated in the basement. Hosiery goods worth lakhs of rupees were gutted, he said.

Mahendranand Giri given title of Jagadguru

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The Juna Akhara which has awakened the flame of Sanatan Dharma from Kumbh city Prayagraj, has taken a unique initiative. Juna Akhara on Monday conferred the title of Jagadguru to Mahendranand Giri, who comes from the Scheduled Caste. Mahendranand Giri was given the title of Jagadguru in the presence of sages and saints of Juna Akhara at Siddha Peeth Mauj Giri Ashram on the banks of Yamuna amidst the ritualistic chanting of Vedic mantras.

All the saints, sages and mahatmas accepted it gladly. Swami Narendranand Saraswati and Hari Giri Maharaj, patron of Juna Akhara, seated the Mahendranand Giri on the throne and presented Jagadguru's 'Chhatra Chanwar'. After this, all the saints and mahatmas garlanded him.

On the occasion Swami Narendranand Saraswati said Mahendranand Giri has been working for a long time to awaken the light of religion and spirituality in every section of the society.

After receiving the title of Jagadguru, Swami Mahendranand Giri said he has been working for the uplift of Sanatan Dharma by living among the saints since childhood. When he entered the life of sanyas, he faithfully followed the traditions of Akhara along with religion and spirituality. Mahendranand Giri said his only aim is the welfare and uplift of Hindu religion and for this he keeps making every effort.

Vishwakarma: Contact every voter to ensure Modi's thumping victory

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

MLC and district president Hansraj Vishwakarma instructed the BJP workers to contact every voter to ensure thumping victory of PM Narendra Modi from Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency. He was holding a meeting of Shakti Kendra coordinators and booth presidents of four Mandals of Rohania assembly area here on Monday. Vishwakarma said the party workers of Rohania, Shultankeshwar, Kardameshwar and Rameshwar Mandals should go door to door in the Shakti Kendras of their respective mandals and give information about the development work



BJP MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma addressing Shakti Kendra coordinators in Varanasi on Monday.

done by the PM in Varanasi areas and motivate more and more people to vote in favour of party's candidate from Varanasi seat. He appealed to the party workers to make the PM win again with huge votes. The meeting was also addressed by state BJP secretary Archana Mishra

and it was also attended by district general secretary Sanjay Sonkar, Rohania assembly convener Mukund Jaiswal, former MLA Shiv Tapasya Paswan and Mandal presidents Rajesh Patel, Vipin Pandey, Milan Maurya and Jitendra Keshari apart from others.

MMDP kits given to filaria patients

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the National Filaria Control Programme (NFCP), 15 patients suffering from filaria (Elephant Foot) were provided Morbidity Management and Disability Prevention (MMDP) kits and necessary medicines at Ayushman Arogya Mandir Dharsauna under CHC Cholahpur by the Community Health Officer (CHO) Ankit Saran here on Monday. He informed the filaria patients about regular wound cleaning methods, yoga and general exercise. This programme was organised under the auspices of the Health department in collaboration with Centre for Advocacy & Research (CFAR), a non profit organisation registered as a Charitable Public Trust.

ness of the filariasis affected parts, especially the feet, there is no fear of infection and there is also reduction in swelling. If carelessness is taken towards this, the organs start getting damaged and the same increases the problem," he said, adding that the medicines are also being given to prevent the infection from increasing.

He said that cleanliness of their affected body parts is very important for those who have swelling in their hands and feet or whose affected organs by filariasis show leakage of water from their organs. He said that for such patients MMDP kits are being provided and each kit includes one tub, mug, bucket, towel, soap, anti-fungal cream etc. The members of the Patient Platform made the community aware about filariasis by throwing light on the myths related to the disease. Senior

Malaria Inspector Ajay Kumar Singh explained in detail to all the ASHA workers and assistants about the causes, symptoms, identification, diagnosis, treatment and prevention etc of filariasis (swelling in hands, feet and testicles). He also gave information about all the grading of filariasis (condition of swelling and wounds in hands and feet) and informed about the use of MMDP kits for patients suffering from elephantiasis. A 48-year-old member of the Patient Platform from Dharsauna village said that she has been suffering from elephantiasis for about 15 years and she underwent treatment for several years, but to no avail. "Now by joining the platform, she got complete information about its care from the doctors, due to which she is taking regular care of her swollen feet," she said.

New research identifies major harmful air pollutant sources

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The new research by Prof Sachchida Nand Tripathi of the Department of Civil Engineering and the Department of Sustainable Energy Engineering, Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur (IIT-Kanpur) has identified the major sources of harmful air pollutants along with their impact on human health in northern India. The study, published in the prestigious journal "Nature Communications", reveals that local emissions, particularly from incomplete combustion of biomass, play a significant role in the poor air quality and associated health risks in the region. While previous studies have highlighted the severity of air pollution in India, identifying the exact sources and their relative contributions has remained a challenge. Prof Tripathi's team, in collaboration with national and international researchers, analysed air quality data from five locations across the Indo-Gangetic Plain, including sites in and around

Delhi, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Prof Sachchida Nand Tripathi said, "The crucial insights from our study into the sources of air pollution and their impact on health in northern India will help us to develop more effective strategies to improve air quality and protect public health. The study has led to a greater understanding of the dominant role played by local emissions and inefficient combustion. It is a matter of great pride that the study has been published in Nature Communications, one of the leading peer-reviewed, open-access journals covering all natural sciences.

The study found that local sources and processes are the main factors contributing to the widespread air pollution across the region. Inside Delhi, ammonium chloride and organic aerosols from traffic, residential heating and industrial activities are key contributors. Outside Delhi, emissions from agricultural burning and secondary organic aerosols formed from these emissions

are more prevalent. Contributing to the problem is the incomplete burning of fuels like wood, dung, coal and petrol. This creates harmful particles that can damage our lungs and cause various health problems. Regardless of location, the study identified organic aerosols from incomplete combustion of biomass and fossil fuels as the major factor driving air pollution's oxidative potential - a key indicator of its ability to cause adverse health effects. Prof Tripathi explained further, "The oxidative potential refers to the free radicals that are generated when pollutants interact with certain substances in the environment or our bodies. These free radicals can cause damage by reacting with cells, proteins and DNA. Oxidative potential measures how likely air pollution is to cause this reaction, which in turn can lead to health problems like respiratory diseases, heart disease and accelerated ageing. There is an urgent need to address this issue and reduce emissions through targeted interventions to improve com-

bustion efficiency in various sectors." Director, IIT Kanpur, Prof Manindra Agrawal, lauded the research, "This study exemplifies IIT Kanpur's commitment to finding solutions for the critical challenges that India is facing. Prof Tripathi's research provides valuable insights and knowledge that can guide policymakers and stakeholders in their efforts to mitigate air pollution and its detrimental effects on our health. I congratulate Prof Tripathi and his team who have been doing outstanding research to address the serious problems caused by air pollution." The research underscores the need for comprehensive strategies that address local emission sources and promote cleaner technologies, particularly in the transportation, residential and industrial sectors. Implementing stricter emission standards, promoting renewable energy sources and raising public awareness about the health impacts of air pollution will help achieve cleaner air and a healthier future for not just the north but the rest of the country too.

Rich tradition of clay crafts in India: Chaudhary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A four-day sculpture workshop was organised by the painting department of Mahila Mahavidyalaya PG College, Kidwai Nagar, on Monday. The aim of the workshop is to arouse interest in Indian culture and hand paintings among the girl students. It was inaugurated by Principal Prof Anju Chaudhary. Earlier the programme was started by garlanding the idol of Lord Ganesha. Addressing the students in the inaugural session, Prof Chaudhary said in India, there is a rich tradition of clay crafts which is more than a 1,000 years old. Apart from the sculptures and pottery, other artefacts found in the Indus Valley Civilization prove that there were skilled clay craftsmen in ancient India too. The history of our culture and different time periods shows that in all of them, many clay artefacts were made and even today, after thousands of years, this art continues uninterrupted. Addressing the students, the convener of the programme, Prof Vandana Sharma said a person searches for a sanctuary for self-expression and self-observation. When our hands mould the clay while creating different forms and the mind is focused on imagination, then when the form is



Sculptor Santosh Kumar giving live demo at the sculpture workshop at MMV PG College on Monday.

realised, we feel immense peace in the mind. Therefore, the students should practice this idol craft for the development of creativity as well as for balance of body and mind. A lot of experiments should be done in the workshop. Invited guest Santosh Kumar created an attractive statue while giving a live demo. At the end of the programme, Dr Sarita Sharma expressed her gratitude to everyone. Prof Pragna Srivastava, Deepali Srivastava, Dr Pooja Srivastava, Roshni Verma and all students of the department were present.

SYMPOSIUM: The Christ Church College in association with Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology, Ministry of Education, Department of Higher Education, Government of India, organised a two-day national symposium on "Vagyanik tatha Takniki Shabdawali" ("Scientific and

Technical Terminology") at the Dr Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan auditorium. It's aim was to bring academicians, researchers and industrialists on one platform for effective deliberation on Hindi terminology used for scientific and technical purpose for the benefit of students and society.

It started with the lighting of the lamp and Saraswati Vandana. Prof Joseph Daniel, Principal and Secretary, Governing Body of the college, welcomed the guests and also informed the gathering that the Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology (CSTT) was established on October 1, 1961, in pursuance of a Presidential Order dated April 27, 1960 with the objective to evolve technical terminology in all Indian languages. The Commission was established under Clause (4) of Article 344 of the Constitution of India as a follow-up of recommendations of a Committee in this regard. The main function of the Commission is to evolve standard terminology, propagate its use and distribute it widely. In the process of evolution of scientific and technical terminology and reference material in Hindi and other Indian Languages, the Commission shall have collaboration of state governments, universities, regional textbook

boards and State Granth Academies. Programme Coordinator, CSTT, Dr Ashok Selvetkar, said presently CSTT is functioning under Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Government of India, with its headquarters in New Delhi. Twenty-two State Granth Academies/State TextBook Boards/Universities Cells, etc. are also associated with this Commission to produce university level textbooks/reference materials in Hindi and other Indian languages with the use of standard terminology as evolved by the CSTT. Till date CSTT has standardised the terminology of about eight lakh technical terms in different subjects and in different languages. Besides this, CSTT has published large number of definitional dictionaries, glossaries, textbooks, reference materials and monographs, quarterly journals named "Vigyan Garima Sindhu" and "Gyan Garima Sindhu" and many more works of similar nature. CSJM Vice-Chancellor, Prof Vinay Kumar Pathak, Chairman told the participants that CSTT plays a vital role in evolving and defining scientific and technical terms in Hindi and all Indian Languages and publishing technical glossaries, definitional dictionaries, encyclopaedia etc.

Third phase polls: Nine per cent of total 1,352 candidates women

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Only nine per cent of the 1,352 candidates contesting in the third phase of the Lok Sabha elections are women while 18 per cent have declared criminal cases against themselves, the ADR said in a new report.

Seven candidates have also declared prior convictions, according to an analysis of details of candidates contesting the elections in the third phase by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) and The National Election Watch. The third phase of the elections will be held on May 7.

Among the 244 candidates with criminal records, five face charges related to murder while 24 have been booked in cases of attempted murder. Additionally, 38 candidates have been linked to crimes against women and 17 declared cases related to hate speech. The analysis, based on the self-sworn affidavits of the 1,352 candidates, has shed light



on trends in criminality and wealth accumulation among political aspirants.

The prevalence of criminal cases varies significantly across major political parties, with figures highlighting concerning trends among candidates from prominent parties such as the BJP, Congress and the Samajwadi Party. The report also highlighted the disparity in the candidates' financial backgrounds.

It disclosed that 29 per cent or 392 candidates are "crorepatis",

with the average assets per candidate standing at a substantial Rs 5.66 crore.

The top three candidates in terms of declared assets possess wealth ranging into hundreds of crores, with the highest declared assets surpassing Rs 1,361 crore. Since filing of the nominations and the affidavits, the Congress nominee from Indore has withdrawn his candidature. The analysis also delves into the educational and demographic backgrounds of the candidates. The report

indicates that 47 per cent or 639 candidates have educational qualifications from classes 5 to 12 while 44 per cent or 591 are graduates or possess higher educational qualifications.

Agewise, 30 per cent or 411 candidates fall within the 25-40 years bracket while 53 per cent or 712 are aged between 41 and 60.

The report also highlights gender disparity in candidate selection with only 9 per cent or 123 women contesting the elections in the third phase.

In response to these findings, the ADR has proposed stringent measures to address the criminalisation of politics, including permanent disqualification of candidates convicted of heinous crimes and cancellation of tax exemptions for political parties fielding "tainted" candidates.

The report underscored the pressing need for accountability and transparency within India's political landscape, emphasising the importance of electoral reforms to uphold the integrity of the democratic process.

Feudal lords raising fear of threat to Constitution: Naqvi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking a swipe at the Opposition, senior BJP leader Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi on Monday claimed that demoralised by the tremendous success of a non-Congress Government, "feudal lords" are raising fear of threat to the Constitution and the democracy.

Addressing "Samajik Samrasta Sammelan" organised by the Bharatiya Bauddh Sangh in the national capital, Naqvi said this clearly reflects their "political inheritance of untouchability and intolerance" towards the BJP and deliberate designs to create instability in the country.

The BJP and Modi have been the "biggest victims of political untouchability and intolerance" of the "feudal fraternity", the senior leader charged.

The Congress-led "clan" and its companions want a "remote-controlled government on rotation, dictation or deputation at the Centre" but the "dream" will fizzle out, he



said.

Naqvi said the country has not forgotten the "policy paralysis, highjacking of constitutional values and the era of cut, commission, corruption, communalism under the deputation government of the dynasty". Modi has proven to be a "tried and tested leader" of good governance, inclusive empowerment and credibility with stability, he said. "Dynastic despondency" cannot dominate the democratic determination of such a mass leader, he added.

Naqvi said by defeating the deceit of political appeasement with the determination to development with dignity has strengthened India's glory and stature across the world.

Modi condoles death of BJP MP Prasad

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU



Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday condoled the death of BJP MP V Sreenivasa Prasad, describing him as a champion of social justice who devoted his life to the welfare of the poor, downtrodden and marginalised. He said on X, "I am extremely pained by the passing away of senior leader and MP from Chamarajanagar, Shri V. Sreenivasa Prasad ji. He was a champion of social justice, having devoted his life to the welfare of the poor, downtrodden and marginalised."

Prasad served as the Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government from 1999 to 2004. He joined the Congress later, got elected as an MLA in 2013 and became the revenue and religious endowment minister in the Siddaramaiah government. In 2016, Prasad resigned from the Karnataka Assembly and rejoined the BJP. He contested the 2017 Nanjangud bypolls on a BJP ticket but lost. He then successfully fought the Lok Sabha election from Chamarajanagar in 2019.

wife and three daughters. He started his political career with the erstwhile Janata Party in 1976 and joined the Congress in 1979. He also had a stint with the JD(S), JD(U), and the Samata Party before joining the BJP.

Prasad served as the Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs Food and Public Distribution in the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government from 1999 to 2004. He joined the Congress later, got elected as an MLA in 2013 and became the revenue and religious endowment minister in the Siddaramaiah government. In 2016, Prasad resigned from the Karnataka Assembly and rejoined the BJP. He contested the 2017 Nanjangud bypolls on a BJP ticket but lost. He then successfully fought the Lok Sabha election from Chamarajanagar in 2019.

Modi's motto has always been Asatyameva Jayate: Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of taking inspiration from Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels while speaking about the party's Nyay Patra for the Lok Sabha elections. Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh said, "For his MA in Entire Political Science, Narendra Modi must definitely have read Joseph Goebbels on the value of propaganda and taken inspiration from him."

He noted that Goebbels had stated that "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it."

Ramesh said he also wrote in 1941 that "The English follow the principle that when one lies, one should lie big and stick to it."

Goebbels was the propaganda minister of German ruler Adolf Hitler. "In his latest interview to a TV channel, which is being headlined, the outgoing PM has yet again blatantly,



brazenly and shamelessly lied about the Congress's Nyay Patra. It once again proves that Modi's motto has always been 'Asatyameva Jayate.' Truth is slaughtered every time he speaks," the Congress leader alleged.

The Congress later used the Hindi saying, "Jhooth Bole Kauwa Kaate" to attack the Prime Minister and alleged that he stands completely exposed on the inheritance tax issue.

