



OPINION 6
MESSI CONFRONTS CHINA
IN HIS OWN WAY

WORLD 9
EGYPT THREATENS TO SUSPEND
KEY PEACE TREATY WITH ISRAEL

MONEY 10
MARKET CAP OF 4 MOST VALUED
FIRMS JUMPS ₹2.18 LAKH CRORE

LUCKNOW, MONDAY FEBRUARY 12, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



REAL SHOW STEALER
WAS BOOMBALL,
SAYS ASHWIN
11 SPORTS

DELHI BRACES UP FOR FARMERS ONSLAUGHT

RAJESH KUMAR ■
NEW DELHI

In a bid to avoid a re-run of the 2020 Farmers' protest in the Delhi-NCR, the Haryana and the Delhi Police have left no stone unturned to prevent any untoward situation for the farmers' 'Chalo Delhi' protest scheduled to be held on Tuesday. Large cement barricades, nails punched on access roads, suspension of internet and bulk SMS services, and heavy police deployment to block the farmers have been put in place at the borders.

The Centre has invited representatives of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha to hold another meeting to discuss their demands on February 12. Three Union Ministers — Piyush Goyal, Arjun Munda and Nityanand Rai, will hold talks with farmers' in Chandigarh. The meeting will be held at the Mahatma Gandhi State Institute of Public Administration in Sector 26.

Meanwhile, Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann has accused the Haryana Government of creating a border "between Punjab and India", referring to the concrete blocks, nails and barbed wire placed on some roads to scuttle the farmers' proposed 'Delhi Chalo' march.

He said the Manohar Khattar-led Haryana Government has placed as much barbed wire at the State's borders with Punjab as there is at the country's border with Pakistan. Khattar, however,



Security personnel deployed at Ghazipur border in view of farmers' Delhi Chalo March, in New Delhi, on Sunday. A large number of farmers from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab are expected to march towards the national Capital on Tuesday

Elaborate arrangements are in place at the borders in Jind and Fatehabad districts to stop the march.

Sources said the Delhi Police are blocking the city's borders with Haryana by placing massive containers. Cranes have been deployed to move these barriers if farmers try to cross into Delhi.

In fact, Haryana too has brought in cement barriers to ensure that the protesting farmers cannot enter Delhi. In Delhi, cops are holding drills to practise firing teargas shells if farmers refuse to stop. A video shows the Delhi Police lining up and firing teargas shells in an open area in north Delhi. The exercise, meanwhile, has left local residents in discomfort. Many of them complained of burning sensation in their eyes after the drill. The Delhi Police is also keeping a close watch on social media in the run-up to the protest.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha had announced the 'Delhi Chalo' march by more than 200 farmers' unions on February 13 to press the Centre into accepting several demands, including the enactment of a law to guarantee a minimum support price (MSP) for crops, implementation of the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations, provision of pensions for farmers and farm laborers, forgiveness of farm debts, withdrawal of police charges, and seeking justice for victims of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence.

Continued on Page 8



Deserted Janata Dal (United) office ahead of the floor test of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar-led Government in Patna on Sunday

PTI

All eyes on Bihar Floor test

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ PATNA /
NEW DELHI

Ahead of the floor test for the newly aligned Nitish Kumar-led NDA Government on Monday, while political parties were busy keeping their members together through sumptuous meals, antakshari, and indoor games, all eyes are also focused on the role of incumbent Speaker Avadh Bihari Chaudhary, an RJD member, and Jitan Ram Manjhi-led HAM, a constituent of the present Nitish regime.

Sources indicate that Chief Minister Nitish Kumar himself is apprehensive of potential cross-voting by some of his party MLAs who have reportedly been unreachable since last week.

The JD(U) chief is seemingly facing internal dissent within the party for his frequent changes in stance, treating the party as his personal fiefdom, and his recent decision to replace his close confidant and predecessor Lallan Singh as the chief of JD(U).

Another former JD(U) president

and once a close aide to Nitish, RCP Singh, is also aiming to sideline Nitish from Bihar politics entirely. RCP, who was part of Narendra Modi's Cabinet as a JD(U) partner and has now joined the BJP.

The Bihar Assembly has a total strength of 243, with the majority mark set at 122. The NDA holds a comfortable majority with 128 seats, comprising 78 from BJP, 45 from JD(U), 4 from Hindustani Awam Morcha, and Independent MLA Sumit Singh. On the other side, led by RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, efforts are underway to "woo" 14 legislators, as the party remains the largest in the Bihar Assembly with 79 MLAs, followed by the Congress with 19, Left parties with 18, and the lone AIMM also in the Mahagathbandhan.

Sources indicate that Manjhi had a meeting with an emissary of RJD supremo Lalu Prasad a day earlier, and now he is attempting to exert his influence with four MLAs in his camp, including the former's son, who was sworn in as part of the newly formed Nitish Ministry.

Continued on Page 8



Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with his Cabinet colleagues during a visit to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Sunday

PTI

Yogi takes politicians on a spiritual odyssey

PNS ■ AYODHYA

In response to the call of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Assembly Speaker Satish Mahana, MLAs from various political affiliations, barring the Samajwadi Party, ventured on a spiritual odyssey to Ayodhya to pay homage to Lord Ram.

Expressing gratitude for the opportunity, the MLAs commended Yogi and Mahana for extending the invitation.

"I am overwhelmed to be present at the 'Darbar' of Lord Ram. My dream has come true," Mahana told reporters after his temple visit.

He reflected on the evolution of the site, from its humble origins to the grandeur it stands as today. "I never envisioned the temple would be such a majestic structure reflecting our religious and cultural ethos," he said.

Accompanied by Ministers and legislators from the ruling coalition,

Opposition members from parties including the BSP, the RLD, and the Congress set aside political disparities to partake in the collective reverence for Lord Ram.

Luxurious buses provided by the Transport Corporation facilitated the journey, resonating with the chanting of Ramdhun and adorned with vibrant flowers, creating a serene ambiance. Refreshments were provided for comfort, alongside thoughtful tokens of remembrance like diaries, pens, and calendars for each MLA.

As flower petals showered the luxurious buses upon arrival in Ayodhya, the journey symbolised a historic milestone, embodying the realisation of a centuries-old dream — the construction of the grand temple of Lord Ram. The unity displayed by the Government and MLAs across the political spectrum was praised as a testament to Yogi's visionary leadership.

Continued on Page 8

Modi: Congress anti tribal, Uses them only during elections

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BHOPAL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said he is confident the BJP will cross the 370 seats mark in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, and even the Opposition leaders in Parliament are saying the ruling coalition will get more than 400 seats.

He was addressing a public meeting of tribal community members in Madhya Pradesh's Jhabua district. Modi alleged the Congress was anti-tribal and thought of villages, farmers and the poor only during elections.

He said he had got overwhelming love from the people as he visited temples associated with Lord Ram in the South of the country. Aware of their imminent

defeat, the Congress and its allies are resorting to last ditch-tactics, the PM said, adding that "loot and divide" is the motto of the Congress. "The Congress when it is in power indulges in loot, while out of power engineers divisions (in society) based on language, region and caste," he said here. The Congress has drowned in its own sins and the more it will make efforts to come up the further it will slide down, the PM asserted.

It got decimated in the 2023 (Assembly polls) and will be wiped out in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, he said. "The people showed the mirror to the Congress in the Assembly polls. The mood of the nation is similar in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls," Modi asserted.

The PM asked voters to ensure



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Madhya Pradesh Governor Mangu Bhai Patel, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and others at the dedication and foundation stone laying ceremony of various development projects during Janajatiya Sammelan in Jhabua, Madhya Pradesh on Sunday

PTI

polling of additional 370 votes in each booth, compared to the last elections, for the Bharatiya Janata

Party (BJP) to win 370 seats, out of the 543 Lok Sabha seats.

Even the Opposition leaders in

Parliament are now saying "abki baar 400 paar" for the (BJP-led) National Democratic Alliance (NDA), he said. "I am sure the BJP's lotus symbol will cross the 370-mark on its own," Modi said.

The PM said he has not come to Jhabua to campaign for the Lok Sabha elections, but as the "sevak" to thank the people for their overwhelming support in the recent Assembly elections. The BJP recently won the Assembly polls in MP, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh with a thumping majority.

"Our 'double engine' Government is working with double speed in Madhya Pradesh," he said referring to the ₹7,550 crore development projects which he launched before addressing the meeting.

Continued on Page 8

RAJYA SABHA NOMINATIONS

Parties unfold their cards

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

With the elections for vacant seats in the Rajya Sabha scheduled this month, the BJP and the TMC announced their candidates on Sunday. The BJP released a list of 14 candidates for the forthcoming Rajya Sabha elections from Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and West Bengal.

The list includes Sudhanshu Trivedi, and former Congress leader RPN Singh from Uttar Pradesh, with former

Haryana BJP chief Subhash Barala announced as the candidate from Haryana. The Trinamool Congress nominated journalist Sagarika Ghose among its candidates for the biennial polls on February 27.

In Uttar Pradesh, besides Sudhanshu Trivedi, former BJP MLA Sadhna Singh, and RPN Singh, the other candidates are Chaudhary Tejveer Singh, Amarpal Maurya, Sangita Balwant, and Navin Jain. RPN Singh, a former Congress leader from the politically important Kurmi caste, joined the BJP in 2022.

The State has the highest number of vacancies with 10 seats. None of the Union Ministers whose terms are ending were named in the list, indicating a strong possibility that many of them will contest the Lok Sabha polls. However, the party is yet to name several candidates. Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar, representing Karnataka in the Rajya Sabha, and BJP chief spokesperson and media head Anil Baluni, the outgoing MP from Uttarakhand, have not been nominated.

Continued on Page 8

BJP names 7 candidates for RS polls from UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Bharatiya Janata Party, on Sunday, released a list of candidates for the Rajya Sabha elections from Uttar Pradesh. The party has fielded seven candidates, including Sudhanshu Trivedi, RPN Singh, Chaudhary Tejveer Singh, Sadhna Singh, Amarpal Maurya, Sangeeta Balwant and Navin Jain.

The BJP list of candidates includes two women — Sadhna Singh, former MLA from Mughalsarai and Sangeeta Balwant, a former minister of Yogi Adityanath 1.0 government. Both had lost the 2022 UP assembly elections.

Sudhanshu Trivedi, a native of Lucknow who will get a second term in Rajya Sabha, is a

Continued on Page 8

Humans continue to invade sacred forests, their inhabitants

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The Pioneer's report published recently that Kerala was fast becoming the graveyard for wild animals is being substantiated by the State's Forest Department, an institution set up to protect jungles and wild animals.

The entire population in Wayanad district has demanded a "death sentence" for a wild tusker that killed a 47-year-old man in Mananthawadi, a forest suburb, on Saturday.

Residents insist that the Forest Department should eliminate the elephant, either by shooting it or tranquilising and relocating it to a safer area.

However, recent incidents prove that the Forest Department does not have qualified veterinary specialists for tranquilising the elephant.

"A few weeks ago, we saw an elephant known as 'Thanneer



Komban' succumbing to a shot administered by the Forest Department's veterinary surgeon. No investigation was conducted to determine the cause of the pachyderm's death," said V K Venkitachalam, chairman of the Heritage Animal Task Force, an organisation in Thrissur dedicated to wildlife welfare. Venkitachalam noted that the death of Thanneer Komban, reportedly tranquilised by a Government veterinarian, could be

attributed to outdated tranquiliser. "The tranquilising pistol and drug have expired, and there is no official record indicating the provision of new tranquiliser. Additionally, there is a shortage of qualified veterinarians to tranquilise elephants or other wild animals," he added.

The past two months saw a leopard and a wild boar being killed within minutes of receiving tranquiliser shots, which Venkitachalam considers a strange coincidence.

A K Saseendran, Kerala Minister for Forest and wild Life, who celebrated his 78th birthday on January 29 remained incommunicado for hours and ordered the tusker be tranquilised at the earliest and shifted to Muthanga Elephant Camp. However, the Minister was non-committal regarding the mission's timing.

Local residents in Mananthawadi, many of whom reside on forest land allocated to them by regional political parties, blamed the Forest Department for the

elephant's intrusion into residential areas.

Venkitachalam countered, saying the animals' habitat has diminished due to the Government's concessions to the forest mafia, who distribute forest land at their discretion.

"There is a lack of water and vegetation for elephants and other wild animals, prompting them to encroach upon human settlements in search of sustenance. We cannot blame wild animals for their efforts to survive," he said.

Continued on Page 8

UP plans to increase its green hydrogen production capacity

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The Uttar Pradesh government, in its green energy initiative, has announced plans to construct one million tonne per annum (mtpa) green hydrogen production capacity. This ambitious project is expected to create 1,20,000 fresh employment opportunities. The groundwork for this transformative endeavour was laid during the UP Global Investors Summit in February 2023, where the state received investment proposals totalling a remarkable Rs 2.73 trillion for green hydrogen plants from 20 leading companies.

These proposals, a testament to the state's attractiveness for sustainable investments, have set the stage for Uttar Pradesh to emerge as a frontrunner in the burgeoning green hydrogen market.

Green hydrogen, produced by utilising renewable energy in an electrolyser to break down water, stands as a beacon of sustainable innovation. This process ensures that the production is free from carbon

emissions, aligning with global efforts to combat climate change. Furthermore, the state's vast network of rivers provides a unique advantage, as water plays a pivotal role in the production of green hydrogen. The global green hydrogen market, estimated to reach \$90 billion by 2030, represents a colossal opportunity for Uttar Pradesh. The sector is projected to grow at an impressive compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 54 per cent during 2021-2030, having been valued at \$1.83 billion in 2021. This move positions Uttar Pradesh not only as a leader in sustainable energy but also as a key player in the global green hydrogen landscape.

In addition to the ambitious production targets, Uttar Pradesh is gearing up to establish two Centres of Excellence (CoE) dedicated to research and innovation in green hydrogen. These CoEs, falling under the purview of the UP New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA), will contribute to advancing the state's technological

capabilities in this cutting-edge field. The green hydrogen policy being formulated by the state will offer a comprehensive package of investment incentives. These include benefits on capital outlay, land availability, power transmission, and more, reinforcing the commitment to make Uttar Pradesh an attractive destination for green energy ventures.

UPNEDA Director Anupam Shukla said, "The Green Hydrogen Policy 2023 is poised to usher in large scale green hydrogen production in the state. The policy has been crafted to provide financial incentives to relevant enterprises, beyond the ease of doing business."

He added, "To promote green hydrogen/green ammonia production and this sector in the state, the government has prepared a draft of Uttar Pradesh Green Hydrogen Policy 2023. The process to get the said draft policy approved by the government is in the final stage."

For the establishment of pumped storage hydro plants in

the state, action is being taken to identify sites and implement them. For this work, the process has been started to set up nine projects with a total proposed capacity of about 12,000 MW by five developer companies.

Bioenergy and solar energy portal has been developed by UPNEDA for effective and transparent approval of projects. Developers can register their projects through these portals for state government approval. All approvals are given through this portal. An online process for issuing No Objection Certificate (NOC) for the production of biodiesel from biodiesel projects has also been launched.

The policy aims to increase hydrogen blending in regions where green hydrogen is consumed, facilitating a seamless integration into existing energy ecosystems. It is anticipated that the policy will pave the way for the establishment of carbon dioxide recovery units, effectively utilising carbon produced from biogas and other industries.



Founder of Isha Foundation Sadhguru paid a courtesy call to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at his official residence in Lucknow on Sunday

Retired woman army officer loses ₹1.95L in cyber fraud

Lucknow (PNS): In a case of cyber fraud, a retired woman army officer was duped of Rs 1.95 lakh in Cantonment police station area. A case in this connection was registered on February 3 and the incident came to light on Sunday.

As per reports, former Joint Director of MES, Ministry of Defense, Alpna Mishra of Gun Factory area in Cantonment, said she deposited Rs 1,20,030 to get the benefits of CGHS scheme after retirement and was told by the office that she deposited excess amount as only Rs 12,030 was needed.

She contacted the CGHS office in Gomti Nagar and was asked to apply at the official website (bharatkosh.gov.in) to get the excess amount refunded. "I applied for the same and dialled a number which I got through a Google search. The person who received the call forwarded it to another person who asked me to download 'anydesk' and 'availdesk' apps.

"Immediately after I downloaded these apps, my mobile phone was hacked and a sum of Rs 1.95 lakh was withdrawn from my bank account," she said. She then filed a complaint with the cyber cell of Lucknow police and also got her bank account blocked.

THEFT

Thieves made off with six boxes filled with air cleaners used in buses and trucks and 57 boxes carrying 384 oil filters from a company's warehouse in Triveni Industrial Area in Chinhat on the intervening night of February 8 and 9. A complaint was filed by deputy manager of Fleet Guard Filters Pvt Ltd Kapil Pawle of Maharashtra on Sunday. In the complaint, Pawle stated that he found the asbestos roof over the warehouse uprooted and goods stolen. "About 3-4 men were spotted in a CCTV footage," he said.

In another incident, thieves made off with Rs 10,000 and electrical goods from a shop in Madaon on the intervening night of February 9 and 10, shop-owner Ashish Mehrotra of Aliganj stated in his complaint.

Arrest warrant against 4 as Power dept 'ignores' RTI query from 1911

Lucknow (PTI): The Uttar Pradesh Information Commission has issued an arrest warrant against four power department officials for ignoring an RTI query related to a Rs 2.24-lakh bill against a connection issued in 1911, and also disobeying the panel's summonses, officials have said.

The arrest warrant was issued recently against Superintending Engineer Anil Verma, Executive Engineer R K Gautam, Sub Divisional Officer Sarvesh Yadav and Sub Divisional Officer Ravi Anand. State Information Commissioner Ajaya Kumar Uprety said the warrant was issued under section 18(3) of the Right to Information Act and powers given in the CPC (Civil Procedure Code) 1908. "This is the first time the UP state information commission has initiated such a strong penal action against erring officials ever since the RTI Act came into existence in 2005," State Information Commissioner Ajaya Kumar Uprety told PTI.

Uprety has asked Kashi zone Deputy Commissioner of Police Pramod Kumar to produce these officials before the

Commission on February 20 when this case will be heard in Lucknow. He also asked him to apprise the Commission how this warrant is being executed. The matter pertains to an electricity connection dated January 1, 1911 in the Kazakpura area of Varanasi against consumer Uma Shankar Yadav. The electricity department has raised a bill of Rs 2.24 lakh against this connection.

When Yadav disputed the bill and refused to pay it, the department issued an RC (recovery challan) against him. Yadav approached department officials to correct the bill, but his pleas fell on deaf ears. Disappointed, Yadav took the recourse of the RTI.

"While hearing the case, the commission had asked the officials following questions — Whether in 1911 the electricity was being given to consumers in Varanasi? How the bill was calculated and what was the cost per unit? Which was the company that was transmitting power to the consumers then? Was UPPCL (Uttar Pradesh Power Corporation Limited) in existence then?" a source said.

The electricity

department officials failed to answer these questions despite repeated summonses, prompting the Commission to issue an arrest warrant against them.

The warrant addressed to DCP Pramod Kumar said that Superintending Engineer Anil Verma, Executive Engineer R K Gautam, SDO (Upkendra Chauk, Macchodari Varanasi) Sarvesh Yadav and SDO (Lohta) Ravi Anand have been summoned to the Uttar Pradesh State Information Commission to answer the questions "pertaining to an electricity connection dated 1911".

"But these officials have failed to turn up on the dates of hearing. Neither have they given any reply to the Commission about their non-appearance. Prima facie, it appears that these officials have been deliberately ignoring/disobeying the orders of the Commission," the warrant said.

Hence, exercising its power under section 18(3) of the Right to Information Act, 2005 and CPC 1908, the Commission "orders you to arrest and produce these officials before the Commission" without fail, the warrant said.

Akbarnagar residents made aware of relocation

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The teams formed by District Magistrate SP Gangwar to conduct surveys in Akbarnagar phases 1 & 2 have launched a drive to inform residents about relocation to new housing venues. Lucknow Development Authority plays a significant role in these teams.

The team members are engaging with residents, reassuring them that relocation is a genuine effort by LDA and district administration for their rehabilitation. LDA Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi reiterated that relocation would occur through mutual agreement between the government and residents, emphasising no one would be forced to move.

LDA is currently registering the names of willing residents for housing under the Prime Minister Awas Yojana (PMAY) and District Urban Development Authority (DUDA). While some residents remain skeptical, describing the relocation as a ploy by the district administration, efforts are ongoing to persuade them.

There were murmurs amongst the skeptics that the district magistrate was acting on state government directives to crush dissent and pursue a personal agenda with the 'Kukrail River Front' project.

However, LDA additional secretary Gyanendra Verma assured the locals authentic documentation for their allotments. To maintain peace, a magistrate will be stationed in the area during the transition, and the local police's intelligence unit is monitoring the situation closely.

There are concerns of outside forces inciting violence, prompting increased night patrols and surveillance of suspicious activity.

Lko takes centre stage at Koshala Literature Festival

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

On the third and final day of the Koshala Literature Festival, the speakers expressing their love for literature, and Lucknow.

The first session titled 'Khufiagiri in Awadh' was a conversation between author/blogger, travel writer & kathak dancer Richa S Mukherjee, and owner of Universal Booksellers Gaurav Prakash.

Prakash began by asking Mukherjee about the many hats she wears and how she manages her various roles. Mukherjee said she manages her roles with ease by making the right decisions at the right time. She added that the support from her family and her passion for her work is the reason behind her success in balancing her roles. She also talked about the cultural shock she faced in Mumbai when she used to say words like 'hum', 'aap' and 'tehzeeb'. Prakash and Mukherjee also discussed her book titled 'Kanpur Khufiya Pvt Ltd'. The current trend of setting up the plot of movies and series in small towns also found a notable mention in the session.

During the second session, a panel comprising Pushpesh Pant, Gurcharan Das, Muzaffar Ali, John Zubrycki, and Nishi Pandey had a discussion titled 'Reflections in the Mirror of Lucknow'.

Muzaffar Ali initiated the discussion by mentioning his autobiography 'Zikr: In the Light and Shade of Time', and the significant role Lucknow played in shaping his child-

hood, as he spent the majority of his early years in Lucknow.

"Lucknow mere liye ek zubaan hai, ek dard hai jo maine jee ke paaya hai. Is Lucknow mein tootke saath judne ki kaifiyat hai, taqat hai. Yahan fann ka khazana hai. Yahan ki hawa khushbudar aur mohabbat se labrez hai, jo hume gher leti hai, ki hum jo kuch hain isi ki den hain," Ali said.

Zubrycki continued the session by mentioning that he doesn't have any personal connection with Lucknow, but he shared a few incidents that introduced him to Lucknow and its culture.

The first time Zubrycki was introduced to Lucknow was through Munshi Premchand's short story 'Shatranj Ke Khiladi'. He also mentioned his encounter with Mulayam Singh Yadav during his visit to India.

Furthermore, Das took the discussion forward and mentioned his connection with Lucknow through cinema. He added that even though he hasn't lived in Lucknow like Muzaffar Ali, cinema played a significant role in connecting him to Lucknow.

