



OPINION 6
THE BOYCOTT
AT DOHA

WORLD 9
NETANYAHU SEEKS OPEN-ENDED
CONTROL IN GAZA

MONEY 10
SHAREHOLDERS
VOTE TO OUST BYJU

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

Late City Vol.160 Issue 53
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable



Established 1864
the pioneer

LUCKNOW, SATURDAY FEBRUARY 24, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

www.dailypioneer.com



INDIA DISCOVERS
NEW PACE OPTION
IN AKASH
12 SPORTS

Modi envisions India in his 3rd term

RAMESH K SINGH ■ VARANASI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi rallied supporters in Varanasi on Friday, outlining his vision for the prospective third term of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), promising a transformation that would propel India to become the world's third-largest economy.

Addressing an enthusiastic crowd at the Banas Dairy Complex, PM Modi pledged to secure all 80 seats in Uttar Pradesh, asserting that the NDA's return to power would elevate India's stature across economic, social, strategic, and cultural fronts.

Highlighting the strides made during his tenure, PM Modi underscored India's ascent from the 11th to the 5th largest economy globally over the past decade, with ambitious plans to further climb the rankings in the next five years.

Amid applause, he launched a scathing attack on Opposition leaders, implicitly referencing Congress scion Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks targeting local youths.

Modi condemned what he termed as "frustrated" leaders resorting to divisive tactics due to dwindling political fortunes, accusing them of peddling dynasty, appeasement, and caste-based politics.

Assuring accelerated



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being presented a memento by UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath during dedication ceremony of Kashi Complex of Banas Dairy Plant in Varanasi on Friday. (Right) Prime Minister Narendra Modi pays tribute to Sant Ravidas during his 647th birth anniversary celebrations



developmental initiatives, PM Modi underscored the expansion of Digital India, infrastructure upgrades including modernised railway stations, and the introduction of transformative projects like Vande Bharat, Amrit Bharat, and Namoh Bharat trains.

He pledged to harness the potential of eastern India, envisioning the region as a vital engine for national growth. The unveiling of the first phase of the Varanasi-Aurangabad six-

lane highway and plans for the Varanasi-Ranchi-Kolkata Expressway underscored the government's commitment to bolster connectivity and regional development.



Reflecting on past promises fulfilled, Modi highlighted the success story of Banas Dairy as a beacon of job creation and economic prosperity.

He announced plans to extend benefits to milk producers in neighboring districts, unveiling initiatives

aimed at fostering agricultural growth and rural prosperity across Eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Accompanied by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy Chief Minister Brijesh Pathak, and other dignitaries, PM Modi bestowed a slew of projects worth ₹13,202.07 crore upon Purvanchal, including Varanasi. From infrastructure to cultural initiatives, the Prime Minister's visit epitomised a blend of developmental zeal and strategic political messaging, resonating with the electorate ahead of the crucial state elections.

Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister paid homage at the

Ravidas Temple, underlining the government's commitment to honour the legacy of Sant Ravidas and uplift marginalised communities.

The symbolic gesture, coupled with a focus on inclusive growth and empowerment, served to galvanise support while underscoring the administration's unwavering dedication to social justice.

In a culmination of his visit, PM Modi interacted with scholars at BHU, underscoring the importance of education and knowledge in India's journey towards prosperity.

Lok Sabha poll dates likely after March 13



RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

The Election Commission is expected to announce the dates for the Lok Sabha elections after March 13. As part of the ongoing preparations for the General Elections and concurrent Assembly polls in select States, the Chief Election Commissioner is currently engaged in successive visits to these regions.

States like Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim are gearing up for simultaneous Lok Sabha and State Assembly polls.

In 2014, the Election Commission announced the schedule for the nine-phased Lok Sabha elections on March 5, and the results were

declared on May 16. In 2019, the poll panel announced the seven-phase Lok Sabha elections on March 10, and the results were declared on May 23.

Sources indicate that senior officials of the Election Commission of India are actively engaged in regular meetings with the Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) of different States to address potential issues ahead of the elections. The focus is on practical challenges such as the transportation of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs), the deployment of security personnel, and maintaining vigilance along state borders.

Also, sources mentioned that the Central Board of Secondary Examination

(CBSE) Class 10 board examination will end on March 13, freeing up many teachers and school buildings for election duties. A team from the EC is also expected to visit Jammu & Kashmir on March 13.

Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar will meet representatives from as many as nine political parties, including the Dravidian majors, to discuss issues regarding conducting the poll. He will hold a review meeting with the district collector and superintendents of police. The CEC will also meet with the CEOs of Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Kerala, as well as officials from enforcement agencies, before wrapping up his meetings with the Tamil Nadu Chief Secretary and the State DGP.

Earlier, a team from the EC reviewed preparations with the Chief Electoral Officer of Bihar, the State police chief, and other agencies including Excise Department, DRI, ED, I-T, Forest Department, Postal Department, among others. During the meeting, the EC said that enforcement agencies have been instructed to take strict action against the use of money power during elections.

Continued on Page 8

CAPSULE SANDESHKHALI FLARES UP AGAIN

Even as the Sandeshkhali unrest showed all the signs of evolving similarly to the Nandigram movement, the mass protest continued in the North 24 Parganas block, this time spreading rapidly to neighbouring villages. On Friday, new areas of violence erupted at Belmajur and Tebhaga More, where hundreds of villagers blocked roads and set fire to wooden blocks after being attacked by armed men associated with Sheikh Shahjahan.

Unruly farmers face punitive damages

The Haryana Police has initiated proceedings to seize the assets of farmers who damaged public property during their "Dilli Chalo" protest. However, hours after announcing that action would be taken under the National Security Act (NSA), the Haryana Police said the NSA will not be invoked against the farmers.