"The Congress's Nyay Patra does not contain any mention, direct or indirect, of an inheritance tax. On the other hand - His ministerial drum-

beaters, party social media figures and corporate personalities advocated it," he said in his post.

The Congress leader claimed that between 2017 and 2019 the Modi Government seriously considered the proposal, with even his Finance Minister praising it publicly. "Now one of his top economic advisors has said he is in favour of an income distribution survey but after the elections! Wow.Come on outgoing PM. At least in the closing few days of your miserable tenure shock the country by stopping the tsunami of lies," Ramesh alleged.

Two held as Indian fishing boat with narcotics seized

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



In a coordinated effort, Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) seized an Indian fishing boat in the Arabian Sea carrying 173 kg of narcotics and arrested two perpetrators on board, Defence Ministry said here on Monday.

Acting on specific and credible intelligence provided by ATS Gujarat, ICG strategically deployed its assets ensuring comprehensive surveillance to intercept the suspected boat. Subsequent investigations upon

intercepting the boat confirmed the accuracy of the intelligence inputs, establishing the involvement of the fishing boat and its two perpetrators in smuggling drugs. Further investigation into the crew's involvement is underway. The operation marked the twelfth such seizure by the ICG in the last three years, including recent detention of a Pakistani fishing boat with a substantial quantity of drugs on board, highlighting the commitment of both agencies to safeguard the maritime borders and combating illicit activities at sea.

Congress misleading Dalits, Hindu groups against Modi Government on quota: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI



The BJP on Monday claimed that it is the Congress and its allies which intends to change the Constitution to give reservation to Muslims on religious grounds, as the ruling party accused them of misleading Dalits and other disadvantaged Hindu groups against the Modi government.

Levelling this charge, BJP MP Brij Lal said Prime Minister Narendra Modi has reiterated time and again that no one can change the Constitution, as envisaged by Bhim Rao Ambedkar.

The former IPS officer, who comes from the Scheduled Castes, told reporters that it is the Congress which has amended the Constitution the most number of times and even suspended its provisions to impose the Emergency in 1975.

The Congress and its allies are spreading this narrative to mislead people, especially Dalits, that the BJP will end reservation, Brij Lal said, speaking on an issue over

which the two main contenders for power have been targeting each other during the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. Brij Lal, who headed the parliamentary panel that scrutinised the three criminal laws later passed by Parliament, cited comments of Jawahar Lal Nehru to claim that the first prime minister was not a votary of reservation and added that Rajiv Gandhi had argued that the Constitution can be changed if needed. It is the Congress that provided reservation to Muslims in undivided Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka on religious grounds, in violation of the Constitution, he said.

The Rangnath Mishra commission appointed by the then-Congress government at the Centre had spoken in favour of including those

Muslims who were earlier in the Scheduled Castes for quota benefits meant for Dalits, he said.

He said the Modi government's decision to repeal Article 370 was most beneficial for Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes, while the Congress has spoken against its removal.

The Congress has always been anti-reservation and against BR Ambedkar, Brij Lal claimed. Dalits believe that a Congress government will include Muslims in the reservation meant for them, he said, adding that the party, when it was in power, ensured that disadvantaged Hindu groups did not get reservation benefits in government-funded institutions such as Aligarh Muslim University and Jamia Millia Islamia.

Congress allies such as the Samajwadi Party has been most opposed to the interests of Dalits, Brij Lal alleged, noting that more than a lakh Scheduled Caste government employees were demoted when Akhilesh Yadav was Uttar Pradesh chief minister.

Five of ten patients face delay in discharge due to medical insurance claims process

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Five out of 10 patients face delays in discharge due to the time taken to process medical insurance claims, according to a new study from healthcare provider Pristyn Care. The study indicates that over 40 per cent of individuals attribute delays in health insurance claims in India to hospital administrative processes, while 25 per cent cite a lack of coordination between hospitals and insurance providers.

Complex documentation procedures also significantly contribute to these delays. Furthermore, the survey underscores various challenges

encountered by patient families throughout the insurance claims process, with nearly 4 out of 10 respondents reporting difficulties with customer support regarding the claims process.

The study also found that 6 out of 10 individuals never initiated the health insurance claim process. Among those who did, 34 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with the paperwork, while 40% faced challenges in receiving timely responses from their insurance providers.

Roughly 3 out of 10 patients encountered discrepancies between pre-approved and final claim amounts. Additionally, around 38 per cent of respondents reported



that the discharge process took over 8 hours, with hospitals requiring a similar timeframe to process claims. Approximately 4 out of 10 individuals lacked clarity on

their policy's terms and conditions. Furthermore, about 18 per cent expressed dissatisfaction with the communication received from their insurance providers regarding claim statuses.

Commenting on the findings, Dr Vaibhav Kapoor, Co-founder of Pristyn Care, said, "There is a huge gap between the intended ease of cashless health insurance and the reality experienced by policyholders.

Despite 75 per cent of survey respondents having cashless insurance, a significant number still face challenges during the claim process. "This creates additional stress for patients and families

already dealing with a medical emergency. However, it's encouraging to note that insurance providers have already started digitizing and using tech to make the process quick and smooth. By embracing technological innovations, insurance providers are not only addressing the current challenges faced by policyholders but also paving the way for a more efficient and customer-centric insurance ecosystem.

"As digitisation continues to evolve, it holds the promise of further enhancing the accessibility and effectiveness of health insurance, ultimately benefiting patients and their families during times of medical need."

The organisation cited a report from the IRDA, claiming that currently, cashless settlement services are accessible in 49 per cent of hospitals in India. Both general and health insurance companies update their roster of affiliated hospitals in response to costly medical bills and false claims aimed at increasing payouts from insurers.

To address these challenges, the insurance regulator, in collaboration with the General Insurance Council, aims to establish a nationwide common cashless hospital network.

This initiative aims to expand and streamline the health insurance claims settlement process, it noted.

NEET aspirant found hanging in hostel room, parents suspect murder

PNS ■ KOTA (RAJASTHAN)

A 20-year-old NEET aspirant was found hanging from the ceiling fan of his hostel room in Kunhari area here, with his parents suspecting he was murdered, police said on Monday. This is the eighth case of suspected suicide by a coaching student in Kota since January. The number of student suicides in Kota stood at 26 in 2023. Sumit Panchal, who hailed from Haryana's Rohtak, had been preparing for NEET at a coaching institute here for over a year, the police said. His parents have demanded the registration of a murder case against unidentified persons and an impartial investigation into the matter. On demand of the student's

parents, a medical board was constituted to perform the autopsy, said Assistant Sub-Inspector Kaptan, who is investigating the case.

The body was handed over to the family after the post-mortem, they said.

The student had allegedly hanged himself around 9 hours before his body was spotted by the hostel staff, the ASI said. Panchal's body was found hanging from the ceiling fan of his room at the hostel in Landmark City under the Kunhari police station limits on Sunday night, they said.

However, his parents suspected Panchal was murdered, citing that the injury on his neck from the rope was too deep to be caused by hanging, the police said.

Majority of marginalised women still face high maternal mortality, lack of emergency care

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Underscoring the essential link between national progress and women's health, Surgeon Vice Admiral Dr Arti Sarin on Monday expressed concerns that the majority of women in marginalized communities across the country continue to have limited emergency care access and high maternal mortality rates.

"The health and wellness of a nation are not only a matter of human rights but also crucial to its progress. Women in our nation continue to face specific challenges that we actively

discuss and strive to resolve. Maternity health, nutrition, reproductive health, and mental health are among the key health concerns. Additionally, issues such as lack of access to emergency care, cultural barriers, and maternal mortality rates of 97 to 100,000 births are pressing concerns," said Dr Sarin at the Women's Health India (WHI 2024) Conference held here. Attended by an array of health experts and researchers besides policy makers, the event provided a platform for discussing evidence-based strategies and collaborations that could mitigate the impact of diseases on women.

.Dr. Madhu Goel, Director - Obstetrics and Gynecology, Laparoscopy Surgeon and Infertility Specialist, Fortis La Femme, Delhi, spoke about maternal health and environmental factors. "Air pollution, water pollution, and noise pollution not only impact the health of the mother but also affect the next generation. Whatever a mother is exposed to can influence her child's health. It's crucial to take proper care beyond just diet. Factors like using mobile phones, laptops, and microwaves can also have an impact on the child." When asked whether access to healthcare for women is chang-



ing and evolving?" Dr Goel opined that while physical

access to hospitals in rural areas has indeed improved,

financial access has not improved.

She emphasized the absence of health insurance in rural health sectors, highlighting its necessity. Furthermore, she lamented the lacking attitude towards investing in women's health. Although digital access has seen advancements, its practical implementation on the ground remains deficient. Dr. Madhu also pointed out persistent pre-existing stereotypes and the enduring male gender bias that continue to pose challenges despite efforts to overcome them.

While addressing the agenda on 'Empowering women's

Health through Innovations and Connectivity', Dr. Urvashi Prasad, Director, NITI Aayog said, many women, including those from tribal areas, with disabilities, less education, above 60 years of age, and widows, often remain unheard in mainstream discussions due to cultural and social reasons. "Addressing their issues requires substantial effort. While progress has been made in impacting women's lives, certain factors still need attention, such as sanitation, personal care, and awareness. However, socio-cultural barriers and limited access to healthcare continue to hinder

progress. Agencies must step up efforts to educate women about health, financial empowerment, and other important aspects."

Devika Bhatia, Product Manager at the National Health Authority (NHA), Dr. Prachi Sambhaji Sharda, Mental Health Consultant at WHO, Dr. Reena Valecha Balani, Wellness Manager for Corporate Health at TATA Motors, Dr. Charu Sharma (PT), Physical Rehabilitation Project Manager at the International Committee of the Red Cross was among the speakers who shared their views on women's health.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

North by Northeast

Internal strife, insurgency and a sense of alienation plague the Seven Sisters, much like the Kashmir of yore

India's Northeastern region has for long experienced insurgency, internal conflict and unrest and the challenges have often been exacerbated by its complex history, geographical isolation and perceived neglect by the Central Government. One of the most prominent facets of the restive Northeast is the internecine wars within its borders, fuelled by a variety of factors ranging from ethnic tensions to resource disputes, leading to cycles of violence and displacement. The region's strategic importance, owing to its proximity to China and Southeast Asia, has made it a battleground for competing geopolitical interests, thus complicating the situation. Traditionally, the conflict in the Northeast has been fuelled by a lack of identity with the Indian mainland, the role of external powers like China, Myanmar and Bangladesh, tribal/communal differences among its inhabitants and fault lines in the subdivision of Assam which led to the creation of other Northeastern states. Indeed, the region's woes stem from several factors, which are reflected in its turmoil. Economic underdevelopment and lack of infrastructure exacerbate feelings of marginalisation and deprivation, providing fertile ground for insurgent movements to recruit disaffected youth. Moreover, the region's porous borders, particularly with Myanmar and Bangladesh, help insurgent groups set up base and launch attacks on our security personnel. Cross-border infiltration and support to insurgent groups by external actors have been persistent challenges for India's security establishment.



The Army's long presence in the region Delhi's apathy has been a recurring theme in the Northeast. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), enacted in 1958 amidst the Naga Hills 'uprising', is a constant irritant that the locals feel reflects New Delhi's deliberate attempt to strip them of their rights and dignity. It is one of the most despised Acts in the region and stands between the Centre's goodwill and the Northeastern people. Currently, the AFSPA is enforced fully in 31 districts across four Northeastern states and partially in 12 districts. The alienation has manifested in various forms, including widespread boycott of elections, as communities express their disillusionment with the political process. The latest manifestation has been in Manipur, bordering Myanmar, where violence began on May 3 last year when hill tribal groups clashed with the ethnic majority Meitei over economic benefits and job and education quotas. Regrettably, since Independence, this area has not been fully integrated into the mainstream. Not only have many insurgent groups representing various communities been waging war against the Indian Union, internal strife and communal differences have also not been reconciled. The lack of inclusive approach to addressing the root causes of the unrest, coupled with sporadic attempts at peace talks and development initiatives, has led to instability that shows little sign of abating. Only through sustained efforts and genuine political will can the region hope to achieve peace and stability.

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PICTALK



Members of a dance group perform on a road on International Dance Day, in Nadia

Why are the young not joining politics?

A large number of voters belongs to the younger generation; their apathy towards the electoral process is a cause of concern



PRAFULL GORADIA

The country belongs more and more to its younger citizens. It is, therefore, all the more disturbing that the youth who have lately crossed the age of 18 and have registered themselves as voters in fewer numbers. The country belongs more to the younger ones who're 18, on an average, the country for say, sixty years more, or probably twelve general elections. To a fifty-year-old, in terms of time, he might get to see five, possibly six more general elections.

In Uttar Pradesh, our largest state only 25 per cent of the eligible youth have registered themselves as voters. What could be the reasons for this lack of desire to have a say in the running of their country? Do most young people expect Government representatives to approach them in the old maibaap fashion? Or do they feel that there isn't likely to be much competition among the political parties for their votes? Could it also be that the younger generation has come to nurse an indifference towards the entire political process and the institution of democracy itself? Over the years, a large body of the youth of the country has come to believe that whoever comes to power, won't make any difference to their lives, as the country's politicians are perceived to be a class that acts only in its interest. However, in this cynicism, the youth forget that by their indifference, they abdicate their right to have a say in the running of their nation.

At the other of the age spectrum, the necessary interest in entering the political arena and playing a meaningful role in the life of the country has not been there to the extent required. Public life of a political nature had existed for some fifty years before independence. It began with the founding of the Congress by a retired British bureaucrat, Allan Octavian Hume, in 1885. The Muslim League was founded in the year 1906, the Hindu Mahasabha in 1916 and the Communist Party in 1925. Indians, therefore had the opportunity to have a feel of political



public life. The motivation wasn't power, but an idealism-driven desire for the country's freedom. Soon thereafter, there might have been disillusion; the earlier idealism began declining rapidly. With the decline was seen a fall in ethical and social values in the country.

Could the disillusionment have been due to disappointment with the quality of politicians? Not all parties indeed have members hailing from the most educated or knowledgeable sections of society. Although the current central Government is not a rough and tumble of the hitherto political dispensations that have ruled the country, it has still not been able to overcome the cynicism about politicians and politics in general, which continues to hold sway in the minds of a large section of the people. This is not to say that good people are disinterested in politics.

We have in recent years, seen many academically and professionally qualified people enter politics; some of them have even become ministers. But clearly, there is a long way to go in this regard.



ANOTHER REASON WHY WEALTHY CANDIDATES ARE ATTRACTED TO POLITICS IS THE TRADITIONAL BELIEF THAT ONCE ELECTED, THE CANDIDATE WOULD BE ABLE TO EARN BACK THE MONEY SPENT ON ELECTIONEERING AND THEREAFTER GENERATE MUCH MONEY

One great discouragement is the number of people in a constituency, as well as the high cost of electioneering. Hopefully, some answer to this problem should emerge from the delimitation of electoral constituencies, which would be set to increase, by (approximately) 50 per cent. No ordinary entrant can afford to spend astronomical sums of money to cultivate nearly two million voters per seat. Delimitation and increased seats alone will not solve the problem of election expenses. Another reason why wealthy candidates are attracted to politics is the traditional belief that once elected, the candidate would be able to earn back the money spent on electioneering and thereafter generate much money. Once the doors are closed to corruption, the attraction for opportunists to become candidates would be much diminished. This also applies equally to any new avenue for making money. Compulsory voting is a way of not only upgrading the system but also reducing the cost of electioneering. It would also eliminate the perpetuation of

vote-bank politics. For example, there was a time when the total voting used to be 50 per cent or less. Therefore, if the candidate had a secure vote bank, it wasn't difficult for him to win. With the rise in the percentage of voting, the power and effect of a committed vote-bank is reduced. For instance, in an electorate of a lakh people, a committed vote-bank of a particular candidate is say, 25 per cent, i.e., 25,000 voters out of a population of one lakh. If the normal voting is no more than 50 to 55 per cent for that seat, this captive vote bank is assured victory for that candidate. However, if the voting percentage is 100 per cent, such a vote-bank will be of no decisive advantage. The role of freebies has to be curbed for any meaningful participation in the political process. Freebies reduce the exercise of elections in a democracy to nothing more than bribing voters. It is then futile to talk of democracy, or why the young don't participate in it in greater numbers. (The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha; views are personal)

Reflections on rituals from around the world

From the tranquil Nyepi Day in Bali to the vibrant street celebrations in Japan, rituals surrounding life's milestones offer glimpses into cultures

We had lunch in the resort restaurant during a vacation to Thailand a few months back. There was a slight drizzle as we walked along a narrow walkway hemmed in by walls and tastefully planted beds of flowers, vines and shrubs.