When asked about the changing liberal mindset on campus, Prof Nishi stated that there hasn't been a change in mindset, but rather, there has always been a lot of liberty at Lucknow University.

She went on to say that it's difficult to tell who is Hindu or Muslim, as students at the university are simply considered Lucknowites once they enrol.

Woman, children injured in chain-snatching bid

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A scooter-borne woman and her children were injured after they fell down following a chain-snatching bid in Ashiyana on February 8 night.

In her complaint, Shweta Kanaulja of Adesh Nagar Aurangabad Jageer-2 stated that she, along with her children, was returning home from somewhere. "Around 9 pm, when I was at the turning point of the lane to my house, a bike-borne man came from behind and attempted to snatch my gold chain. He hit my scooter with his bike in the process and my children and I fell down," she alleged.

She further alleged that the accused was drunk. Police

registered a case under sections 279, 338 and 393 of the IPC — reckless driving, causing grievous injuries and attempted robbery.

It was further alleged that the police detained the accused and booked him for causing accident due to reckless driving, but the woman later alleged that he also attempted to deprive her of her gold chain. The police had let off the accused, but now the case would be re-investigated, sources said. A spokesman claimed that the accused caused injuries to the woman in an accident and that probe into other allegations was underway.

Meanwhile, a middle-aged man was attacked by his rivals

over a land dispute in Sairpur police station area of Lucknow on Sunday morning. As per reports, Ramadhar Yadav of Tarahiya village was fixing poles in his land for demarcation when his rivals Ajay Yadav and Raj Yadav, along with their supporters, reached the scene.

They picked a fight with Ramadhar and allegedly attacked him with sticks and sharp-edged weapons. He suffered grievous injuries and fell unconscious while the attackers fled the scene considering him dead. Later, Ramadhar's son Sandeep reached the scene and got him admitted to a hospital. He filed a complaint against the above-named accused.

Social media conclave for global branding of Mahakumbh-2025

PNS ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In preparation for the global promotion of the upcoming Mahakumbh-2025 in Prayagraj, the state government is planning to organise a social media conclave. This initiative involves collaborating with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to reach a wide audience.

Until now, only government agencies have been involved in organising the Mahakumbh. However, the state government is now taking proactive steps to involve non-governmental agencies in the process. Regional Tourism Officer of Prayagraj, Aparajita Singh, said that the department wanted to connect with as many people as possible through the Mahakumbh. Singh elaborated, "Everyone may possess valuable

insights, and it is possible that some individuals may not have had the opportunity to communicate their ideas to the government until now. To bridge this gap and incorporate diverse perspectives, the Tourism department will organise a competition inviting ideas related to organising the Mahakumbh."

She added, "The participants with the most unique ideas in this competition will be encouraged and recognised by the Tourism department. Their ideas will become an integral part of the organisation of the Mahakumbh."

The Tourism department is taking initiatives to enhance the branding and publicity of tourist destinations. For this purpose, a 'Social Media Conclave' is being organised. A two-day conclave is scheduled to take place in March,

and a proposal has been sent to the government for its approval. The conclave will commence with a session involving local social media influencers, followed by a session with global influencers. Additionally, tour operators from tourism centres across the country are being invited to share their insights on attracting tourists to the Mahakumbh. Local entrepreneurs are also encouraged to participate in these discussions. While proposals for necessary facilities for tourists will be sought from all stakeholders, a review of the shortcomings in the current supply will also be conducted. The efficacy of social media in amplifying public awareness campaigns is widely recognised. Whether it is enhancing Prayagraj's standing in Swachh Survekshan or bolster-

ing cleanliness efforts ahead of next year's Mahakumbh, engaging local citizens is imperative.

Prayagraj Municipal Commissioner Chandra Mohan Garg said the municipal corporation was utilising social media for the cleanliness campaign.

Meetings with more than a dozen social media influencers have already taken place. City residents will soon be able to observe the city's cleanliness arrangements along with urban activities on social media platforms. Active youth on social media sites will promote awareness of cleanliness among the urban population. Through reels and other mediums on social media, city residents will be made aware so that the cleanliness rating of the city can be improved before the Mahakumbh.

Mathura gears up for light & sound show

Lucknow (PNS): Mathura is gearing up to mesmerise visitors with an enchanting spectacle. The highly anticipated Jawahar Bagh's spectacular light & sound show, backed by a substantial budget of Rs 4.64 crore, will highlight the diverse facets of tourism.

Tourism and Culture Minister Jaiver Singh unveiled this exciting addition and emphasised on the rapid development of tourism in Uttar Pradesh, with Mathura being a major tourist destination.

Festivals like Shri Krishna Janmashtami and Braj ki Holi attract a significant number of tourists from across the country and the world to this place. Located in the same district is Jawahar Bagh. Continuous efforts are being made to develop tourist facilities, attracting a large number of visitors. In line with this, preparations are underway to start the light & sound show.

Singh said that under the Mukhyamantri Paryatan Vikas

Sabbhagita Yojana, the state government has approved Rs 4.64 crore for this project, with 50% of the funds to be provided by the state government and the remaining by Mathura Development Authority. The state government has already released the first installment of Rs 25 lakh for this project.

The minister also mentioned that under Mukhyamantri Paryatan Vikas Sabbhagita Yojana, individuals, organisations, and associations can also propose projects.

Under this scheme, 50% of the expenditure will be borne by the government and 50% by the individual or organisation. Similarly, proposals submitted by public representatives will also receive 50% funding from the government and the remaining by public representatives. This scheme aims to identify and develop the most important locations in each assembly constituency or lesser-known tourist destinations as high potential places.



NOTICE

I have changed my name Arun Kumar to Arun Kumar kushwaha for all future purpose, Arun Kumar kushwaha s/o Lalchandra kushwaha R/O 295/57 nai basti khada pur, Naubasta Kanpur

NOTICE

I have changed my son's name from Mohammad To Mohammad Khan for all future purpose, Mohammad Arshad Khan R/O 175 D, KDA Colony Shiwans Taneray Kanpur 208010

NOTICE

I Vidya Sengar w/o Shivram Singh Sengar R/O vill - launa post- Jalaun Dist - Jalaun (up) pin-285123. Mother of JC 541995M subedar Raghuvendra Singh Sengar unit 15 kumaon (indore) c/o 56 APO . declare that in my son's service record my name is Vittyia Devi (incorrect) mentioned erroneously my name is Vidya Sengar (correct) as par my Aadhaar card and will be used for all purpose.

NOTICE

Be it known to all that I have lost my plot registry and allotment letter of my plot number 4B/213, Vrindavan Yojana, Raebareli road, Lucknow that was allotted by Avas Vikas Parishad. After looking a lot for it I am unable to find it. The use of which would be illegal by any person. Deepali Sah D/o Mahesh Lal Sah 6/388, Lilavati Villa Navabi Road, Haldwani.

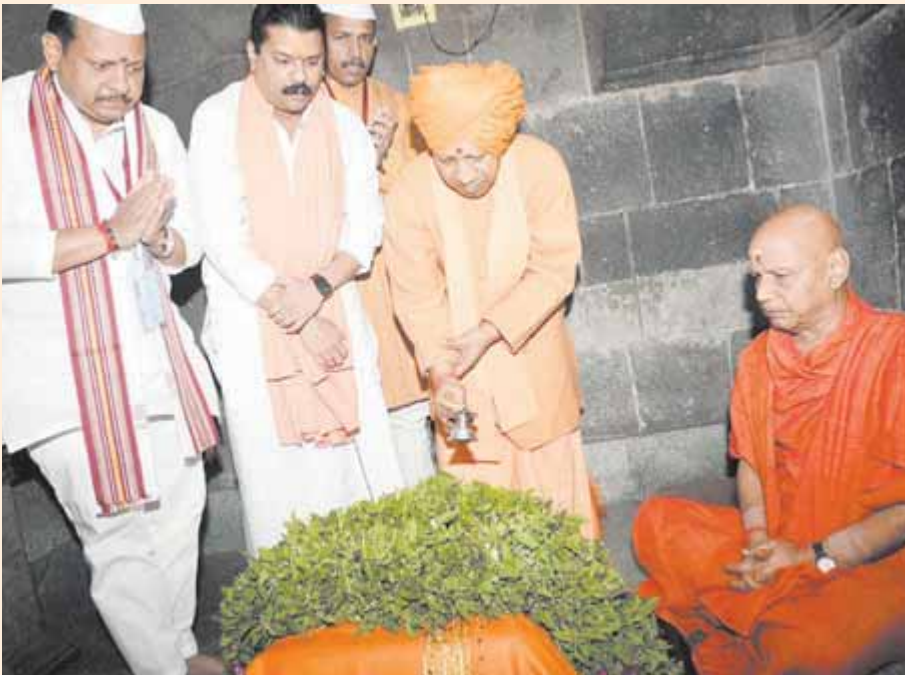
When devotion and power mingle, shackles of slavery shatter: Yogi

PNS ■ PUNE/LUCKNOW

When devotion and power mingle, shackles of slavery shatter, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Sunday, describing Maharashtra as a land of both. Addressing a gathering on the eighth day of Shri Geeta Bhakti Amrit Mahotsav organised in Alandi, Pune, Chief Minister Yogi said: "It was here that Guru Samarth Ramdas provided his guidance to the brave Chhatrapati Shivaji. When devotion and power mingle, the shackles of slavery shatter. This is what we have witnessed in Ayodhya with the construction of a grand and divine Ram temple after 500 years of bondage. With the company of saints and the efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we all have been witnesses to the historical date of 22nd of January. The new and grand Ayodhya is inviting you all."

During the ceremony, Yogi Adityanath presented an 'angavastra' and an idol of Lord Ganesha to Swami Govind Dev Giri, along with releasing a souvenir commemorating the saint's life. He was also honoured by Shankaracharya Vijayendra Saraswati with traditional 'angavastra' and 'prasada'. Reflecting on the occasion of Swami Govind Dev Giri's 75th birth anniversary, Yogi Adityanath expressed his admiration for the saint's lifelong dedication to Vedic Sanatan dharma and his invaluable contributions to Hindu society. Yogi Adityanath shared his long-standing desire to visit Alandi, a place he had read about in his childhood while studying the Dnyaneshwari. He stated: "At the age of just 15, Pujya Dnyaneshwar ji Maharaj did the work of showing a new path to the devotees by preaching Dnyaneshwari. In just 21 years, the revered

CM offers prayers at Sanjeevan Samadhi



Lucknow/Pune (PNS): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited the Sanjeevan Samadhi temple of Pujya Dnyaneshwar Maharaj in Pune on Sunday morning and offered prayers. Swami Govind Dev Giri Maharaj welcomed Yogi Adityanath at the temple. On

Dnyaneshwar ji Maharaj had done the work of spreading the spirituality of India across the globe by taking Sanjeev Samadhi."

He praised the spiritual legacy of Maharashtra, exemplified by luminaries like Samarthguru Ramdas and Chhatrapati Shivaji, whose valour and devotion continue to inspire.

Highlighting the significance of Maharashtra's history of bravery, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath mentioned the

this occasion, Maharashtra ministers Chandrakant Patil and Dilip Walse Patil as well as UP Jal Shakti Minister Swatantradev Singh were present. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath offered flowers at the Sanjeevan Samadhi of Dnyaneshwar Maharaj and worshiped him as per the

Defence Industrial Corridor of Uttar Pradesh, named in honour of Veer Chhatrapati Shivaji, underscoring the enduring spirit of resistance against oppression. Yogi Adityanath added that when he became the chief minister of UP, the name of the Mughal Museum being built in Agra was changed to Chhatrapati Shivaji Museum.

He also talked about how Chhatrapati Shivaji made Aurangzeb suffer with his bravery. Expressing gratitude for the event, Chief Minister Yogi

rituals. He also met the saints present there. On behalf of the temple, a picture of revered Dnyaneshwar Maharaj ji was presented to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. The saints honoured Chief Minister Yogi by presenting the idols of Shri Ram, Janaki and Lakshman.

Adityanath extended an invitation to all attendees to visit Ayodhya, the site of the grand Ram temple, symbolising the triumph of devotion over adversity.

The event was attended by notable figures including Swami Ramdev, Mahamandaleshwar Swami Avdheshanand of Juna Akhara, Swami Chidanand Saraswati, Swami Rajendradas, and other esteemed guests, alongside a multitude of devotees and citizens.

UP legislators' Ayodhya temple visit done for show: Maurya

Amethi (PTI): Samajwadi Party general secretary Swami Prasad Maurya termed the Uttar Pradesh legislators' visit to the Ayodhya Ram temple on Sunday as an act of "show", and said that lawmakers offering prayers on "government orders" was "not appropriate".

Maurya said those who went to the temple on Sunday did it "out of compulsion".

"It is a show. It is an illusion. Why should we follow such orders?" the SP leader told reporters in Amethi. Maurya made the remarks during a visit to Hasanpur village of Jagdishpur assembly constituency to attend the 'Constitution Awareness Seminar'.

Over 300 Uttar Pradesh legislators packed in 10 buses and some cars travelled Sunday from Lucknow to the new Ayodhya Ram Mandir, a state government-organised event skipped only by the opposition Samajwadi Party. Asked about Congress' 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra', Maurya said he would participate in it when the Rahul Gandhi-led yatra reaches Uttar Pradesh. The SP leader said Rahul Gandhi is currently trying to connect the society through his 'nyaya yatra'.

"I welcome the work that they are doing to establish brotherhood and whenever their yatra reaches Uttar Pradesh, I will definitely participate somewhere," he said. On Pramod Krishnam's expulsion from Congress, Maurya said the Congress and the opposition INDIA bloc will not be affected by it. Maurya said while Krishnam was a Congress member, his "soul was wandering close to the BJP" for the last one year.

"The expulsion of Pramod Krishnam from the party has not affected the Congress and it will not make any difference to the INDIA bloc, rather it will become stronger," he said.



Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with UP legislators inside Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya on Sunday

UP team to acquire disaster mgmt expertise in Gujarat

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's steadfast commitment to the safety and well-being of the residents of Uttar Pradesh has been evident through swift and effective measures taken during natural calamities such as floods, droughts, earthquakes and cyclones.

In line with this dedication, a specialised team from the Relief department has embarked on a two-day training programme in Gujarat to enhance their disaster management skills. Under the guidance of experts from the esteemed Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management, the team will undergo rigorous sessions on February 12 and 13, focusing on proactive disaster preparedness and effective crisis management strategies.

Additional Chief Secretary

(Revenue) Sudhir Garg highlighted Chief Minister Yogi's unwavering emphasis on minimising casualties during disasters. He added: "The chief minister has instructed department officials to conduct various learning and training initiatives. Recently, a training camp was convened on February 6 and 7 at the Indian Institute of Management-Lucknow, where 25 additional district magistrates received comprehensive training on climate change, sensitivity and disaster management from experts representing institutions like IIM-Lucknow."

In continuation of these efforts, a four-member team from the Relief department has been dispatched to the Gujarat Institute of Disaster Management for specialised training on February 11. By actively participating in the two-day training camp, sched-

uled for February 12 and 13, the team aims to significantly contribute to minimising loss of life during calamitous events, including floods and other emergencies in Uttar Pradesh.

Noteworthy directives from Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath have led to the establishment of three new State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) units in Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, 11 types of disasters have been officially recognised as state-level calamities, encompassing incidents such as boat accidents, snakebites, sewer cleaning mishaps, gas leaks and human-wildlife conflicts.

To proactively address disaster prevention and promote public awareness, relief chaupals are being organised at the village level, reflecting the government's proactive approach towards ensuring the safety and security of its citizens.

7-year-old found killed in Etah, rape suspected

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a suspected case of rape and murder, the body of a seven-year-old girl, who went missing in a village in Etah, was recovered by the police from a mustard field on Sunday morning. The victim's family members alleged that she was raped before being killed, officials said.

Senior Superintendent of Police Rajesh Kumar Singh said prima facie it appeared that the girl was strangled to death. Her family members have alleged that she was raped before the murder, Singh added.

According to the SSP, information was received at the Kotwali Dehat police station on Saturday night that a seven-year-old girl was missing since 12 noon from her house in a local village.

Quoting the family members, Singh said the girl had gone out around 12 pm to play with her friends. After she did not return for a long time, her family members approached the police. A missing complaint was filed and a police team launched a hunt for the girl with the help of a dog squad, SSP added.

Following the trail of the dogs, the police recovered the girl's body from a mustard field located near the village on Sunday, he said.

Four teams have been formed to uncover the incident.

The girl's body was sent for post-mortem. The police are waiting for the report to confirm whether the victim was sexually assaulted or not.

Meanwhile, police arrested a man on Sunday for allegedly killing his 67-year-old father and 27-year-old adopted sister at their home in the Katra Ghulam Ali locality of Amroha city late on Friday.

The 42-year-old accused, Ishank Agarwal, has confessed to killing his father, Yogesh Chand Agarwal, and Srishti, whom the latter had adopted three years ago.

Ishank said he had a dispute over property with his

father, who had registered half of his property in the name of Srishti.

"Srishti is the daughter of Yogesh's brother-in-law," Amroha's Superintendent of Police Kunwar Anupam Singh informed reporters while giving details of the case on Sunday.

Yogesh Chand Agarwal was the district chief of the Amroha Vyapar Mandal and a patron of the Sewa Bharati, a wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh.

According to police, Ishank has set up a cardboard trading business and has settled in New Delhi with his wife, Mansi, for the last few years. He used to come to his parental home once or twice in a week and reached Amroha on Friday morning. Ishank filed a complaint of a double-murder at the Kotwali police station against unidentified assailants after the cremation of his father and adopted sister.

He informed the police that all the four in the family had dinner together around 11:30 pm on Friday and that he and his wife slept on the first floor while his father and adopted sister slept on the ground floor. He also said that neither he nor his wife could hear any voice during "the struggle his father and sister were having with unidentified killers".

The police said their investigation revealed that an attempt was made to wipe out stains of blood from the room where the two were found dead.

"Their throats were slit with a sharp weapon. We have found some blood stains at the staircase leading to the first floor where Ishank and his wife claimed they were sleeping at the time of incident. Fifteen CCTV cameras have been installed in the house but all were not working, which made us suspicious that anyone close to the family could be the killer. We took Ishank into custody on Saturday evening and after a few hours, he confessed to killing his father and the adopted sister," the SP said.

'Spirituality, inner peace, faith' only transaction in this bank

Ayodhya (PTI): There is a unique bank here in the land of Lord Ram where money does not matter and the only return its 35,000 account-holders get is peace of mind, faith and spirituality!

Catching the attention of the devotees and tourists visiting the newly constructed Ram temple is "International Shree Sitaram Bank". The deposits here are booklets with "Sitaram" scribbled on all pages. The spiritual bank, which was set up in November 1970 by Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, the chief of the Shri Ramjanmabhoomi Teertha Kshetra Trust, has over 35,000 account-holders in India and abroad including the US, the UK, Canada, Nepal, Fiji, the UAE and other countries. The bank has a collection of 20,000 crore 'Sitaram' booklets from the devotees of Lord Ram.

According to Punit Ram Das Maharaj, the manager of the bank, the number of daily visitors at the bank has increased after the consecration ceremony of the grand temple last month. "The bank provides free booklets and red pens to devotees and keeps track of each account. One has to write 'Sitaram' at least 5 lakh times to get an account opened in the bank and then a pass-book is issued. "There are 136 branches of the bank across India and even abroad. The account holders also send us the booklets by post and we maintain the ledger here," Puneet Ram Das told PTI. He said the visitors also question the benefits of writing Sitaram and depositing it into bank.

"I tell them that the way we visit temples of gods and goddesses for inner peace, faith and virtue, in the same way, writing



RPF to host 2-day AIPDM from today

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Railway Protection Force will host the 67th All India Police Duty Meet (AIPDM) at Jagjivan Ram RPF Academy in Lucknow from February 12 to 16. Addressing a press conference at RDSO here on Saturday, RPF Director General Manoj Yadava spoke about the events to be held during the 67th edition of the AIPDM that would be instrumental in scientific, smart and sensitive policing.

He apprised the media about the security measures being taken by the RPF to ensure safety and security of passengers during their journey in trains. He said CCTVs were

being installed in coaches under the Nirbhaya Scheme of the Union Women and Child Development Ministry, adding that 8,000 coaches had been covered under CCTV surveillance and their number was expected to reach 10,000 in near future.

The DG said the Railway Protection Force and Government Railway Police were coordinating to provide escort as per the crime prone jurisdiction in special trains like Vande Bharat, Rajdhani, Duronto etc.

He said under the 'Meri Saheli' initiative, the RPF was providing security and essential amenities for women passengers travelling alone. These women passengers are assist-

ed by female RPF personnel at all major stations of India, he added.

Yadava said under the 'Nanhe Fariishte' initiative for helping children in need of care and protection, RPF personnel along with recognised non-governmental organisations were looking after such kids and helping them reunite with their families. He said 17,000 children were recovered in the year 2022, and 11,000 in 2023.

The DG said under Operation Aahat, which is being run by RPF with the help of Bachpan Bachao Aadolan, action was being taken against human traffickers. In the year 2023, RPF rescued 1,048 persons, he added.

Besides, he said, RPF recovered unattended luggage worth Rs 54 crore in the year 2023. Yadava said to check transport of narcotics through railways, the RPF had launched NARCOS operation under which narcotics worth Rs 40 crore had been recovered.

"To address issues of mental health in RPF personnel, the force plans to re-evaluate weapon protocols and organise training for supervisory officers. Additionally, the RPF has urged the Railway Board to incorporate mental health assessments into medical check-ups. Professional lectures will also be organised to raise awareness among RPF personnel," the DG said.

Man kills mother and son, ends life

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a shocking incident, a man killed his elderly mother and 12-year-old son in Lawyers Colony in New Agra, allegedly over his deteriorating financial condition.

According to reports, the man recorded a video confession in which he admitted that he made financial decisions that he believed were not right and expressed his intention to end his life after taking

the lives of his mother, wife and son. The incident happened on Saturday night and the man, identified as Tarun Pratap Singh, allegedly also wanted to kill his wife but she had gone with relatives to Khatu Shyam temple in Rajasthan. Singh, who worked in a PVC pipe factory, had been facing financial losses, according to reports.

The gruesome killings came to light on Sunday morning when the family maid

Geeta, arrived at the residence around 8 am. Geeta sensed something wrong upon finding the main door wide open. After entering the house, she found the body of Singh's mother, Brijesh Devi, lying in her room. A panicked Geeta rushed to alert neighbours. They went to Singh's room on the first floor of the house and found him hanging from the ceiling. In the next room, his son, Kushagra, lay dead on the bed. The child's body had

signs of distress, with blue-tinted nails and vomit.

The police have launched an investigation into the deaths. Initial suspicions point towards possible strangulation. The police reportedly found empty cigarette cases at the scene of crime.

According to reports, Singh had lost his father just seven months ago and he reportedly used his father's mobile phone to record a video confession.

Two cops suspended, case registered for illegal detention

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unidentified policemen have been booked and two officers have been suspended after a 24-year-old man, detained over his alleged involvement in the abduction of a minor girl, allegedly attempted suicide inside a police station in Kasganj district, the police said on Sunday.