Former LS Speaker Manohar Joshi dies

Veteran Shiv Sena leader Manohar Joshi, who had risen from being a corporator of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to the post of Maharashtra chief minister and then went onto become the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, passed away at a private hospital here early hours of Friday.

Centre set to get the show on the road



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Ministry of Road & Highways (MoRTH) is set to achieve a record-breaking milestone with the construction of the highest-ever four-lane and access-controlled high-speed highways, reaching an ambitious road construction target of 13,000 km by the end of this fiscal year.

"In 2020-21, we witnessed the highest-ever road construction of 13,327 km compared to 4,260 km in 2013-14. As of January this year, we have already completed 7,600 km of roads, and we anticipate reaching a level

of 12,800-13,000 km by the end of March," said Anurag Jain, Secretary of MoRTH, during a press conference on Friday.

The Ministry aims to construct between 12,000 km and 13,000 km of national highways in 2023-24, slightly below the target of 13,813 km. The ministry constructed 10,237 km of National Highways in the 2019-20 financial year, 13,327 km in 2020-21, 10,457 km in 2021-22, and 10,331 km in 2022-23. As of the end of January 2024, the ministry has completed the construction of 7,685 km. "We are optimistic about completing 4,500-5,000 km in the remaining two months, which will help us

achieve anywhere between 12,000 and 13,000 km in the current financial year. This will be the second-best achievement," Jain said. The Secretary said the current financial year will see the highest-ever construction of four-lane roads and the highest-ever speed or access-controlled highways, with capacity augmentation pegged at 9,500 km, which will be a record for the ministry.

"Up to January 2024, we have seen a 10 per cent year-on-year growth, while the increase in construction of four-lane highways is 16 per cent," he said, adding that the construction of four-lane and above roads now stands at two-and-a-half times the annual achievement of FY'14. Jain said the ministry is also confident of awarding highway projects worth ₹10,000 crore by March end.

The NH network increased by 60 percent from 91,287 km in 2014 to 1,46,145 km in the year 2023, government data showed. The length of four lanes and above NH increased by 2.5 times from 18,387 km in 2014 to 46,179 km in November 2023, the secretary said.

For BJP, Bullet Train to chug in Modi 3.0

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ MUMBAI

The BJP is all set to showcase the ambitious Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train as the success story of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's third term at the Centre in August 2026 as the party is confident of returning to power.

Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw told *The Pioneer* that a section of about 50 km of the high-speed corridor will be thrown open to the public in August 2026. Vaishnaw said that the Surat-Bilimora section on the 508-km-long corridor between



Construction work at the Bandra Kurla Complex Station, a key component of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad High-Speed Rail corridor Photo by Deepak Kumar Jha

Mumbai and Ahmedabad could be operational by July-August 2026.

"The other sections will be

opened one after the other thereafter," he said.

Vaishnaw made these statements during a site visit

where the tunnelling process was initiated for the 21 km long India's first underground/undersea tunnel as part of the bullet train project. He also visited to assess the progress for the underground stations at Bandra-Kurla Complex and Shilphata in Maharashtra.

"Challenges involved multiple controlled blasting with sufficient noise and air pollution prevention measures so as to cause minimal disturbance to the environment and population in the adjoining areas," Vaishnaw said.

Continued on Page 8

LMC budget passed amid uproar

₹2,865-cr income, ₹2864.68-cr expenditure proposed

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The LMC House passed the budget of nagar nigan and that of Jal Kal department for 2024-2025 amidst uproarious scenes on Friday. Mayor Sushma Kharakwal adjourned the House until February 28, stating that various issues raised would be taken up for discussion.

The passed budget includes a proposed income of Rs 2,865 crore and an expenditure of Rs 2864.68 crore, with revenue sources ranging from taxes to fines and parking contracts.

In terms of expenditure, allocations have been made for various areas including park maintenance, school funding, road cutting, and traffic arrangements, with spending updates provided till December 2023.

Corporators from the opposition parties staged a walkout due to no increase in the Ward Development Fund despite their longstanding request. Previously, a majority of corporators voiced concerns about the Chennai-based company selected for garbage collection, questioning why it was assigned two-thirds of the wards while the rest remained under nagar nigan. Allegations of the company being tainted were also raised, along with criticism of the sewage work.

Issues regarding the supply of dirty drinking water in wards led to a dramatic gesture



Noisy scenes were witnessed at LMC House on Friday
Pioneer

where a corporator offered water to the Jal Sansthan general manager, insisting he drink it himself, which he did.

Briefing mediapersons after the session, Mayor Kharakwal and Municipal Commissioner Inderjit Singh highlighted initiatives such as mandatory allocation percentages for development funds and increased oversight on departmental road construction.

Kharakwal said 50 per cent of any development funds will be mandatorily used for development works, 15 per cent for parks, 20 per cent for lights, 10

per cent for vending zones, and 5 per cent for patch works in the wards.

She said the highest budget of any nagar nigan in the state is that of LMC and that she has formed a committee to look into how other municipal corporations spend their money.

The mayor further said that any department would have to take an NOC from Nagar Nigan for road construction in LMC wards.

The municipal commissioner said they would be charging taxes from the 116 enemy properties in Lucknow.

Nagar nigan hopes to generate a revenue of Rs 621 crore from house tax, Rs 10 crore from taxes in the industrial area, Rs 15 crore from taxes on advertisements, Rs 1.5 crore from taxes on auditoriums, Rs 50 lakh from pet taxes, Rs 10 lakh from taxes on vehicles, Rs 1.5 crore from lease rent, Rs 2.5 crore from rents of buildings, rest houses, dak bungalows; Rs 175 crore from the sale of buildings, Rs 17 crore from parking contracts, Rs 75 crore from user charges and Rs 6 crore from fines.