I remember a late evening in our beach resort in Bali a few years back. The day after our arrival was Nyepi Day, a public holiday. It is a day of silence, fasting and meditation. No lights are lit in the evening. It is believed that spirits roam in the evening on this day. Any loud sound or bright light may attract them to come down to explore and some of them may cause harm.

We had walked to the resort restaurant along walkways at the back, which were lit up with muted lamps placed along the path to guide the guests. Even the lighting in the restaurant was subdued. We were also caught up in the spirit of the local folklore and walked silently along the dimly lit narrow path, surrounded by flowers, vines and shrubs,



apprehensive of catching the fancy of an evil spirit. A few decades back, I was in Japan for a study tour. There was a public holiday, which was celebrated as the day of the ancestors. Groups of people were out dancing on the streets, moving from one house to the other. Each household had set up a table in the front, loaded with beer and other alcohol and savouries to be partaken by the dancing people. I also joined the celebrations. We have a fortnight-long annual ritual, called Pitru Paksha, to honour our

ancestors. Prayers are offered, followed by meals specially prepared. What surprises me, though, is the fact that these 15 days, in honour of our ancestors are considered inauspicious for any new purchases, or any other auspicious work, even though we are because they were. A very close Parsi friend passed away a few years back. The family invited us for a celebration of her life a few days later. There was laughter all around as we all recounted the happy times that we had spent with the lady over drinks and food.

The gracious hostess, her daughter, had prepared a special Parsi-style chicken dish, which had been both a speciality and a favourite of the departed soul. We also have the thirteenth-day ceremony in our Hindu religion which is formally the close of the mourning period. Guests are intimated to join prayers and then partake of our special food prepared for the occasion. Though sometimes teary-eyed, everyone remembers the time spent with the person who has joined the supreme being. Why mourn death, which is only the passing away to another life? When my time comes, I hope my near and dear ones remember me, not for my beliefs, but for the happiness that I gave them.

A life led to spreading happiness all around is to be celebrated. Thomas Campbell rightly said, "To live in hearts we leave behind is not to die!" (The author is an electrical engineer with the Indian Railways and conducts classes in creative writing; views are personal)



SANJAY CHANDRA

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

PAKISTAN'S AFGHAN DEBACLE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Pakistan paying for its misplaced priorities," published on April 29, this is my response. Ambassador Asif Durrani's acknowledgement of Pakistan's failures in Afghanistan reveals a stark reality: the cost of tensions along the Durand Line surpasses all wars with India combined. The fixation on India as the primary adversary stems from historical wounds and institutional agendas. However, the Afghan debacle exposes the fallacy of such fixations and challenges the two-nation theory. The resurgence of Taliban attacks and Afghan nationals participating in strikes against Pakistan signal a seismic shift in regional dynamics. Pakistan's strategic ambitions in Afghanistan have backfired, eroding trust and isolating it on the global stage. Despite efforts to rewrite the narrative, Pakistan remains entangled in its past missteps, with Afghanistan looming as a permanent fixture in its regional calculus.

As the world watches with scepticism, Pakistan's plight underscores a fundamental truth: religion alone cannot sustain a nation. Bangladesh and Afghanistan stand as testaments to the folly of such notions. It's a sobering lesson for Pakistan to reassess its identity and recalibrate its foreign policy away from religious rhetoric towards pragmatic diplomacy.

Rohit Kapoor | Kolkata

ENVIRONMENTAL MANIFESTO

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Political parties must prioritise environmental preservation," published on April 29, this is my response. As an avid reader of daily news, it's disheartening to witness India's political landscape during election time fail to address pressing environmental concerns. Despite lip service in manifestos, concrete actions are conspicuously absent. The proliferation of plastic waste during political campaigns exacerbates the crisis. Plastic pollution poses a grave threat to ecosystems and human health, with marine life suffering the brunt.

Bihar on progress path



Apropos the news article, "Chronicle of Bihar, Beyond Elections," published on April 28, this is my response. Deepak Kumar Jha's narrative in The Pioneer paints a vivid picture of Bihar's rural landscape, where traditional thatched homes have given way to brick dwellings amidst agricultural abundance. Yet, glaring issues persist: healthcare and education

lag, despite decades of political promises. The narrative exposes the complexity of Bihar's socio-political fabric. While leaders tout progress, caste-driven politics remain entrenched. Migration continues, disillusioning locals with governance. Jha's storytelling captures the essence of Bihar's electoral fervour, where political discourse blends with everyday life. Amidst discussions over leaders, the grassroots yearns for tangible change. The article's depth extends beyond politics, delving into healthcare woes. The anecdote of the patient's struggle highlights systemic failures, contrasting with Bihar's rich cultural tapestry. Ultimately, Jha's piece is a poignant portrayal of Bihar's struggles and resilience. It underscores the urgent need for holistic development and the preservation of its cultural heritage amidst the political clamour.

Vishal Kumar | Delhi

CULINARY ESCAPADES

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Feast of hot summer menus," published on April 27, this is my response. Reading through these descriptions feels like leafing through a gourmet guidebook. Each venue promises not just a meal but an experience, a journey through flavours and cultures. Olly offers a tranquil haven from urban chaos, serving up classics with a twist amidst a serene ambience. The China Kitchen tantalizes with its immersive dining experience, bringing Chinese culinary traditions to life. Viet: nom adds

a modern flair to Vietnamese classics, while L'Opéra delights with French finesse, especially with its seasonal mango collection. Café Delhi Heights, ever-evolving, captures the essence of Delhi's vibrancy through its diverse offerings. The must-try dishes read like poetry, each a symphony of flavours designed to tantalize taste buds. From crispy sweet potato skins to succulent Peking duck, from vibrant summer rolls to creamy Alfredo pasta, there's something to suit every palate. Akanksha Dean's culinary journey adds a personal touch, showcasing a deep passion for food and an impressive resume. Her influence undoubtedly enhances the richness of each dining experience. As a regular newspaper reader, these culinary adventures beckon, promising not just a meal but a story to savour, making the dining experience more than just a necessity but a delightful escape.

Sneha Patel | Ahmedabad

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com



FIRST COLUMN

THE POWER OF THE HUMAN MIND

Settle your mind and clear accumulated dust, only then it gets purged



RAVI VALLURI

Aeons ago lived, Suddhodana, chieftain of the Sakyan republics. He was captivated with the thought of perpetuating the dynasty. However, his battle fatigued son Siddhartha, was not ensnared by the Mara of trappings of power, carnal pleasures and a family life. Siddhartha eschewed violence, cast away royal clothing and adorned ochre robes in search of the quintessential truth and was to become Buddha after intense tapas. Upon attaining enlightenment, the Compassionate One dissected the bewildering characteristics of the human mind. He was soon to quantify in a plain sailing manner, "We are what we think and our thoughts shape our lives."

The human mind is not resplendent with ennobling thoughts if the prana levels are low. The prana level increases (through yoga, pranayama, meditation and Sudarshan Kriya) and at that moment an individual realises the magnetic potential of the human mind.

Once there was a Good Samaritan, Sudhakar. He happened to read the maiden effort of a civil servant called the Magic of the Mind. This gentleman, with trepidation, became a 'Facebook friend' of the mandarin and persuaded him to be interviewed by a few T.V. channels.

However, the thought process of the public functionary- who was a recovered alcoholic- doubted the sincerity of the Facebook friend. In disgust, he 'blocked' and then 'unblocked' the gentleman, perhaps more to quell the pangs of his own conscience. Finally in sheer vexation he gave in to the entreaties of the 'Facebook friend'. Soon an amazing pattern emerged and the administrator was invited by several media houses and estimable institutions to deliver lectures as to how he combated and conquered the battle against the bottle. Only much later did he realise that Sudhakar had lost some close relatives to the perils of alcoholism.



The autarchic mind of the bureaucrat was ossified and looking at life through the prism of tunnel vision. One day, after a series of interviews, the functionary received a distress call from a lady, who had happened to listen to one of his interviews and was also reading the book penned by the bureaucrat, which captured his triumph over alcoholism.

On receiving the call, he could empathise with the woman's husband who was fighting a grim battle against alcoholism. There was a sudden transmutation in the mind of the public servant and went on to guide the husband on how to attain sobriety.

Realisation and awareness are two iconic qualities that shine the light on the amazing power of the human mind. Several centuries ago, Gautama Buddha was travelling with a group of disciples. The Compassionate One felt thirsty and desired some water to quench his thirst. He asked a disciple to fetch some water from a nearby lake. The enthusiastic disciple rushed to the lake but was horrified to find the water turbid as a farmer had just crossed the lake on his bullock cart.

He returned back remorsefully as he could not fulfil the wish of the holy Master. Buddha sent the disciple a couple of times to fetch water to quench his thirst. But to the dismay of the tutee on each occasion the water remained dirty and turbid. While the devotees were fidgety and distraught, Buddha remained patient. Eventually, the devotee animatedly brought fresh water from the lake and offered it.

Buddha smiled and drank the water. He was to say, "You did nothing. The mud settled down and the water was purged of the impurities. Let your mind settle all the dust accumulated over a period of time." This is the amazing power of the human mind. Just let it settle down.

(The writer is the CEO of Chhattisgarh East Railway Ltd. and Chhattisgarh East West Railway Ltd. He is a faculty of the Art of Living; views are personal)

Challenges loom ahead of July Union Budget



SHIVAJI SARKAR

The incoming Government would face the uphill task of navigating through a myriad of fiscal hurdles to foster sustainable growth



Despite it being too early to discuss the union budget to be presented in July, it is certain whichever combination comes back to power it would have to majorly review the February interim budget given the debates generated during elections. The election is veering around more on economic issues than the religion or Ram temple, though in certain regions these remain a potent issue and so the brands Narendra Modi and Yogi Adityanath. A larger section is concerned with the core economy, unemployment, farmers' issues, irrationally high prices, medical and health care costs, school and university fees, shooting costs of houses, high toll-jacked inflation and similar other issues.

Even showcasing of Indian economy as the fifth largest economy is not being accepted by a large section as reality. The farmers and citizens wonder while cars and tractors are allowed to run for 40 years like aircraft across the world, why a pro-people Government should be in a hurry to send these to junkyards in India, particularly when household debts are skyrocketing. The rural wisdom calls it weird and tries to locate the linkages of Government functionaries with the car makers.

Questions are also raised on the Rs 16.87 lakh crore debt repayment in the 2024-25 budget. This effectively cuts the actual budget of Rs 47.65 lakh crore to about Rs 31 lakh crore. The repayment burden in 2025 is slated to be higher. The opposition's sharp angling on core economic issues is being rebutted by the ruling combine by charging that if the opposition gets to power it would sell "mangalsutras" and delve into divisive politics. The Election Commission has issued warnings to the ruling party for its wry comments.

Low voting in 190 constituencies in major States like UP, Bihar and Maharashtra raises concern among all parties. The voter is apathetic despite



THE NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TO TAKE DRASTIC STEPS TO BRING DOWN THE PRICES OF EDIBLE OIL, FOOD GRAINS, VEGETABLES, POTATOES AND ONIONS, AS WELL AS SCHOOL FEES AND EXPENSIVE HEALTH CARE, MILK AND OTHER COMMODITIES

many moves by the Election Commission. Is that a reflection on governance?

This has not put the issues on the back burner. According to RBI, inflation rises at 5.5 per cent a year and has shot beyond 55 per cent in compounded terms causing a huge rise in prices. Nobody has got such a raise in their salaries, not even Government employees.

The new Government would have to take drastic steps to bring down the prices of edible oil, food grains, vegetables, potatoes and onions as well as school fees and expensive health care, milk and other commodities. People are unwilling to buy the argument that inflation is built into the system. They rather equate it with corporate electoral bond doles to parties. The Government accepts the petrol prices are high, cut it by Rs 2 just before the polls. It has no impact on the voters' psyche.

The voter is not happy with the so-called demonstrative developments like demolition and construction of large office buildings, rail stations and rampant construction of roads or metro. Constructions devastate the hills of Himachal, Kashmir, Uttarakhand and the North East. Kisans who became millionaires overnight with the acquisition of their land for roads are not happy about losing their livelihood. Most villagers rue the roads that divide their habitats and relationships for a road they can't use without paying a toll. It is a serious issue because the Kisan also pays Rs 30 per litre petrol cess toll introduced with the promise of ending the toll. All these benefit bulk profiteers and the least of jobs.

A new Government has to initiate drastic changes and reorient policies. The major reason for joblessness is attributed to ad hoc decisions. Such constructions erode Government finance and build little assets. Southeast Asia tried it in the late 1990s and got into trouble in 1997. It would be wise on the part of the new Government to revive PSUs and ask the private sector to compete with them. It would create jobs, add to the national economy and create a fair playground.

People question the rationale of parting a part of Indian Oil to a private giant or giving out ports to private players. At least one such port has become notorious for being a smugglers' den. The universities, IITs and Government institutions have been given a mandate to raise tuition fees every year. The private ones hike far more. Schools and universities need financing from the Government and education costs must be cut down. Congress promises apprenticeship to every graduate. Looks good but it is not practical. The scheme has failed several times. India's overall exports fell by 8.1 per cent and exports to its free trade partners shrank by 18 per cent in the first half of 2023. The country's trade deficit ballooned to \$78.2 billion in the last financial year. India's export values across all commodities declined to \$351 billion during April-January from \$366 billion a year ago, underlining the impact of the global economic slowdown and tightening of interest rates in Western countries. These numbers have emerged amid India's push to sign free trade deals with the UK and the European Union. The International Monetary Fund

says that the global slowdown is on. However India projects its march to a \$5 trillion economy and it is not easy. The West has become more protectionist and keen on imposing a carbon tax. The West needs to protect its bread.

Lower productivity can result in reduced job creation within the manufacturing sector, leading to unemployment or underemployment. The International Labour Organisation finds low pay and wages as serious challenges. When productivity declines, the incentives for firms to invest in research and development or adopt new technologies diminish, leading to a slower pace in the manufacturing sector. However, the challenge of rising household debt and falling savings could weigh on long-term growth sustainability.

The FDI flow is low at \$17.96 billion. Despite a supposed buzzing market, it has not risen much. The new Government also has the challenge to cut personal income-tax rates from 39 per cent to 22 per cent in tune with the corporate tax. High taxation hits the purchasing capacity and concomitant market problems.

In short, the new Government has to stress issues regarding taxes, education, health, livelihood, low tolls and better deal with farmers. Both manifestos of the BJP and Congress speak of too many doles and caste-related benefits. If the Government can address the basic issues and make it one of the most affordable economies, India's journey will be smooth. It is a dream, if comes true it will be the most liveable country.

(The author is a senior journalist; views are personal)

Celebrating the universal language of dance

From traditional Indian classical dance forms to contemporary global dance phenomena, dance continues to inspire, heal and unite communities

On April 14 last year, history was made in Assam, India, as a Guinness World Record was set for the largest gathering of Bihu dancers. Over 11,000 dancers from different communities and backgrounds came together to perform the traditional dance of Assam, watched live by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was a spectacular display of cultural diversity and unity. This event was a shining example of how cultural diversity can bring people together and foster a sense of emotional bonding and appreciation of one another's culture and traditions. More recently as part of the 'Raag Seva' in a breathtaking display of timeless grace and unwavering passion, the 90-year-old actor-dancer and



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Padma Vibhushan awardee Vyjayanthimala Bali, enchanted spectators with her ethereal Bharatanatyam performance in Ayodhya. In this rich mosaic of human expression, dance emerges as a timeless gem, casting its spell across generations and captivating hearts through the ages. Beyond mere movement, it embodies a symphony of creativity, infusing the soul with unbridled joy. A graceful interplay of rhythm

and emotion, it offers solace from the burdens of modern life, intertwining threads of happiness into the fabric of existence.

Welcome to the rhythm of life, as we celebrate the 'International Dance Day' on April 29th every year, since 1982. Dance helps to change lives. The 'Navras', which is used to express joy, sadness, love, anger and many other emotions, is a way of celebrating life and creating a sense of community.