The girl, who had gone missing near her house on February 2, had been found two days later. The man, however, was not released from detention. Police said he tried to hang himself from a ventilator in the washroom of the police station. He was taken to a hospital in Aligarh where doctors said his condition was critical. The incident sparked protests by the man's family and locals outside the police station. The protesters blocked the Etah-Kasganj road, pelted stones at the police station, prompting police to disperse the protesters using force.

Normalcy was restored after a senior police officer arrived on the scene, and assured strict action and updated the protesters on the man's treatment.

The man is a Dalit labourer.

The girl's family members, too, are Dalit labourers.

The man's family claimed he had been held by police since February 3 on dubious grounds. After about a week of protest, an FIR has been finally registered against unidentified policemen and two relatives of the girl. Among the Indian Penal Code sections invoked are 343 (wrongful confinement for three or more days) and 323 (voluntarily causing hurt). The complaint was filed by the man's father. No arrest has been made so far in the matter.

Kasganj Superintendent of Police Aparna Rajat Kaushik has suspended Station House Officer of the police station, Yatendra Pratap Singh, and the Investigation Officer of the abduction case, Sub-Inspector Gaya Prasad Singh.

Kasganj's Additional Superintendent of Police Jitendra Kumar Dubey has been asked to conduct a thorough inquiry into the incident.

SP Kaushik said the inquiry would also look into how the girl was found and why the man was detained at the police station. A police force was deployed in the village to maintain peace.

PM’s proposed visit: PuVVNL MD inspects progress of work

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Managing Director (MD) of PuVanchal Vidyut Vitran Nigam Limited (PuVVNL) Shambhu Kumar inspected the pole shifting work for widening of cement concrete (CC) road at Seer Govardhan, the birthplace of Sant Ravidas, for the second time here on Saturday and directed the officers concerned that in view of the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi the work should be completed soon. During his inspection, the MD also saw the progress of the displacement work of electrical infrastructure and maintenance work of smooth power supply due to widening of the road from Trauma Centre of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) to Chittupur and Sheer Govardhan Gate to Sant Ravidas Temple. The MD directed the officers concerned



PuVVNL MD Shambhu Kumar inspecting the work in Seer Govardhan in Varanasi on Saturday.

to complete the work with quality soon. Earlier, the MD hailed the officers and engineers for good work in revenue realisation and prevention of transformer damage apart from billing supervision and 100 per cent successful running of month-

long campaign. He was holding a meeting of officers at Chief Engineer Distribution Office Auditorium during his visit to Basti district. Shambhu Kumar gave necessary guidelines to the officers after inspection for uninterrupted power supply. He also inspected the work of

pole shifting for road widening during the night hours.

FELICITATED: Nirvana Peethadhishwar Acharya Mahamandaleshwar Swami Vishokanand Bharti Maharaj from Govindmath and Bikaner said that Veda means knowledge. “Vedic Sanatan Dharma is great because God himself has propounded it, just as God is eternal, in the same way Vedas are also eternal,” he said while addressing the guest teachers and students of Centre for Vedic Science in BHU here on Saturday. In the beginning, Mahamandaleshwar and other guests were welcomed by the coordinator of the centre Prof Upendra Kumar Tripathi. On the occasion Swami Vishokanand was felicitated by giving him an angavastram, memento and statue of Mahamana. The guest teachers, students and staff of the centre were present.

Patel: Connect beneficiaries of govt schemes with NaMo app

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The workshop of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Labour Cell (Kashi Region) was organised at the party’s regional office in Rohania here on Saturday. Addressing it regional president of BJP Dilip Patel said the central government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi is continuously engaged in the uplift of poor and helpless people. He said through the government’s public welfare schemes, needy people are being given free housing, toilets, ration, gas connection, electricity connection, health cover worth ₹5 lakh under Ayushman Bharat scheme etc.

Patel directed the office-bearers and workers of the party’s Labour Cell to go door to door, meet the workers and tell them about the work done by the government in the interest of the workers and provide the benefits of the schemes to



Regional chief Dilip Patel addressing BJP Labour Cell workshop in Varanasi on Saturday.

the eligible people. He also directed them to connect the beneficiaries of government schemes with NaMo app and organise conferences at the district level. He said the planning for these conferences should be started and their dates to be organised at the district level should also be decided. He claimed that in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the government will be formed with

the overwhelming majority of the BJP and Narendra Modi will take oath as Prime Minister for the third time.

Addressing the meeting, state convener of BJP Labour Cell Bhupesh Awasthi said the central and state governments under the leadership of PM Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath are working in the interest of the workers because they are get-

ting the benefits of government schemes. He said that the BJP government is doing the work of connecting the workers who are registered and whose labour cards have been made under the Ayushman Bharat scheme.

State coordinator Bhupesh Awasthi said the role of every citizen will be important to fulfil the resolve taken by the PM to make India a developed India by 2047. The programme was presided over by Anil Pandey, regional coordinator of BJP Labour Cell. Regional BJP spokesman Navratan Rathi, labour cell co-convenor Zorawar Singh, Rajiv Sharan, Akhilesh Kushwaha, Vipin Vishwakarma, Atul Singh, Dr Balram Mishra, Angad Kushwaha, Anil Sharma, Praveen Agarwal, Madan Singh, Rajneesh Pandey, Alok Shah, Vikas Baranwal, Priyanshu Gupta, Sanjay Srivastava etc were also present.

NCR GM inspects RPF training centre

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

General Manager North Central Railway (NCR) Ravindra Goyal inspected the Railway Protection Force (RPF) Zonal Training Centre (ZTC) located at Subedarganj headquarters. The GM was informed in detail about the ZTC by Principal Chief Security Commissioner (PCSC) Amiya Nandan Sinha. The GM inspected the class room, library, simulator room, gym, auditorium, gazetted officer’s mess and parade ground. The GM assured to solve the problems of the ZTC, Subedarganj. Besides instructions were given to provide high quality training to the force members on subjects like soft skills, stress management, intelligence etc.

During the visit of the GM, Chief Security Commissioner M Suresh, Senior Divisional Security Commissioner, Vijay Prakash Pandit, Assistant Security Commissioner Sudeep Kumar



Ghosh and other officers were present. Meanwhile, the GM also inspected the Track Machine Central Periodic Overhauling Factory located at Subedarganj on Saturday. The GM saw the maintenance process of track maintenance machines of Indian Railways and observed various sections and processes of the factory. During the inspection, Goyal said track machines play a very important role in the maintenance of railway tracks. He directed the official concerned to maintain proper records of all machines coming

for maintenance and monitor their performance. He said if any problem or failure occurs in them after Periodical Overhaul (POH), it should be thoroughly observed and assessed. He said Central Periodical Overhauling workshop (CPOH) here is a premier institute in the field of track maintenance and it should also be developed as a knowledge sharing platform with all the zonal railways. Divisional Railway Manager (DRM), Prayagraj, Himanshu Badoni and senior officials of NCR were present.

Emphasis on promoting writing of Indian history

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

National organisation secretary of Akhil Bhartiya Ithihas Sankalan Yojana, New Delhi, Dr Balmukund Pandey appealed to all regional units of the organisation to bring out their own magazines to promote writing of Indian history.

He was speaking as the chief guest of the concluding session of the regional workshop of Kashi (Eastern UP) region of organisation at the Centre for Vedic Science in BHU here on Sunday. He appealed to all members to know and understand about the organisation. At the end Prof Suman Jain and Dr Priyanka Singh welcomed the guests, including Prof Devi Prasad Singh, Dr Balmukund and Sanjay. The vote of thanks was proposed by Prof Pravesh Bhardwaj. More than 150 regional office-bearers from Kashi, Goraksh, Awadh and Kanpur units of the organisation were present

₹10 cr allocated for Medical School at IIT-K

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Uttar Pradesh Government has allocated a fund of ₹10 crore in the recently announced State Budget 2024-25 for the Medical School at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K). IIT Kanpur has established the Gangwal School of Medical Sciences and Technology (GSMST) and the Yadupati Singhania Super Speciality Hospital. While the former will cater to postgraduate academic degrees and biomedical research, the latter will be a 500-bed super specialty hospital fulfilling medical components and high-end care. The state budgetary allocation for IIT Kanpur’s Medical School is a significant development, which will help consolidate infrastructure and related services.

“The Gangwal School of Medical Sciences and Technology is an ambitious umbrella project the institute has envisioned to revolutionise convergence of medical and technical education and research. The idea is to build a robust healthcare ecosystem



The proposed structure of Medical School at IIT Kanpur.

that not only propels the state’s research in MedTech, but also enriches its medical facilities. The state budgetary allocation is hence a momentous development for us as it aligns with the Prime Minister’s vision of a Viksit Bharat and the Chief Minister’s vision for better healthcare for the state. We are grateful to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath for showing confidence in us and encouraging more impactful collaboration with the government,” Director, IIT-K, Prof S Ganesh, said.

Professor in charge, Gangwal School of Medical

Sciences and Technology, Prof Sandeep Verma, said, “We are very grateful for getting an allocation from the Government of Uttar Pradesh for IIT Kanpur Medical School. We will ensure the best utilisation of the committed funding from the state government for infrastructure projects. This generous funding will give fillip to multifarious development activities planned for the Medical School. This is just the beginning of a shared mission we all have embarked upon.”

This development opens up the scope for grants, fund-

ing etc at the state level. It is anticipated that the Gangwal School of Medical Sciences & Technology shall launch various academic programmes by July 2026. The School is already executing the flagship Hridayantra project – development of an affordable and advanced artificial heart – among a number of other significant projects based on contemporary biomedical research problems.

The 500-bed Yadupati Singhania Super Speciality Hospital, once completed, will offer affordable treatment to patients from the state and elsewhere. Simultaneously, patients will also be able to avail benefits under Ayushman Bharat and other health welfare schemes launched by the Central as well as State governments. The state-of-the-art medical and research facilities the Medical School will house are expected to transform the state into a knowledge hub while also ensuring ease-of-living. With donations from global IIT Kanpur alumni and corporate grants, the School is coming up as a milestone project by the Institute.

Youth fatally knocked down by vehicle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A bike-borne youth of Hardoi was fatally knocked down by a speeding vehicle near Nangakheda village under Asiwani police station area of Unnao late on Saturday night. The incident took place when he was returning to Hardoi. A passerby informed the police which rushed to the spot and after identifying the body, informed the kin of the deceased.

According to a report received here, Sachche Ram (36) of Bhul Bhawanipur, Mallawa, Hardoi, had arrived for some work around 10 pm on Saturday. While returning when he had reached near Nangakheda village, he was knocked down by the speeding vehicle. After falling on the road he succumbed to his injury on the spot.

Station House Officer (SHO) Gyanendra Singh along

with force rushed to the spot and contacted the kin of the deceased on the basis of the bike number. He said on receipt of complaint, an FIR will be lodged and action will be taken in the matter.

TWO COMMIT SUICIDE: A youth along with his sister-in-law committed suicide by jumping before a speeding goods train near Parjani Block Hut on Delhi-Howrah rail route under Mangalpur police station area of Kanpur Dehat late on Saturday night. The police rushed to the spot and carried out investigation. A love affair was stated to be the cause of incident. After quizzing the kin, the police sent the bodies for autopsy.

The bodies of a youth and a woman were recovered on the Up line near 57/ of pole No 1086 of Parjani Block Hut around 9 pm on Saturday. The guard of the goods train which

passed through the halt informed the Kanchausi railway station about the incident. Apart from RPF, Vikramjit Rajput of Sadhramau also reached the spot and identified both the bodies. Meanwhile, Mangalpur SHO Janardan Singh reached there. Vikramjit informed the police that the deceased included his son Vikas alias Mridul (20) and daughter-in-law Reema Devi (32), wife of Badan Singh Rajput of his family. Both had left the house around 8 pm on bike. He had also followed them. Police also recovered the bike of Vikas near the crossing. Vikramjit said Vikas was pursuing BPharma in Kanpur and had arrived home a few days ago. Both had developed closeness. After the incident, a large number of people reached the spot. The SHO said a probe was on in the matter.

ELECTROCUTED: A contractor worker was electrocuted in Dera Piparkheda village under Gangaghat Kotwali police station area of Unnao on Saturday night. After sustaining burns, colleagues took him to the district hospital where he was declared dead by the doctors. The police have a started probe in the matter. When a worker engaged under the contractor was laying the wire in Dera Piparkheda village on Saturday night, he came in contact with the electric current and fell unconscious on the floor. Sampat of Bikamau under Sohramau police station, Unnao, along with colleagues took him to the district hospital where doctors on duty declared him dead. Sampat thereafter informed the kin of the deceased about the incident. The police have started a probe in the matter. The identity of the deceased could not be ascertained.

tract worker was electrocuted in Dera Piparkheda village under Gangaghat Kotwali police station area of Unnao on Saturday night. After sustaining burns, colleagues took him to the district hospital where he was declared dead by the doctors. The police have a started probe in the matter. When a worker engaged under the contractor was laying the wire in Dera Piparkheda village on Saturday night, he came in contact with the electric current and fell unconscious on the floor. Sampat of Bikamau under Sohramau police station, Unnao, along with colleagues took him to the district hospital where doctors on duty declared him dead. Sampat thereafter informed the kin of the deceased about the incident. The police have started a probe in the matter. The identity of the deceased could not be ascertained.

Two killed as truck hits motorcycle

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Two youths were killed when the motorcycle on which they were returning home were hit by a truck coming from the front in Lachhipur area under the Kunda police station of Pratapgarh late on Saturday night. One of the youths died instantly while the other died in the hospital on Sunday morning.

According to a report received here, Rishikesh (27) of Rakha Diwanganj under Kandhai police station area of Pratapgarh, had gone to the nursing home in Durgaganj market on Saturday night with his friend Shekhar Singh (24). While they were returning home on the bike after giving food to Shailesh Singh of the

family and the attendant around 10 pm their bike was hit by truck. As a result Rishi died on the spot. Ritesh, who was sitting behind was seriously injured. Within a short while, a crowd gathered there informed the police about the incident. The truck driver escaped after the collision. The police reached the spot and took the injured to the trauma centre. On seeing his serious condition, the doctor referred him to the SRN Hospital. Shekhar Singh also died during treatment in the morning. The police sent both the bodies for post-mortem. Station Officer (SO) of Kunda Aditya Singh said an FIR has been filed on the basis of complaint being given by the family of the deceased and action will be taken.

3 NSI research fellows conferred ‘Bharatiya Sugar Awards’



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

In recognition of their commendable work three research fellows of National Sugar Institute (NSI) were conferred the prestigious ‘Bharatiya Sugar Awards’ during a ceremony held at Kolhapur, Maharashtra. Neelam Chaturvedi and Shalini Yadav were jointly conferred “Young Scientist Award” for developing innovative technologies for waste water treatment and production of value added product from ash of the sugar factory boilers respectively. Anushka

Kanodia, Senior Research Fellow, was conferred the “Innovative Leader of the Year Award” for carrying out exemplary work and developing technologies for producing fortified and low glycemic index sugars.

“The institute always endeavours to provide best possible facilities for carrying industry oriented research work and on women empowerment. Such awards will boost the morale of all of us, especially of those involved in such research activities,” said Director Prof Narendra Mohan.

Man falls into Ganga from pontoon bridge, drowns

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A 30 year-old man fell into the Ganga river from the pontoon bridge and died due to drowning under Sarai Akil police station area on Sunday. On being informed by the people passing through the bridge the police arrived and somehow got him out. After informing the family members about the incident, the body was sent for the post-mortem. Due to the accident, traffic on the bridge was disrupted for a few hours.

The accident took place on the pontoon bridge connecting Pratappur village of Lalapur area to Nanda Ka Pura area Kaushambi around 9 am.

Mahendra of Isipur village under the Sarai Akil police station, used to sell chilli in Lalapur. While coming to Lalapur on Sunday on the bicycle, he lost control and fell into the Ganga and died due to drowning. On information from passers-by, Lalapur and

Sarai Akil police reached the spot. The Sarai Akil police took possession of the body after investigation and sent it for the post-mortem.

TRIBUTE PAID: Heartfelt tribute was paid to late Sanjay Kumar Mishra, former IFFCO Officers’ Association president and public relations officer on his first death anniversary. PRO Sonu Tiwari said a homage meeting was organised in the office of IFFCO Officers’ Association in which a humble tribute was paid to late Sanjay Kumar Mishra. He said late SK Mishra was a very friendly person. Many unforgettable memories associated with him are still fresh. May his soul rest in peace. JGM PK Singh, IFFCO Officers’ Association President Anurag Tiwari, General Secretary Swyam Prakash, DK Singh, CB Singh, JS Dwivedi, MP Sharma, Umesh Kumar, SK Awasthi, Vishnu Kant Tiwari and a large number of other IFFCO officers and employees were present.

Markandeya Mahotsav: Hansraj keeps audience spellbound

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Famous promising ‘bhajan’ singer Hansraj Raghuvanshi mesmerised the audience on the first day of the three-day Shri Ram Shivotsav: Shri Markandeya Mahadev Mahotsav at Markandeya Mahadev Dham, Kaithi near the confluence of Ganga and Gomti rivers on Saturday. Presenting the last programme of the day, he changed the mood and electrified the atmosphere with the bhajans of Mahadev’s like ‘aisa damru bajaya Bhole Nath ne sara Kailash Parvat mahaan ho gaya...’, ‘Shiv Kailasho ke vasi...’ etc. The festival was inaugurated by Mahamandaleshwar Pujya Bhavaninandan Yeti Maharaj of Hathiyamath, along with District Magistrate (DM) S Rajalingam, Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal and



Hansraj Raghuvanshi presenting programme in Markandeya Mahotsav in Varanasi on Saturday.

Regional Culture Officer (RCO) Dr Subhash Chandra Yadav by lighting the lamp. The

cultural programme started with the continuous conch sound of Shri Ram Janam Yogi.

After that Dr Ranjana Upadhyay presented Shiva praise through Kathak dance while singer Raghavendra Sharma enthralled with Shiva ‘bhajan’.

The festival is being organised with the courtesy of Union Minister of Heavy Industries and MP from Chandauli Lok Sabha seat Dr Mahendranath Pandey in collaboration with the Culture Department of Uttar Pradesh, Ministry of Culture, Government of India and district administration Varanasi.

A large number of people along with the officials of Varanasi and Chandauli enjoyed the festival. The guests were welcomed by the DM and RCO while the programme conducted by Ashutosh Pandey. In his address, Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey said building a strong nation is possible only by protecting culture.

Murder case worked out

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

With the arrest of the accused, the Dhoomanganj police claimed to have worked out the sensational murder of Aarti (30).

The police, who had arrived on the information of neighbours, found the case suspicious and sent the body for the post-mortem examination. On the complaint of the Harilal, brother-in-law of the deceased, the police registered a case and sent the accused husband to jail. Manoj Kumar of Bhagalpurwa of

Dhoomanganj, used to sell coconut water. His wife had died under mysterious circumstances on Thursday. The family members were busy preparing for the last rites when someone informed the police and body was sent for the post-mortem. In the post-mortem report found serious head injuries and beating wounds were found at many places on the body.

On the complaint of Harilal, the police registered a case of murder against Manoj Kumar and arrested him from TP Nagar.

Modi to distribute one lakh appointment letters

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will distribute more than one lakh appointment letters to newly inducted recruits in Central Government departments on Monday via video conferencing.

On this occasion, the Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone of Phase-I of the Integrated Complex “Karmayogi Bhavan”. This complex will promote collaboration and synergy among various pillars of Mission Karmayogi.

Prime Minister Modi will distribute more than 1 lakh appointment letters to newly inducted recruits on February 12 at 10:30 am via video conferencing, a statement issued by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) said.

The Rozgar Mela will be held at 47 locations across the country and the recruitments are taking place across central government departments, and state and Union Territory governments are supporting this initiative.

The new recruits will be joining the government in var-



ious ministries and departments vis-a-vis Department of Revenue, Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Higher Education, Department of Atomic Energy, Ministry of Defence, Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Ministry of Tribal Affairs and Ministry of Railways, the statement said.

The Rozgar Mela is a step towards fulfilment of the commitment of the prime minister to accord highest priority to employment generation in the country, it said.

The mela is expected to leverage further employment generation and provide gainful opportunities to the youth for their empowerment and direct participation in National Development, the statement said.

The newly inducted appointees are also getting an opportunity to train themselves through “Karmayogi Prarambhi”, an online module on iGOT Karmayogi portal where more than 880 e-learning courses have been made available for ‘anywhere any device’ learning format, it said.

PM to witness India UPI services launch in Lanka, Mauritius

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

India’s Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services will be rolled out in Sri Lanka and Mauritius at a virtual ceremony on Monday that will be witnessed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the top leadership of the two island nations. India’s RuPay card services would also be launched in Mauritius at the event.

Mauritian Prime Minister Pravind Jugnauth and Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremesinghe will join Modi at the virtual ceremony, according to the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi, President of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe and Prime Minister of Mauritius Pravind Jugnauth will witness the launch of Unified Payment Interface (UPI) services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius, and also RuPay card services in Mauritius on February 12 at 1 PM via video conferencing,” it said.

Developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), UPI is an instant real-time payment system to facilitate inter-bank transactions through mobile phones. RuPay



is a global card payment network from India, with wide acceptance at shops, ATMs, and online.

The launch of the Indian services in Sri Lanka and Mauritius is taking place amid New Delhi’s increasing bilateral economic ties with the two countries.

“India has emerged as a leader in Fintech innovation and Digital Public Infrastructure. The prime minister has placed a strong emphasis on sharing our development experiences and innovation with partner countries,” the MEA said in a statement.

It said given India’s robust cultural and people-to-people linkages with Sri Lanka and

Mauritius, the launch will benefit a wide cross-section of people through a faster and seamless digital transaction experience and enhance digital connectivity between the countries.”

The launch will enable availability of UPI settlement services for Indian nationals travelling to Sri Lanka and Mauritius as well as for Mauritian nationals travelling to India,” it said.

“The extension of RuPay card services in Mauritius will enable Mauritian banks to issue cards based on RuPay mechanism in Mauritius and facilitate usage of RuPay card for settlements both in India and Mauritius,” it added.

Modi pays tribute to Pandit Deendayal



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday paid tributes to Pandit Deendayal Upadhyaya, a key party ideologue, on his death anniversary, saying he showed the path to take the country forward by keeping the Indian culture and heritage at its centre.

These have become an inspiration in building a developed India as well, Modi posted on X. Upadhyaya, an RSS functionary, was among the founding members of the Bharatiya Jana Sangh, the BJP forerunner. His ideas of “antyodaya” (uplift

of the most impoverished) and “integral humanism” have often been cited by Modi as an inspiration for his governance model. Upadhyaya died in 1968.

Other BJP leaders also paid rich tributes to him, with party president J P Nadda asserting that his values will always be a guiding light for the party.

Home Minister Amit Shah said Upadhyaya’s life is a giant symbol of serving the nation and devotion towards it.

He believed no country can progress by neglecting the fundamental values of its culture, Shah said.

Expelled Congress leader hints at rift in Gandhi family

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Expelled Congress leader Acharya Pramod Krishnam on Sunday dropped a bombshell indicating of a clear rift in the Congress’ first family — the Gandhis.