The income generated from collection of house tax for

the financial year 2023-2024 till December 2023 was Rs 240.2 crore, including Rs 33.1 crore from zone 1, Rs 12.16 crore from zone 2, Rs 33.8 crore from zone 3, Rs 62.3 crore from zone 4, Rs 14.7 crore from zone 5, Rs 19.15 crore from zone 6, Rs 26.25 crore from zone 7, and Rs 38.57 crore from zone 8.

The income generated from taxes on vehicles for the year 2023-2024 till December 2023 was Rs 4.55 lakh.

As far as expenditures are concerned, a sum of Rs 200 lakh has been earmarked for running and monitoring of parkings. Till December 2023, a sum of Rs 14.94 lakhs has been spent in this area.

An allocation of Rs 1,600 lakh has been made for the schools run by nagar nigan.

An allocation of Rs 600 lakh has been made for road cutting. A sum of Rs 670.75 lakh has already been spent till December 2023 in this area.

An allocation of Rs 50 lakh has been made for the monitoring and repair of the toilets in the city. Till December 2023, there has been no expenditure in this area.

An allocation of Rs 300 lakh has been made for the traffic arrangements in the city.

An allocation of Rs 1,000 lakh has been made for the survey of ground properties and building of boundaries. A sum of Rs 27.46 lakh has already been made in this area till December 2023.

Case registered in paper leak

Priyanka targets govt

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An additional inspector on duty at an examination centre in Krishna Nagar police station lodged an FIR in connection with the leak of paper in the constable recruitment examination of UP Police held on February 18.

As per the FIR, the paper leak was a pre-planned incident. While registering the FIR, Inspector Ram Babu Singh, posted at Mohanlalganj police station in Krishnanagar police station area, said that on February 18, 2024 the police recruitment examination was held at City Modern Academy School at Alinagar Sunehra in Krishna Nagar.

He said that junior engineer of Irrigation department Ambrish Kumar Verma and junior engineer at Public Works Department Lucknow Saurabh Yadav who were static magistrates and centre administrator Priyanka Soni were on duty at the centre in the second shift of the examination. According to Inspector Ram Babu Singh, at around 4:55 pm, in room number 24, invigilators Vandana Kanojia and Vishwanath Singh informed that a candidate, Satya Aman Kumar, was filling the OMR sheet by copying from a slip. On this information, the candidate was frisked and slips were recovered from him. When he was interrogated, he confessed that around 12 noon, one of his acquaintances, Neeraj, had sent him the answers on his WhatsApp and he had noted down the answers on a slip of paper and was copying from it.

Lucknow (PNS): With thousands of aspirants staging demonstrations in Lucknow, Prayagraj and other districts demanding re-examination both in police and review officer and assistant review officer recruitment examinations conducted by the Uttar Pradesh Public Service Commission, Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, on Friday, fired fresh salvo at the state government blaming it for failing to conduct any recruitment in a fair and free manner. The government has already constituted separate committees to look into the alleged leakage in both these exams.

Priyanka Gandhi Vadra took to Instagram on Friday and wrote, "Just think once, more than 50 lakh youth filled the form. This was the biggest test in the history of the state. There was a form for Rs 400; 48 lakh admit cards issued. And the paper got leaked before the exam. What must

the children be going through? Or their families? Same thing happened in the RO Exam. The paper got leaked. This discussion is taking place in every village of UP. The government is sleeping. Boys and girls are shouting and protesting from Allahabad to Lucknow and demanding re-exam. The government is humiliating them and beating them with sticks."

She further wrote in her tweet: "Who gets this paper leaked? How did this paper leak? Can't our country, which is going to the Moon and Mars, conduct a foolproof test? Where a youth's hard work is not stolen, his future is not robbed."

Earlier, Rahul Gandhi, during his entire Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra in Uttar Pradesh, had also targeted the Yogi Adityanath government in the alleged paper leakage case and accused the chief minister of playing with the future of youths of the state.

The inspector said the candidate's mobile phone kept in the strong room of the examination centre was checked and handwritten replies sent on his WhatsApp (received at 12:56 pm) from Neeraj's mobile number were found.

"When the answers sent on WhatsApp were matched with the question paper distributed at the matching centre, everyone was surprised to see that they matched. The question

numbers in the paper used in the evening shift were different, but the answers were matching. In such a situation, this paper of the examination held in the second shift of February 18 has been leaked in a planned manner," he said. On his complaint, the police registered a case under various sections of the Indian Penal Code for using unfair means and use of electronic gadget and on other counts.

Concerns mount in Akbarnagar as 'bulldozer' threat looms

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A vigorous drive began on Friday to identify houses and shops that are not paying taxes, as well as individuals living below the poverty line without possessing BPL ration cards. The five-day drive will continue until February 27.

An unconfirmed report suggests that over 300 houses and 101 shops in Akbarnagar may soon be bulldozed for failing to meet the guidelines set by the district administration.

Vice-Chairman of Lucknow Development Authority Indramani Tripathi stated that the actual numbers would be known after the findings were submitted on February 28.

The task of identification was assigned to five separate teams, recently constituted by District Magistrate SP Gangwar upon the request of the LDA VC. These teams will individually submit their reports within a week.

The names of genuine

dwellers will be cross-referenced with the lists prepared by the teams and scrutinised to ensure accuracy. An executive engineer, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that notices would be served on non-genuine dwellers, informing them to remove their belongings before their houses and shops were bulldozed.

This exercise was initiated following the directive of the High Court, which is set to hear the dispute on February 26. The court aims to ensure that genuine dwellers are not harmed by these actions.

An atmosphere of uncertainty pervades the entire area, particularly among women who have taken to the streets to protest against the state government's decision.

Conversely, youths are troubled over the decision to bulldoze non-genuine houses and shops. Mohammed Aftab Alam, a resident of Akbarnagar, expressed distrust in the credibility of officials, alleging that the prolonged dispute was causing anguish and sleepless nights for residents.