This Day serves as a platform aimed at fostering awareness regarding the intrinsic value of dance and facilitating the widespread promotion of the dance community's endeavours. Central to its mission is the aspiration that Governments and influential figures will

recognize the significance of dance and extend support towards its cultivation. We are all aware of Yo-Yo Ma's 'Silk Road Ensemble', a musical group founded by the cellist Yo-Yo Ma, where musicians from China, Iran, India and Spain come together and use their music to create a bridge between cultures and promote understanding between people from different backgrounds. Through cultural collaboration, this is a forum for the exchange of ideas, tradition and innovation across borders.

Also, the 'OneBeat' initiative, which brings together musicians from around the world to collaborate and create new music - was funded by the U.S. Department of State - aims to promote cultural exchange

and create a global community of musicians. 'OneBeat' has brought together musicians from countries such as Syria, Russia and Cuba, to name a few, not only providing a platform for musicians to share their music but also creating new collaborations that transcend cultural and linguistic barriers.

Dance also helps in promoting intercultural dialogue. Dance companies worldwide come together to create new works that reflect their cultural traditions and explore common themes. One such example is the 'Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater', which has been promoting diversity and inclusion through dance for over 60 years. The company's performances celebrate the African-American cultural

experience and explore universal themes such as love, loss and identity. Not only this, the 'National Ballet of Cuba' is a dance company that promotes intercultural dialogue through its performances. Founded in 1948 by Alicia Alonso, one of the most famous ballerinas of the 20th century, it is known for its unique style that combines elements of classical ballet with Afro-Cuban and Spanish dance traditions.

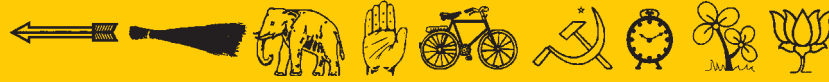
Back in India, 'The Kalakshetra Foundation', - of the many foundations and institutions that exist to popularize Indian classical dance forms - Chennai-based dance school, founded by Rukmini Devi Arundale in 1936, sought to revive and promote Indian classical dance forms and is

today a leading institution that trains students in various forms of Indian classical dance, including Bharatanatyam, Kathakali and Kuchipudi. Similarly, the 'Nrityagram Dance Village', near Bangalore, which was founded in 1990 by Protima Gauri, a renowned Indian classical dancer, is a unique institution that offers a holistic approach to dance training, focusing not only on dance techniques, but also on aspects such as yoga, meditation and Indian mythology. The institute has gained global recognition and has collaborated with many international dance companies to create new works that blend Indian classical dance with contemporary dance forms. We cannot miss Bollywood dance, which has become a

global phenomenon and has created a platform for people from different backgrounds to come together and celebrate India's vibrant culture. Using different dance styles from Indian classical forms to ballet; to cabaret; to hip-hop, break dance and so on - each step encompasses a unique rhythm and style involving different generations tap to the beats.

As we celebrate the universal language of dance and its ability to unite people, it is also important to acknowledge the Guru-Shishya Parampara and celebrate the beauty of dance and its ability to create a better world for all.

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



Mamata takes swipe at Modi

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

Bengal Chief Minister continued to rain fire on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, this time calling him a Prachar Babu whose Government was on its way out if the first two phases of polling were any indication. "The sluggish rate of polling in the first two phases of elections has given a clear election that this Government is going out despite the Prachar Babu's slogan of India Rising," Banerjee told in an election rally at Khargram in Murshidabad comparing Modi with former Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee. "Vajpayee ji was a good man and did not exhibit this conceit... even he tried to win by giving the India Shinning slogan but failed... so the people of India has taken cognizance of all the misdeeds of this Government... they will surely punish them... which is indicative from the first two phases of the elections," Banerjee whose own



Government has been hit by a whole number of issues including corruption, falling law and order, employment scam etc said. "Can you hear what the people are saying... can you hear what Bihar is saying, what Uttar Pradesh is saying, what Rajasthan is saying... the voting trend in all these States has started sending shivers down the BJP's spine... they are trembling now because of their own policies and arrogance... the people have already started giving them the reply," the Chief Minister said.

Referring to massive rise in medicine prices and the Centre blocking Bengal's lawful funds, Banerjee said "the Modi Government has done nothing about the rising medicine prices... even the prices of the essential medicines have gone up... then they have blocked the lawful MNREGA and housing funds... now the people will block them," adding how "they have been trying to divide the people in the name of religion, caste and culture to win votes." She said, the BJP was imposing Citizenship Amendment Act, National Register for Citizens and Uniform Civil Code. "Do you know that CAA, NRC and UCC mean... these mean division of people on caste, religion and culture... these mean detention camps," she said. Calling the BJP a party of anti-social elements Banerjee said, "the BJP is a party of thieves and smugglers who are anti-people, anti-dalit, anti-minority, anti-Muslim, anti-Hindu, anti-Christian, anti-OBC... they will not let the people to live peacefully if they return

Education Ministry asks NCERT to review, update textbooks on yearly basis

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Education (MoE) has asked the NCERT to conduct a review of its textbooks and update them on yearly basis, according to sources. So far, there has been no mandate on the frequency of updating NCERT textbooks. However, the National Council of Educational Research and Training has been occasionally revising and updating content since 2017. A rationalisation exercise was also conducted in view of the closure of schools due to the pandemic but there were allegations from a section of agenda-driven editing. "In the fast-changing world of today, it is important that the textbooks are absolutely updated. The NCERT has been asked to conduct a review on a yearly basis and update them ahead of the beginning of the new academic session... They are soon going to put a system in place," official sources said.

BJP leader hurt in TMC attack

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
KOLKATA

While the first two phases of elections remained by far peaceful, violence tended to creep in as electioneering entered parts of South Bengal with a Trinamool Congress worker getting killed in a factional fight in Baguati area of northern Kolkata and a BJP worker getting grievously attacked by the TMC goons for daring to campaign in South Kolkata constituency. Sanjeev Das a TMC worker who was severely injured in a factional fight on Saturday died subsequently, the police said. The incident occurred at Baguati area in the northern fringes of Kolkata. Das aka Potla was a history sheeter who worked actively for the TMC, locals. The police said on Monday that they had arrested 13 people in connection with his murder. About 20 km down south Saraswati Sarkar, the president of the BJP Mahila Mandals unit in Kasba in Kolkata South parliamentary



constituency sustained severe injuries when she was attacked with sticks and chopper by a group of local TMC men, sources said. "We were returning from party work when our party men were attacked by some TMC men at the instance of the local TMC councilor who runs all kinds of anti-people activities in the area attacked the men who were with us... two of my fellow party men fled and the third was being beaten up when I intervened... then they left him and started attacking me with rods and chopper... I sustained a deep cut on my head and have five stitches," Sarkar who was released from the hospital after initial treatment said adding, she was

afraid that she would be killed if she went out of her house. Following an FIR the police had arrested two persons involved in the attack, sources said. A local BJP leader said that the incident took place at Kasba in South Kolkata. "They were accosted and then attacked... the BJP workers were pulled out of their car and beaten up and when Saraswati Sarkar who was in a different car intervened she two was attacked," the BJP leader said adding Union Minister Smriti Irani had personally called up Sarkar and enquired after her health. Former Union Minister and Raiganj MP Debashree Chowdhury who is contesting from South Kolkata seat, staged a protest outside the Anandapur police station before writing a complaint to the Election Commission of India. "We have demanded thorough investigation into the matter and asked the ECI to see that such incidents are not repeated again... if this is the situation now then everyone knows what is going to happen subsequently.

Job scam: SC retains HC order cancelling 26k school jobs

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■
KOLKATA

The Bengal Government on Monday suffered a big blow with the Supreme Court refusing to put a stay on the Calcutta High Court order cancelling appointments of 25,753 school employees including teachers and non-teaching staff. The only respite the TMC Government got is that the Apex Court stayed a CBI probe against West Bengal government officials involved in the teachers' recruitment scam. While staying the CBI probe against the Government functionaries — that could well have brought top level politicians into the ambit of inquiry — the Bench of Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, Justice JB Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra however observed that prima facie it looked like a scam.

Security forces in JK mobilised to neutralise terrorists in Udhampur

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The presence of two active groups of foreign terrorists, comprising four to six members, in the upper reaches of the Udhampur district has kept the entire security grid on its tenterhooks since late Saturday evening. After receiving inputs about the presence of terrorists in the Basantgarh area the security forces mobilized troops to neutralize them early Sunday morning. A member of the Village Defence Guard was killed in action during an initial exchange of firing in the remote Panara village of Chochru Gala Heights, Basantgarh. As more troops were rushed to the spot to lay a tight cordon the foreign terrorists managed to give a slip to the police party. Unconfirmed reports suggested one of the terrorist groups was spotted in the upper reaches around 11.00 a.m. The gunfight erupted around 7.45 a.m on Sunday during which the VDG member received injuries and later succumbed. Since Sunday, the Indian army has also rushed fresh reinforcements to capture these foreign terrorists but as the anti-



terrorist operation continued for the second consecutive day no major headway was achieved on Monday. The area is witnessing inclement weather conditions and the same is hampering the ongoing operations in the area. On Monday, the security forces conducted thorough searches in the thickly forested belt of Basantgarh. The security forces also deployed sniffer dogs and drone cameras to trap these foreign terrorists. Senior security officials supervising the anti-terrorist operations on ground zero told media persons on Sunday as per initial inputs two groups of terrorists are believed to be present in the area after they recently infiltrated from across the border. Additional Director General of

Police, Jammu Anand Jain said the strength of the two groups, as per preliminary investigation, is between four and six and the security forces are working on various inputs to flush them out. Jain maintained the security personnel are thoroughly investigating how these two groups managed to infiltrate to reach Basantgarh. When militancy was at its peak in the late 1990's the deep forests of Basantgarh were used as transit points by the terrorist groups to move upwards towards the Chenab valley region. The area also witnessed targeted killings of Village Defence Committee members. 13 members belonging to the minority community were killed in 2006 in the Basantgarh area.

Congress takes dig at Shah's scramble for PM post remarks

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Taking a dig at Union Home Minister Amit Shah's "scramble for Prime Minister's post" remarks, the Congress on Monday said it was an "admission" that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will not return for a third term. The opposition party also claimed that people have been through the BJP's "sinister plot" to change the Constitution and end reservations. Shah on Monday warned that a victory of the INDIA bloc, "even by mistake", will lead to a scramble among top leaders of the opposition alliance for the prime minister's post. Asked about Shah's remarks, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said, "I am very glad that the home minister is talking about who the potential prime ministerial candidates will be. At least there is admission that Mr. Modi is not coming to power. From saying '400, 400 (seats)', now there is admission that the next government will be that of the INDIA bloc." "Who the PM will be and will not be that is a decision which



we will take but the reality is that there is admission, there is cognizance and I thank them for it," Shrinete said at a press conference here. The reality is that the country is seen through this "sinister plot" of trying to change the Constitution and ending reservations because that has been the core philosophy of the RSS, they have consistently opposed reservations, she alleged. Even in the BJP, it is no coincidence that leaders such as Jyoti Mirdha to Ananthkumar Hegde, are all talking about changing the Constitution, Shrinete said. "What does it mean, it simply means denying people the right to reservation, it simple means to act against Dalits, tribals, backward class-

es, the poor in the general category...The people have understood your sinister plot and will throw you out," she said. Addressing a rally in Jhanharpur Lok Sabha constituency of Bihar, Shah claimed that leaders like M K Stalin, Sharad Pawar, Lalu Prasad and Mamata Banerjee may agree to a year each of premiership, by turns, and "Rahul baba (Rahul Gandhi)" will have to settle for whatever is left of the tenure. "In contrast, he said, "A third term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead to elimination of corruption from the entire country, including Bihar, and eradication of casteism in the state". "Modi's return to power is certain. But, suppose, even by mistake, if the INDI alliance comes to power, what will happen? Who will be the prime minister? Will it be Stalin, Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee or Rahul Gandhi? They will all settle for sharing the top post for a year each. Is it how the country can be run?" Shah said. India wants a "mazboot" (strong) prime minister, not a "majboor" (weak) PM, the senior BJP leader asserted.

Centre revises limits of children education allowance for its staff

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Centre has revised the limits of children's education allowance and hostel subsidy for its employees, according to a Personnel Ministry order. The move comes following the enhancement of dearness allowance with effect from January 1, 2024. Citing a 2018 directive, it said the order provides that the limits of children's education allowance and hostel subsidy would be automatically raised by 25 per cent every time the dearness allowance on the revised pay structure goes up by 50 per cent. The ministry said references are being received from various quarters about the amount of children's education allowance (CEA) and the hostel subsidy admissible consequent upon enhancement of dearness allowance payable to the central government employees at the rate of 50 per cent with effect from January 1, 2024, announced by the finance ministry on March 12, 2024. Accordingly, the amount for reimbursement of children's



education allowance shall be Rs 2,812.5 per month (fixed) and hostel subsidy shall be Rs 8,437.5 per month (fixed) irrespective of actual expenses incurred by the government employees, said the personnel ministry's latest order. The reimbursement of children's education allowance for divyang children of government employees shall be payable at double the normal rates — Rs 5,625 per month (fixed) — irrespective of actual expenses incurred by the government employee, it said. The rates of special allowance for child care to women with disabilities stand revised to Rs 3,750 per month, according to the order issued to all central government ministries. "These revisions are applicable with effect from January 1, 2024," it added.

Telangana CM summoned...

From Page 1

The Delhi Police had filed an FIR under sections 153 (wantonly causing provocation with the intention to cause riot), 153A (promoting enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc), 465 (forgery), 469 (forgery to harm the reputation of any party), and 171G (publishing false statement with intent to affect the result of an election) of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and section 66C of the Information Technology Act.. According to the FIR the MHA, in its complaint, stated that it has been found that some doctored videos are being circulated by users of Facebook and X. "The video seems to be doctored, spreading misleading information with the intention of creating disharmony among communities which is likely to affect public tranquility and public order issues. It is requested to kindly take necessary legal action as per the provisions of law," the FIR.

Measures mooted...

From Page 1

For ventilation, while fans for air circulation are recommended, direct blowing on animals should be avoided to maintain their natural cooling. Cool refuges like burrows, caves, or nesting boxes with moistened substrates like soil should be provided for animals to retreat. "Provide frozen treats with fruits or vegetables in ice. Feed animals during cooler times, like early mornings or evenings. Offer easily

digestible, high-moisture foods like fruits and vegetables during heatwaves," as per the circular. Authorities have also been directed to avoid inter-zoo transfers of animals during heatwaves to minimize stress. Training staff to recognize signs of heat stress and promptly respond to any issues is crucial. Besides bringing animals indoors for air conditioning, some zookeepers are turning the inmates to

pools, ice, and other cool treats to help lower body temperatures and create enrichment games for all to enjoy. The Delhi zoo official said that its animal care specialists are always trying out new ways to physically and mentally stimulate the animals during the searing summers. There are 155 CZA recognized zoos in the country. Karnataka tops the list with 14 numbers of zoos followed by West Bengal (13) and Maharashtra (12).

Congress planning religion based quota...

From Page 1

"I want to guarantee today to my Dalit, Adivasi and OBC brothers and sisters. I will not let such intentions of Congress be successful. To protect your rights, your reservation, Modi will go to any extent. I'm assuring you this," he added. On the occasion Modi also said that he "doesn't

believe in attacking from the back" and he had first informed the Pakistani authorities about the airstrike on a terror camp in Balakot in Pakistan. "I had asked the forces to call the media and inform them about the airstrikes, but I said, before that I will inform Pakistani authorities through phone, but they didn't pick up the phone.

So I asked the forces to wait, and after informing the Pakistani authorities, we disclosed to the world about airstrikes that happened during the night. Modi doesn't believe in hiding things nor attacking from the back, he fights openly," the PM added.

Gowda grandson's scandal sparks...

From Page 1

JD(S) MLA and former Minister HD Revanna on Monday said he was open to an investigation over the allegations of sexual abuse involving his son and Hassan MP Revanna and himself, and said they were ready to face action in accordance with law, if the charges are proved. Alleging that there was "politics" behind the issue, he said his son Revanna would "join" the probe "whenever he is asked to". Revanna is the NDA candidate in Hassan Lok Sabha constituency, which went to the polls on April 26.