Krishnam who is all set to join BJP said the High Command has a division and that the former party chief Rahul Gandhi has done everything to keep away his sibling Priyanka Gandhi and questioned why the latter has been in the party without any portfolio. He also mentioned the perpetual disrespect to the another stalwart Sachin Pilot who has been batting day in an out to sustain himself in the party led by a reluctant politician like Rahul Gandhi.

Krishnam also sought to know why it’s now to be one month for the second leg of Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra that



Priyanka has not joined the yatra. “Like Lord Shiv, Sachin Pilot is gulping poison, Pramod Krishnam said adding that, Priyanka Gandhi -- for the first time in the party’s history -- was kept as the general secretary without any portfolio. Ask Priyanka Gandhi whether she is happy about it. Ask her why she is not joining Rahul Gandhi’s Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra. Who is orchestrating all

this because our president (Mallikarjun Kharge) is a rubber stamp,” Pramod Krishnam said.

Krishnam was expelled from the Congress for six years for indiscipline and anti-party remarks. In the statement issued by Congress general secretary KC Venugopal, the party said, “In view of complaints about indiscipline and repeatedly making statement

against the party, Congress president has approved the Uttar Pradesh Congress Committee’s proposal to expel Pramod Krishnam for six years with immediate effect.”

“When I was 16 or 17 years old, I gave my words to Rajiv Gandhi that I would stand with him. Today I am giving my words to PM Modi that I would stand with PM Modi because he is working for the development of the country. Everyone is asking what was my fault — whether we meeting Narendra Modi, Yogi Adityanath or me attending the pran pratishtha ceremony of Ram Temple,” Pramod Krishnam said.

On being asked whether he would join the BJP, he said he did not know what he would do. “I have faith in God. I will go wherever God takes me. I am with Modi ji because he is with the country,” Pramod Krishnam said.

BJP national spokesperson Shehzad Poonawala said Pramod Krishnam earned Rahul Gandhi’s wrath because of his ‘strident defence of Priyanka Vadra’.

“Congress cannot even tolerate aides of Priyanka now!” Poonawala said adding that when he was in the Congress he alerted Acharya Pramod that ‘Priyanka was no better than Rahul’ but Acharya chose to remain loyal to Priyanka.

Among his anti-party activities, Acharya Pramod criticised the Congress’s stand of not attending the pran pratishtha ceremony of Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22 and despite the top leadership declining the invitation, he attended.

On the expulsion, he said he was happy that the party freed him. “I wish to Congress party to expel me for 14 years instead of 6 years. Lord Rama was also expelled for 14 years,” he said.

In a first, CAPF constable exam being conducted in 13 regional languages

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

For the first time, the constable recruitment examination in the Central Armed Police Forces such as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF) and Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) will be conducted in 13 regional languages apart from Hindi and English.

The examination are being conducted from February 10-March 7 and around 48 lakh candidates are appearing in 128 cities across the country, according to an official statement. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) had decided to conduct



the constable (general duty) examination for recruitment in CAPFs in 13 regional languages in addition to Hindi and English from January 1, 2024.

This “historic decision” has been taken on the initiative of the home minister to increase the participation of local youths in the Central Armed Police Forces and to promote regional languages, it said.

In addition to Hindi and

English, the question papers will now be prepared in the following 13 regional languages: Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi, Malayalam, Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, Odia, Urdu, Punjabi, Manipuri and Konkani. Constable examination is one of the flagship recruitment tests conducted by the Staff Selection Commission (SSC) attracting lakhs of youths from across the country.

Kharge extends party support to protesting farmers

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday extended his party’s support to the farmers who have set on march to Delhi seeking fulfillment of the promises Modi government made to them when they withdrew their year long protest outside the Delhi borders.

He congratulated the Punjab farmers for launching the stir for the fulfillment of their demands.

Addressing an impressive workers convention organized by the Punjab Congress, Kharge pointed out, Modi had promised so many things to the farmers including guarantee on Minimum Support Price. “What happened to those promises?” he asked.

The Congress president accused Prime Minister Modi of calling farmers names and describing them as terrorists and ‘andolan jeevies’ in a most derogatory manner.

Congratulating the people of Punjab, he said, the state was unique as it was only here that both the Jawsans and Kisans are found. He said, in some places there are kisans but no jawsans and in some places there are jawsans but no kisans. But, he remarked, it is only in Punjab we find both Jawsans and Kisans thus a great and unique instance of former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri’s slogan, “Jai Jawan Jai Kisan”.

But, Kharge regretted, Modi had tried to damage and destroy the both institutions of farming as well as the defence services. He said, while Modi first brought three black laws, then he introduced the Agnipath scheme in the defence services.

Substantiating his charge that Modi was anti-farmer,



Kharge disclosed that Rs one lakh crores allocated for the agriculture sector had lapsed as the Modi government did not spend it on agriculture.

He disclosed that Rs 40,000 crores was pocketed by the private insurance companies under the ‘Fasal Beema Yojana’. Besides, for the first time in independent India’s history, farmers were paying tax of Rs 25,000 per hectare.

Similarly, Kharge added, the Modi government was not filling about 30 lakh vacancies in various government departments and public sector undertakings. He alleged that Modi does not want the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes to get 50 percent jobs. He said, Modi wants the poor to remain poor. He said, the big and huge industries set up under the Public Sector by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru were being handed over to one single friend of the Prime Minister.

Responding to Modi’s question as to what Congress did, Kharge said, “we built dams, brought white and green revolution and set up institutions like the Punjab Agriculture University”. He challenged the BJP and Modi to name a single such thing they had done for the country.

Taking a jibe at the Prime Minister, he remarked, sometimes Modi flags off a single train twice, first from South and second time from the north.

Navy conferences on warship maintenance organised in Mumbai



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

With the objective of maintain its fleet of submarines and warships in top operational condition, Indian Navy’s Annual Refit Conference 24 (ARC 24) and Annual Infrastructure Conference 24 (AIC 24) were conducted on February 8-9 at Naval Dockyard, Mumbai, under the Chairmanship of VADM Kiran Deshmukh, Chief of Materiel, navy officials said here on Sunday. Refit Plans of Indian Naval Ships and Submarines, augmentation of infrastructure to meet the maintenance requirements of the new ships and submarines being inducted, Materiel Cooperation with Friendly Foreign Countries and digital solutions being implemented in enhancing maintenance were discussed.

Foreseeable challenges in Maintenance of Indian Navy’s platforms and their solutions, including changes at the strategic level required to make refit and repair processes efficient were also deliberated, they said.

The Chief of Materiel complimented all Naval Dockyards and Repair Yards for the efforts in successfully ensuring enhanced operational availability of naval assets. He also highlighted the importance of all Logistics and Maintenance Organisations to be more agile by harnessing new technology and efficient work processes, as

also the requirement for modernisation of marine assets and yard infrastructure.

During the AIC, progress of various technical and marine infrastructure projects was reviewed by the Chief of Materiel. He emphasised the need to develop ‘Future Ready’ repair and support infrastructure while modernising and revitalising the existing infrastructure. He expressed happiness with the progress made in the ongoing infrastructure projects and appreciated the completion of various projects in the previous year including the Wet Basin and Refit Jetty at Port Blair.

Vice Admiral Sanjay J Singh, Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief Western Naval Command, addressing the forum complemented the efforts put in by all concerned in ensuring enhanced operational availability of platforms and emphasised the need to maintain the focus towards supporting heightened operational readiness, upskilling of workforce to develop expertise in new inductions and attention to information security.

The conference was attended by delegates from Naval Headquarters, the three Naval Commands, the Tri-Services Andaman and Nicobar Command, Director General Naval Projects, Naval Dockyards, Repair Yards and Material Organisations of the Indian Navy.

Need for expanding oncology services in tier two cities: Experts

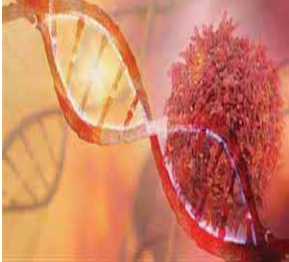
PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The increasing incidence of cancer in India, coupled with alarming statistics such as 50 per cent of lung cancer cases occurring in non-smokers and breast cancer affecting every eighth woman, underscores the urgent need to expand oncology services in tier two cities to close the care gap in cancer treatment across the States. On the inaugural day of the two-day IO-CON2024 conference which was held here, top oncologists also highlighted the impact of factors like declining air quality and lifestyle habits on cancer prevalence, emphasizing the importance of enhancing awareness and early diagnosis.

Dr. Madhur Garg, the Clinical Director of Radiation Oncology at Montefiore Medical Center in the United States, emphasized the importance of expanding oncology services in tier two cities in India and advocated for a strong public-private partnership to achieve the goal.

Dr. Garg also pointed out that doctors are willing to serve in tier two cities, provided there is adequate infrastructure in place to support cancer treatment services. He also acknowledged the positive impact of the central flagship Ayushman Bharat health coverage.

“Of the almost 14 lakh new cancer cases diagnosed in India every year, more than 60% get diagnosed in advanced stages which underscores the need for an enhancing the awareness and diagnosis,” said Dr. Shubham Garg, Director of Surgical Oncology, IOCI, Fortis Hospital, Noida while Dr Anita Malik, Senior Consultant and Clinical Lead Radiation Oncology at IOCI stressed the



importance of scaling up radiation therapy equipment to meet the increasing demand, calling for greater cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Dr PK Sharma, Executive Director, International Oncology Cancer Institute stressed on the need for a holistic treatment, personalized medicine in oncology leverages molecular testing and comprehensive genomic profiling to develop individualized treatment strategies that consider the unique genetic, molecular, and environmental factors influencing each patient’s cancer. In India, there are more than 640 radiation therapy equipment, but because the country is now experiencing a 5-7% annual growth in cancer cases, the number of machines needs to be scaled up to 1400 as per WHO, said the experts.

“The infrastructure costs associated with any oncology institution exceed Rs 100 crore, and the cost of radiation devices is at least Rs 25 crore. This calls for sufficient public-private cooperation to make the treatment accessible to the greatest number of people, which is still limited to a set of people,” said Dr Malik.

Looking ahead, Dr Rajat Bajaj, Program Director, IOCI emphasized the importance of timely detection and a people-friendly approach in oncology centers and stressed the need for government-private sector cooperation to save more lives.

Ambitious football for schools plan launched across country

PNS ■ NEW DELHI

The Department of School Education & Literacy, Ministry of Education, in collaboration with All India Football Federation (AIFF) and Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has launched the ambitious Football for Schools (F4S) programme of FIFA for school students across the country.

According to a Press release by the Ministry of Education, the programme aims to significantly broaden the accessibility of football for students, regardless of gender, within the school setting, while seamlessly integrating football-related activities into the education system in collaboration with various stakeholders.

Under the programme, on 9th February 2024, 6848 footballs were distributed to 1260 Schools of 17 Districts of Odisha. The footballs were distributed from Nodal district NVS with the presence of local dignitaries from various fields. The kick-off of the distribution of balls was launched by Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on December 2, 2023 from JNV Cuttack, Odisha.

Further, the footballs were distributed in the districts of Angul, Dhenkanal and Deogarh in Odisha; and Goa, Maharashtra, Gujarat and UT of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu in a phased manner.

An MoU was earlier signed between the Ministry of Education, AIFF and FIFA on 30 October, 30, 2022. Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya is the Nodal organization for the F4S programme.

Under this programme, more than 11 lakh FIFA foot-

balls are to be distributed throughout the country in a phased manner. More than 1.50 lakh schools will benefit from this programme.

As a part of the programme, to enhance capacity building, recently the department has conducted a master training programme at 3 venues, viz., Sambalpur, Pune and Bengaluru where around 300 physical education teachers/trainees from States/UTs, KVS, NVS and AIFF across India participated with an aim to learn from the best and further use their training and skills as Master Trainers at State level for further capacity building in the field.

F4S aims to contribute to the education, development, and empowerment of around 700 million children across the world. It seeks to make football more accessible to both boys and girls by incorporating football activities into the education system, in partnership with relevant authorities and stakeholders.

Through the F4S programme, the aim has also been to significantly broaden the accessibility of football for students, regardless of gender, within the school setting, while seamlessly integrating football-related activities into the education system in collaboration with various stakeholders.

By fostering partnerships at different levels, the programme wishes to instil a sense of enthusiasm for the sport, laying the foundation for a lasting sports culture that goes beyond individual schools. It will not only introduce the joy of playing football to students but also infuse values of teamwork, discipline, and fitness, contributing to their holistic development.

An exhilarating term

Parliament adjourns for the last time before LS polls are held and the next Govt assumes office

As both Houses of Parliament have been adjourned sine die one last time before the general elections, it is time to reflect on the Government's achievements, challenges and legacy of the past five years. This period has been marked by significant policy reforms, legislative milestones and moments of both triumph and controversy. The concluding session of Parliament holds special significance as it serves as a crucial juncture for the Government to showcase its accomplishments and for the Opposition to hold the former accountable for its actions. Over the past five years, the Government has introduced a plethora of reforms across sectors, ranging from economy and governance to social welfare and national security. Initiatives such as the Goods and Services Tax (GST), the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and ambitious welfare schemes like Ayushman Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana have left a deep impact on the nation's socio-economic milieu. However, alongside these successes,



the Government has faced its fair share of challenges and criticism. Issues such as economic slowdowns, agrarian distress, unemployment and social unrest have tested the administration's resolve and elicited strong reactions from both critics and supporters. Debates on contentious issues like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), farm laws and handling of COVID-19 pandemic have dominated parliamentary discourse. Besides, the Government's inability to take timely action to quell Manipur violence would also be a blot on its tenure. As the 17th Lok Sabha is bid farewell, the parliamentarians must assess the overall progress made and identify areas that require further attention. This

introspection is essential not only for the ruling party but for the entire political spectrum to understand the pulse of the nation and address people's aspirations effectively. Beyond legislative achievements, the last five years have witnessed significant shifts in the political landscape with coalition dynamics, rise of regional parties and evolving voter preferences shaping the electoral narrative. The general elections present an opportunity for citizens to voice their verdict on the Government's performance and chart the course for the nation. Moreover, the conclusion of the session marks the beginning of a new chapter in India's democratic journey, where the electorate will exercise its right to choose the next set of leaders to steer the country forward. It is time for political parties to engage in constructive dialogue, present their vision and earn the electorate's trust. In this transitional phase, lawmakers must uphold the principles of democracy, foster inclusivity and prioritise mass welfare. The Government's legacy will be defined not only by its legislative accomplishments but also by its commitment to upholding democratic values, promoting social justice and growth for all. As the nation embarks on the next phase of governance, let us reflect on the lessons learnt and communicate effectively to our would-be lawmaker representatives.

PICTALK



Children fly kites in a field in the backdrop of the Taj Mahal, in Agra

PTI

Synergise regional and national science academies

It is essential for regional science academies to actively promote science through regional media and provide regular updates

Science education in the country is at a crossroads, because of the declining trend among the new generation to pursue a career in Science. Across the country, many brilliant students move towards professional courses that fetch them a good placement soon after their studies. No one will wait 5 or 10 years to get a good placement. Even our policymakers neglect basic science education, forgetting the fact that it's the backbone for building a strong Viksit Bharat. The trend of student exodus to foreign countries is increasing. The public's initial encounter with scientific advancements often occurs through newspapers, television programs, and various other media outlets. The reduction in space or airtime allocated to Science can be viewed as a direct challenge to the field. Many media organisations prioritise commercial considerations when making decisions about content allocation. They may contribute to a lack of public awareness and understanding of scientific concepts, potentially hindering progress in scientific literacy and societal



engagement with Science. This lack of awareness leads to parental pressure on students to move away from science courses. It is where our regional science academies in the country can play a lead role in building a robust scientific force for the future. We have three national science academies in India - the Indian National Science Academy, the Indian Academy of Sciences, and the National Academy of Sciences, India. Even though our National Science Academies are doing their service to promote Science, it doesn't reach every nook and corner of the country. Here, regional science academies come into the picture. Regional science academies can play a crucial role in fostering scientific advancement, education, and collaboration within specific geographic

regions. These academies are well-positioned to address and prioritize issues that are specific to a particular region. They can focus on problems related to geography, climate, biodiversity, and other factors that may vary from one region to another. By bringing together scientists and researchers from a specific region, science academies help build a strong and collaborative scientific community. This facilitates the exchange of ideas, expertise, and resources, fostering a culture of innovation and cooperation. It is essential for regional science academies to actively promote Science through regional language media channels, maintain regular interactions with journalists, and offer science updates in accessible format. Apart from science popularisation activities, many regional academies conduct studies on various topics that could affect the enhancement of Science in society, for example, student exodus to foreign countries, public perception of science and scientific research, etc. Regional academies can offer insights into

the unique challenges faced by their communities and contribute to developing informed policies that address regional needs. Regional science academies can promote diversity and inclusion in Science by supporting underrepresented groups within the region. This contributes to a more inclusive and equitable scientific community. Regional science academies' contributions to nation-building and developing scientific temper are well documented in history. In our journey towards a Viksit Bharat, we should take various regional science academies and the National Science Academies' by affiliating them to the National body. When both academies work with a common goal, it can foster significant advancements in Indian Science. By aligning their efforts and resources, these academies can synergise their strengths, expertise, and networks to tackle scientific challenges more effectively.

(The writer is an adjunct faculty at the National Institute of Advanced Studies, views are personal)



BIJU DHARMAPALAN

Messi confronts China in his own way

China's psychological warfare extends from visa manipulations to Messi's 'snub,' providing a taste of their own strategy in return

Last year, three Indian Wushu players i.e., Nyeman Wangsu, Onilu Tega and Mepung Lamgu, were given stapled visas to travel to China, for the World University Games. All three were proud Indian Arunachalis, and the entire Indian squad pulled out of the competition in protest of the Chinese sleight. It was reminiscent of the 2016 incident when the Manager of the Indian Badminton team, Bamang Tago, was denied a visa to travel to China - he too was an Arunachali! Much earlier in 2011, a 45-team Indian Karate team travelling to China were issued standard visas, except five members who were given stapled visas, again all Arunachalis. Chinese are past masters in psychological warfare and no domain or opportunity is too irrelevant for them to resist partaking a 'ping'. It is culturally part and parcel of their patented 'three warfare' approach where they relentlessly invoke psychological, legal, and public opinion warfare. The recurring bone of contention is the Indian State Arunachal Pradesh which expansionist China falsely claims as so-called 'South Tibet', and therefore shadow boxing on the same. It's the same pressure tactic that it applies with Taiwan and forces its athletes to compete under an unfamiliar name called 'Chinese Taipei', in Olympics and other events. Taiwanese athletes also compete under an alien flag (1981 agreement with the International Olympics Committee led a newly designed white flag with a flower outline around a sun and the Olympic rings in the middle) with an unheard flag-raising song. The Chinese are constantly looking to score a symbolic and psychological 'hit'. Therefore, with such fixation with political posturing and insinuations in everything that it does and imagines, it also leads to hallucinations or perceived indignities whenever it is on the receiving end, deliberately or inadvertently. The latest issue of a 'non-starter' by the global football superstar, Lionel Messi, whilst in Hong Kong owing to an ostensible 'swollen and painful injury' got



doubly compounded by the football icon subsequently playing in Japan, within three days thereafter. The angst against Messi started early with fans booing the 'no-show' on field (which extended to even avoiding interacting with fans or receiving the trophy). The Chinese were not amused and were seen openly questioning the intent of the player and called out what they thought was a 'deliberate and calculated snub'. All hell broke loose when just after a couple of days Messi took to the ground in Japan. As it is, China has major beef with Japan. An indignant Global Times echoed Chinese frustrations in its editorial, "The match in Hong Kong became the only one in Messi's six pre-season friendly matches on this trip where he was absent. The situation... has magnified these doubts and suspicions on the integrity of Inter Miami and Messi himself." The Chinese finally got a flavour of a dish that they so routinely serve, even if Messi who is an Argentine (which little or no sovereign stakes for or against China) is not known to make political points, unlike some other stars. This incident harks back to 2019 when the then Arsenal football club legend Mesut Ozil openly condemned China's treatment of the coun-



PERHAPS THE ONLY TIME THAT MESSI DID COME UNDER POLITICAL SUSPICION WAS WITH HIS PURPORTED MOVE TO SAUDI ARABIA EARLIER, A MOVE RIFE WITH SUSPICIONS OF SAUDIS 'SPORTSWASHING' THEIR MURKY CREDENTIALS BY LURING SPORTSMEN WITH MONEY

try's Uighur minority - the thin-skinned Chinese reacted furiously, and Arsenal club had humiliatingly buckled under pressure, offering meek clarification, "The content published is Ozil's personal opinion. As a football club, Arsenal has always adhered to the principle of not involving itself in politics". The Chinese had flexed muscle and extracted their revenge. For the Chinese, football is particularly important given its global popularity and Xi Jinping's penchant in the same reflecting with its declared aspiration to be a 'soccer powerhouse' with the stated intent of winning the Football World Cup in 2050! Perhaps the only time that Messi did come under political suspicion (indirectly again) was with his purported move to Saudi Arabia earlier, a move rife with suspicions of Saudis 'sportswashing' their murky credentials, by luring sportsmen with money. But Messi didn't move, finally. Despite a long career he has remained steadfastly apolitical and steered clear of political controversies. With a permanent house in Barcelona, Messi took no position on the contentious Catalan-independence issue, given its resonance in Barcelona region. However, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner has somehow never played against England at internation-

al level, with whom the Argentinian emotions date back to the 1982 Falkland War and Diego Maradona's infamous 'Hand of God' moment in 1986. In fact, Messi now plays for Inter Miami owned by the English star David Beckham, who had his own 'moment' against rival Argentines when he kicked their captain Diego Simeone in the crucial FIFA World Cup match of 1998. So, it is extremely unlikely that Messi would be making a political point this late in his career, and especially given the lucrative contracts he has with Chinese conglomerates. If anything, Messi has been in the news for milking his stardom by signing brand endorsements without bothering too much about the brand product or service itself. Incidentally, he had signed up with the now-in-news Byju's as their global ambassador, only to be put on hold when the company started going belly-up. Nonetheless, the Chinese are feeling insulted and aggrieved, Messi's likely innocence and apology notwithstanding. But it is a providential taste of China's own medicine. (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POWER SECTOR WOES

Sir — The government in Andhra Pradesh seems to be under complacency with the pittance of Navarathnas Scheme provided to the poor section. Though the beneficiaries are thankful for the small benefit they are equally upset over the increase in the burden imposed by an increase in the power bill. The functioning of three companies in the power sector seems to be let loose to function the way they want. Inadequate planning by distribution companies results in purchasing power from private players, who dictate unfavorable Power Purchase Agreements. This compels the distribution companies to burden consumers with charges like FPPCA I, FPPCA II, True Up Charge. Government offices' delayed power bill payments, subsidies, and unauthorized payouts of ₹1,400 crores to a private company further strain consumers, leading to unjustified extra charges of ₹500 and an unfair share of system-induced losses. To add to the woes Smart meters are going to be provided to each consumer. Each consumer has to bear the cost of it, which is likely to be around ₹13,000/-. It is to be paid in monthly instalments for a few years. The smart meter lacks consumer benefits, focusing on prepaid and dynamic tariffs that favour private entities. Prepaid setups benefit companies, while dynamic pricing confuses consumers, hindering consumption planning. Reforms prioritize profits over people's well-being, urging the government to prioritize citizens over private interests for a better quality of life.