Army havildar honey-trapped; ₹11 lakh extorted

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

An army havildar was allegedly honey-trapped and a sum of Rs 11 lakh was extorted from him in Chinhat. The accused, identified as Seema Devi, allegedly threatened the soldier with dire consequences in a bid to extract sensitive information. A case in this regard was registered at Chinhat police station on the direction of a local court.

As per reports, Havildar Pramod Kumar of Barabanki district came in contact with Seema of Lucknow through social media six years ago. Seema allegedly inveigled him into a relationship. The accused allegedly coerced Pramod for an intimate pose with her and made a video stealthily.

Later, Seema started blackmailing Pramod and extorted money from him. She even asked him to relocate to Delhi.

Fearing repercussions, Pramod kept obliging her until

THE COMPLAINANT ALLEGED THAT THE ACCUSED THREATENED HIM IN A BID TO EXTRACT SENSITIVE INFORMATION

he decided to take her on. Seema then filed a false rape case against Pramod in Ram Nagar police station of Barabanki, but the two later settled for a compromise.

Pramod, who wanted to get out of the precarious situation, sought police help and even filed a complaint on the CM portal, but no help came his way. It was only after he moved court that the police were directed to register a case against Seema under various sections, including fraud. The police said investigations were underway to ascertain the veracity of Pramod's allegations.

CITYBRIEFS

RARE DISEASE DAY

The department of medical genetics, SGPGI, along with UP chapter of Indian Academy of Paediatrics and Lucknow Academy of Paediatrics, is organising a programme on Saturday to mark 'Rare Disease Day' with the rare disease warriors and doctors who care for them. Head of the department Dr Shubha Phadke said although individually rare, collectively 20-40 crore people worldwide are living with rare diseases at any given point of time. "Eighty per cent of the rare diseases are genetic in nature. Though the genetic disorders are due to defects in genes and some of them are inherited, there may not be family history of similarly affected family members," she said. She added that theirs is the first department of this kind in India and it has been providing diagnostic services, management and prevention for these disorders for the last 35 years. The department and has also trained most of the medical geneticists in India.

CONFERENCE

The two-day 18th National Conference on Interdependence, Integration, and Co-creation (IIC-2024) got underway at Jaipuria Institute of Management, Lucknow, on Friday. The aim was to provide a platform for new ideas and unraveling the complexities of Industry 5.0. The conference titled 'Industry 5.0: Opportunities & Challenges' will serve as a platform for industry leaders, academics, researchers, and students to come together, share insights, and explore the multifaceted dimensions of Industry 5.0. Through IIC, the institute will engage in thought-provoking discussions, keynote presentations, panel sessions, and workshops aimed at addressing both the challenges and opportunities that accompany this transformative era. Senior director at BNY Mellon Sushila Kapoor was the chief guest on the occasion. Director, Google India, Bhaskar Ramesh, and co-founder of Zaystack Intellizence Tarun Malik were the keynote speakers.

BOOTCAMP

IIM-Lucknow Enterprise Incubation Centre, in collaboration with the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub, organised a comprehensive 'UP Fintech Futurepreneurs Bootcamp' aimed to explore the convergence of finance and technology. The event brought together experts, practitioners, and enthusiasts from academia and industry. Under the guidance of Vice-Chancellor Prof Alok Kumar Rai, Lucknow University has been building a teaching-learning student-friendly environment towards 'Viksit Bharat@2047'. This bootcamp was conducted to educate the students about the entrepreneurship culture and opportunities in the field of Fintech. The bootcamp commenced with an inaugural address highlighting the significance of fintech in revolutionising the financial landscape and fostering innovation-driven

growth. Eminent speakers from RBI and IIM-L shared insights on regulatory frameworks, emphasising the need for responsible innovation and compliance within the fintech ecosystem. An MoU was signed between the Reserve Bank Innovation Hub and IIM-Lucknow Enterprise Incubation Centre to initiate a new partnership and lay the foundation to achieve new heights in the field of entrepreneurship.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

An awareness campaign related to women's health, 'Pink Together, Stronger Forever and Breaking the Silence' was organised by 19 UP Girls Battalion of NCC Wing, Navyug Kanya Mahavidyalaya, on Thursday (February 22). Senior under officer Tanu Saraswat and under officer Anjali Rai explained the symptoms, preventive measures and misconceptions related to breast cancer. Under officer Deepanshi Nigam and corporal Priyanka Yadav highlighted the concepts related to menstruation and also spoke on precautions to be taken. Principal Prof Manjula Upadhyay said it is important for women to be physically and mentally strong because they play many roles in the society and they have to face challenges at different levels. Programme coordinator Major (Dr) Manmeet Kaur Sodhi said that the issue of women's health is important and cannot be ignored at any cost.

Car stolen by trio on pretext of taking lift

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A car was stolen by three men on the pretext of taking a lift in Sushant Golf City police station area on Thursday night. As per reports, Vivek Singh of Krishna Nagar was going towards Ayodhya road from Mohanlalganj around 11 pm when the trio asked for a lift. Vivek allowed them in and then drove towards his destination. On the way, one of them asked Vivek to stop the car as he wanted to attend nature's call.

"The other two stayed back while I also got down to relieve myself. In the meantime, the one who had asked me to stop the car hurriedly sat in the vehicle and the trio sped off in no time," he stated in a complaint.

Meanwhile, two men duped a youth of his gold chain and Rs 4,000 in cash in Wazirganj. Reports said Tribhuvan Chauhan, who works as a supervisor at the Residency, was going towards an ATM booth to withdraw money when intercepted by the duo. They asked him the way to a hospital. However, as Tribhuvan was not familiar with it, he excused himself and moved ahead. The duo started trailing him and stopped after walking a few yards. Tribhuvan withdrew money and then started walking again. The duo stopped him once again and engaged him in talks. They allegedly hypnotised him and asked him to part with his gold chain and money.