On his son's whereabouts, his father said, "Normally he had to go (without saying where), and he has gone. Did he know they will file an FIR and constitute an SIT? He will come when called for investigation." Former Chief Minister of the State, H D Kumaraswamy, said the party has decided to suspend Revanna. The JD(S) leader also sought to distance JD(S)'s alliance partner the BJP and the Prime Minister from the ruling Congress seeking their response on the issue. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi asked whether the

Prime Minister will remain silent on the matter. "The leader with whom the PM gets photographed by placing his hand on his shoulder. The leader for whom the PM himself campaigned 10 days ago. Praised him on stage. Today, that leader of Karnataka is absconding from the country. Just hearing about his heinous crimes committed is heart-wrenching. This ruined the lives of hundreds of women. Modi, will you still remain silent?" Priyanka said. Congress' media and publicity department head Pawan Khera shared on social media a letter written

by BJP leader Devaraj Gowda to the Karnataka BJP president on December 8 last year. He said the letter exposed the presence of a pen drive full of "sleaze videos of Revanna". Trinamool Congress leader Shushmita Dev slammed the BJP and criticised them for backing the accused. She said the scandal that unfolded "goes to the top". The BJP is very much a part of the kind of sexual abuse that that has unfolded, she said. Several sex videos allegedly featuring Revanna with multiple women have been doing the rounds in recent days. According to police

sources, Revanna has fled the country. Congress led Karnataka government has announced a Special Investigation Team to probe the "obscene videos case". AAP called the alleged sex scandal "worse than the Nithari serial murders" and questioned why the BJP did not sever ties with the southern party after the incident came to light. Former Delhi Commission for Women chief and AAP Rajya Sabha MP Swati Maliwal appealed to the Election Commission to disqualify Revanna and demanded that re-polling be conducted in the constituency.

India summons Canadian envoy over Khalistan slogans at Trudeau...

From Page 1

The group has been organising an annual parade down Lake Shore Boulevard for many years; the council claims that it is the third-largest parade in the nation and that it regularly draws thousands of spectators, according to CBC News. Even as Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

walked up to address the Sikh Community in Toronto loud pro-Khalistan slogans were raised from the crowd. Trudeau in a staunch assurance to the Sikh Community in the country has said the government is always there to protect their rights and freedoms at all costs. He said, "Diversity is one of

Canada's greatest strengths, and the country is strong not in spite of the differences, but because of those differences." "One of Canada's greatest strengths is its diversity. We are strong not in spite of our differences, but because of our differences; but even as we look at these differences, we have to remember, and get reminded on days such as

this, and every day, that Sikh values are Canadian values..." Trudeau said during the Khalsa Day Celebrations on Sunday in Toronto. "To the nearly 800,000 Canadians of Sikh heritage across this country, we will always be there to protect your rights and your freedoms, and we will always defend your community

against hatred and discrimination," he asserted. The Canadian Prime Minister also noted that the country is enhancing the security and infrastructure programmes by "adding more security at community centres and places of worship, including Gurdwaras." "Your right to practice your

religion freely, and without intimidation is exactly that. A fundamental right guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms that we will always stand up and defend you for," Trudeau assured the Sikh community in his Khalsa Day address. However, Trudeau's remarks come at a time when the

diplomatic relations between India and Canada are going through a difficult phase. It was notably, the killing of India-designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, that sparked a row between India and Canada. Nijjar, who was designated a terrorist by the National Investigation Agency in 2020, was shot and killed as

he came out of a Gurdwara in Surrey, British Columbia, on the evening of June 18, 2023. The killing led to accusations from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that the government of India had a hand in the killing -- a claim that was denied by India and led to the deterioration of diplomatic ties between Canada and India.

'Israel must boost more humanitarian aid for Gaza'

AP ■ WARSA

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Monday that Israel must do more to increase the flow of humanitarian aid into the besieged Gaza Strip and that he would use his current Middle East trip — his seventh to the region since the Israel-Hamas war started in October — to press that case with Israeli leaders.

Speaking to Gulf Cooperation Council foreign ministers in Riyadh, Blinken said best way to ease the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza would be to conclude an elusive cease-fire agreement that would release hostages held by Hamas. But, in the meantime, he said it was critical to improve conditions now. "The most effective way to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, to alleviate the suffering of children, women and men, and to create space for a more just and durable solu-

tion is to get a cease-fire and the hostages out," he said. "But we're also not waiting on a cease-fire to take the necessary steps to meet the needs of civilians in Gaza," Blinken said. He said that because President Joe Biden has been insisting that Israel do more, including in his phone call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday, there had been improvements, although not nearly enough. "We have seen measurable progress in the last few weeks, including the opening of new crossings and increased volume of aid delivery to Gaza and within Gaza, and the building of the US maritime corridor, which will open in the coming weeks. But it is not enough. We still need to get more aid in and around Gaza," he said. "We need to improve deconfliction with humanitarian assistance workers. And we have to find greater efficiency and greater safety and



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is welcomed by Saudi Foreign Ministry Director of Protocol Affairs Mohammed Al-Ghamdi as he arrives in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Monday. AP/PTI

deconfliction is at the heart of that. And, finally we have to make sure that we're focusing not just on inputs, but on impact.

Scores of relief workers have been killed since the conflict began, and a deadly Israeli attack on a World Central Kitchen aid convoy in Gaza this month only highlighted the dangers and difficulties of protecting them. Israel has said the strike was a mistake and has disciplined officials involved.

World Central Kitchen says it would resume operations in Gaza on Monday after a four-week suspension.

The war has ground on since Hamas' deadly Oct 7 attacks on Israel with little end in sight: more than 34,000 Palestinians have been killed, hundreds of thousands more are displaced and a humanitarian crisis in Gaza is worsening.

The conflict has fuelled mass protests around the world that have spread to American

college campuses. US support for Israel, particularly arms transfers, has come under particular criticism, something the administration is keenly aware poses potential problems for Biden in an election year.

Blinken's trip comes amid renewed concerns about the conflict spreading in the Middle East and with once-promising prospects for Israeli-Saudi rapprochement effectively on hold as Israel refuses to consider one of the Saudis' main conditions for normalised relations: the creation of a Palestinian state.

Meanwhile, the Biden administration has been warning Israel against a major military operation on the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where more than a million Palestinians have fled to escape fighting further north. Israel has not yet launched such an offensive, but Netanyahu has repeatedly said that one will take place, asserting that it is the

only way to wipe out Hamas. Both topics were discussed during the Biden-Netanyahu phone call on Sunday, according to the White House and US officials. During his trip, Blinken said he would also underscore the absolute importance of not allowing the Israel-Hamas conflict to engulf the region.

The danger of conflagration was underscored this month when a suspected Israeli attack on an Iranian consular building in Syria prompted an unprecedented direct missile and drone response by Iran against Israel. An apparent retaliatory Israeli strike on Iran followed.

Although the tit-for-tat cycle appears to have ended for now, deep concerns remain that Iran or its proxies in Iraq, Lebanon, Syria or Yemen could act in such a way as to provoke a greater response from Israel or that Israel might take action that Iran feels it must retaliate for.

Likely missile attack by Houthi rebels targets ship in Red Sea

Jerusalem (AP): A suspected missile attack by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeted a ship in the Red Sea on Monday, authorities said, the latest assault in their campaign against international shipping in the crucial maritime route.

The attack happened off the coast of Mokha, Yemen, the British military's United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations centre said. It urged vessels to exercise caution in the area. There was "an explosion in close proximity to a merchant vessel," the UKMTO said. "Vessel and crew are reported safe."

The private security firm Ambery said a salvo of three missiles targeted a Malta-flagged container ship traveling from Djibouti onward to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. "The vessel was targeted due to its listed operator's ongoing trade with Israel," Ambery

said. CMA CGM, a Marseille, France-based shipper, had its Malta-flagged CMA CGM Manta Ray due to sail to Jeddah from Djibouti on Monday. However, the shipper said the vessel remained at harbour in Djibouti and could not have been targeted in the incident.

The Houthis did not immediately acknowledge any attack, though suspicion fell on the group. It typically takes the rebels several hours to claim their assaults.

The Houthis say their attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden are aimed at pressuring Israel to end its war against Hamas in Gaza, which has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on October 7, killing 1,200 people and taking some 250 others hostage.

Yousaf resigns as Scottish First Minister

PTI ■ LONDON

Humza Yousaf, the Pakistani-origin Scottish National Party leader who heads the devolved government in Scotland, announced his resignation on Monday, after days of political turmoil for the devolved SNP-led government.

Yousaf, 39, took over as Scotland's first Muslim and also the region's youngest First Minister in March last year.

Last week, he ended a power-sharing agreement with the Scottish Green Party amid growing policy differences and plunged his leadership of a minority government into crisis. His former Green Party allies then teamed up with the Opposition Conservatives, Labour and Liberal Democrat parties to back two non-confidence motions — one in Yousaf's leadership of Scotland and the second regarding the Scottish government as a whole.

"While a route through this week's motion of no confi-



dence was absolutely possible, I am not willing to trade my values and principles or do deals with whomever simply for retaining power," said Yousaf.

"Therefore, after spending the weekend reflecting on what is best for my party, for the government and for the country I lead I have concluded

that repairing our relationship across the political divide can only be done with someone else at the helm," he said. In his speech delivered at Bute House in Edinburgh, he noted on an emotional note: "I am sad that my time as First Minister is ending, but I am so grateful, I am so blessed, for having the opportunity that are afforded to so few to lead my country and who could ask for a better country to lead than Scotland." Yousaf, of Pakistani and Kenyan heritage, paid tribute to the UK's diversity and also referenced Rishi Sunak as Britain's first Hindu prime minister in his resignation speech.

He added: "People who looked like me were not in positions of political influence, let alone leading governments, when I was younger. We now live in a UK that has a British Hindu Prime Minister (Sunak), a Muslim Mayor of London (Sadiq Khan), a black Welsh First Minister (Vaughan Gething), and for a little while longer a Scottish Asian First Minister

of this country." "So for those who decry that multiculturalism has failed across the UK, I would suggest that the evidence is quite to the contrary and that is something we should all celebrate." Yousaf will remain in his post until a replacement First Minister is chosen in the Scottish Parliament, Holyrood. It marks a time of upheaval for the pro-independence SNP even though the outgoing leader claimed Scottish independence "feels frustratingly close." "The last few miles of the marathon are always the hardest and we have run this race as a team and will now prepare to pass the baton to a successor who I am absolutely certain will lead us over the finish line," he said.

The Opposition parties welcomed his resignation, with the Scottish Tories saying Yousaf had averted a "humiliating defeat" at a vote of no confidence later this week and the Labour Party demanding a UK-wide general election soon for a "fresh start" across the country.

Israeli officials concerned over ICC arrest warrants

AP ■ JERUSALEM

Israeli officials on Monday appeared to be increasingly concerned that the International Criminal Court may issue arrest warrants against the country's leaders, as international pressure mounts over its war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, Israeli airstrikes on the southern Gaza city of Rafah overnight and into Monday killed at least 22 people, including six women and five children, one of whom was just 5 days old, according to hospital records and an Associated Press reporter.

The ICC launched a probe three years ago into possible war crimes committed by Israel and Palestinian militants going back to the 2014 Israel-Hamas war, but it has given no indication such warrants are imminent. There was no comment from the court on Monday.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said late Sunday that it had informed Israeli missions of "rumours" that warrants might be issued against senior political and military officials. It was not clear what sparked the Israeli concerns. "We expect the court to prevent the issuance of arrest warrants against senior Israeli officials," Foreign Minister Israel Katz said, adding that such warrants would "provide a morale boost" to Hamas and other militant groups.

A series of Israeli announcements in recent days about allowing more humanitarian aid into Gaza meanwhile appears to be aimed in part at heading off possible ICC action. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Friday that Israel "will never accept any attempt by the ICC to undermine its inherent right of self-defence." "The threat to seize the soldiers and officials of the Middle East's only democracy and the world's only Jewish state is outrageous. We will not bow to it," he posted on X, formerly known as Twitter. It was not clear what prompted the post. The ICC investigation covers allegations going back to the 2014 war in Gaza as well as Israel's construction of Jewish settlements in occupied territory that the Palestinians want for a future state.

Truce: Biden, Netanyahu hold talks

Tel Aviv (AP): The White House on Sunday said US President Joe Biden had again spoken with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as pressure builds on Israel and Hamas to reach a deal that would free some Israeli hostages and bring a cease-fire in the nearly seven-month-long war in Gaza.

The White House said that Biden reiterated his "clear position" as Israel plans to invade Gaza's southernmost city of Rafah despite global concern for more than 1 million Palestinians sheltering there.

The US opposes the invasion on humanitarian grounds, straining relations between the allies.

Israel is among the countries U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken will visit as he returns to the Middle East on Monday.

Biden also stressed that progress in delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza be "sustained and enhanced," according to the statement.

The call lasted just under an hour, and they agreed the onus remains on Hamas to accept the latest offer in negotiations, according to a U.S. official who spoke on condition of anonymity because the official wasn't authorized to comment publicly.

There was no comment from Netanyahu's office. A senior official from key intermediary Qatar, meanwhile, urged Israel and Hamas to show "more commitment and more seriousness" in negotiations.

Qatar, which hosts Hamas' headquarters in Doha, was instrumental along with the US and Egypt in helping negotiate a brief halt to the fighting in November that led to the release of dozens of hostages.

But in a sign of frustration, Qatar this month said that it was reassessing its role.

Spain's PM Sánchez to continue in office

AP ■ MADRID

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez on Monday ended days of speculation about his future by saying he will continue in office "with even more strength."

Sánchez shocked his country last Wednesday by taking five days off to think about his future, following the decision by a court to open preliminary proceedings against his wife on corruption allegations. "I have decided to continue on with even more strength at the helm of the government of Spain," he said in a televised speech after informing King Felipe VI of the decision earlier Monday. His resignation would have deprived Europe of a prominent Socialist prime minister ahead of European elections in June and at a time when the center right increasingly holds sway. "It is a decision that does not mean a return to the status quo,

this will mark a before and after, I promise you that," Sánchez said, without detailing what steps he could take to curtail "the smear campaign" he says he and his family is facing.

The eurozone's fourth-largest economy had been in suspense since Sánchez, prime minister since 2018, posted an emotional letter on X on Wednesday before he holed up in his Moncloa Palace, the prime minister's residence in Madrid. In it he said the moves against wife were too personal an attack on his family and he needed time to decide on his priorities.

In that letter, where he declared himself "deeply in love" with wife Begoña Gómez, he said that he could no longer just stand aside and watch her being targeted by a legal probe brought by allegations by a right-wing platform that accused her of using her position to influence business deals.

The group, Manos Limpias, or "Clean Hands," acknowledged that the complaint was based on newspaper articles. Spanish prosecutors say it should be thrown out.

The expectation Monday was such that Spain's state broadcaster had put up a 10-minute countdown clock before his announcement on the screen during their morning news talk show.

Speaking from the steps of Moncloa Palace, Sánchez said that he and his wife "know that this campaign to discredit them won't stop" but that he has decided that he couldn't give his adversaries the satisfaction of giving up.

Rallies by his supporters over the past few days played a part in his decision, he said. Essentially Sánchez had four options: resign, seek a parliamentary vote of confidence, call a new election or remain in office.

At least 45 die in Kenya after dam collapses

AP ■ NAIROBI

A dam collapsed in western Kenya early Monday, killing at least 45 people after a wall of water swept through houses and cut off a major road, police said.

The Old Kijabe Dam, located in the Mai Mahiu area of the Great Rift Valley region that is prone to flash floods, collapsed and water spilled downstream, carrying with it mud, rocks and uprooted trees, police official Stephen Kirui told The Associated Press.

Vehicles were entangled in the debris on one of Kenya's busiest highways and paramedics treated the injured as waters submerged large areas. Ongoing rains in Kenya have caused flooding that has already killed nearly 100 people and postponed the opening of schools. Heavy rains have been pounding the country since mid-March and the Meteorology Department has



warned of more rainfall. Kenya's Interior Minister Kithure Kindiki ordered the inspection of all public and private dams and water reservoirs within 24 hours starting Monday afternoon to avert future incidents. The ministry said recommendations for evacuations and resettlement would be done after the inspection. The Kenya National Highways

authority issued an alert warning motorists to brace for heavy traffic and debris that blocked the roads around Naivasha and Narok, west of the capital, Nairobi. The wider East African region is experiencing flooding due to the heavy rains, and 155 people have reportedly died in Tanzania while more than 200,000 people affected in neighbouring Burundi.

UK's new laws to keep smart devices secure

PTI ■ LONDON

All internet connected smart devices will be required to meet minimum security standards under what the UK government has dubbed as "world first" laws, effective from Monday to protect consumers and businesses from hacking and cyberattacks.