AG Rajmohan | Anantapur

INFLATION RISING

Sir — The Reserve Bank of India is trying to control the inflation rate. According to the RBI report, the inflation rate between April and December in the current financial year has been 5.5 per cent. The inflation rate is estimated to be 5.4 per cent during the entire current financial year. The inflation rate is likely to come down in the next financial year, and it may remain at 4.5 per cent.

Well-deserved Bharat Ratna



The Bharat Ratna, the Country's highest civilian honour has been given to three distinguished personalities of the country P V Narasimha Rao, Charan Singh and Swaminathan who have made monumental contributions to the nation in different sectors. P V Narasimha Rao the 9th prime minister of India, was a statesman and distinguished scholar of our times. He held the reins of the country during a politically tumultuous time in the wake of the assassination of for-

mer Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi when the nation was facing an extremely grave economic crisis and was on the brink of bankruptcy, indeed there were several challenges galore for him, the shattered Economy and several internal security problems, but with his visionary leadership he steered the country through successfully. Narasimha Rao's unmatched legacy secures his pivotal place in Indian history. Chaudhary Charan Singh dedicated his life to farmers' rights, earning the title 'champion of farmers.' A principled socialist, he advocated higher taxes for the wealthy and opposed luxury consumption. MS Swaminathan, a distinguished agricultural scientist, played a crucial role in India's transformation from a food-importing to a self-sufficient, food-exporting nation, earning him the moniker 'father of the green revolution' during challenging times marked by droughts.

Ramesh G Jethwani | Bangalore

However, the efforts of the Reserve Bank of India and the claims of the government are in their place, but the bitter reality is that the food plate of the common man of the country is still expensive. This inflation is likely to increase further. In other words, the growth rate of our economy has been more than 7.5 per cent. But for the common man, economic development means that he gets relief from inflation and adequate employment opportunities. If inflation is not under control and youth are not getting employment, then the figures of economic progress have no relevance to the life of the common man.

Jahangir Shaikh | Mumbai

GRAHAM STAINES' DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Sir — A few days ago, on January 22, residents of Manoharpur, a remote village in Keonjhar district of Odisha observed the 25th death anniversary of Australian missionary Graham Staines and his two sons. Graham Staines had been working with leprosy patients in Odisha since his coming to India in 1965 till his death in 1999. "For 35 years, Saiboo, clad in casuals with

his trademark hat, pedaled his rickety bicycle, a familiar sight in Baripada. Known for doing God's work, he cared for leprosy patients in a dedicated home on the outskirts. Tragically, Graham Staines and his two sons, Timothy (6) and Philip (10), were burned alive while sleeping in their jeep in a Manoharpur forest." When Dara Singh and his followers had set fire to the vehicle, they woke up and tried to come out. But those fanatics used their long stout sticks to shove them back into the fire, till they died close to midnight of January 22, 1999. His wife Gladys Staines told television reporters, "I forgive those who have killed my husband and my two sons." After his husband's death, she continued to serve leprosy patients and managed to turn his husband's home for those patients into a hospital. Every year, January 22 will come and remind us about the warning signs of religious fanaticism on the road to our evolutionary progress.


Sujit De | Kolkata

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

A JOURNEY THROUGH LOSS AND HEALING

The Buddhist approach offers a grounded and rational way to cope with grief



RAVI VALLURI

The doctor was an early riser. Upon waking he hit the gym. He remained fit and in proper shape by maintaining this regimen. The medico was a noted pediatrician, his wife an eminent cardiologist. Unfortunately, their only daughter suffered from a compromised heart condition. The trio had attended a party the previous evening. It was time to drop the daughter to school and the father knocked at the door. But the cherubic girl did not respond. Life was snuffed out; tragedy had struck the family and a pall of gloom descended.

A few weeks back an old aunt had kicked the bucket. It was a double whammy for the family, and they were inconsolable. Several centuries ago, in the time of the Buddha, a woman lost her only child to the cruel hands of fate. In an anguished state she implored the Enlightened One to resuscitate the dead child. Buddha, the compassionate, agreed to perform the miracle. He asked the lady to collect mustard seeds from all the houses of the village which had never seen death or grief. The woman knocked at the doors of all the houses in the village but returned empty handed. Handling grief is a challenging task and only skillful minds can undertake this responsibility.

The doctor couple who could not save their precious child were subsumed into a cesspool of anger, guilt, sadness, pangs of loneliness, numbness, and a yearning for their beloved one. To overcome their grief and desolation, the husband, a moderate drinker, became a quotidian one and his spouse began administering herself sedatives.

Several eminent psychologists like Parker, Arewill and Worden have zeroed in on the point that those suffering from grief, need to move on from the feeling of numbness, pining, depression, a feeling of shock and despair



to the process of recovery. It is important for the grieving to accept the reality of the loss, experience the pain of the departed one, adjust to the environment of living without the deceased person.

Medical science has made rapid advancements such that proper diagnosis, therapy, and counselling along with proper medication can trigger the change agent in the wrecked mind. Alternatively, there are techniques like hypnosis and even providing ECT (in the worst-case scenario) to address the problem.

The Theravada Buddhist traditions have dealt with the subject of handling grief in a dynamic manner. The human mind by the process of strong internal resolution can overcome this vicissitude in life by mindfulness. The process is called Satipatthana.


The emotionally wrought can find solace and succour by becoming aware of the reality about the impermanence of events, happenings, and people. The mind should become strong to accept the reality and look ahead. There are breathing techniques like Vipassana and Sudarshan Kriya which have proven ability to transfigure the mind from a depressed state to a positive one. Both the techniques have been validated by medical science as alternative therapies and have the power to alter the thought process, bringing it to the present moment.

Several grieving souls adopt holistic measures like the breathing techniques mentioned, meditation, pranayama, yoga, chanting of mantras, being in communion with nature or seva to overcome their grief and restore normalcy in their lives. It is the recalcitrant human mind which acts as a deterrent and needs to be tamed. "Grief is in two parts. The first is loss. The second is remaking of life," writes Anne Roiphe.

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

Celebrating women in science: Recognising their achievements

Despite their significant contributions, women in science still face systemic barriers, including gender bias, unequal representation and limited access to opportunities



VEERENDRA MISHRA

Yesterday, we celebrated the International Day of Women in Science, a day dedicated to recognising and honouring the achievements of women in the field of science. This annual event serves as a reminder of the invaluable contributions women have made to scientific progress and innovation throughout history. It is an opportunity to highlight their accomplishments, shed light on the challenges they face, and inspire future generations of women to pursue careers in science.

Recently, while presenting the interim Budget 2024, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted that female enrollment in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) courses

has reached 43 per cent, which is one of the world's highest figures. She said, "Female enrollment in higher education has gone up by 28 percent in ten years. In STEM courses, girls and women constitute 43 percent of enrollment—one of the highest in the world. All these measures reflect the increasing participation of women in the workforce." She also mentioned the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship, ease of living, and dignity, mentioning, "Thirty crore Mudra Yojana loans have been given to women entrepreneurs."

From historic figures like Savitribai Jyotiba Phule, who was the first female teacher of India and founded the first girls' school, to Lady Abala Bose, who was the first Indian woman to study medicine at Madras University, to Kamala Sohonie, the first Indian woman to receive a PhD in a scientific discipline, to Ayyalasomayajula Lalitha, India's first woman engineer, to Shakuntala Devi, who was popularly known as the "Human Computer," women continue to leave an indelible mark on the scientific landscape. Today, women scientists are assuming leadership positions in groundbreaking projects like Chandrayaan-3 and the Aditya-L1 solar mission, showcasing their continued influence and expertise in pushing the boundaries of scientific exploration.

The Government has taken significant strides to bolster STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education, recognising its pivotal role in driving innovation, economic prosperity, and societal advancement. Initiatives like the Vigyan Jyoti Scheme, spearheaded by the Ministry of Science and Technology, are breaking gender barriers by empowering young girls in STEM fields through exposure and mentorship programs. Additionally, programmes like INSPIRE foster innovation among students through scholarships and research opportunities, while Atal Tinkering Labs nurture creativity and problem-solving skills among school students.

The Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan promotes a culture of innovation in schools, bridging the gap between theory and real-world applications. Moreover, the government provides research fellowships and grants, digital learning resources through the National Digital Library, and skill enhancement programmes via Skill India, all aimed at nurturing a skilled workforce and fostering growth in STEM-related industries. These concerted efforts underscore the government's commitment to nurturing a robust ecosystem for scientific inquiry and technological advancement in the country.

Women in STEM in India have been steadily challenging stereotypes and contributing significantly to various disciplines. Pioneers like Dr. Tessy Thomas, known as the "Missile Woman of India," have shattered glass ceilings in fields traditionally dominated by men. Indian women researchers are excelling in areas like space technology, biotechnology, and mathematics, making remarkable advancements.

Additionally, the government's Vigyan Jyoti scheme aims to encourage young girls to pursue STEM education and careers, fostering inclusivity. Women have made groundbreaking strides in diverse scientific domains, ranging from astronomy and biology to engineering and computer science. Their discoveries, innovations, and leadership have enriched our understanding of the world and advanced technological progress.

Women have played a pivotal role in shaping the scientific landscape, yet their contributions have often been overlooked or undervalued. By celebrating the International Day of Women in Science, we aim to rectify this imbalance and bring attention to the remarkable achievements of women scientists. It is crucial to showcase diverse role models in science to inspire young girls and women to pursue their passions and break down the barriers that still exist in the field. While progress has been made, women in science still face numerous challenges.

Gender bias, a lack of representation, and unequal opportunities persist in many scientific fields. It is essential to work towards creating a more inclusive and equitable environment for women in science. By providing equal opportunities, mentorship, and support, we can empower women to thrive and contribute their unique perspectives to scientific advancements. Despite their significant contributions, women in science still face systemic barriers. By encouraging and showcasing the achievements of women in science, we hope to ignite a passion for discovery and innovation in young girls.

(The writer is an IPS officer and the director RACE Lab, Samvedna India, views are personal)

The impact and evolution of IBC 2016

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code IBC of 2016 streamlines insolvency resolution processes and bolstering investor confidence





MANOJ KUMAR ANAND

The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) of 2016 stands as a transformative milestone in recent Indian legislative history. Enacted with the aim of streamlining and expediting the resolution process for distressed businesses, the IBC has had far-reaching implications for India's economic landscape and global standing. In this comprehensive exploration, we delve into the genesis of the IBC, its impact on India's Ease of Doing Business Index, the role of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), and the recent amendments that have further refined and strengthened the framework.

The IBC of 2016 was a response to the urgent need for a comprehensive insolvency regime in India. Prior to its enactment, the country grappled with a fragmented and inefficient system that often led to protracted legal battles and value destruction for all stakeholders involved. Recognizing the critical importance of a robust insolvency framework in fostering economic growth and investor confidence, the Indian government embarked on a journey to overhaul the existing system.

The passage of the IBC in 2016 marked a paradigm shift in India's approach to insolvency resolution. By introducing a unified legal framework that streamlined the resolution process and prioritized creditor rights, the IBC sought to expedite the resolution of distressed assets and maximize value for all stakeholders. Key provisions of the IBC include the establishment of the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) and the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), as well as the creation of Insolvency Professionals (IPs) and Insolvency Professional Entities (IPEs) to facilitate the resolution process.

One of the most significant outcomes of the IBC has been its impact on India's Ease of Doing Business Index. Since the enactment of the IBC, India's ranking in the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index has steadily improved, climbing by another 14 places to 63 in 2019. This improvement can be attributed in large part to the IBC's success in resolving insolvency cases more efficiently and effectively, thereby enhancing the overall business environment in the country.

In particular, India's ranking in resolving insolvency saw a remarkable jump of 56 places to 52 in 2019, marking the highest-ever leap recorded by any country in the history of the World Bank. This significant improvement reflects the positive impact of the IBC in expediting the resolution process, reducing the time and cost involved in resolving insolvency cases, and maximising the value recovered by creditors.

The success of the IBC can also be attributed to the efforts of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI), the regulatory authority tasked with overseeing the implementation of the IBC. Since its inception, the IBBI has played a crucial role in shaping and refining the insolvency framework, issuing regulations, guidelines, and circulars to ensure smooth and effective implementation of the IBC.

In its journey of seven years, the IBBI has introduced six amendments to the IBC, each aimed at further enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the insolvency resolution process. These amendments have addressed various challenges and loopholes in the framework, making it more robust and resilient to emerging complexities in the insolvency landscape.

One of the key areas of focus for the IBBI has been the regulation of Insolvency Professionals (IPs) and Insolvency Professional Entities (IPEs), who play a critical role in the insolvency resolution process. The IBBI has introduced several amendments to the regulations governing IPs and IPEs, aimed at enhancing their role and capabilities in resolving insolvency cases.

For example, the IBBI has introduced amendments to allow IPs to resign from their roles under certain circumstances, thereby addressing concerns about the prolonged tenure of IPs without remuneration. Additionally, amendments have been made to allow IPEs to engage their partners or directors in insolvency assignments, expanding their capacity and expertise in the resolution process.

Furthermore, the IBBI has introduced amendments to streamline the appointment process for IPs by introducing a panel of eligible candidates for appointment by the adjudicating authority. This has helped to expedite the appointment process and ensure a more transparent and efficient resolution process.

In addition to amendments relating to IPs and IPEs, the IBBI has also introduced amendments to other regulations governing the insolvency process. For example, amendments have been made to clarify the role of monitoring committees in the resolution process and to streamline the billing process for insolvency professionals. Overall, the amendments introduced by the IBBI have helped to address various challenges and complexities in the insolvency resolution process, making it more efficient, transparent, and effective. These amendments have further strengthened the IBC and solidified India's position as a leader in insolvency reform.

Looking ahead, the IBBI remains committed to continuously improving and refining the insolvency framework to ensure that it remains responsive to the evolving needs and challenges of the insolvency landscape. By fostering an environment that is conducive to efficient and effective insolvency resolution, the IBBI aims to support India's economic growth and development goals and enhance investor confidence in the country's business environment.

In conclusion, the IBC of 2016 stands as a testament to India's commitment to fostering a business-friendly environment and enhancing the ease of doing business in the country. Through its robust framework and proactive regulatory efforts, the IBC has contributed significantly to improving India's ranking in the Ease of Doing Business Index and enhancing investor confidence in the country's business environment. With the continued support and efforts of regulatory authorities like the IBBI, India is well-positioned to further strengthen its insolvency framework and drive economic growth and development in the years to come.

(The writer is a chartered accountant and a visiting faculty to ICAI, ICSI; Views are personal)

THE SUCCESS OF THE IBC CAN ALSO BE ATTRIBUTED TO THE EFFORTS OF THE INSOLVENCY AND BANKRUPTCY BOARD OF INDIA (IBBI), THE REGULATORY AUTHORITY TASKED WITH OVERSEEING ITS IMPLEMENTATION

Senior CPM leader held after violence in Sandeshkhali

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

While Sandeshkhali continued to smolder despite the imposition of Section 144 — in the wake of a public unrest in protest against the alleged tyrannical regime perpetrated by local Trinamool Congress chieftains — the Bengal Police on Sunday arrested senior CPI(M) leader and a former MLA from this region Nirapad Sardar on charges of arson, loot and vandalism.

Sardar an all-India Kisan Sabha member and a CPI(M) committee member was arrested from his son's house at Garia in South Kolkata. His arrest led to massive protests by the Marxists outside the Bansdroni Police Station.

CPI(M) State secretary Md Salim said that Sardar had falsely implicated in the case though he was not present at Sandeshkhali on the days of violence. A BJP leader Bikash Singh too was arrested by the police on Sunday.

Sandeshkhali hit the nation-



al headlines in January when hundreds of supporters of local TMC strongman Sheikh Sahjahan attacked a team of Enforcement Directorate officials and members of central forces when they went to raid his house in connection with his alleged involvement in the Rs 10,000 crore ration scam that has landed senior Bengal minister Jyotipriya Mallick in jail.

While Sahjahan and his two accomplices Shibui Hajra and Uttam Sardar remained at large the women folk of

Sandeshkhali block --- which is an assortment of a group of river islands near the Sunderbans --- revolted demanding their immediate arrest. Properties including the farmhouses, poultrys, wine outlets etc of Hajra and Sardar were looted, vandalized and set on fire by the angry locals who complained of forced labour, land-grabbing and even forced sex.

Even as the administration snapped the internet service and clamped Section 144 in the area, the police went on an

arresting spree picking up opposition leaders.

While the CPI(M) has announced a gherao of all; the police stations on Monday demanding the immediate and unconditional release of Sardar a tribal leader, Bengal Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari demanded arrest of Sahjahan and Hajra both of whom are district board members.

“Their henchmen not only grabbed lands and looted the properties of the poor hapless Hindus but also they looted their women's honours ... first surveyed the villagers and then lifted the women. Kept them for days on end in the TMC parties offices before letting them off ... in case of protests their men were beaten up and their limbs were broken ... we cannot let this happen ... we cannot let the Hindu women's honour be looted like this ... we want their arrest,” Adhikari on Sunday said giving a call for “Sandeshkhali Chalo” on Monday.

I will cut my throat before betraying TMC: Abhishek

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Trinamool Congress general secretary Abhishek Banerjee has iterated that he would not let a Maharashtra take place in Bengal by the way of him doing the Ajit Pawar or Eknath Shinde. “There are no factions in the Trinamool Congress. Differences in our approach do not imply personal or political disagreements with Mamata Banerjee,” the Trinamool Congress posted on social media quoting Banerjee who is also the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

According to sources the junior Banerjee said that he had no lust for posts. “He said that differences may be there but that is simply difference of opinion and there is nothing personal about it,” a senior leader said adding the junior Banerjee had said that “even if the INDIA alliance comes to power in Delhi he will not hanker for ministerial berths.” Banerjee is also known to



have said he would prefer to slit his throat than to betray Mamata Banerjee who has created him.

“I will cut my throat before betraying my party ... I am out and out a Trinamool Congress man and will continue to be so,” he said.

Speculations had been rife for the past several weeks as Banerjee remained conspicuous by his absence in a number of party programmes including the dharna against

alliance to become the Deputy Chief Minister of that State. Political grapevine in Bengal speculated that Banerjee could split the TMC after the Lok Sabha polls enabling the BJP to grab power.

“It is clear that going by the division of votes and political maturity in Bengal it is not feasible that BJP can come to power through elections if they take place in a free and fare manner ... in that case it is possible that after the general elections which is heavily tilted towards the NDA Abhishek Banerjee is forced to join the NDA by splitting the TMC ... and all this with the Chief Minister's consent because they do not have the power to save themselves from ED and CBI ... the allegations are heavily loaded against them,” said a political analyst and an advocate in Calcutta High Court. However, Banerjee's statement tended to put a lid on the issue for the time being it seems.

Farmers Delhi Chalo march: Cops issue traffic advisory

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi traffic police have issued an advisory for the proposed farmers' Delhi Chalo' march on February 13. The police have advised commuters to plan their journey accordingly and advised to avoid the above borders.

According to advisory, heavy, Commercial Vehicles and trucks going towards Bahadurgarh, Rohtak via Rohtak Road are advised to use Najafgarh Nangloi Road from Nangloi Chowk to enter Haryana via Najafgarh Jharoda Border. Vehicles intending to go towards Bahadurgarh, Rohtak via Rohtak Road may take left turn from PVC Red Light upto Jharoda Nala Crossing - take right turn upto Najafgarh Bahadurgarh Road reaching towards Bahadurgarh. “Take left turn towards Hiranakudna Village - Turn Right Dichaon Kalan Hiranakudna Marg (5 KM) - Dichaon Kalan Village- Nangloi Stand-turn Left Najafgarh Firni Road- Delhi Gate Stand- Turn Right Chhawla Stand- Turn Right Dhansa Stand- Bahadurgarh Stand Turn Left Najafgarh

Bahadurgarh Road-Jharoda Village- Jharoda Border reaching towards Bahadurgarh (HR),”it said.

The advisory said take Left Turn towards Nangloi Najafgarh Road (13 KM) Nangloi Stand-Turn Left Najafgarh Firni Road-Delhi Gate Stand-Turn Right Chhawla Stand- Turn Right Dhansa Stand- Turn Right Bahadurgarh Stand Turn Left Najafgarh Bahadurgarh Road-Jharoda Village-Jharoda Border reaching towards Bahadurgarh (HR).

Motorists (cars) coming from Punjabi Bagh to take Turn Left from Peeragarhi Chowk up to Najafgarh Road (8 KM) - Turn Right Uttam Nagar Chowk-Dwarka Mor-Tura Mandi-Najafgarh Firni Road Turn Left-Chhawla Stand-Turn Right Dhansa Stand-Turn Right Bahadurgarh Stand - Turn Left Najafgarh Bahadurgarh Road-Jharoda Village-Jharoda Border reaching towards Bahadurgarh (HR).Commuters intending to go towards Sonapat, Panipat, Karnal via NH 44 are advised to take exit from Exit 1 (NH-44) Alipur Cut to Shani Mandir, to Palla Bakhtawarpur

Road Y-Point to Dahisara Village Road two lane stretch to MCD Toll Dahisara to Jatti Kalan road to Singhu Stadium to PS Kundali reaching NH-44 towards Sonapat Haryana. Traffic from Delhi going to Ghaziabad through Gazipur border may take: Pushta Road in front of Akshardham temple OR Patparganj Road/Mother Dairy Road OR Chaudhary Charan Singh Marg ISBT Anand Vihar and exit from Maharajpur or Apsara border in UP Ghaziabad.

Vehicular traffic going to Haryana through NH-44 may use/divert to Dabur Chowk, Mohan Nagar- Ghaziabad. Traffic coming from Hapur Road GT Road Delhi Meerut Expressway - Dasna- take left turn to Eastern Peripheral Expressway - Rai Cut and reach (NH-44) or Inderpuri Loni - Puja Pavi - Panchlok -Mandola Mussoorie- Khekra (29 KM) - left turn to Eastern Peripheral Expressway- Rai cut (NH-44).

Tronica City Marg - Tronica City - take left turn Delhi Dehradun Expressway Mandola Mussoorie - Khekra - left turn to Eastern Peripheral Expressway - Rai cut (NH-44).

Ancient text unravels mystery of 400 years old stolen idol

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Facing initial challenges in verifying its history for two long years, it was a fortuitous moment of rummaging through the pages of a Tantra Shastra book in Odisha that officials from the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) finally unravelled the mystery of a stolen 400-year-old historical brass statue, Kotarakshi.

The statue depicts Mother Chamunda with ten hands and was seized from the IGI Airport in Delhi in 2022. Valued at approximately Rs 3 crore in the global market, the statue's customs interception, measuring around 26 inches and weighing 38 kilogram, prompted ASI's investigation.

Though the idol is now restored to its original home in a temple in the lesser-known village of Badchana in Odisha, the journey from its seizure at the airport by customs officials to its installation was shrouded in mystery. ASI officials initially grappled with determining its origin and the location of its theft.