70% of kidney donors at RMLIMS are women

SHARMILA KRISHNA ■ LUCKNOW

Seventy per cent of donors in the kidney transplant programme at Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Institute of Medical Sciences (RMLIMS) are females, with the majority being mothers of patients.

Head of the nephrology department Dr Abhilash Chandra pointed out that while most kidney recipients are males, the donors are predominantly females. He highlighted a bias towards females, possibly due to familial pressure or their non-earning status.

Dr Chandra emphasised that during counselling, they provide options without gender bias, offering information on success rates based on various donor relationships. He acknowledged the unfortunate influence of societal and economic factors on female donors' decisions.

Regarding the programme's progress, he mentioned a steady rate of 3-4 transplants per month since its inception six-and-a-half years ago, totalling around 170 transplants. He outlined the challenges, including the absence of deceased donor transplants, which they aim to promote to alleviate the burden on live donor transplants.

Dr Chandra stressed on the need for increased awareness and effort from both healthcare professionals and potential donors to facilitate deceased donor transplantation.

He highlighted the high immediate success rate of over 90 per cent post-transplant at

RMLIMS, with 85 to 90 per cent graft kidney function after one year. However, he noted a potential loss of 20 to 30 per cent of kidneys within five years due to various factors.

Dr Chandra expressed the goal of increasing monthly transplant numbers from 3-4 to 7-8 and also mentioned plans for a centralised transplant centre across departments.

Regarding programme sustainability, he credited the continuous presence of faculty since the department's establishment in 2013 and strong administrative support.

Patients mainly come from eastern UP and bordering areas of Bihar, with a waiting list of one to one-and-a-half months while costs ranging from Rs 2.5 lakh to Rs 3.5 lakh depending on blood group compatibility.

He further said that the success rate immediately post doc is over 90 per cent for the kidney transplants which they were doing at RMLIMS.

"With the current form of treatment which we are using and the drugs which we are using, the success rate is well above 90 per cent. If you see after one year, 85 to 90 per cent have their graft kidney functioning well. At the end of five years, we are likely to lose 20 to 30 per cent of the kidneys for various reasons such as infection, renal disease which occurs after transplant or any reaction," he said.

He added that director Dr Soniya Nityanand had plans of setting up one centre which would cater to all transplants being done across all departments.

LDA squad seals houses, shops

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The enforcement squad of Lucknow Development Authority on Friday sealed houses in Chinhat and a commercial establishment in Jankipuram Extension after the developers failed to submit a layout plan to the mapping department.

LDA field officers recently discovered unauthorised construction of 16 houses in the

Pappanmau area of Chinhat. Upon investigation, it was found that the owners or developers had not submitted the layout plan for approval. The information was passed on to LDA Vice-Chairman Indramani Tripathi.

Notices were served on the developers. A final notice was issued last month, warning that the under-construction houses would be sealed if the plan was not submitted.

A team, led by zone 5 incharge Rajkumar, accompanied by armed police, reached the site in the morning. Initially, there was a heated exchange between the incharge and locals, but the situation was diffused with police intervention.

Meanwhile, a commercial establishment in Sector-3 of Jankipuram Extension was sealed by assistant engineer NN Choubey.

the pioneer CLASSIFIEDS

NOTICE

I am Dharendra Pratap Singh son of Aparbal Singh, R/o 25/41 indira nagar Lucknow. By mistake, the date of birth of my son Aditya Pratap Singh has been mentioned as 02/03/2006 in his high school marksheet and certificate, whereas his correct date of birth is 02/05/2006. The date of birth of my son 02/05/2006 should be written and read in all the records

NOTICE

Be it known to all that applicant Vimala Devi wife of Jagannath Prasad Verma resident of 376 /a/287 Chaukhandi Kydganj Tehsil Sadar District Allahabad has a house whose house number is 141 old new 157 J/141 New Basti Kydganj Tehsil Sadar Allahabad Area 35.62 square meter purchased from Tara Devi wife of Chhedilal resident of 157 J/141 New Basti Kydganj city Allahabad, which is registered at chayal Allahabad on page number 66 to 70 of volume 2155 of number 1, number 5072, dated 20 August 1982. It fell through traffic on 20th January 2024 and has not been found even after many efforts.

आवश्यकता है

मदरसा आलिया मिरबाहुल उल्मु सब्जी मण्डी प्रयागराज आवश्यकता है
मदरसा आलिया मिरबाहुल उल्मु सब्जी मण्डी प्रयागराज में सहायक अध्यापक तहानिया एक पद हेतु आवेदन पत्र आमंत्रित किये जाते हैं। सहायक अध्यापक तहानिया हेतु शैक्षिक योग्यता आलिय अथवा इण्टरमीडिएट उर्दू के साथ हो जिसका वेतनमान 35400-124400 लेवल - 6 व अन्य भत्ते देय होंगे स्तुतम आयु 18 वर्ष हो। इच्छुक अय्याधी विज्ञापन तिथि से 21 दिन के अन्दर आवेदन पत्र समस्त शैक्षिक योग्यताओं के साथ स्थान - 28 डी / 1 योतानपुर मावा प्रयागराज के पते पर भेजें तथा साक्षात्कार हेतु सूचना पंजीकृत डाक द्वारा भेजी जायेगी।
प्रबन्धक
मदरसा आलिया मिरबाहुल उल्मु सब्जी मण्डी प्रयागराज

NOTICE

I have changed my name from Shabana Khatoun to SHABANA KHATUN W/o Syed Ehsan R/o 95/47 Dada Miyan Hata, Parade Kanpur for all future purpose.