Under the new regime, manufacturers will be banned from having weak, easily guessable default passwords like "admin" or "12345" and if there is a common password, the user will be prompted to change it on start-up. An investigation conducted by the Which? consumer group found that a UK home filled with smart devices could be exposed to more than 12,000 hacking attacks from across the world in a single week, with a total of 2,684 attempts to guess weak default

passwords on just five devices. "From today, consumers will have greater peace of mind that their smart devices are protected from cyber criminals, as we introduce world first laws that will make sure their personal privacy, data and finances are safe," said UK Minister for Cyber Viscount Camrose, Jonathan Berry.

The UK's Department for Science, Innovation and Technology said under the new legal requirement, manufacturers must protect consumers from hackers and cyber criminals from accessing devices with internet or network connectivity — from smartphones to games consoles and connected fridges. It said the new laws are part of the British government's GBP 2.6-billion National Cyber Strategy to protect and promote Britain online.

Top Chinese scientist expelled over corruption allegations

AP ■ BEIJING

China's top scientist, who developed the first inactivated COVID-19 vaccine at the height of the pandemic in the country in 2020, has been dismissed from Parliament for alleged corruption. Yang Xiaoming, the chairman of China National Pharmaceutical Group's vaccine subsidiary China National Biotec Group (CNBG), has been stripped of his membership in the National People's Congress (NPC) due to serious discipline and law violations, official media reported here on Monday.

The charge of serious discipline and law violations is a common euphemism for corruption under the ruling Communist Party of China

(CPC) disciplinary practice. Yang, 62, is a veteran researcher who headed the CNBG - a vaccine subsidiary of state-owned Sinopharm - and led a team that developed Sinopharm's BBIBP-CorV vaccine, China's first coronavirus shot approved for general use. Coronavirus first surfaced in the Chinese city of Wuhan in March 2020 and later spread to the world, becoming the pandemic of the century and claiming millions of lives.

According to a statement by NPC, Yang is already being investigated by the party disciplinary body — the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection. The Sinopharm shot and Sinovac Biotech's CoronaVac were the most widely used in China and the leading

COVID-19 vaccines exported by the country. Yang's dismissal comes amid the biggest crackdown on China's healthcare system, expanding a sweeping anti-corruption drive launched by President Xi Jinping in the last few years.

The crackdown aims to root out widespread corruption in a system plagued by kickbacks.

It targets hospitals, drug companies and insurance funds, with dozens of hospital chiefs detained since last year, Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post reported.

Another former Sinopharm senior executive, Zhou Bin, who once served as the company's deputy general manager, was placed under investigation by the CCDI in January.

Solomon Islands pro-Beijing PM won't keep his job following polls

AP ■ MELBOURNE

Solomon Islands pro-Beijing Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare on Monday withdrew from the contest to remain head of the strategically important South Pacific island nation's government following general elections two weeks ago that are central to the US-China rivalry in the region.

Sogavare has been re-elected to the parliament. But he told a press conference in the capital Honiara on Monday he would not be nominated as a candidate when the 50 newly elected lawmakers vote on Thursday for the prime minister, Australian Broadcasting Corp reported. Sogavare had hoped to become the first

Solomons prime minister to maintain power in consecutive four-year terms following the April 17 election. During his previous term, China's influence increased more in the Solomons than anywhere else in the South Pacific. Sogavare switched diplomatic allegiances from Taiwan to Beijing and struck a secret security pact that has raised fears of the Chinese navy gaining a foothold in the region. Sogavare said in his press conference he had been "vilified by media" and his family had been subjected to "unprecedented abuse," the ABC reported. Sogavare's Ownership, Unity and Responsibility Party, known as the Our Party, won 15 seats in the election, more than any other party. The

party's candidate to become prime minister will be Foreign Minister Jeremiah Manele.

A prime minister needs the support of at least 26 lawmakers in the 50-seat chamber. Observers expect China to have secretly backed more candidates than Sogavare at the election in a bid to ensure the government change does not diminish Beijing's influence. Sogavare could again return to power during the current four-year term. He was elected prime minister after the last election in 2019.

But he has served as prime minister three times before 2019 because his predecessors had quit or were ousted by fellow lawmakers in a precarious political system.



THOMAS CUP

India seal quarterfinal berth with 5-0 win over England

PTI ■ CHENGDU (CHINA)

Defending champions India sailed to the knockout stage of the Thomas Cup with a 5-0 rout of England in a Group C contest here on Monday. India, who defeated Thailand 4-1 in their opening tie, notched up a second consecutive win to qualify for the quarterfinals. HS Prannoy returned to winning ways, defeating Harry Huang 21-15 21-15 to give India a 1-0 lead. "To give a start to the team is really important, it gives a good boost to the team to go ahead. It is really important to finish off the matches clinically, you saw against Thailand one match was bad

for us. So it's important to finish off the matches clinically," Prannoy said after his match. The star pair of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty was stretched to three games by Ben Lane and Sean Vandy in the first doubles fixtures before 2022 world champions bronze medallist picked up a 21-17 19-21 21-15 win in one hour five minutes. Former world number one Kidambi Srikanth recorded a 21-16 21-11 victory over Nadeem Dalvi to give India an unassailable 3-0 lead. "Happy with the way both the matches have gone for me (in the tournament). There is a lot of pressure on players to win games. I feel I have played little easier opponents so far. But

from now we will face better opponents and I have to be my best," Srikanth said. On his recent form, Srikanth said "I'm playing well but not able to pull off the matches. Obviously people will compare how I was playing from 2021-2022. I was in my 20s then." The second doubles pair of MR Arjun and Dhruv Kapila then brushed aside Rory Easton and Alex Green 21-17 21-19. In the final match, 24-year-old Kiran George prevailed 21-18 21-12 over Chohan Kayan to wrap up the fixture. India will take on group toppers and record 14-time champions Indonesia in their final group fixture on Wednesday. With Liverpool's title hopes

Arsenal and Man City both win to keep it tight at top in race for Premier League title

AP ■ LONDON

Arsenal survived a late scare at Tottenham to stay narrowly ahead in the race for the Premier League title. A 3-2 win at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium ensured Mikel Arteta's team remained at the top of the standings, ahead of defending champion Manchester City, which won 2-0 at Nottingham Forest.

But Arsenal had to endure a nervous finish despite powering to 3-0 lead in a London derby that was supposed to be one of its biggest tests in the title chase. "The last 20 minutes wasn't nice, but it was worth it," Arsenal forward Bukayo Saka said afterward. "We know it is a big derby and they don't want to lose 3-0 at home. Momentum shifted their way, but I am proud of the boys - we managed to get the three points."

An own-goal from Pierre-Emile Hojbjerg and further strikes from Saka and Kai Havertz put Arsenal into a commanding position at the break. But in the face of a potential rout, Tottenham responded in the second half through Cristian Romero and a penalty from Son Heung-min in the 87th minute. Under pressure, Arsenal held on and remains one point clear at the top, having played a game more than City. The advantage is still with Pep Guardiola's team, which will clinch a fourth-straight title if it wins its remaining games this season and responded to Arsenal's win with victory of its own at relegation-fighting Forest. With Liverpool's title hopes



further diminishing after dropping five points in two games this week, it is down to Arsenal to challenge City's domestic dominance. Having collapsed late on in last season's title race, Arteta's players look more capable of going the distance this time around. An away fixture against its fiercest rival, Tottenham, was a major test of its credentials at this stage of the campaign. And while Arsenal was guilty of letting Spurs back into a game that should have been killed off much earlier, victory when tension was high was a test of character. "Maybe last season that could have ended in a draw and we showed we have the experience," Saka said. "We know City are an amazing team, but they are not perfect, we just need to do our job." MAN CITY WINS: Arsenal's win meant the pressure was on City to keep the heat on its title rival. It was always favorite to beat a Forest team that is desperately fighting for survival but without Phil Foden, who was

ill, and Erling Haaland on the bench, Guardiola was without two of its big match-winners in the starting 11. An injury to goalkeeper Ederson also forced City into a change at halftime. But Guardiola's team looks to be in unstoppable form and a 2-0 win extended its unbeaten record in the league to 19 games, dating back to a 1-0 loss to Aston Villa at the start of December. Back then there were questions about City's ability to win a sixth title in seven years. While Arsenal may lead the way, City's title-winning know-how could make the difference. So could Haaland, who stepped off the bench to score the goal that effectively killed off Forest's challenge. Josko Gvardiol headed City in front in the first half, but Chris Wood had two clear chances from close range to score for Forest. Haaland missed City's last two games through injury, but was quickly back on the scoresheet with a clinically taken goal just nine minutes after coming on as a substitute.

Among those in the crowd to watch were his father, Alf-Inge, and rock star Noel Gallagher. The goal saw Haaland move clear of Cole Palmer as the league's top scorer with 21 goals. "It's an important win, it does not matter how we do it, and it is good to be back," Haaland said. "We knew it was going to be a fight, and the pitch was not the easiest to play on but we cannot complain, it is about winning and that is exactly what we did." BOURNEMOUTH RECORD: Without a win in its first nine league games this season, Bournemouth is now in the top half of the table and has set its own Premier League points record. A 3-0 win against Brighton moved Andoni Iraola's team up to 10th and on 48 points. Bournemouth's previous best in the top flight was 46 points in the 2016-17 season under former manager Eddie Howe. Goals from Marcos Senesi, Enes Unal and Justin Kluivert secured victory against a Brighton team that is going in the other direction after six games without a win.



PSG wins record extending 12th French league title

AP ■ PARIS

Paris Saint-Germain has won the French league in Kylian Mbappé's last season at the club after Monaco lost 3-2 at Lyon. PSG has an unassailable 12-point lead over second-place Monaco, which has three games left. The Ligue 1 triumph is PSG's third in a row and a record-extending 12th overall. Mbappé has been involved in six of them, but comes off contract at the end of the season. He's expected to be signed by Real Madrid. PSG is on course for a potential historic treble as it will play at Borussia Dortmund in the first leg of the Champions League semifinals on Wednesday and face Lyon in the French Cup final on May 25. In coach Luis Enrique's first season at the club, PSG produced one of the most dominant seasons in league history with just one loss in 31 games so far. PSG could have secured the title a day earlier but was held 3-3 by Le Havre on Saturday. "Our fans are incredible. We were losing 1-0, 3-1, and they kept supporting us," Luis Enrique said after the draw. "We managed to draw later on and effectively win the league thanks to the supporters, thanks to their positive attitude." That was quite a contrast with the past couple of seasons. Last season, PSG supporters were booing Lionel Messi even though the soccer great was the player who helped the club clinch an 11th league title by scoring in a 1-1 draw with Strasbourg. Two years ago, there was a similar disconnect between the supporters and the club. PSG supporters kept protesting at Parc des Princes by giving their team the silent treatment.

AP ■ MADRID

Alcaraz earns another comfortable win in Madrid

Carlos Alcaraz continues to make a successful return from injury at the Madrid Open. The two-time defending champion cruised past Thiago Seyboth Wild in the third round on Sunday to earn another comfortable win. Alcaraz won 6-3, 6-3 for his second straight victory in his first tournament after skipping Monte Carlo and Barcelona because of an arm injury. "I think I played at a really good level," Alcaraz said. "Coming into this match I was nervous a little bit because I didn't know how my forearm was going to be. Thiago has big shots. He is really strong. I am really happy with the performance. It was difficult a little bit at

the end, at 5-0 and then serving at 5-3. I am really happy to get it at the end." The second-seeded Alcaraz had made his debut at the tournament with a 6-2, 6-1 win over Alexander Shevchenko. Alcaraz had been scheduled to play at the Monte Carlo Masters and he also missed Barcelona to try to fully recover ahead of the French Open next month. "I think I'm in a good shape right now. I'm not feeling anything in the forearm, and I played good tennis," the 20-year-old Alcaraz said. "Obviously I'm not hitting my forehand on my 100% ... But I'm just focused to

hitting the forehand as much relaxed as I can. I'm really happy to be competitive without pain." No. 3-ranked Alcaraz is trying to become the first player to win three straight Madrid Open titles. He will next face Jan-Lennard Struff, his opponent in last year's final in Madrid. Andrey Rublev continued his return to form with a 7-6 (10), 6-4 win against Alejandro Davidovich Fokina. The world No. 8 arrived in Madrid coming off a four-match losing streak before defeating Facundo Bagnis in his opening match. Tallon Griekspoor got his



first top-20 win on clay on Sunday by defeating world No. 12 Holger Rune 6-4, 4-6, 6-3 to reach the fourth round at an ATP 1000 event for the second time. American Taylor Fritz, coming off an appearance in the final in Munich, defeated Sebastian Baez 6-2, 6-3, while Francisco Cerundolo picked up his first top-20 win of the season by beating 15th-seeded Tommy Paul 6-7 (7), 6-4, 6-2.

SABALENKA ADVANCES: Second-ranked Aryna Sabalenka survived a tough test against 19-year-old American wild card Robin Montgomery, prevailing 6-1, 6-7 (5), 6-4. Sabalenka is trying to become the second woman to win three Madrid titles after triumphing in the Spanish capital in 2021 and 2023. Petra Kvitova won the Madrid Open in 2011, 15 and '18. Sabalenka will next face American Danielle Collins, who rallied to defeat Jaqueline Cristian 3-6, 6-4, 6-1 for her 15th straight victory. Collins went into the tournament having won the Charleston Open. And Miami Open. Teenager Sara Bejlek beat Ashlyn Krueger 6-3, 6-1 while 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva made it to the last 16 for a second straight year with a 7-5, 6-1 win over seventh-seeded Marketa Vondrousova, the reigning Wimbledon champion.



Archer Deepika Kumari reinducted into TOPS

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Former world number one archer Deepika Kumari, who won a silver medal at the just-concluded World Cup in Shanghai, has been re-inducted into the Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) core group ahead of the Paris Games, the Sports Ministry announced on Monday. Deepika, who missed the entire season last year after becoming a mother in December 2022, recently made a comeback and has been doing well both at the domestic and international stage. The 29-year-old recurve archer, who is a three-time Olympian, had also medalled at the Asia Cup earlier this year. So far, only Dhiraj Bommadevara has qualified for the Games in the men's individual event owing to his silver medal at the Asian Qualifying Tournament in Bangkok last year. Only one qualifying tournament is left to be held and it will take place in Antalya, Turkey on June 15 and 16.

Another archer, Mrinal Chauhan, has been added to the TOPS Development group, while Pravin Jadhav has been moved from Development to Core group and para-powerlifter Ashok has been inducted in TOPS Core group, the sports ministry said in a statement. The Mission Olympic Cell (MOC), during its 133rd meeting, also inducted squash players Anahat Singh, Abhay Singh and Velavan Senthilkumar to the TOPS Development group, to help them prepare for the Los Angeles Olympics, that will take place in the year 2028. In October 2023, the LA organising committee had include squash in the 2028 edition of the Games. "Looking at India's performance in Squash in the past two decades, especially at Commonwealth Games and Asian Games, MOC decided to induct three squash players in their TOPS Development group, with the aim to help them provide all required assistance to prepare for the global event," the ministry release stated.