“For two long years, ASI officials faced the daunting

task of verifying its history,” recounted an official. However, amidst this uncertainty, a chance discovery of ancient texts and scriptures, particularly a forgotten volume of Tantra Shastra literature from Odisha, proved pivotal.

“In the end of the third volume of the book authored by Professor Thomas Donaldson, there were some details and pictures which bore resemblance to the seized antiquity. There was an obscure mention of a deity resembling the stolen statue,” recalled the official.

Piecing together information provided by the Tantra and Sakta Art of Odisha Pustak, they managed to shed light on the historical and cultural significance of the statue. “We connected our Odisha ASI circle and connected the dots with the FIR registered in the case by the temple priest way back in 2021,” recounted an official.

He explained that details of the antiquities were not available anywhere, making it a herculean task to identify its origin. However, breakthroughs came through the study of Tantra Shastra literature, particularly the Tantra and Sakta Art of Odisha Pustak.

Learning of the statue's recovery, a team of priests, villagers, and locals from the region visited the customs office in Delhi and identified the idol, confirming its connection to the temple. To expedite its return, the locals, under the guidance of the Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, petitioned the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

“The idol's journey back home was facilitated by the intervention of the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), prompted by a heartfelt request from the villagers led by Union Minister Dharmesh Pradhan, who hails from Odisha,” said the official. The ASI is now in the process of registering the artifact with all photographs and history to ensure its identification and security. Simultaneously, the State Government has been asked to ensure theft-proof security for the valuable idol, one of the jewels in India's rich cultural heritage.

According to the locals, Maa Kotrakshi is a symbol of faith, community spirit, and heritage. Seven months after the theft, the villagers had installed another idol of Maa Kotrakshi.

BJP names 7 candidates for RS polls from UP

From Page 1

prominent face of the party in electronic and social media.

Fifty-nine-year-old R P N Singh, who left the Congress to join the BJP before the 2022 Uttar Pradesh assembly elections, belongs to the Sainthwar Royal family of Kushinagar and is considered a key leader of his community in eastern Uttar Pradesh.

In 2009, he was elected to the Lok Sabha from Kushinagar and served as the Union Minister of State for Road Transport and Highways from 2009 to 2011. He was the Union Minister of State for Home in the then Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government till October 2012.

In the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, he lost to the BJP candidate in Kushinagar.

He was also elected to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly from Padrauna in 1996, 2002 and 2007.

The BJP has renominated its national spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi from the state.

Trivedi was elected unopposed to the Rajya Sabha from Uttar Pradesh in October 2019.

The party's state general secretary Amarpal Maurya is considered a prominent leader from the Koeri community.

Maurya, who has been long associated with the organisation, is considered close to Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya.

Chaudhary Tejveer Singh, who comes from the Jat community, is a former MP from Mathura and is currently active in the cooperative movement.

He was elected to the Lok Sabha from Mathura in 1996, 1997 and 1998.

Sangeeta Balwant was the Minister of State for Cooperation in the first Yogi Adityanath government in Uttar Pradesh. In the 2022 assembly elections, she was defeated from the Ghazipur Sadar seat by 1,600 votes.

Sadhna Singh is a former MLA from Chandauli district.

Naveen Jain is a former mayor of Agra Municipal Corporation. The Rajya Sabha elections are scheduled to be held on February 27.

DELHI BRACES UP FOR FARMERS...

From Page 1

The security forces in Haryana and Punjab are reportedly using tractors to simulate the protest and practise how they will respond. A total of 40 such rehearsal using tractors -- 10 in Haryana, 30 in Punjab -- have been held so far.

The road on the Ghaggar flyover at the Shambhu border is shut for traffic movement, with police placing cemented barricades on the road. Barbed wire, sandbags, concrete blocks barricades and other items have been stocked at the Shambhu border.

View cutters and frames were also being put up at the flyover. The Ghaggar river bed has also been dug up to prevent farmers from reaching the highway.

In Jind, two roads near the Haryana-Punjab border have been shut for vehicular movement and restrictions imposed on two more roads, a police official said on Sunday.

In Fatehabad district, police have also put up cemented barricades and spike strips on a Jakhla road to stop protesters from Punjab moving towards Delhi.

The Haryana Police on Saturday issued a traffic advisory asking commuters to take alternative routes. In the traffic advisory, police asked commuters going from Chandigarh to Delhi to take alternative routes via Derabassi, Barwala/Ramgarh, Saha, Shahbad, Kurukshetra, or through Panchkula, NH-344 Yamunanagar Indri/Pipli, Karnal.

Similarly, passengers travelling from Delhi to Chandigarh have been asked to reach their destination via Karnal, Indri/Pipli, Yamunanagar, Panchkula, or Kurukshetra, Shahbad, Saha, Barwala, Ramgarh, according to the police.

The farmers have planned to head to Delhi from the Ambala-Shambhu border, Khanauri-Jind and the Dabwali border.Ambala and Kaithal districts have imposed section 144 of the CrPC, prohibiting the assembly of five or more

people. Police have also been holding meetings with sarpanch of villages and khap panchayats, asking them not to participate in the march.SKM leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal slammed the Haryana Government for making arrangements to stop farmers from going towards Delhi.“We are ready for talks and will never run away from dialogue,” he said.On one side, talks are going on with the Centre and on the other hand, the State Government is creating terror, Dallewal said, adding, “What the Khattar Government is doing is unfortunate and condemnable.”He said the Government had “promised” a legal guarantee on minimum support price during the stir against the now-repealed farm laws.

The farmer leader said the Government had “promised” the withdrawal of cases registered against farmers.

Farmers were forced to move towards Delhi as their demands were not accepted by the Centre.“Why is the Government scared? Huge barricading was being done. Is this democracy,” Dallewal asked.“If the situation turns bad, it will be the responsibility of the Khattar government,” he said in a video message.

In 2020, a significant number of farmers from Punjab and nearby areas, notably Ambala, congregated at the Shambhu border, breaching police barricades in an attempt to march towards Delhi. Primarily hailing from Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh, these farmers staged a year-long protest at Delhi's border points-Singhu, Tikri, and Ghazipur-against the now-repealed farm laws.

The farmer bodies held the first round of meeting with the three Union Ministers on February 8.

The leaders of the Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) Lakhawal in Ludhiana, Punjab, declared on Saturday that they would not participate in the ‘Delhi Chalo’ protest scheduled for February 13. However, they stated their readiness to oppose any mistreatment faced by farmers during the march.

All eyes on Bihar...

From Page 1

Sources said the RJD has offered Manjhi a Rajya Sabha seat, a Lok Sabha seat, and two Cabinet berths in case the Tejaswi-led front is supported by him. Manjhi had demanded two berths in the newly formed NDA Cabinet.

The former Chief Minister, known as a mercurial leader, was apparently keeping his options open.

Manjhi himself has disclosed that an Opposition party had offered him the post of Chief Minister but did not reveal which party did so.

Sources also said the NDA alliance is planning to move a no-confidence motion against the Speaker an hour before the trust vote. The Speaker had refused to give in to the ruling alliance's demands and resign from his post, adding that he would only step down based on the results of the floor test.

As per the rules, a no-confidence motion can be brought after 14 days [of giving notice to the Secretary of the Assembly] or on the 14th day. Until then, the Speaker remains in his office.

Sunday brought worry for all political parties except for the BJP, as legislators of the RJD, the JD(U), the Congress, the CPIML were playing truant, with some not attending their respective party meetings, not showing up for meals, and worst, some of them keeping their mobile phones ‘not reachable’.The biggest headache has come for Nitish as a few of his party legislators were conspicuously absent for the meeting at the residence of senior party leader and Cabinet Minister Shrawan Kumar.

An MLA of a Left party (an ally of the RJD-led grand alliance) was said to have met with Hindustani Awam Morcha (Secular) chief Manjhi at the behest of Lalu.

The luncheon meeting at former Deputy CM Tejaswi's official residence, where RJD legislators were later joined by their CPIML colleagues, had stated to wait for the “Khela Hoga” (game plan) when Nitish walked out from the Mahagathbandhan alliance to join BJP.

In a statement clarifying the RJD legislators’ ‘stay-over’ at Tejashwi's residence, party spokesman and Rajya Sabha MP Manoj Jha said the legislators had decided to spend the next 48 hours together. He also said the RJD MLAs were playing ‘antakshari’ inside.

Modi: Congress anti...

From Page 1

Targeting the Opposition, he said, “The Congress remembers villages, the poor and farmers only during elections,” he said. “We have started a campaign against sickle cell anaemia not for votes, but for the health of tribals,” he said.

The Centre last year launched the National Sickle Cell Anaemia Eradication Mission 2047, which aims to address the pressing health challenges posed by the sickle cell disease, particularly among the tribal population.

Jhabua is a tribal dominated district which shares borders with Gujarat and Rajasthan, both BJP-ruled States. Incidentally, out of the 47 Lok Sabha seats reserved for Scheduled Tribes across the nation, six

are in Madhya Pradesh, four in Gujarat and three in Rajasthan.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP had won 28 out of 29 Lok Sabha seats in MP, including the six reserved for STs, and all 26 in Gujarat and 25 in Rajasthan.

“In the South, women, children and elderly persons have showered countless blessings on me when I visited temples connected to Lord Ram there.

I experienced overwhelming blessings,” he added.

Attacking the Congress further, the PM said the party never thought of tribal development or respecting them when it was in power for a long time, and treated them only as vote banks.

“For the BJP, tribals are

not a vote bank but the pride and future of the country. Modi guarantees to work for them,” he told the gathering.

Only 100 residential schools were opened for tribal children during Congress rule (till 2014), while the figure has now increased by four times, the PM pointed out. No tribal children will be deprived of education, he said.

Then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee set up a Ministry for Tribal Welfare, Modi said, adding, “The Congress did not bother about villages and remained worried about their palaces. Now, local Congress functionaries are asking senior leaders how to go about asking for votes against Modi.

They are in trouble.”

Parties unfold their...

From Page 1

Sources said both may be fielded by the party in the Lok Sabha polls.

Senior Bihar leader Sushil Kumar Modi's fate also hangs in the balance as his name did not figure among the candidates named by the party.

In Bihar, which has six seats, the BJP, in alliance with Nitish Kumar's JD(U), has named Dharmshela Gupta and Bhim Singh. In Chhattisgarh, the BJP has named Raja Devendra Pratap Singh. From Karnataka, it has named Narayana Krishanasa Bhandage; Mahendra Bhatt from Uttarakhand, and Samik Bhattacharya from West Bengal.

Elections for 56 seats in the Rajya Sabha are set to take place on February 27, with the votes being counted the same day.

Mamata Banerjee-led TMC named four candidates for the Rajya Sabha elections from West Bengal. While the party nominated party leaders Sushmita Dev, Md Nadimul Haque, and Mamata Bala Thakur, it surprised many by announcing well-known journalist Sagarika Ghose as its nominee.

According to the current strength of the West Bengal Assembly, four TMC candidates and one from the BJP will be elected to the Rajya Sabha. Haque is a two-time Rajya Sabha MP, having been sent to the Upper House of Parliament for the first time in 2012.

Humans continue to invade...

From Page 1

As a token of goodwill, the Government has announced a compensation of Rs 10 lakh for the deceased's family and employment for the widow of the individual killed by the tusker.

Pak parties intensify efforts to form coalition government

PTI ■ LAHORE/ISLAMABAD

The three main political parties in Pakistan on Sunday intensified their efforts for the formation of a coalition government after it became clear that the coup-prone country faced a hung Parliament after general elections marred by allegations of rigging.

The general elections were held on Thursday, but the unusual delay in the announcement of results vitiated the atmosphere as several parties cried foul and some resorted to protests. Former prime minister and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won 101 seats in the National Assembly.

They were followed by three-time former Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) with 75 seats, which technically is the single largest party in Parliament.

The Pakistan Peoples Party of Bilawal Zardari Bhutto got 54 seats, and the Karachi-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) of Urdu-speaking people who migrated from India during the Partition, got 17 seats. Other smaller parties won the rest of the 12 seats.

To form a government, a party must win 133 seats out of 265 contested seats in the National Assembly.

Overall, 169 seats are needed to secure a simple majority out of its total 336 seats, which include the reserved slots for women and minorities which will be decided later based on proportional representation.

The PML-N was leading the push to form the coalition

postponed after the death of a candidate.

Independent candidates, a vast majority of them backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), won 101 seats in the National Assembly.

They were followed by three-time former Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) with 75 seats, which technically is the single largest party in Parliament.

The Pakistan Peoples Party of Bilawal Zardari Bhutto got 54 seats, and the Karachi-based Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM-P) of Urdu-speaking people who migrated from India during the Partition, got 17 seats. Other smaller parties won the rest of the 12 seats.

To form a government, a party must win 133 seats out of 265 contested seats in the National Assembly.

Overall, 169 seats are needed to secure a simple majority out of its total 336 seats, which include the reserved slots for women and minorities which will be decided later based on proportional representation.

The PML-N was leading the push to form the coalition



government on the pattern of one it set up after Khan, 71, was removed as prime minister through a no-confidence vote in April 2022. Party supremo Sharif, 74, tasked his younger brother former premier Shehbaz Sharif to hold talks on the issue.

The PML-N leaders on Sunday held a meeting with MQM-P leaders in Lahore.

After an hour-long meeting, they have reached a "principle agreement" to work together in the upcoming government, according to a statement released by Sharif's party.

"We will work together in the interest of the country and public," the statement said, adding that basic points had been agreed upon by the two parties.

MQM-P leader Haider Rizvi earlier told Geo News in an interview that his party would be more comfortable with the PML-N as the "two parties don't compete in Karachi" unlike the PPP or other parties.

PML-N President Shehbaz on Saturday met senior PPP leaders Asif Ali Zardari and his Bilawal on Friday night and

discussed the future coalition.

Shehbaz told the party leaders that former president and PPP leader Asif Zardari has demanded the prime minister's slot for PPP Chairman Bilawal and major ministerial portfolios in exchange for support for the PML-N to form the government, sources said.

Party sources added that so far making a coalition with Zardari was the first option the PML-N was exploring but didn't want to give away the slot of prime minister.

Sources claimed the meeting decided that in case the negotiations with the PPP failed, the PML-N would make a coalition government with MQM, JUI-F and other smaller parties, including independents.

They further claimed that in this scenario, the PML-N would make Shehbaz Sharif the prime minister and Maryam Sharif the Chief Minister of Punjab.

"Shehbaz Sharif is the favourite for the PM office for being more close to the military establishment besides the PML-N has more seats in Parliament than the PPP," sources said.

Losing candidates backed by PTI challenge Pak poll results

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan courts have been flooded with petitions by losing candidates who challenged the provisional results in their constituencies within days after the highly polarised general elections in the country, it emerged on Sunday.

Though Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) emerged as the single largest party in the February 8 elections, the number of independent candidates, a vast majority of them backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, were the single largest block of winners.

The PTI claimed that its supported candidates have won the maximum number of seats but the results were manipulated to deprive it of the majority, and in order to turn the tide, its losing candidates have thronged the courts.

According to a report in the Dawn newspaper, a vast

majority of those filing challenges against results are PTI-backed independents, including high-profile politicians such as former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi and his wife Qaisera, former Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) finance minister Taimoor Jhagra and ex-KP speaker Mahmood Jan, Islamabad-based lawyer Shuaib Shaheen, former Punjab health minister Dr Yasmin Rashid, as well as Rehana Dar, mother of Usman Dar who was in-charge youth affairs in the PTI government.

In Lahore, the victories of PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz, PML-N Attaullah Tarar and former defence minister Khawaja Asif were assailed in separate petitions before the high court, which allege manipulation of Form 47s, which showed consolidated results of every constituency. The petitioners claim that they were successful against

their opponents as per the Form 45, showing results of individual polling stations, handed to them.

However, in their absence, their victories were allegedly turned into defeats in the Form 47. The have also alleged collusion in the alteration of election results and demand that the results of Form 47 be prepared according to the Form 45s.

In PP 146 Sialkot, Omar Dar's wife, Ruba Omar, has challenged the election results. According to Form 45, Ruba Omar has won, but she was evidently defeated in Form 47 due to collusion.

Maryam's victory from NA-119 has been challenged by independent candidate Shahzad Farooq, alleging that the presiding officers did not provide Form 45, and the returning officer issued the result in his absence. Farooq claims to have won against Maryam but was defeated due to rigging.

Russia launches 45 drones as Kyiv continues war cabinet reshuffle

AP ■ KYIV

Russian forces launched 45 drones over Ukraine on Sunday in a five-and-a-half-hour barrage, officials said, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy continued the reshuffle of his war cabinet as the war enters its third year. In a statement, the Ukrainian air force said it had shot down 40 of the Iranian-made Shahed drones over nine different regions, including on the outskirts of the country's capital, Kyiv.

The five-and-a-half-hour attack targeted agricultural facilities and coastal infrastructure, officials for Ukraine's southern defense forces wrote on Telegram. They said that a strike in the Mykolaiv region had injured one person, sparking a fire and damaging nearby residential buildings.

Another person was injured in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region when a blaze broke out due to falling debris from a destroyed drone,



said the head of the region's military administration, Serhiy Lysak. The strikes come as Zelenskyy continues his shake-up of military commanders in a bid to maintain momentum against attacking Russian forces. Kyiv announced on

Sunday that former deputy defence minister Lt Gen Alexander Pavlyuk would become the new commander of Ukraine's ground forces. The post was previously held by Col Gen Oleksandr Syrskyi, who was named on Thursday

as the replacement for Ukraine's outgoing military chief, Gen Valerii Zaluzhnyi.

New presidential decrees also named Yurii Sodol, the former head of Ukraine's marine corps, as the new commander of Ukraine's combined forces; Brig Gen Ihor Skibiuk as commander of Ukraine's air assault forces; and Maj Gen Ihor Plahuta as commander of Ukraine's territorial defense forces.

Incoming commander-in-chief Syrskyi has signalled that his immediate goals include improving troop rotation at the front lines and harnessing the power of new technology at a time when Kyiv's forces are largely on the defensive. In a statement on Telegram Saturday, Zelenskyy said that he hoped to "reboot" the upper levels of Ukraine's armed forces with experienced combat commanders. "Now, people who are well-known in the army and who themselves know well what the army needs are taking on new responsibilities," he said.

Finns vote for a new president

AP ■ HELSINKI

Voters in Finland are choosing on Sunday between two experienced politicians to be their next president, whose main task will be to steer the Nordic country's foreign and security policy now that it is a member of NATO, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Former prime minister Alexander Stubb, 55, on the centre right, and former foreign minister Pekka Haavisto, 65, from the green left, largely agree on Finland's foreign policy and security priorities.

These include maintaining a hard line toward Moscow and Russia's current leadership, strengthening security ties with Washington, and the need to help Ukraine both militarily and at a civilian level. Finland shares a 1,340-kilometer (832-mile) border with Russia.

Unlike in most European countries, the president of Finland holds executive power in formulating foreign and security policy together with the government, especially concerning countries outside the European Union such as the United States, Russia and China.

The head of state also commands the military — particularly important in Europe's current security environment and the changed geopolitical situation of Finland, which joined NATO in April 2023 in the aftermath of Russia's attack on Ukraine a year earlier.

A politician with the conservative National Coalition Party who led the government in 2014-2015 and earlier held several other Cabinet posts, Stubb took the top spot in the first round of the election on January 28 with 27.2 per cent of the votes and is the favourite to win the presidency.

Haavisto, the runnerup in the first round, was Finland's top diplomat in 2019-2023 and the main negotiator of its entry into NATO. A former conflict mediator with the United Nations and a devout environmentalist, Haavisto took 25.8 per cent of the votes in the first round. This is his third bid for the presidency. He is running as an independent although he is a former leader of the Green League.

In the last days of campaigning tiny differences in style and approach between the candidates have emerged.

Stubb and Haavisto differ in their stance on the hypothetical question of whether Finland would allow the transportation of the alliance's nuclear weapons through its territory. "Nuclear weapons are a strong element of our deterrence and our security. We signed our NATO agreement without any kind of limits," Stubb told The Associated Press during a campaign event just outside the capital, Helsinki, on Saturday. But "we (Stubb and Haavisto) also agree that no one is offering us nuclear weapons ... we don't want any nuclear weapons."

Haavisto said on Saturday that he does not favour nuclear arms being transported via Finland in a crisis situation. His country of 5.6 million makes up a substantial part of NATO's northeastern flank and is the European Union's external border in the north.

"I think there hasn't been any need to transport nuclear weapons to Finland or over Finland. As I've seen during NATO negotiations, the current nuclear policies of NATO are well-established and there is no need of changing them," he said.

Iran marks 45th anniv of Islamic Revolution

Tehran (AP): Iran marked Sunday the 45th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution amid tensions gripping the wider Middle East over Israel's continued war on Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Thousands of Iranians marched through major streets and squares decorated with flags, balloons and banners with revolutionary and religious slogans.

In Tehran, crowds waved Iranian flags, chanted slogans, and carried placards with the traditional "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" written on them. Some burned US and Israeli flags, a common practice in pro-government rallies. Processions started out from several points, converging at Azadi Square. State TV showed crowds in many cities and towns, claiming that "millions participated in the rallies" across the country.

The military displayed a range of its missiles, including the Qassem Soleimani and Sejil ballistic missiles, and the Simorgh satellite carrier at the square where people took selfies with them. During the celebrations, a paratrooper jumped from a plane while displaying a Palestinian flag. There was a heavy security presence in the major cities across the country. The anniversary came a month after a deadly attack by the extremist Islamic State group in the central city of Kerman that left at least 95 people dead during the commemoration for prominent Iranian general Qassem Soleimani whom the US killed in a 2020 drone strike.

Iran has tried to blame the US and Israel for the attack as the Israeli offensive in the Gaza Strip continued. The Islamic Republic launched missile attacks on Iraq and Syria. It then struck alleged anti-Iran Sunni militant group Jaish al-Adl targets in nuclear-armed Pakistan, which responded with its own strikes on Iran, further raising tensions in a region inflamed by the Israel-Hamas war. Earlier in January, a drone attack killed three US troops in Jordan which an umbrella group for Iran-backed factions known as the Islamic Resistance in Iraq claimed.

Egypt threatens to suspend key peace treaty with Israel

AP ■ RAFAH

Egypt is threatening to suspend its peace treaty with Israel if Israeli troops are sent into the densely populated Gaza border town of Rafah, and says fighting there could force the closure of the territory's main aid supply route, two Egyptian officials and a Western diplomat said on Sunday. The threat to suspend the Camp David Accords, a cornerstone of regional stability for nearly a half-century, came after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said sending troops into Rafah was necessary to win the four-month-old war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas. Over half of Gaza's population of 2.3 million have fled to Rafah to escape fighting in other areas, and are packed into sprawling tent camps and UN-run shelters near the border.

Egypt fears a mass influx of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees who may never be allowed to return.

The stand-off between Israel and Egypt, two close US allies, comes as aid groups warn that an offensive in Rafah would worsen the already.