NOTICE

मेरा नाम पूर्व मे RAM SHA ADEEBA ABDUL JABBAR था जो कि अब बदल के नाम RAMSHA ALI पुत्री ABDUL JABBAR निवासी 132/174 बाबु पुरवा टी० पी० नगर कानपुर नगर कर लिया है। इसी नाम से जाना जाये।

NOTICE

सूचित किया जाता है कि मेरा नाम अरशद था जिसे बदलकर मैंने मो. अरशद कर लिया है। अतः मुझे इसी नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाये।
मो. अरशद पुत्र इरशद अली निवासी - ग्राम समऊ, गोरिया कला रसूलपुर टिकनयामऊ लखनऊ मो 6352600511

NOTICE

I, Vaishali Bhosale, w/o Bhosale Eknath Tukaram, No - 14673985F, Rank Hav At, Dhanganwadi Post - Dothan Ta- Ashti Dist - Beed St- Maharashtra, Pin- 414202 Here by declare that my Date of Birth in my Husband record in wrongly mentioned as 15/08/1991, my actual Date of Birth is 15/08/1994 for all future purpose,

UP embarks on transformative journey through GBC@IV

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh has embarked on a transformative journey through the fourth edition of the ground-breaking ceremony (GBC@IV), marking a significant milestone in its development. The implementation of over 14,000 projects worth more than Rs 10 lakh crore signed during the Global Investors Summit last year, is not only accelerating development but is also providing a super boost to the state's economy.

Presently, Uttar Pradesh contributes 9.2 per cent to the country's economy, and with

GBC@IV, this contribution is expected to increase, solidifying its rank as the second-largest contributor. The state's dominance in various sectors, including manufacturing, electric vehicles, pharma, energy, data centre, micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME), renewable energy, real estate and waste management, will increase and the development will reach new heights. In totality, Uttar Pradesh is inching closer to fulfilling its aspiration of emerging as the nation's growth engine.

Among the investment projects launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the GBC@4 on February

19, the majority (21 per cent) are related to the manufacturing sector. This implies that Uttar Pradesh will now engage in large-scale manufacturing of products and is set to become a manufacturing hub.

In addition, 13 per cent of the investment is in renewable energy, 9 per cent in information technology and electronics, 8 per cent in power, 6 per cent in food processing, 6 per cent in real estate, 5 per cent in MSMEs, and 3 per cent each in hospitality and entertainment, waste management, and education. It is evident that UP's strength will grow in all these sectors, employing more workforce and directly

benefiting the state's development and economy.

Furthermore, significant investments in sectors such as healthcare, wood-based industries, distilleries, dairy, cooperatives, handicrafts and textiles, pharma and medical devices, and animal husbandry will also be helpful in boosting the economy.

With the implementation of more than 14,000 investment projects, 34 lakh people are expected to get employment. According to experts, an increase in employment in any state enhances people's spending power, savings and tax collection, positively impacting the economy. When

people have more money, they tend to make more purchases, leading to increased demand for goods and services. This further helps in boosting production and generating new jobs.

Additionally, increased savings provide economic security for the future, helping individuals to be prepared for upcoming challenges or opportunities. Moreover, as people's income rises, tax collections also increase, providing the government with more resources to formulate beneficial schemes for the general public. Thus, this can prove to be a significant step towards a prosperous economy.

Under GBC@IV, development projects have been initiated for tourism destinations in Uttar Pradesh. The development of tourist spots will increase visitor footfall, boosting the local economy and providing employment opportunities.

For example, since the consecration of Lord Ram's idol in Ayodhya, around 60 lakh to 65 lakh people have visited the place. Devotees not only from the country but also from abroad are coming for the darshan of Ram Lalla. It is estimated that in terms of tourist numbers, Ayodhya alone will surpass major religious sites globally, such as

Mecca and Vatican City. Kashi and Mathura-Vrindavan are also not lagging behind in this regard.

Next year, lakhs of people are expected to take a holy dip in the Ganga during the Mahakumbh in Prayagraj. Tourists visiting Uttar Pradesh are likely to spend money on hotels, restaurants and various goods, benefiting both the local economy and the state's overall economy. This will further boost the enthusiasm of investors, encouraging them to expand their businesses.

Looking at the recent figures of GBC@IV, a total of 5 per cent investment projects have also been launched in the

MSME sector. Currently, there are more than 96 lakh MSME units in the state. With the commencement of new projects, it is now ensured that this number will surpass one crore. Notably, small industries are the biggest strength not only of the state but of the entire country. It is referred to as the backbone of India's economy. The contribution of MSMEs to the economy of Uttar Pradesh is significant, playing a crucial role both directly and indirectly. It particularly plays a crucial role in creating extensive employment in rural areas, which will now gain even more momentum.

India has moved to 5th spot from 10th in world in terms of economy: FM



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman hands over cheque to a beneficiary under the Centre's Credit Outreach programme, in Maharajganj on Friday

PTI

PTI ■ MAHARAJGANJ

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday said under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, India has moved up to the fifth position from the 10th spot in the world in terms of economy.

"In the next year and a half, we will be at the third position," she said, adding

that the standard of living of the citizens is better in a country that has a strong economy and everyone benefits from it.

The senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said this is the first government in the country that listens to people, then makes schemes and works to deliver the benefits of such schemes to people.

"The BJP is such a party in which even the smallest worker can reach the highest position by working for the party," she said. Claiming that the INDIA opposition bloc has disintegrated, Sitharaman said nothing is achieved by taking photographs.

"They (Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav) have nothing left to say to the

public. Prime Minister Modi has a lot in his heart for farmers. He has done a lot for farmers in 10 years. The BJP has given a scam-free government in the last 10 years," she said. Sitharaman was here to distribute a total loan amount of Rs 1,143.05 crore among 40,011 beneficiaries under the credit outreach programme in Maharajganj district of Uttar Pradesh.