Bayern, Dortmund seek Champions League glory

AP ■ MUNICH

It's shaping up to be quite the few weeks for German soccer. The country is preparing to stage the European Championship over June and July, with Germany's national team taking a nicely timed upturn in form. Before that, Germany might yet be celebrating having a European champion once again, with Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund making up half of the lineup for the Champions League semifinals beginning this week. The last time Bayern and Dortmund both reached the Champions League semifinals was in 2013 and they went on to meet in the title match at Wembley Stadium, with Bayern winning 2-1. As fate would have it, Wembley will be hosting the final this year, too. Setting up a repeat of that 2013 final would mean upsetting the odds. Bayern is up against another European heavyweight in Real Madrid, the record 14-time champion and king of the competition. Dortmund faces Paris Saint-Germain, whose star striker Kylian Mbappé is looking to lead the French team to its first ever Champions League title in his last season there before a likely move to Madrid. Germany didn't have a single semifinalist in each of the last three seasons. In the 2019-20 competition, it had two - Bayern and Leipzig - and Bayern was the eventual champion. This season, Bayern and Dortmund have mounted impressive European campaigns while underperforming on the domestic front. Bayern has relinquished its Bundesliga title to Bayer Leverkusen after an 11-year hold on the biggest prize in German soccer, and needs to win the Champions League to avoid a first trophy-less season since

BOTH CLUBS KICK OFF BIG SUMMER OF SOCCER FOR GERMANY



2012. Dortmund, meanwhile, is in fifth place in the league so its deep run in Europe has come as something of a surprise. Here's a closer look at the two games: BAYERN MUNICH vs. REAL MADRID (TUESDAY): Madrid should arrive well rested after the Spanish league moved its game at Real Sociedad to Friday. Madrid won 1-0. With Madrid set to win Spain's domestic title, coach Carlo Ancelotti kept Jude Bellingham, Vinicius Junior, Eduardo Camavinga, Toni Kroos, Federico Valverde, Antonio Rudiger and goalkeeper Andriy Lunin on the bench at the start of the league game in San Sebastian. Forward Rodrygo did not travel with the team because of flu. All started against Manchester City in the second leg of the quarterfinals

and are expected to be back in the starting lineup against Bayern. Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel is leaving at the end of the season, and the Champions League - which he won with Chelsea in 2021 - offers him the chance to go out on a high. Two months on from Bayern's announcement that Tuchel would depart, he seems more popular than ever among sections of the Bayern support. Part of that is down to the calm, controlled way Bayern knocked out Arsenal in the second leg of their quarterfinal. Partly it's a reaction to Bayern's failure to hire top coaching targets like Bayer Leverkusen's Xabi Alonso or Germany's Julian Nagelsmann. As Tuchel nears the end of a troubled tenure at Bayern, he's often seemed more upbeat than ever. "If people want me to stay, it is still an issue that has no priority," Tuchel

said Friday when asked about a fan petition begging the club to keep him. "Even if in this case it is a pleasant issue for me." The injuries that have plagued Bayern this season are easing off, too. Tuchel predicted Friday that Serge Gnabry would recover from his latest problem in time to play - and score - against Madrid on Tuesday, while fellow forward Leroy Sané could also return. BORUSSIA DORTMUND vs. PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN (WEDNESDAY): PSG won another French league title on Sunday - after second-place Monaco lost at Lyon - but the Champions League is the trophy the Qatar-backed club is desperate to finally get its hands on. And there would be no better way for Kylian Mbappé to sign off at the end of the season than by leading PSG to victory in European club

soccer's elite competition. The club is already planning for life without its superstar striker, who is set to walk away as a free agent, with players like Randal Kolo Muani, Ousmane Dembele and Goncalo Ramos expected to help fill the void in his absence. But Mbappé could still have a big say in the Champions League and he scored two goals in PSG's 4-1 comeback win against Barcelona in the quarterfinals. PSG drew 3-3 at home to Le Havre on Saturday after coming back from 3-1 down and needing an equalizer from Ramos in the fifth minute of stoppage time. It's been a strange season for Dortmund and that was underlined by Saturday's 4-1 loss against top four rival RB Leipzig. Dortmund has certainly saved its best performances for the Champions League, none better than the comeback win over Atletico Madrid in the quarterfinals. Striker Sebastian Haller scored in the first leg against Atletico but injured his ankle in Dortmund's next game and hasn't played since. Forward Donyell Malen has been struggling with pain, too. Much could depend on which version of Jadon Sancho turns up to face PSG. Sancho, who scored against Leipzig, has shown glimpses of his obvious talent since returning to Dortmund in January on loan from Manchester United. The issue is whether the former England forward can consistently play at his best. "Both I and Jadon have noticed he isn't at the peak of his performance yet, but that's totally OK. That's something we were aware of when we decided to bring him back, but we know that he's able to reach that maximum very quickly," Dortmund coach Edin Terzic said Friday. "Every training session, Jadon has a moment that shows his incredible talent and we see how hard-working he is with the team."



Congress planning religion based quota: Modi

I will not let this happen, says PM at Karnataka rally

PTI ■ BAGALKOTE (KARNATAKA)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday accused the Congress of planning religion-based reservation in the country for the sake of vote bank politics, but asserted that he will not let it happen.

He said this Congress proposal is to appease minorities as the SC/ST and OBC community is now with the BJP.

"In Karnataka, Congress has started a campaign to change the Constitution and to snatch away the rights of SC/ST and OBCs. Our Constitution does not accept religion-based reservation. But the Karnataka government has given part of OBC reservation to Muslims," Modi said.

Addressing a mega election rally in this district headquarters town, he said, "they (Congress) will not settle with this. They had earlier too in their manifesto said about coming out with a law to provide religion-based reservation. There is a similar signal in their manifesto this time."

"I want to make my Dalit, SC/ST and OBC brothers and sisters aware about Congress' intentions. These people on the basis of religion, to keep their vote bank safe, are planning to loot your right



which was given by Babasaheb Ambedkar and the Constitution," he added.

Veteran BJP leader B S Yediyurappa, BJP candidates and MPs from Bagalkote (Bagalkot) and Vijayapura (Bijapur) -- P C Gaddigoudar and Ramesh Jigajinagi, respectively -- were among those present at the rally.

Noting that most of SC, ST and OBC MPs in the Parliament are from BJP, Modi said, "So they feel that as SC, ST and OBC are with BJP. To gain the trust of minorities, they want to loot from SC, ST and OBC and give it to minorities. Will you let this happen?"

"I want to guarantee today to

my Dalit, Adivasi and OBC brothers and sisters. I will not let such intentions of Congress be successful. To protect your rights, your reservation, Modi will go to any extent. I'm assuring you this," he added.

Citing a habit among people to forward certain information that comes on various platforms without verifying, Modi alleged that, "those who have lost elections or have lost (while being in) the fray are using technology to make fake videos. Misusing artificial intelligence they put out wrong things in my voice in social media -- this is creating a big threat."

Appealing to people to inform

police or the BJP about such fake videos and legal action will follow, the PM said the law of this country will not allow people to play such games with anyone.

Warning those who try to kill innocent people of the country, Modi said, "this is Naya Bharat (New India), Ghar me ghuskar ke maarega (kills inside one's (enemy) territory)."

Claiming that Modi doesn't believe in attacking from the back and fights openly face to face, he said he did not hide information about the Balakot air strikes, and disclosed information about it and the destruction caused to the enemies, after the strikes.

"I had asked the forces to call the media and inform them, but I said before that I will inform Pakistan through telephone about airstrikes at night and destruction caused, but Pakistan people did not come on phone. So I asked forces to wait, and after informing them, we later disclosed to the world about airstrikes that happened during the night," he said, adding Modi doesn't hide things nor attacks from hiding, and does things openly.

Observing that BJP has resolved to make India a manufacturing hub and skill centre, the PM said this resolve cannot be accomplished by those

enjoying vacations, as it needs vision and determination to strive for it.

Accusing the Congress of loot and asking whether the country can be given to them, he said the grand old party has made Karnataka, where it is in power, the "ATM of its loot", and in a short span they have emptied the state's coffers.

"The situation is that legislators are not getting funds for development on time and days are not far when Karnataka government will be unable to pay (salary) its employees," he said, as he accused Congress of running a 'vasooli gang', and not the government, in Karnataka.

Congress has turned the tech hub of Bengaluru into a "tanker hub", by aiding tanker mafia over the water crisis, and the commission is reaching the party, he alleged, as he also claimed that the grand old party was dreaming about a scam as big 2G scam worth lakhs of crores.

In Karnataka, fundamentalist forces have become unbridled, he said.

Referring to the alleged attack on a shopkeeper in Bengaluru for listening to "Hanuman Chalisa" and the bomb blast at the city's cafe, he said, "these are not incidents of normal crime, this is terror and fundamentalist mentality, and Congress is trying to protect it to get votes," Modi added.

LDF convener Jayarajan gets a reprieve

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The State Committee of the CPI(M) which met on Monday to discuss the ramifications caused by the meeting between LDF Convener EP Jayarajan and the BJP's Prakash Jawadekar gave a clean chit to the former and said that there was nothing unusual in it.

Briefing the media after the State Committee meeting, M V Govindan, Kerala secretary of the CPI(M) said that Jayarajan explained the situation that led to the meeting and clarified all issues raised in the meeting. "It has been found that the hype about this meeting was created by a certain section of the media which is not friendly with the CPI(M) and they had some intention to put the party in a dilemma. Based on the explanation given by Jayarajan, we have asked him to take legal action against those media which spread falsehoods about the meeting," said Govindan.

The party secretary also said that there was nothing unusual in two leaders belonging to different political parties and pursuing different ideologies meeting each other. "Such meetings are not uncommon so long as the agenda is confined to personal relations," said Govindan.

He also alleged that the opposition led by the



Congress wanted to divert the attention from real issues and they blew the news about the Jayarajan-Jawadekar meeting out of proportion. "We have also asked Jayarajan not to have any more contacts with 'Dallal' T G Nandakumar, who reportedly played a major role in facilitating the meeting," said Govindan.

Dallal Nandakumar, the Delhi based Keralaite is credited with facilitating and finalizing underhand dealings and contracts between people in high places and favor seekers for a price.

He has been described as a dubious character and persons dealing with him are looked down by civil society. Political observers like A Jayasankar are of the view that there are string reasons behind the State Committee opting out of taking any action against Jayarajan. "This

is a meeting which was held to save certain leaders in the CPI(M) facing probe by central agencies like ED and CBI. If any action is taken against Jayarajan at this juncture, chances are that he would spill more beans and that will put the VVIPs in the party in an embarrassing situation. This is the same CPI(M) which campaigned in Kollam alleging that the RSP member N K Premachandran is shifting his loyalty to the BJP following the lunch he shared with Prime Minister Modi at the Parliament House canteen," said Jayashankar.

Jayasankar also said that if the CPI(M) is serious about taking action against Jayarajan for meeting Jawadekar, the only body capable of doing the same is the polit bureau of the party because Jayarajan is a member of the high power central committee, a body of intellectuals and intelligentsia like Sitaram Yechury, Prakash and Brinda Karats. Govindan charged the BJP's national spokesperson Sanju Verma for spreading "blatant lies" about Kerala.

"This lady was heard alleging in a media that the CPI(M) was distributing 98 per cent of the income generated by temples in Kerala to the Muslim community. The truth is that temples in the State survive because of the generous fund released by the Government," said Govindan.

Top leaders of INDIA Bloc will scramble for PM post if it comes to power: Shah

PTI ■ JHANHARPUR (BIHAR)

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday warned that a victory of the opposition INDIA bloc, "even by mistake", will lead to a scramble among top leaders of the alliance for the prime minister's post.

Addressing a rally in Jhanharpur Lok Sabha constituency of Bihar, Shah claimed that leaders like M K Stalin, Sharad Pawar, Lalu Prasad and Mamata Banerjee may agree to a year each of premiership, by turns, and "Rahul baba (Rahul Gandhi) will have to settle for whatever is left of the tenure".

In contrast, he said, "a third term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lead to elimination of corruption from the entire country, including Bihar, and eradication of casteism in the state".

"Modi's return to power is certain. But, suppose, even by mistake, if the INDIA alliance comes to power, what will happen? Who will be the prime minister? Will it be Stalin, Sharad Pawar, Mamata Banerjee or Rahul Gandhi? They will all settle for sharing the top post for a year each. Is it how the country can be run?" Shah said.



India wants a "mazboot" (strong) PM, not a "majboor" (weak) prime minister, the senior BJP leader asserted.

Slamming Gandhi for his "new-found concern for OBCs", the home minister said "the Congress party

has always been against the Other Backward Classes. It had opposed the Mandal Commission. Modi has emerged from among the OBCs and the community has been empowered during his tenure as never before".

He also showered encomiums on Modi for abrogation of Article 370 and strong counter-terrorism steps like surgical strikes in contrast with the previous Congress-led UPA regime, "when for 10 years, terrorists struck at will".

Attacking the opposition for alleging misuse of central agencies, Shah said, "Should there be no action against the corrupt? Whoever is found guilty of swindling money meant for the poor people of the country, must be in jail".

He also said the opposition camp had neither leaders nor resolve, alleging "Sonia Gandhi's sole concern is making her son the prime minister, while Lalu Prasad wants to make his son the chief minister of Bihar".

Shah alleged that the Congress and the RJD supremo did not give due respect to former Bihar CM Karpoori Thakur, but the BJP recognised his contribution and conferred the Bharat Ratna on him.

Lok Sabha polls are churning of Constitution: Akhilesh Yadav

PTI ■ ETAH (UP)

Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav Monday termed the ongoing Lok Sabha elections as "samvidhan manthan" (churning of the Constitution) between the protectors and destroyers of democracy and said the Constitution and democracy will be saved only if INDIA bloc wins.

Yadav alleged that the BJP will not only take away reservation by abolishing the Constitution but will also take away the right to vote from the people if it comes to power for the third time. Everyone knows that every promise of the BJP has turned out to be false, he said while addressing an election rally in Etah.

"These are the same people who had once said they will double the income of the farmers, give the right price to the farmers for their produce and make them happy. But none of these things were done," he said. About a thousand farmers were martyred in the farmers' movement against the three "black laws", he said.

Without taking names, Yadav referred to the RSS as "the most dangerous family in the world" and alleged that the family which intended to end reservation is now talking against it for getting votes in polls. The SP president alleged that the BJP wanted to end reservation as part of a major conspiracy by putting everything in the private hands but, he said, the "samajwadis" (socialists) will not let them succeed.

Rahul: If voted to power, Congress will conduct caste, economic survey

PTI ■ PATAN (GUJARAT)

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday said if his party is voted to power, it would conduct a nation-wide caste and economic survey on priority to enhance participation of Dalits, tribals, poor for the general category and OBCs.

Gandhi, who was addressing a poll rally in Patan town of north Gujarat in support of the party's Lok Sabha candidate Chandanji Thakor, also said the BJP and RSS planned to change the Constitution after retaining power.

"Ninety per cent of the country's population comprises SCs, STs and OBCs, but you will not find their representation in the corporate, media (sectors), private hospitals, private universities or as bureaucrats in government. We will first do a caste survey and economic survey after coming to power," he said.

These communities are working as farmers, labourers, small traders or are simply unemployed, he said, adding that only three of the 90 IAS officers at the helm of affairs at the Centre are from the backward classes, and they too have been given insignificant posts.

Accusing the BJP of bringing about wealth inequality in the country during its 10-year rule, Gandhi said just 22 individuals possess as much wealth as 70 per cent of the population.

"Our solution is that the Congress will first conduct a caste census and economic survey after coming to power to find out the exact population of Dalits, OBCs, tribals as well as the poor from general category. Then a survey will be held to find out their participation in media, government sectors, private colleges and universities, etc and also financial status," he said.

After this exercise, India will have a fair idea of everyone's proportion in population, their participation details, money in their hands and institutions they are working in, Gandhi claimed. Hitting out at the RSS and BJP, he said the ruling dispensation is against the system of reservations and it also wants to change the Constitution, which is the basis on which people received their rights, facilities like education, health care, water, as well as rights.

"BJP leaders are saying they will change the Constitution,



which protects the poor and the downtrodden. Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants only 22-25 people to control all wealth, power and natural resources. That is what happened in their 10-year rule," Gandhi said.

"They waived Rs 16 lakh crore of those 22-25 persons but refused to write off loans taken by farmers. Just 1 per cent population in India controls 40 per cent wealth. The BJP wants to shut schemes which are beneficial to farmers, the poor and downtrodden," he added.

The Congress believes in distributing wealth and power without any injustice, he said, adding that reservation guarantees participation of Dalits, poor, tribals and the backward classes. Privatisation and the Agnipath-Agniveer military recruitment scheme are two tools of this Government to end reservation, and the Congress will ensure the Agniveer scheme is scrapped when it comes to power, Gandhi asserted.

"Agniveer scheme is an insult to our soldiers. It was brought in by the PM. The Army never wanted it. We will scrap it, protect each soldier and given them pension," he asserted.

The situation of farmers is desperate, inflation and unemployment are at record levels but the media will only show Modi, billionaires and their wedding ceremonies and Bollywood stars and celebrities, Gandhi claimed. "After the Congress comes to power, we will waive farm loans, give legal status to MSP, give Rs 1 lakh per year to poor women under the Mahalakshmi scheme and a yearly stipend of Rs 1 lakh to graduates and diploma holders enrolled for apprenticeship in private and government sectors," Gandhi announced.

On the occasion, Gandhi hailed Maharaja Krishnakumarsinhji Gohil, the last ruler of Bhavnagar princely state, who as per the official records, was the first to merge his state with the Union of India on the request of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.