Netanyahu, in an interview with ABC News "This Week with George Stephanopoulos", suggested civilians in Rafah could flee north, saying there are "plenty of areas" that have been cleared by the army. He said Israel is developing a "detailed plan" to relocate them. But the offensive has caused widespread destruction, particularly in northern Gaza, and heavy fighting is still taking place in central Gaza and the southern city of Khan Younis. A ground operation in Rafah could also force the closure of its crossing, cutting off one of the only

avenues for delivering badly needed food and medical supplies.

All three officials confirmed Egypt's threats, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to brief reporters on the sensitive negotiations. Qatar, Saudi Arabia and other countries have also warned of severe repercussions if Israel goes into Rafah. "An Israeli offensive on Rafah would lead to an unspeakable humanitarian catastrophe and grave tensions with Egypt," European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell wrote on X. Israel and Egypt had fought five wars before signing the Camp David Accords, a landmark peace treaty brokered by then-US President Jimmy Carter in the late 1970s. The treaty includes several provisions governing the deployment of forces on both sides of the border.

Hungary president resigns over pardon to man convicted in child sexual abuse case

AP ■ BUDAPEST

Hungary's conservative president resigned on Saturday amid public outcry over a pardon she granted to a man convicted as an accomplice in a child sexual abuse case, a decision that unleashed an unprecedented political scandal for the long-serving nationalist government.

Katalin Novák (46) announced in a televised message that she would step down from the presidency, an office she has held since 2022. Her decision came after more than a week of public outrage after it was revealed that she issued a presidential pardon in April 2023 to a man convicted of hiding a string of child sexual abuses in a state-run children's home. "I issued a pardon that caused bewilderment and unrest for many people," Novák said on Saturday. "I

made a mistake." Novák's resignation came as a rare episode of political turmoil for Hungary's nationalist governing party Fidesz, which has ruled with a constitutional majority since 2010. Under the leadership of populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, Fidesz has been accused of dismantling democratic institutions and rigging the electoral system and media in its favour.

Novák, a key Orbán ally and a former vice president of Fidesz, served as the minister for families until her appointment to the presidency. She has been outspoken in advocating for traditional family values and the protection of children.

She was the first female president in Hungary's history, and the youngest person to ever hold the office. But her term came to an end after she pardoned a man sentenced in

2018 to more than three years in prison. He was found guilty of pressuring victims to retract their claims of sexual abuse by the institution's director, who was sentenced to eight years for abusing at least 10 children between 2004 and 2016.

"I decided in favour of clemency in April of last year in the belief that the convict did not abuse the vulnerability of the children entrusted to him. I made a mistake," Novák said on Saturday. "I apologise to those I have hurt and to any victims who may have felt I am not standing up for them."

"As head of state, I am addressing you for the last time today. I resign from the office of president of the republic," she said. Also implicated was Judit Varga, another key Fidesz figure who was minister of justice at the time and endorsed the pardon. Varga was expected to lead the

list of European Parliament candidates from Fidesz when elections are held this summer. But in a Facebook post on Saturday, Varga announced that she would take political responsibility and "retire from public life, resigning my seat as a member of parliament and also as leader of the EP list."

At the presidential headquarters in Budapest on Saturday evening, around 200 people gathered in what was originally planned as a protest to call on Novák to resign. After her announcement, attendees said they were happy, but that it wasn't enough to fundamentally change Orbán's system of governance.

"I'm glad that she resigned but I think things aren't solved this way. She's not the main criminal, you've got to look all the way to the top," said Anna Bujna.

Pope and Milei embrace after pontiff canonises Argentina's first female saint

AP ■ VATICAN CITY

Pope Francis and Argentine President Javier Milei embraced on Sunday in St. Peter's Basilica, as Argentine faith and politics came together during a Mass to canonise the country's first female saint.

The ceremony to declare Mama Antula a saint marked the first meeting between the Argentine pope and Milei, who once called Francis an "imbecile" for defending social justice. The president, who was seated to Francis' right on the side of the main altar throughout the ceremony, bent over and gave the pope a big bearhug when Francis was wheeled over to him at the end of the service. Mama Antula was an 18th century laywoman

who ministered to the poor and helped keep Jesuit spirituality alive in Argentina after the religious order — to which the pope belongs — was suppressed. Argentines flocked to the canonisation, which turned into something of an Argentine fiesta in Rome. Milei waved to supporters in the pews as he entered the basilica and posed for selfie photos before the liturgy, while Argentine women, in particular, celebrated a saint who defied the norms for women of her time to spread the faith. In his homily, Francis praised Mama Antula as a model of charity and urged the faithful to really touch the wounds of the poor, as Jesus overcame fear and prejudice to touch the wounds of lepers. "How many

suffering men and women do we meet on the sidewalks of our cities," he said. "And how many fears, prejudices and inconsistencies, even among those who are believers and call themselves Christians, contribute to wounding them all the more!"

Milei is to meet privately with Francis on Monday, before also having private talks with Italy's far-right Premier Giorgia Meloni and the president. During his campaign, Milei described Francis as an "imbecile" and "the representative of malignance on Earth".

Francis spoke at length with Milei after he was elected in December and has indicated he has forgiven him for the campaign rhetoric. Francis has said he is considering vis-



iting Argentina later this year in what would be his first trip home since his 2013 election. After arriving in Rome on Friday from Israel, where Milei announced the relocation of

the Argentine embassy to Jerusalem, the president visited the Colosseum and the church housing one of Michelangelo's best-known sculptures: a seated Moses. In

an Instagram post accompanying a photo of himself looking at the sculpture, Milei wrote his frequent motto "Long live freedom damn it...!!!"

The president, who describes himself as an anarcho-capitalist, has promised to drastically reduce state spending to shore up a government budget deficit that he says is fuelling inflation, which finished 2023 at 211 per cent.

On Sunday, he appeared firmly engaged in the Mass, making the sign of the cross several times, receiving Communion and burying his head in his hands as he knelt in prayer afterward.

Mama Antula, born María Antonia de Paz y Figueroa, is a figure beloved to Argentines, a woman who left behind a life

of privilege to spread Ignatian spirituality across Argentina after the Jesuits were ordered expelled from Spain's colonies. She is held up in particular by Argentine women as a model of strength and independence, at a time when women's options in life included marriage or entering the convent.

"The first female saint — it's an enormous step forward," said Argentine pilgrim Annabella Lopez as she waited for the Mass to begin. "It's a pity it couldn't have happened before, but fine, now women are starting to have more visibility and this is a great step also for the church."

Silvia Corraele, who spearheaded Mama Antula's sainthood process, said she remembered she first met the future

Pope Francis when he was archbishop of Buenos Aires and Mama Antula's candidacy had just cleared an important hurdle in the Vatican.

"I know that he esteems her a lot, like all the Jesuits of Argentina and Uruguay, because they consider her their spiritual mother," Corraele told The Associated Press in the runup to the ceremony. "They know that she kept the treasure of the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius alive in the years they weren't there." But the current archbishop of Buenos Aires, Archbishop Jorge Ignacio García Cuerva, said it would be wrong to think that Mama Antula is only being made a saint now because a Jesuit Argentine pope happens to be running the Catholic Church.

Market cap of four most valued firms jumps ₹2.18 lakh crore

LIC, SBI lead gainers

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Four of the top-10 most valued firms together added Rs 2.18 lakh crore in market valuation last week, with Life Insurance Corporation and State Bank of India emerging as the biggest gainers.

From the top-10 pack, Reliance Industries, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), Life Insurance Corporation of

India (LIC) and SBI were the gainers. They collectively added Rs 2,18,598.29 crore in market capitalisation. On the other hand, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, Bharti Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC faced erosion from their valuation to the tune of Rs 1,06,631.39 crore. Last week, the BSE benchmark declined by 490.14 points or 0.67 per cent. Market valuation of LIC jumped Rs 86,146.47 crore to Rs 6,83,637.38 crore. The share price of LIC on Monday jumped nearly 6 per cent to hit the Rs 1,000 mark for the first



time. SBI added Rs 65,908.26 crore, taking its valuation to Rs 6,46,365.02 crore. Market valuation of TCS climbed Rs 61,435.47 crore to Rs 15,12,743.31 crore and that of Reliance advanced Rs 5,108.09 crore to reach Rs 19,77,136.54 crore. Shares of TCS jumped 4 per cent on Tuesday, taking its market valuation to above Rs 15 lakh crore. However, market capitalisation (mcap) of HDFC Bank declined by Rs 32,963.94 crore to Rs 10,65,808.71 crore. The valuation of ITC eroded by Rs 30,698.62 crore to Rs 5,18,632.02 crore.

Mcap of Bharti Airtel fell by Rs 16,132.15 crore to Rs 6,31,044.50 crore and that of Infosys went lower by Rs 10,044.09 crore to Rs 6,92,980.35 crore. The valuation of ICICI Bank dipped Rs 9,779.06 crore to Rs 7,09,254.77 crore and that of Hindustan Unilever diminished by Rs 7,013.53 crore to Rs 5,69,587.91 crore. In the ranking of top-10 most valued firms, Reliance Industries continued to rule the chart followed by TCS, HDFC Bank, ICICI Bank, Infosys, LIC, State Bank of India, Airtel, Hindustan Unilever and ITC.



FPIs infuse over ₹15,000 crore in debt market in February

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) continued their bullish stance on the country's debt markets with a net infusion of over Rs 15,000 crore so far this month, on the back of inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index along with relatively stable economy. This followed a net investment of Rs 19,836 crore in January, making it the highest monthly inflow in more than six years. This was the highest inflow since June 2017, when they infused Rs 25,685 crore.

On the other hand, foreign investors pulled out more than Rs 3,000 crore from equities during the period under review. Before this, they withdrew a massive Rs 25,743 crore in January, data with the depositories showed.

"The main trigger for this divergent trend in equity and debt is the high valuation in the Indian equity market and the rising bond yields in the US," V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services, said.

Himanshu Srivastava, Associate Director - Research, Morningstar Investment Research India, attributed the outflow from equities to the uncertainty surrounding the interest rate environment, both domestically as well as globally.

According to the data, FPIs made a net investment

of Rs 15,093 crore in the debt markets in this month (till February 9).

With this, the total investment by FPIs reached over Rs 34,930 crore in 2024.

They have been injecting money in the debt markets for the past few months.

FPIs infused Rs 18,302 crore in the debt market in December, Rs 14,860 crore in November, and Rs 6,381 crore in October.

"The Indian debt markets witnessed a reversal in FPI flow trend last year after the announcement of inclusion of Indian government bonds in the JP Morgan Index. This was one of the major drivers for the robust flows from FPIs, along with relatively stable economy," Srivastava said.

JP Morgan Chase & Co. In September last year announced that it will add Indian government bonds to its benchmark emerging market index from June 2024.

This landmark inclusion is anticipated to benefit India by attracting around USD 20-40 billion in the subsequent 18 to 24 months.

This inflow is expected to make Indian bonds more accessible to foreign investors and potentially strengthen the rupee, thereby bolstering the economy, he added.

Overall, the total FPI flows in 2023 stood at Rs 1.71 lakh crore in equities and Rs 68,663 crore in the debt markets. Together, they infused Rs 2.4 lakh crore into the capital market.

Government examining FDI flow from China in Paytm Payments Services

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government is examining foreign direct investment from China in Paytm Payments Services Ltd (PPSL), the payment aggregator subsidiary of One97 Communications Ltd, sources said.

In November 2020, PPSL had applied for licence with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to operate as a payment aggregator under the guidelines on Regulation of Payment Aggregators and Payment Gateways.

However, in November 2022, RBI rejected PPSL's application and asked the company to resubmit it, so as to comply with Press Note 3 under FDI rules. One97 Communications Ltd (OCL) has investment from Chinese firm Ant Group Co.

Subsequently, the company filed the required application on December 14, 2022 with Government of India for past downward investment from OCL into the company in order to comply with Press Note 3 prescribed under FDI guidelines.

An inter-ministerial committee is examining investments from China in PPSL and decision would be taken on the FDI issue after due consideration and

comprehensive examination, sources said.

Under Press Note 3, the government had made its prior approval mandatory for foreign investments in any sector from countries that share land border with India to curb opportunistic takeovers of domestic firms following the COVID-19 pandemic. Countries which share land borders with India are China, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Myanmar and Afghanistan.

A query sent to OCL for comments remained unanswered till the filing of the story. The Reserve Bank last month barred Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL), an associate company of OCL, from accepting deposits or top-ups in any customer account, prepaid instruments, wallets, and FASTags, among others after February 29, 2024.

The Reserve Bank's action against PPBL follows a comprehensive system audit report and subsequent compliance validation report of external auditors.

RBI had said that these reports revealed persistent non-compliances and continued material supervisory concerns in PPBL, warranting further supervisory action.

Direct tax collection grows 20 per cent, reaches ₹15.60 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Net direct tax collection so far in current fiscal grew 20 per cent year-on-year to Rs 15.60 lakh crore, which is 80 per cent of revised budget estimates for full fiscal year.

"The provisional figures of direct tax collections continue to register steady growth. Direct tax collections up to 10th February, 2024 show that gross collections are at Rs



18.38 lakh crore, which is 17.30 per cent higher than the gross collections for the corresponding period of last year," Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement. Direct tax collection, net of refunds, till February 10 of FY24 stands at Rs 15.60 lakh crore, which is 20.25 per cent higher than the net collections in the corresponding period last year. This collection is 80.23 per

cent of the total revised estimates of direct taxes for 2023-24.

Refunds amounting to Rs 2.77 lakh crore have been issued during April 1, 2023 to February 10, 2024.

Gross revenue collections for Corporate Income Tax (CIT) and Personal Income Tax (PIT) also showed a steady growth.

Growth rate for CIT was 9.16 per cent while for PIT, it was 25.67 per cent (PIT only).

Adani Ports secures top position for climate actions

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) on Sunday said it has secured top position for its climate actions and environmental performance in assessments done by four global rating agencies.

The assessments were done by CDP, S&P, Sustainalytics and Moody's.

While the company secured 'leadership band' in CDP Climate Assessment 2023, it ranked first on the environmental dimension among 324 companies in the transport and transport



infrastructure sector by S&P Global CSA 2023, a statement said.

The company also secured the top rank in the marine ports sector on a low carbon transition rating by Sustainalytics.

It also received the 'advanced' rating in Moody's

Energy Transition Rating and the first rank in the overall ESG Assessment and Strategy review in their last update.

APSEZ is a part of the globally diversified Adani Group and is the largest port developer and operator in India.

Jeff Bezos sells nearly 12 million Amazon shares

AP ■ SEATTLE

Jeff Bezos filed a statement with federal regulators indicating his sale of nearly 12 million shares of Amazon stock worth more than USD 2 billion. The Amazon executive chairman notified the US Securities and Exchange Commission of the sale of 11,997,698 shares of common stock on February 7 and February 8. The collective value of the shares of Amazon, which is based in Seattle where he founded the company in a garage about three decades ago, is more than USD 2.04 billion.

Akums Drugs eyes ₹680 crore via fresh issue

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Akums Drugs and Pharmaceuticals Ltd has filed draft papers with capital markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering (IPO).

The initial share-sale is a combination of fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 680 crore and an offer-for-sale (OFS) of 1.86 crore shares by promoters and an existing investor, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Saturday.

Those selling shares in the OFS are Sanjeev Jain, Sandeep Jain and Ruby QC Investment Holdings Pte Ltd.

The company is looking to raise Rs 136 crore through a pre-IPO placement. If such placement is undertaken, then fresh issue size will be reduced. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used to repay debt, fund working capital requirements of the company, pursue inorganic growth initiatives through acquisition and for general corporate purposes.

Founded in 2004, Akums is a pharmaceutical contract development and manufacturing organization (CDMO) offering a comprehensive range of pharmaceutical products and services in India and overseas. As of September 30, 2023, key clients of the company include Alembic Pharmaceuticals, Alkem Laboratories, Cipla, Dabur India, Dr. Reddy's Laboratories, Sun Pharmaceutical Industries, among others.

Close to ₹750 crore stuck in projects in Qatar, says Voltas

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Tata Group firm Voltas is facing a major headwind in Qatar as around Rs 750 crore has been stuck due to delays in the realisation of overdue receivables and execution timelines, said its MD and CEO Pradeep Bakshi.

In some projects, bank guarantees were "unethically" encashed by some contractors, which was an "uncalled" action to make quick money, derailing the international project business of Tata Group firm in the December quarter, he added.

"Unprecedented things are happening in that area, especially in Qatar, wherein, unfortunately, our dues are

not being paid to us timely, and inordinate delays are happening. We have completed the project and handed it over, and despite that, payments are not made," Bakshi told PTI. Voltas has already approached the Indian government for help on the issue and also approached the Embassy in Qatar. MEP (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing) contractor Voltas has completed the projects in Qatar and handed them over as per the contract. However, its bills are not getting certified and paid.

"There has to be some basic ethics when you do business with your partners... Unfortunately, our payments are not coming.

Duty concession on gold major concern in FTA with Peru: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Duty concessions on gold, which accounts for 80 per cent of India's imports from Peru, is the most challenging issue for New Delhi under the proposed free trade agreement with the South American nation, a report said on Sunday.

Economic think tank Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said that gold, a high-value product with low volume, attracts a 10 per cent basic customs duty in India, and even minor tariff concessions could lead to a significant increase in imports.

India and the South American nation Peru are negotiating a free trade agreement to promote bilateral trade and

investments between the two countries. In such pacts, two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate customs duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them, besides easing norms to promote trade in services.

The next round of talks is expected to start this week in Lima, Peru.

"Tariff concessions on gold, accounting for USD 1.8 billion or 80 per cent of India's imports from Peru in FY23, is the most challenging issue for India," GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava said.

He argued that after tariff concessions under the India-UAE free trade agreement, gold imports from the UAE, India's second-largest gold supplier, doubled in 2023 compared to 2022.



"Peru, the fifth-largest supplier to India, could see a similar surge in gold imports if concessions are made," the report said.

In 2023, India's global imports of unwrought gold are estimated at USD 43 billion, with Switzerland accounting for 40 per cent of these imports, it said, adding

that given Peru's gold mines, its gold would easily meet any Rules of Origin criteria.

"FTAs offer concessions on effective duties rather than on the bound duty. Excluding gold from an FTA would violate the World Trade Organization's Article XXIV, which requires duty cuts on substantial trade for FTAs,"

Srivastava said.

He also said that India's bound duty on gold is set at 40 per cent, but the current applied tariff is 10 per cent.

"FTAs allow concessions in effective duties and not on bound duty. If the FTA does not include gold, it may not meet the WTO Article XXIV condition for FTAs to have duty cuts on substantial trade," Srivastava said.

Peru has a bilateral trade pact with major economies like the US, EU, China, Australia, and Singapore. It also has multi-country agreements with the Pacific Alliance (Chile, Colombia, and Mexico) and the Andean Community (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador).

These FTAs allow tariff-free imports of most products imported into Peru.

Majority of employees feel difficulty in adapting work from office module: Report

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Amid encouraging their employees to return to the office, a majority of workers interviewed feel that it will be difficult for them to adapt to this transition, according to a report. There is an apprehension among employees regarding the adaptation to the work-from-office module, and 69 per cent of respondents have expressed concerns about the potential challenges associated with this transition, a report by staffing solutions and HR services



provider Genius Consultants said. However, 25 per cent of employees showcased resilience and confidence in their ability to navigate and adapt to the renewed office environment, it added.

The report is based on an online survey among 1,213

employees from October 26 to November 30 across sectors like banking and finance, education, FMCG, hospitality, HR solutions, IT, ITES, and manufacturing.

The report also anticipated a potential rise in attrition as a consequence of the work-from-office call.

A significant 82 per cent of employees have expressed concerns, citing the increasing availability of work-from-home job opportunities in the market, the report said.

This presents the evolving nature of the job market and the need for organisations to

consider and address the preferences and demands of their workforce, it added.

On the flip side, 12 per cent of respondents do not perceive attrition as a major concern, signalling a degree of optimism about the benefits of the in-office experience. About 67 per cent believe that work-from-office facilitates the integration of new employees with the larger workforce, serving as a catalyst for instilling organisational values.

This perspective highlights the importance employees place on interpersonal connections.

ONGC Q3 profit falls 14 per cent to ₹9,536 crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) on Sunday reported 14 per cent drop in net profit for the third quarter ended December 31 as oil and gas prices fell.

Standalone net profit of Rs 9,536 crore in October-December 2023 (third quarter of 2023-24 fiscal year) was 13.7 per cent lower than Rs 11,045 crore earning in the same period of previous financial year, the company said in a statement.

The earning was lower as

price realised for crude oil the firm produced and sold in the quarter fell 6.4 per cent to USD 81.59 per barrel. Gas price too was 24.2 per cent lower at USD 6.5 per mmbtu.

Also contributing to lower profit was a decline in production of crude oil, which is converted into fuel like petrol and diesel at refineries, and natural gas which is used to generate electricity, produce fertilizer, turned into CNG and piped to kitchens for cooking. Crude oil production dropped 3.3 per cent to 5.22 million tonne while gas output was 4.3 per cent

lower at 5.12 billion cubic meters. Gross revenue was down 10 per cent at Rs 34,789 crore in Q3. The board of the company approved a second interim dividend of 80 per cent or Rs 4 a share. "The total payout on this account will be Rs 5,032 crore," the statement said.

This is in addition to the first interim dividend of Rs 5.75 per share declared last year. ONGC's standalone net profit in the first nine months of the current fiscal fell 24 per cent to Rs 29,767 crore as oil price realised dropped to \$75.55 a barrel from \$97.10.

Nagal, Ramkumar draw French rivals in opening round of Bengaluru Open

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Indian ace Sumit Nagal is pitted against Geoffrey Blancaneaux, while wild card entrant Ramkumar Ramanathan will face Maxime Janvier in the men's singles main draw of the Bengaluru Open beginning here on Monday.

World ranked 121 Nagal will aim to extend his dominance over French player Blancaneaux, whom he has beaten three times, including in the Australian Open Qualifiers.

India No 2 Ramkumar has a 1-1 head-to-head record against Janvier of France and if he clears the first round hurdle, he is likely to run into top-seed Italian Luca Nardi, who has been drawn to meet a qualifier in his opening round.

Australian Adam Walton has been seeded third and will open his campaign



against Indian wild card entrant Prajwal Dev.

In the doubles main draw, Frenchman Dan Added and Korea's Yun Seong Chung have been given the top billing and will clash with the Australian pair Tristan Schoolkate and Adam Walton.

Australia's Christopher Matthew Romios and Poland's Piotr Matuszewski are seeded second and will take on Taipei's Ray Ho and Australia's Calum Puttergill.

There are nine Indians in the doubles main draw.

N Sriram Balaji and Andre Begemann of Germany will clash with the German duo of Mark Wallner and Jakob Schnaitter.

The ATP Challenger event is being organised by Karnataka State Lawn Tennis Association at KSLTA Stadium. Qualifying rounds began on Sunday, while the final is scheduled on February 18.



Man City keeps pressure on Liverpool

AP ■ LONDON

Watch out, Premier League. The competition's most lethal attacking combination is back in tandem.

Erling Haaland and Kevin De Bruyne - both recently back from long injury absences - linked up for the clinching goal in Manchester City's 2-0 win over Everton on Saturday in what will be a worrying sight for the defending champions' rivals.

do his old club a favor.