SHAHI IDGAH CASE

HC to continue hearing plea challenging maintainability suit on February 29

Prayagraj (PTI): The Allahabad High Court on Friday fixed February 29 as the next date of hearing on a plea regarding the maintainability of a suit seeking the removal of the Shahi Idgah mosque in Mathura, which it claims was built on a 13.37-acre land of the Katra Keshav Deo temple.

After hearing the submissions of the parties on Friday, Justice Mayank Kumar Jain fixed February 29 as the next date of hearing in the matter.

The counsel for the Muslim side to the dispute, Taslima Aziz Ahmadi, submitted before the court through a video-conference that a compromise was arrived at between the Srikrishna Janam Sewa Sangh and the Shahi Idgah Masjid Committee in 1968, and the land on which the masjid stands

was given to the latter. She said the compromise was affirmed by a court order passed in 1974 and contended that the present suit is in violation of the said compromise and the court order and thus, not maintainable. Earlier, Ahmadi had argued that the suit is not maintainable as it is barred by the provisions of the Waqf Act as well as the Places of Worship Act, 1991.

She had said the mosque, which is a waqf property, stands on the disputed site, adding that since the dispute is related to a waqf property, the jurisdiction to hear the matter is only with the waqf tribunal and a civil court has no such jurisdiction. In May last year, the high court transferred all 15 cases related to the Sri Krishna Janmabhoomi-Shahi Idgah masjid dispute to itself.

Bank loan fraud: ED raids SP leader's house in Gkp, his co

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The sleuths of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Friday raided the Gorakhpur residence of Samajwadi Party leader Vinay Shankar Tiwari, son of former minister and mafia of eastern Uttar Pradesh Harishankar Tiwari. Sources confirmed that the ED also raided the Lucknow and Delhi residences of the SP leader.

A case of money laundering is already registered against Vinay Shankar Tiwari and others in a Rs 750 crore bank fraud case. Recently his property was also confiscated.

Reports said that a team of Bank of India, Lucknow had come to Gorakhpur three years ago regarding the bank loan taken by Vinay Shankar Tiwari and his company and returned after assessing his properties.

Later the bank filed a report and in 2020, the case was

handed over to the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) for probe. In 2021, the Enforcement Directorate registered a money laundering case against former MLA Vinay Shankar Tiwari and others in the Rs 750 crore fraud case.

The agency's Lucknow-based regional office had filed an Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act against the former MLA from Chillupar (Gorakhpur) and Lucknow-based Gangotri Enterprises.

The ED registered this case against Vinay Shankar Tiwari, his wife Rita, Gangotri Enterprises and others on the basis of CBI's FIR. The CBI had conducted raids in Lucknow and Noida after registering a complaint in the case.

The alleged fraud was committed against a consortium of banks led by the Bank of India, and was said to be

worth Rs 754.25 crore.

According to the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT), the firm M/s Gangotri Enterprises Limited and others have taken a loan of Rs 1,129 crore from seven different banks. The owners of these firms are former MLAs and their relatives. Most of the bank accounts have become non-performing assets (NPAs). Bank accounts are also being closed.

In this case, the DRT had issued summons against 33 persons, including former MLA Vinay Shankar Tiwari, on July 1, 2019, and then sought answers from M/s Gangotri Enterprises Limited and other defendants at different times.

According to the case which reached the DRT, Vinay Shankar Tiwari and others have taken the maximum loan from the Bank of India. Action is going on in this matter. The details of the raids are awaited.

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

To expedite the screening and testing of tuberculosis patients in the year 2024, the Yogi Adityanath government has set a target for notification of 6.50 lakh TB patients, including 4.30 lakh in the public sector and 2.20 lakh in the private sector.

The target has been determined based on a district's population under the National Tuberculosis Eradication Programme, data from private drug sale contracts, targets set by the Patient Provider Support Agency (PPSA), trends in seeking treatment in neighbouring districts and other epidemiological facts. Additionally,

arrangements have also been made to initiate the treatment as soon as TB is confirmed in the test so that infection can be prevented from spreading.

Director General Medical and Health Services, Uttar Pradesh, Dr Brijesh Rathore, has informed all the chief medical officers and district tuberculosis officers of the state about the target of TB patient notifications for the year 2024, according to the vision of Chief Minister Yogi. Along with this, directions have also been given to take the necessary steps to achieve the target ahead of the specified time.

Health centres are organising Ekikrat Nikshay Diwas on the 15th every month to

Arrangements have also been made to initiate the treatment as soon as TB is confirmed so that infection can be prevented from spreading

achieve the TB notification target. Additionally, Active Case-Finding Campaigns and Dastak Campaigns are being conducted at regular intervals to identify TB patients.

Against the target of notifying 5.50 lakh TB patients in the year 2023, the state

achieved a remarkable feat of 6,32,571 notifications, at 115 per cent, according to Dr Ratan Pal Singh Suman, Director, National TB Programme, and Dr Shailendra Bhatnagar, Joint Director/State Tuberculosis Officer. This includes 4,09,192 patients identified in the government sector and 2,23,379 patients in the private sector. The state achieved 113 per cent of the set target in the government sector and 118 per cent in the private sector.

Uttar Pradesh was recognised for the best performance in the private sector, and the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare provided five commendation certificates to the state in different categories

for achieving the highest performance in the country.

Dr Bhatnagar said that the strong determination of the government and skilled guidance played a crucial role in achieving this milestone. He also emphasised that efforts would continue this year to notify more TB patients than the target, contributing to the prime minister's vision of a TB-free India. Upon notification, TB patients receive government health facilities such as Rs 500 directly in their bank accounts every month during treatment. They also benefit from the support of Nikshay Mitra and TB champions, receiving nutritional and mental support.