Jabalpur BJP leader, anti drug crusader injured in stabbing

PTI ■ JABALPUR

A Jabalpur-based BJP leader, who is also an anti-drug crusader, sustained grievous wound after he was stabbed by three men here apparently over an old enmity, police said on Monday.

The condition of BJP leader Mangal Siddique (42) was out of danger and all three assailants were arrested on Monday, Adhartal Police Station in-charge Vijay Kumar Vishwakarma told PTI. The incident took place around midnight on Sunday under the Adhartal Police Station area of Jabalpur city, police said.

Congress, BJP spar in MP over quotas, Muslim appeasement

PTI ■ BHOPAL

The ruling BJP and the opposition Congress in Madhya Pradesh on Monday indulged in a war of words over quota for Other Backward Classes ahead of the third phase of Lok Sabha polls on May 7.

While the BJP claimed the Congress wants to give some part of the quota meant for SCs, STs and OBCs to Muslims, the opposition party hit back saying the ruling dispensation will change the Constitution and scrap reservations after retaining power.

"The character of BJP has always been anti-reservation. During my tenure as Chief Minister in Madhya Pradesh, 27 per cent reservation was

given to OBCs. But the BJP government, which was formed after toppling the democratically elected government, conspiratorially abolished the 27 per cent reservation given to OBCs in MP," senior Congress leader Kamal Nath said on X on Monday.

The BJP was making baseless allegations on the issue against the Congress, which, after Independence, implemented the quota system and from time to time expanded its scope for the deprived communities, Nath asserted. MP Congress chief Jitu Patwari also released a video in which he charged the BJP of wanting to change the Constitution and scrap quotas.

On Sunday, Madhya Pradesh BJP minister Prahlad Patel

claimed the hidden agenda of the Congress-led INDIA Bloc was to snatch the rights of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and OBCs and to give them to "their favourites". "The Congress wants to give the share of reservation for Dalits, tribals and backward classes to Muslims.

The Congress' intention is Muslim appeasement and its opposition to the majority community has become evident to the public. This conspiracy of the opposition party will weaken the country and shatter constitutional values," Patel had said.

The National Commission for Backward Classes was formed in 1993 but it got constitutional status only in 2018 under the Modi government and it was the Congress' ploy (to not give

constitutional status) to ensure such commissions could be formed at the state level and to allow them to work arbitrarily, Patel had alleged.

State BJP secretary Rajneesh Agrawal told PTI the Congress has attacked the social justice system by including Muslims under the other OBC list to provide them religion-based quota, adding the party wanted to implement its "Karnataka model" in the entire country and curtail the existing quota for the OBCs, SCs and STs.

Earlier on Sunday, RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, while addressing a function in Hyderabad, had asserted the organisation has always been supportive of reservation, and advocated for its implementation as long as "discrimination exists".

LS poll: 36 out of 266 candidates in Gujarat face criminal cases, says ADR data

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Thirty six out of the 266 candidates for the Lok Sabha polls in Gujarat have criminal cases against them, with some also facing attempt to murder and dacoity charges, as per an analysis of their affidavits by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR).

Elections to 25 out of the 26 Lok Sabha seats in Gujarat will be held on May 7. The BJP candidate from Surat seat has already been declared elected unopposed.

"Out of the 266 candidates, 36, or 14 per cent, have criminal charges against them, as per details provided by them in the affidavits. Out of them, 21, or 8 per cent,



have serious criminal cases against them," ADR's Gujarat coordinator Pankti Jog told reporters here on Monday. Serious criminal cases are those which attract a maximum punishment of 5 years or more, are non-bailable, related to murder,

rape, kidnapping, bribery, assault, causing loss to the exchequer, crimes against women, hate speech, and offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act, she said. Among the major parties, out of the 25 BJP candidates, four, or 15 per cent, have criminal

cases against them, with two facing serious charges, as per the data of ADR, which is an electoral reform advocacy group.

Out of the 23 Congress candidates, six, or 26 per cent, are named in criminal cases, with three facing serious charges, showed the ADR analysis of the Election Commission data.

Tribal leaders Anant Patel and Dilip Vasava, contesting from Valsad and Bharuch seats respectively, are facing cases on charges of attempt to murder.

Patel is the Congress candidate, while Vasava is the Bharat Adivasi Party nominee. Aam Aadmi Party candidate Chaitar Vasava and

independent nominee Ismail Patel, both contesting from Bharuch seat, have the highest number of 13 criminal cases each against them.

The cases against Chaitar Vasava include of dacoity, sexual harassment, abetment of suicide and hate speech, as per the ADR data. Ismail Patel is facing various charges including dacoity, forgery and voluntarily causing hurt.

Out of the total 118 independent candidates, 18 have criminal cases against them, with 11 facing serious charges, the ADR said showed.

Anant Patel is also accused in cases of attempt to murder, dacoity and voluntarily causing hurt. In one case, he

was also convicted and fined Rs 99.

Dilip Vasava, who is facing the charge of attempt to murder, was sentenced to three years imprisonment in 2016. He has filed an appeal against the court order which is currently pending, the data showed.

Chaitar Vasava was sentenced to 6-month imprisonment and fined Rs 1,000 in one of the cases. Independent candidate from Kheda seat, Hitesh Parmar, is facing charges of stalking and criminal intimidation, according to the data.

Congress Banaskantha seat candidate Geniben Thakor has a case pending related to abetment of suicide, said the data.



FOCUS ON RAHUL DURING LSG, MI CLASH

PTI ■ LUCKNOW

With T20 World Cup selection round the corner, KL Rahul will have one final chance to stake claim on the second wicketkeeper's spot in the Indian team when Lucknow Super Giants host Mumbai Indians in the Indian Premier League here on Tuesday.



Rahul's strike-rate in T20 cricket has always been a bone of contention. Despite the advantage of field restrictions in the Powerplay, Rahul has often started his innings on a slow note in the IPL. However, the LSG captain has managed to change gears this season.

In the 2024 edition, he has scored 378 runs at a strike rate of 144.27 but it is still less than that of Rishabh Pant (160.60) and Sanju Samson (161.08). While comeback man Pant has all but sealed the first wicketkeeper's spot in the marquee event in the Caribbean islands and the USA in June by displaying some sharp work behind the stumps and sensational knocks with the bat, Samson has also made a strong case for himself by playing match-winning knocks for Rajasthan Royals at a brisk pace.

In such a scenario, Rahul needs to play more fearlessly and exploit the field restrictions not only to strengthen his Indian team selection prospects but also to help his side score in excess of 200 runs, which has become a norm in this edition.

LSG were handed a seven-wicket loss by Rajasthan Royals, who chased the 197-run target with six balls to spare. The onus will also be on the team's big hitting trio of Quinton de Kock, Marcus Stoinis and Nicholas Pooran to hit those towering maximums and get match-winning totals as the race for the playoff heats.

They will fancy their chances against a struggling Mumbai bowling unit which was carted all over the park by the Delhi Capitals batters the other day. MI bowlers struggled to find answers against young Jake Fraser-McGurk, who wreaked havoc in the Powerplay. Even the world class Jasprit Bumrah conceded a 19-run over before returning to his frugal self while the likes of Luke Wood and

consistent performances ahead of the World Cup. All-rounder Pandya has flopped with the bat and ball this season. He did get his highest score this season the other day but more would be needed to make it to the World Cup squad.

SQUADS:
Mumbai Indians: Hardik Pandya (c), Rohit Sharma, Suryakumar Yadav, Dewald Brevis, Jasprit Bumrah, Piyush Chawla, Gerald Coetzee, Tim David, Shreyas Gopal, Ishan Kishan (wk), Anshul Kamboj, Kumar Kartikeya, Akash Madhwal, Kwena Maphaka, Mohammad Nabi, Shams Mulani, Naman Dhir, Shivalik Sharma, Romario Shepherd, Arjun Tendulkar, Nuwan Thushara, Tilak Varma, Harvik Desai, Nehal Wadhwa, Luke Wood.
Lucknow Super Giants: Quinton de Kock, KL Rahul (c & wk), Deepak Hooda, Ayush Badoni, Marcus Stoinis, Nicholas Pooran, Krunal Pandya, Ravi Bishnoi, Mohsin Khan, Shamar Joseph, Yash Thakur, Manimaran Siddharth, Prerak Mankad, Arshad Khan, Krishnappa Gowtham, Amit Mishra, Kyle Mayers, Ashton Turner, Matt Henry, Naveen-ul-Haq, Devdutt Padikkal, Yuvvir Singh Chakar, Mayank Yadav and Arshin Kulkarni.

Chakravarthy, Salt propel KKR to seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Spinner Varun Chakravarthy worked his magic to claim three important wickets before Phil Salt's scintillating half-century as Kolkata Knight Riders secured a convincing seven-wicket win over Delhi Capitals in the IPL here on Monday.

Chakravarthy (3/16) shone in the middle overs following Vaibhav Arora's fine start (2/29) that limited Delhi to a modest 153/9 after Rishabh Pant opted to bat.

On a two-paced pitch where most batters struggled, Salt capitalised on a reprieve on 15 to smash a 33-ball 68. He hammered five sixes and seven fours in a 79-run opening wicket partnership with Sunil Narine that came off just 38 balls.

Skipper Shreyas Iyer (33 not out; 23b) and Venkatesh Iyer (26 not out; 23b) then completed the chase as KKR cantered home in 16.3 overs to improve their net run-rate to 1.096.

KKR now have the best run-rate in the 10-team standings as they consolidated their position at second place with 12 points from nine matches.

DC's Lizard Williams will surely want to forget this outing. He bore the brunt of a wayward opening over that yielded 23 runs to set the tone for KKR's easy chase.

There was worse in store for Williams in the next over as he spilled a sitter from Salt. There was no stopping the world No. 2 T20I batter from thereon as he brought up a 26-ball fifty, his fourth from nine matches.

With Salt firing on all cylinders, KKR raced to 79 for no loss in six overs. Left-arm spinner Axar Patel was introduced in the seventh over and he made an immediate impact, dismissing Narine (15) while in his next over, he cleaned up Salt and one wondered why Delhi brought into play their spin attack only after the power play. Axar returned with 2/25, but Kuldeep Yadav went wicket-less while giving away 34 runs from his four overs.

Earlier, there were no fireworks for a change at this venue which has witnessed record runs being scored and innumerable sixes being hit so far in the season.

The returning Arora (2/29) gave KKR a fine start in the power play after Delhi opted to bat on a tacky wicket. Introduced in the ninth over,

Chakravarthy then spun a web as he bowled his four overs on the trot and snared the key wickets of Rishabh Pant (27; 20b), Tristan Stubbs (4; 7b) and impact sub Kumar Kushagra (1) during a match-turning spell of 3/16.

The KKR bowlers dominated the power play, reducing Delhi to 67/3 on a pitch that seemed to be two-paced as batters struggled to get their timing right. Making a return after missing the last two matches, seamer Arora seized the early initiative, striking twice for KKR inside four overs.

First, Arora halted Prithvi Shaw's brisk start and dismissed him for 13. Then, he bowled a peach of a delivery that angled in before darting away after pitching to clean up Hope (6).

From Delhi's perspective, their run-rate was way above 11 and they needed someone to consolidate but KKR kept taking wickets. Abhishek Porel looked the most at ease, and took on Harshit Rana for successive 4-6-4 with exquisite timing and aggression.

But Rana had the last laugh, beating the Bengal wicketkeeper with pace. Rishabh Pant got a reprieve on 18, when Rana dropped a sitter, but the Delhi skipper looked scratchy and was dismissed by Chakravarthy for a third time in the IPL.

Harshit Rana also finished with two wickets, but Mitchell Starc continued to be their weak link in the bowling as the star Aussie pacer conceded 43 in his three overs at 14.30 runs per over. Veteran Sunil Narine went about his task quietly to end with 1/24 while accounting for Axar (15; 21b), as none of the DC batter could consolidate after a brisk start. On a day their batters failed to capitalise, Kuldeep became Delhi's top-scorer and his 26-ball 35 not out against his former franchise was the reason why he crossed the 150.



PTI ■ CHENNAI

T20 format has always favoured the batters and that has gone to a 'whole new level' in this Indian Premier League, feels Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins.

The Australian gave his thoughts following SRH's 78-run loss to defending champions Chennai Super Kings here on Sunday. IPL 2024 has witnessed six 250 plus totals already with 200 no more a safe total. Prior this edition, 250 was only breached twice in the history of IPL.

T20 has always been a batters game and that has gone to a new level this IPL: Cummins

"T20 is always on the batting side, and it has gone to a whole new level this season. The way we set up, we had the best chance if we got some really aggressive batters, and that's the way to win the tournament," Cummins said at the post-match press conference.



around. There's not much sideways movement, and there's not much on the wicket either. "So, a lot of times, the best way to get a wicket is to try and defend. Batters are getting better at hitting the ball out and even getting confident. It challenges you as a bowler. But, if you have a big total like 270-280 and if you can go at 9.00 as a bowler and make an impact, it could be match-winning," said the Australian. Analysing the reason for the loss to CSK, he admitted that the side has some work to do while chasing.

"Hard to put a finger on it. Nothing really went (according to) to plan tonight. We're pretty well-suited to chasing, but it hasn't really come off yet. So yeah, it is something (we need) to work on," Cummins reckoned. "There was definitely dead there; haven't seen so much at any other venue across the country. But, we failed to make the most of it, and they bowled well as well. So, it (dew) didn't really factor in this match as much as we would have liked." Of their four losses, three of them have come chasing.

Cummins said while their openers have been commendable, middle-order needs to step up. "Whenever the openers have gone off (to score), it's been match-winning and crazy. In a few chases, we felt that we set up really well," he analysed.

OTHER SPORTS

Video reviews have changed face of European soccer

One country is holding out

AP ■ STOCKHOLM

As the Swedish league got underway this spring, yellow-and-black-clad supporters of Stockholm club AIK held up an enormous banner containing a long, vivid story about the dark forces of modern soccer conquering the world.

"The whole world? No!" read the words on the giant display. "There was, in fact, a small area that successfully resisted the intruders, surrounded by modern football's smoldering ruins."

The intruder in this case is VAR — the high-tech video review system formally written into the laws of soccer in 2018 to help referees make the right calls in the biggest moments.

While most leagues around the world are now using this technology, Sweden is an outlier in holding out and, in its view, retaining the game in its purest form. The Swedish league is the only one of Europe's top-30 ranked leagues yet to have rolled out the system. It won't be happening anytime soon, either.

"VAR is a symbol of modern, commercialized-to-the-point-of-destruction football," says Ola Thews, vice-chairman of AIK's largest supporter organization, ASK. Thews is more than just a die-hard AIK fan. He played a part in mobilising anti-VAR sentiment among Sweden's top clubs and helped push through a motion at AIK opposing the introduction of the technology, before the Swedish soccer federation had the chance to bring it in.

That's possible because Swedish clubs are majority-controlled by members — essentially, supporters — under a regulation that states members should control at least 50% of their club's shares, plus one.

Although the federation initially appeared to want VAR in operation — the technology is, after all, used at European and international level — it will not go against the wishes of its member-run clubs. As a result, the federation has held off on further discussions about adopting VAR and said last week it doesn't envisage any in the foreseeable future.

That's a big win for Swedish match-going fans who are proud of their rebel status in European soccer. No VAR. No out-of-touch American owners or oil money from the Middle East. A culture where fans matter. Soccer as it should be, in their view.

Bayer Leverkusen late escapes are keeping Xabi Alonso team unbeaten this season



Stuttgart had won seven of its nine games since losing to Leverkusen in the German Cup and led 2-0 against Leverkusen, but even that wasn't enough of a cushion to prevent Alonso's team from coming back and extending its unbeaten record.

The previous weekend, Josip Stanišić scored in the seventh minute of stoppage time for a 1-1 draw at Borussia Dortmund. And in Leverkusen's previous game, Amine Adli scored in the 90th minute for a 1-1 draw at West Ham in the Europa League.

Silva to leave Chelsea at end of season

AP ■ LONDON

Brazil defender Thiago Silva will leave Chelsea at the end of the season after four years at the club. The 39-year-old Silva made the announcement on Monday, saying he is leaving the door open for a return to Chelsea "in another role."



"Goodbyes are for those that leave and don't come back," he said in a message to Chelsea's fans. "I intend on coming back one day."

Silva joined Chelsea in 2020 after his contract at Paris Saint-Germain expired. He said he only planned to stay at the English club for one season. He continued playing for the team after winning the Champions League at the end of his first season there. Now his sons are playing in Chelsea's youth teams.

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