Liverpool bounced back from only its second league loss this season, at Arsenal last weekend, though there might be concerns over the fitness of Trent Alexander-Arnold after the right back came off at halftime with a recurrence of a recent knee injury, when the score was 1-1.

"Same area in the knee. Nothing really bad but he felt it again," Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp said.

SON'S TRIUMPHANT RETURN

Son Heung-min marked his return for Tottenham after more than a month away at the Asian Cup by creating a dramatic winner against Brighton. Son, whose South Korea team was eliminated in the semifinals on Tuesday, started on the bench for his comeback game, came on at 1-1 and set up Brennan Johnson for a goal in the sixth minute of stoppage time that made it 2-1.

"It's fair to say that we are still a work in progress but we had a world-class player in Son who makes the most difficult ball look simple to set up Brennan," said Tottenham manager Ange Postecoglou, whose team jumped above Aston Villa into fourth place.

GUIMARAES DOUBLE

Bruno Guimaraes continues to be the shining light in a difficult season for Newcastle. The Brazil midfielder scored in each half, including a superb curling shot for the winner, as Newcastle beat Nottingham Forest 3-2 to climb two places to seventh.

Guimaraes' performances have been consistently excellent for Newcastle while, crucially, he has stayed healthy in a campaign that has seen manager Eddie Howe lose player after player to injury.

Forest stayed two points and two places above the relegation zone but, like third-to-last Everton, was recently charged with breaching the league's financial regulations and could yet be facing a points deduction.

IN-FORM TONEY

Ivan Toney scored for the third time in four games since his return from a ban for breaching betting regulations as Brentford won 2-0 at Wolverhampton. Last-place Sheffield United won for just the third time this season, 3-1 at relegation rival Luton, and Fulham was the winner by the same score at Bournemouth.



Inter wins 4-2 at Roma to end De Rossi perfect record

AP ■ MILAN

A sublime second-half performance from league leader Inter Milan saw it win 4-2 at Roma in the teeming rain and end Daniele De Rossi's perfect record.

Goals from Gianluca Mancini and Stephan El Shaarawy had given Roma the lead at halftime following Francesco Acerbi's opener for Inter. But the Nerazzurri turned things around immediately after the break with a strike from Marcus Thuram, who also forced an own-goal from new Roma defender Angelino.

Alessandro Bastoni sealed the match late on as Inter moved seven points above second-place Juventus. The Bianconeri can cut the gap to four points with a win at home to relegation-threatened Udinese on Monday but will then have played a match more than Inter.

Roma remained a point behind fourth-place Atalanta after De Rossi's first loss.

The former Roma player had won all three of his matches as coach after replacing the fired Jose Mourinho.

The Nerazzurri were without coach Simone Inzaghi on the bench in Rome after he picked up his fifth yellow card of the season in last weekend's win over Juventus.

The suspended Inzaghi watched from the stands as his team took the lead in the 17th minute - with the help of a former Inter player.

Former Nerazzurri forward Romelu Lukaku headed away an Inter corner but only as far as Acerbi, who headed it into the back of the net.

However, Roma leveled in the 28th minute when a free kick was floated over the top and Mancini headed it into the bottom right corner from close range.

And Roma turned the match around on the stroke of halftime as a counterattack sent El Shaarawy sprinting into the area and he unleashed a shot which hit the crossbar and the left post before also bouncing off the right post and going in.

Qatar win Asian Cup titles after beating Jordan 3-1

AP ■ LUSAIL (QATAR)

Akram Afif dropped to his knees. Pretty soon he was being thrown into the air by his joyous teammates after the forward's hat trick of penalties secured back-to-back Asian Cup titles for Qatar.

Afif, the outstanding player of the tournament and leading scorer with eight goals, was nerveless when converting his spot kicks in a 3-1 win against Jordan at Lusail Stadium on Saturday.

Just over a year ago it had been Lionel Messi and Kylian Mbappe who had lit up this spectacular venue in arguably the greatest World Cup final of all time.

On this occasion it was Afif taking center stage and becoming the first player to score a hat trick in the Asian Cup final.

He had been his country's standout performer from the start of the tournament and did not disappoint when it fell to him to produce the decisive moments against Jordan as Qatar became the first back-to-back winner since Japan in 2000 and 2004.

In front of more than 86,000 fans and with the pressure on, Afif never looked likely to miss from the spot and he sparked wild celebrations with each goal.

"(I scored) the penalties because of the confidence my teammates had in me. It is not about technique, it is about the feeling that people are behind me - my team," Afif said.

He won and converted his first penalty in the 22nd minute. And after Yazan Al Naimat leveled the game in the 67th he struck again from the spot in the 73rd and sealed the win in the fifth minute of stoppage time.

Afif had spoken earlier in the tournament of his wish to return to European soccer after spells in Spain and Belgium at the start of his career. His performances, which also earned him the award for the Asian Cup's most valuable player, will likely have caught the attention of clubs far and wide.

While this was a personal triumph for him, it was redemption for Qatar, which had endured a miserable World Cup on home soil in



2022 when exiting the tournament after three straight defeats in the group stage.

Even as host and defending champion, Qatar had been an unexpected finalist, let alone winner. Captain Hassan Al-Haydos noted on the eve of the final how critics had expected little of the team ahead of the tournament.

How satisfying for him, then, to be draped in the same type of black Qatari ceremonial robe that Messi had worn to lift the World Cup.

After the pain of that tournament, here was a

moment of national celebration as the Emir of Qatar Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani handed Al-Haydos the trophy and shortly after there was an eruption of tickertape and fireworks.

Earlier, Qatar's Spanish coach, Márquez López slumped in his seat, seemingly exhausted, as he waited out 17 minutes of stoppage time.

The exertions of the past month appeared to have taken its toll. He had only been hired in December and Qatar had been beaten 2-1 by Jordan in a friendly in January.

Shankar wins season opening meet in Belgium

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

National record holder in high jump Tejaswin Shankar won the top prize in the International High Jump Gala Elmos 2024 athletics meet in Heist-op-den-Berg, Belgium with a leap of 2.23 metres. Shankar, competing for the first time since October last year, finished ahead of Greece's Antonios Merlos (2.20 metres) in the World Athletics Indoor Tour Challenger event on Saturday.

The 25-year-old, who holds both the men's high jump and decathlon national records, however, could not better his personal best of 2.29m.

Shankar is also focusing on decathlon and had won bronze and silver in the discipline in the Asian Championships and Asian Games last year.



Shankar has trained his eyes on a Paris Olympics berth but for that he will have to achieve a qualifying standard of 2.33 metres.

The other Indian in fray, Jesse Sandesh finished joint-10th with a jump of 2.09 metres. Shankar will next be seen in action at the Hvezdy v Nehvizdech athletics meet in Nehvizdy, Czech Republic on February 20.

Jota, Diaz, Nunez score for Liverpool in 3-1 win over Burnley

AP ■ LIVERPOOL

Diogo Jota, Luis Diaz and Darwin Nunez - Liverpool's starting front three while Mohamed Salah is out injured - all scored for the Premier League leaders in a 3-1 win over Burnley.

The Reds responded to Manchester City's extremely brief return to the league's summit, after its 2-0 victory against Everton hours earlier, with a triumph that tested their mettle even more than their stretched resources.

While the three points reestablished Liverpool's two-point advantage, the less-than-convincing nature of victory against the league's next-to-last side was not quite befitting the occasion of the hosts' biggest league crowd of 59,896 after the full opening of the Anfield Road stand.

For a time it appeared Liverpool, which was without goalkeeper Alisson Becker



and defender Joe Gomez because of illness as well as the injured Salah, was still suffering a hangover from the defeat at Arsenal last week.

It took the familiar right boot of Trent Alexander-Arnold, setting a new mark of 58 for Premier League assists by a defender, and the equally reliable head of Jota to put

them ahead at a corner in the 31st. The sloppy concession of an equalizer, when Dara O'Shea headed in at a corner on the stroke of halftime, posed further problems as did the withdrawal of Alexander-Arnold - only recently returned from a knee injury - at the break.

It was the England international's replacement, Harvey Elliott, who set up headed goals for Diaz in the 52nd and Nunez in the 78th to ease the pressure.

However, had on-loan Chelsea forward David Fofana been as clinical as he was scoring twice last weekend, then not only would Liverpool be looking up at City but questions would have started to be asked about their ability to match their long-time rivals.

Liverpool should have Salah and Dominic Szoboszlai back from injury in the next couple of weeks.



The first break of the second set came when Giron made a lunging save with a forehand, then ran down

Paul, Giron advance to Dallas Open final

AP ■ DALLAS

Second-seeded Tommy Paul Sand unseeded Marcos Giron won in straight sets to set up an all-American final in the Dallas Open.

Paul beat No. 3 seed Ben Shelton of the U.S., 6-2, 6-4, and Giron rolled over a seeded opponent again, beating No. 4 seed Adrian Mannarino of France, 6-1, 6-3, in the semifinals.

The 30-year-old Giron, who beat top-seeded American Frances Tiafoe in

the quarterfinals, is seeking his first ATP Tour title Sunday in his second trip to a final. Paul's only title came in 2021 in Stockholm.

Paul won the final four games of the first set before a break early in the second set held up against the 21-year-old Shelton in the hardcourt event on the SMU campus.

Giron took a 4-0 lead in the first set a day after going up 5-0 in a straight-set win over Tiafoe, who was the highest-ranked player in the tournament at No. 14.

Mannarino's volley for a backhand crosscourt passing shot and a 5-3 lead. Giron, who hasn't lost a service game in four matches in the tournament, had little trouble closing out the match on his serve. With three victories over seeded opponents, Giron has a chance to surpass his career-best ranking of 49th from 2022, when Giron lost his only previous final in San Diego.

Giron reached the semifinals in Dallas two years ago, losing a three-setter to

Jenson Brooksby while having match points. The final two sets went to tiebreakers.

"That stuck with me, and that's hard," Giron said. "I have experience. I know what it's like to lose. I know what it's like to win. Having a big win yesterday was awesome, and I'm really, really happy to be able to come back today."

Paul reached two finals last year, losing in a grass-court event at Eastbourne and a hardcourt tournament in Acapulco.

The 26-year-old Paul

converted three of eight break points against the hard-serving Giron while saving all three break points he faced.

The 15th-ranked Paul, who stopped a six-match losing streak against top 20 opponents, had dropped his previous two matches against Shelton, who is No. 16.

"Obviously, his serve is unbelievable," Paul said. "These courts kind of help me a little bit. You don't have to jump in quite as high. Kind of kept the ball in my strike zone."

U-19 WORLD CUP FINAL

India lose by 79 runs to Australia

PTI ■ BENONI (SOUTH AFRICA)

India's batting lineup misfired when it mattered the most as they suffered a heartbreaking 79-run loss to Australia in the final of the U-19 World Cup here on Sunday.

Opting to bat, Australia first posted 253 for 7, courtesy Oliver Peake's enterprising 43-ball 46 and Harjas Singh's 55 off 64 balls, and then returned to bowl out the five-time champions for 174 in 43.5 overs.

Australia, thus, became four-time champions.

Chasing 254, opener Adarsh Singh made a 77-ball 47 but India kept losing wickets at regular intervals to collapse to 122 for 8 in 31.5 overs. Number 8 batter Murugan Abhishek (42 off 46 balls) then played an entertaining knock but it was too little and too late.

The loss brought back memories of Indian senior team's gut-wrenching loss to Australia in the 50-over



World Cup final at home in November last year.

For Australia, seamer Mahli Beardman (3/15) and off-spinner Raf MacMillan (3/43) did most of the damage. Callum Vidler (2/35) and Charlie Anderson (1/42) were the other wicket-takers.

Earlier, Harjas top-scored for Australia with 55, while Weibgen and opener Harry Dixon made 48 and 42 respectively. Later, Peake propped up Australia with his breezy knock.

Raj Limbani was the most successful Indian bowler with figures of 3/38, while Naman Tiwari picked up two wickets for 63 runs in nine overs.

BRIEF SCORES:

Australia: 253/7 in 50 overs (Harjas Singh 55, Hugh Weibgen 48, Harry Dixon 42, Oliver Peake not out 46; Raj Limbani 3/38, Naman Tiwari 2/63).

India: 174 all out in 43.5 overs (Adarsh Singh 47; Mahli Beardman 3/15, Raf MacMillan 3/43).



Real show stealer was Boomball, says Ashwin

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Lavishing praise on teammate Jasprit Bumrah, senior India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin said "Boomball" stole the show in the second Test against England and the pacer reaching top of the ICC rankings across three formats is a "Himalayan feat".

Bumrah displayed brilliance with the ball to play a key role in the team's series-levelling 106-run win in the second Test in Visakhapatnam.

He put up a reverse swing master-class in England's first innings that yielded him six wickets (6/45), following it up with a three-wicket haul in their second essay for match figures of 9 for 91.

His performance enabled him to jump to number one in the Test rankings list, becoming the first Indian pacer to achieve the feat. Bumrah has also held the top spot in the ODI and T20 rankings previously. "The real show stealer was BoomBall. Jasprit Bumrah has bowled extraordinarily," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

"He is the leading wicket-taker with 14 wickets and also the No.1 ranked Test bowler. The first India fast bowler to achieve number one across

all formats. I am a big fan of his and this is a Himalayan feat."

Ashwin said that the extraordinary vibe and energy on the fourth day of the second Test helped India secure a favourable result. "We came into the fourth day with it all being even-stevens. But our extraordinary vibe, energy and team performance helped us level the series 1-1." The five-match series will be played across Hyderabad, Visakhapatnam, Rajkot, Ranchi and Dharamasala and Ashwin noted that most Indian players have not played Test cricket at these venues.

"There's never been a marquee Test series like this in five such venues before. In 2017, we played Australia in Dharamasala and Ranchi and then Pune and Bengaluru. Usually, if there is a 4-5 match Test series at least one or two happen in metro cities."

"Unlike that, this time it's happening in venues that weren't part of World Cup matches."

"For most of the Indian players, these venues are new. There are a lot of players playing in our team who haven't played a first-class or Test match in Vizag stadium. I'm not sure that is possible in any other country. But possible in India as there are so many Test venues."



Leach ruled out of remaining three Tests against India

PTI ■ LONDON

England left-arm spinner Jack Leach was on Sunday ruled out of the remaining three Tests against India with a left knee injury, announced the England and Wales Cricket Board.

However, no replacement will be called up for Leach, an indication that England will continue with the spin trio of Tom Hartley, Rehan Ahmed and Shoaib Basheer for the rest of the tour.

Joe Root is the visitors' fourth spin option behind the three regular spinners.

Leach had sustained the injury during England's first Test victory in Hyderabad and missed the second Test in Visakhapatnam as a result.

"He will fly home from Abu Dhabi in the next 24 hours, where the England team has been staying ahead of the third Test in Rajkot, which starts on Thursday (February 15). "Leach will work closely with the England and Somerset medical teams in respect of his rehabilitation," stated the ECB in a media release.

The 32-year-old Leach has taken 126 wickets in 36 Tests, besides being a handy lower-order batter.

Zimbabwe Cricket to restructure after WC qualification woes

PTI ■ HARARE

Zimbabwe Cricket (ZC) has decided to effect far-reaching changes in both its domestic and development pathway following failure to qualify for the 2023 Men's ODI World Cup and the 2024 Men's T20 World Cup.

As a first step, the ZC board, which met on Saturday, decided to appoint 51-year-old former first-class player Walter Chawaguta as the head coach of the senior women's national team and accepted the resignation of U19 men's national team head coach Prosper Utseya.

It also decided to appoint the senior and U19 men's team coaches on an urgent basis. A ZC statement said



that the board had "adopted the comprehensive report presented by a committee of inquiry that was established

to probe Zimbabwe's World Cup qualification failures as well as to review ZC's cricket affairs structure". The three-

member committee was headed by lawyer Lloyd Mhishi.

"The three-member

Committee, chaired by Lloyd Mhishi, presented its report to the board after gathering input from various stakeholders, both internal and external... The board resolved to adopt the report in its entirety and to immediately implement the committee's recommendations," the statement added. Among the recommendations accepted by ZC board are a complete restructuring of the cricket affairs department and its personnel, overhaul of the domestic and development pathway, advertising for the head coach's job for the national senior men's and U19 teams and restructuring of the coaching set-up at first-class level.

Debutant Sharma completes 10 wickets match haul

PTI ■ THUTHIPET (PUDUCHERRY)

Left-arm spinner Vanshaj Sharma completed a maiden ten-wicket match haul on his debut as Jammu and Kashmir dismissed Puducherry for 67 in their chase of 87 to register a 19-run win in the Ranji Trophy group D match here on Sunday.

Resuming at 35 for 7, Puducherry folded in 35.3 overs with the 20-year-old Sharma claiming all the remaining three wickets, returning with figures of 5 for 16 to go with his first innings figures of 5 for 74.



On Saturday, another left-arm spinner Abid Mushtaq notched up a 10-wicket match haul, his second in First-Class cricket. He had taken five for 28 in the second innings, returning with figures of 25-3-64-5 in the first innings.

Mushtaq was adjudged the Player-of-the-match for his exploits at the Cricket Association of Pondicherry (CAP) Siechem ground here.

With the win, Jammu and Kashmir continued their unbeaten run and grabbed the third place with 18 points, behind Baroda and Madhya Pradesh. For Pondicherry (15), their hopes of reaching the knockout stage is almost over.

Brief Score: J&K 106 and 152 (Sagar Udeshi 3/48) beat Puducherry 172 and 67 allout in 35.3 overs (Damodarans Rohit 17; Vanshaj Sharma 5/16, Abid Mushtaq 5/28) by 19 runs.

Sunrisers claim back to back SA20 titles

PTI ■ CAPE TOWN

Sunrisers Eastern Cape won Sback-to-back SA20 titles after an empathic 89-run victory over Durban's Super Giants at Newlands here.

After topping the group stage, the Sunrisers delivered a clinical performance in the final on Saturday. Half-centuries from Tom Abell (55) and Tristan Stubbs (56 not out) along with contributions from Jordan Hermann and captain Aiden Markram, who both contributed 42, respectively, saw the Sunrisers post a formidable 204/3.

The defending champions then bowled out the Super Giants for a paltry 115 in 17 overs.

Partnerships were crucial in



the Sunrisers' innings with Hermann and Abell setting up the winning total with a 90-run stand for the second wicket after the early loss of Dawid Malan.

Durban's Super Giants captain, Keshav Maharaj, hit back with a double-wicket over by removing both set batters in

Hermann and Abell.

But the Sunrisers showed they had plenty more in reserve with Markram and Stubbs rebuilding the innings before exploding towards the backend with 98 runs off 55 balls.

The Sunrisers' bowling has been their strongest discipline

all season and their seamers certainly rose to the occasion on the night.

Dan Worrall (2/15) set the tone upfront again with the dismissal of Quinton de Kock early on before Marco Jansen delivered two hammer blows in the fourth over with the removal of Jon Jon Smuts and Bhanuka Rajapaksa to leave the Super Giants reeling at 7/3.

Wiaan Mulder attempted a recovery job with quickfire 38, but that's when Otttniel Baartman (2/17) delivered the moment of the match.

He had already dismissed Matthew Breetzke, but it was his in-swinging that wrapped the dangerous Heinrich Klaasen on the pads first ball that closed the game as a contest.

Saxena grabs 9/68 as Bengal stare at second successive defeat

PTI ■ THUMBA (KERALA)

Domestic cricket stalwart Jalaj Saxena destroyed Bengal with career-best figures of 9/68 as the visitors found themselves on the brink of a second successive defeat in the Ranji Trophy Group B here on Sunday.

Resuming on 172/8, Bengal managed to add just eight runs to their overnight total with the veteran all-rounder adding two more wickets to his name.

The 37-year-old now has 439 wickets and has 6600-plus runs from 138 matches in first-class cricket.

Despite a substantial lead, Kerala skipper Sanju Samson chose not to enforce follow-on and declared their second essay at

265/6 to set a massive 449-run target for the visitors.

In reply, Bengal were 77/2 with Abhimanyu Easwaran batting on 33. Bengal had lost their last match against Mumbai at Eden Gardens.

Khare slams fighting 143, but Mumbai hold edge

In Raipur, skipper Amandeep Khare led from the front with a stellar 143 as Chhattisgarh put up a strong fight, falling just one run short of Mumbai's first innings total of 351. From 180/4 overnight, Khare, who was unbeaten on 35, showed utmost patience in his composed knock from 211 balls.

Mumbai kept taking wickets at one end but Khare stood firm and was the last man to get out. He struck 14 fours and four sixes.



In reply, Mumbai were 97/1 at close on day three.

With a lead of 98 runs, Mumbai seemed to be well-placed with Bhupen Lalwani and Amogh

Bhatkal at the crease.

Shubham Singh managed the only breakthrough for Chhattisgarh in Mumbai's second innings when he dismissed

Mumbai's first innings hero Prithvi Shaw, five runs short of a half-century.

The Indian batter's 159 off 185 balls had powered Mumbai to 351.

Assam eyeing maiden win of season

Veteran off-spinner Swarupam Purkayastha was the star performer with the ball, securing four wickets for just 11 runs, as Assam bundled out Bihar for 207 to take a huge first innings lead of 198 runs in Guwahati.

Assam were quick to enforce the follow-on and reduced Bihar to 168/3 at close of play on the penultimate day.

Opener Piyush Singh displayed resilience with an unbeaten 79 from 204, steering Bihar in their

second essay. The visitors face a challenging task ahead, trailing by 30 runs as Assam will be eyeing their first win of the season.

Mukhtar Hussain, Rahul Singh and Mrinmoy Dutta picked up wicket apiece for Assam.

Brief Scores

In Raipur: Mumbai 351 and 97/1; 28 overs (Prithvi Shaw 45, Bhupen Lalwani 40 batting). Chhattisgarh 350; 106.1 overs (Amandeep Khare 143, Shashank Chandrakar 56, Sanjeet Desai 41; Tushar Deshpande 5/121, Royston Dias 2/44). Mumbai lead by 98 runs.

In Guwahati: Assam: 405. Bihar 207; 71.5 overs (Paramjeet Singh 53, Bipin Saurabh 39; Swarupam Purkayastha 4/11, Mukhtar

Hussain 3/22) and following on 168/3; 61 overs (Piyush Singh 79 not out, Bipin Saurabh 44; Mukhtar Hussain 1/15, Rahul Singh 1/13). Bihar trails by 30 runs.

In Thumba: Kerala: 363 and 265/6 declared; 64.2 overs (Rohan Kunnummal 51, Sachin Baby 51, Shreyas Gopal 50 not out; Shahbaz Ahmed 3/80). Bengal: 180; 51.1 overs (Abhimanyu Easwaran 72; Jalaj Saxena 9/68) and 77/2; 20.4 overs (Target: 449) (Abhimanyu Easwaran 33 batting, Sudip Gharami 31). Bengal need 372 runs.

In Vizianagaram: Andhra 261 and 271/5; 92 overs (Ricky Bhui 100 batting, Hanuma Vihari 48, Shaik Rasheed 42 batting; Saurabh Kumar 3/73). Uttar Pradesh 198. Andhra lead by 338 runs.