UP CM Yogi Adityanath during a meeting with Rajasthan CM Bhajanlal Sharma at his official residence in Lucknow on Friday

Three children burnt alive in Bareilly; CM mourns deaths

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a tragic incident in Nawada Bilsandi hamlet of Faridpur area of Bareilly, a hut caught fire on Friday afternoon in which three children were burnt alive while a girl suffered serious burns. She has been admitted to the hospital.

After receiving the information, the police reached the spot along with the district magistrate and the senior superintendent of police. Both the officers also visited the hospital and directed the doctors to make all efforts to save the life of the girl.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took cognisance of the fire accident in Bareilly and expressed condolences to the bereaved families of the deceased children.

The chief minister also instructed the district administration officials to provide the injured proper treatment. He also wished for the speedy recovery of the injured.

According to information, Ramdas lives in the village Nawada Bilsandi. Straw was kept on the roof of his house and somehow it caught fire on Friday afternoon. The burning straw fell on the hut below in which some children were playing hide and seek. Four children were hiding in the hut. Within no time the entire hut caught fire and children were trapped inside.

On hearing the screams of the children, the family members and the neighbours ran to the hut and they somehow extinguished the fire, but by

then all four children were badly burnt. Of these, three children died on the spot.

All three deceased were cousins. The fourth child, Neetu (6), daughter of Amitabh, was immediately taken to the hospital where her condition is said to be critical.

Those who died in the mishap were identified as Priyanshi (5), daughter of Bhim; Naina (5), daughter of Arjun and injured Neetu's sister Manavi (3).

As soon as the information was received, DM Ravindra Kumar and SSP Ghule Sushil Chandrabhan reached the village with the force.

They claimed that the affected families have been assured of all possible help.

At the same time, instructions have been given to investigate the incident. The DM said that three children died due to fire in the hut while a girl suffered burn injuries.

Meanwhile, in another incident, a child was killed while seven others were injured after a huge fire broke out at the Ramnagar fair in Farrukhabad city on the intervening night of Thursday and Friday, police said.

As many as 40 makeshift huts where pilgrims were staying were engulfed in the inferno. The fire was brought under control after three hours, officials said. According to eyewitnesses, the fire initially started in one hut and quickly spread to nearby structures. Cooking cylinders began to explode in the fire hindering efforts to extinguish it.

The district magistrate along with superintendent of police reached the site to take stock of the situation and asked officials to ensure proper treatment for the injured.

Satya Prakash, officer in-charge of the fair, confirmed that the fire was contained, but the exact cause was yet to be determined.

Preliminary investigations suggest that the fire may have originated from a cooking incident, leading to the ignition of a cooking gas cylinder and subsequent spread of the fire.

Local authorities have assured a thorough inquiry into the incident to prevent similar tragedies in the future.

Meanwhile, three members of a family, including a couple, were killed when a speeding car going towards Bihar crashed into a road divider on Purvanchal Expressway on Friday morning. The son of the couple was seriously injured and referred to the medical college hospital after being taken to Kurebhar community health centre.

Reports said that the speeding car crashed into the road divider on Purvanchal Expressway near Seur village of Kurebhar police station area of Sultanpur on Friday morning.

Ram Chandra Gupta (55) of Bihiya Ara, Bihar, who was travelling in the car, his wife Maya Devi (52), son Vikas (30) and aunt Chinta Devi (55) were seriously injured. Ram Chandra Gupta, Maya Devi and Chinta Devi died on the spot while Vikas survived.

Kashi’s aura rising culturally on global stage: Yogi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Chief Minister (CM) Yogi Adityanath said after ending the 500 years of exile of Lord Ram Lalla, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has come to Kashi with his foresight and commitment. Along with Ayodhya Dham, the first Hindu temple has been built in the United Arab Emirates (UEA) with the inspiration and efforts of the PM which was inaugurated by him recently. “Now the aura of Kashi is rising culturally on the global stage. The temple built in Abu Dhabi is also a new example of this. The PM is arriving in the world’s most ancient cultural city, Kashi, at such a time, therefore, on behalf of the people of Kashi, I congratulate the PM strongly in the most ancient cultural city,” the CM said.

Yogi was addressing the prize distribution of Kashi Sansad Gyan Pratiyogita, Kashi



(Left) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressing prize distribution function at BHU (right) being being welcomed by the Sant Ravidas Temple management at Seer Govardhan in Varanasi on Friday.



(Left) Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressing prize distribution function at BHU (right) being being welcomed by the Sant Ravidas Temple management at Seer Govardhan in Varanasi on Friday.

Sansad Photography Pratiyogita and Kashi Sansad Sanskrit Pratiyogita at Swatantrata Bhawan in Banaras Hindu University (BHU) here on Friday. The CM said that Kashi will be the capital of all knowledge. “When the world

sleeps, the PM stays awake and works in people’s interest on the streets. It shows how a politician can earn the trust of the public”, he said, adding that in the last 10 years, while maintaining its spiritual and cultural identity, Kashi has emerged

before the world in a new colour. “Even last night at 11 o’clock, the local residents had seen the PM observing the development works on the road while being in his parliamentary constituency; Kashi, as a popular MP”, he said.

Along with development, Yogi said the PM has also given a new look to Kashi and a platform to every section of the society. “For the first time, the PM presented an example in front of the country’s public representatives through the

competitions of Kashi Sansad Gyan Pratiyogita, Kashi Sansad Photography Pratiyogita and Kashi Sansad Sanskrit Pratiyogita,” he said.

The CM said that this is an inspiring occasion. “Generally a public representative means making efforts for development, but the PM is regularly associated with Kashi as an MP. While working for the interests of the people of Kashi, he is giving prestige to the ancient spiritual and cultural heritage of this place on the global stage,” he said. Later, while addressing the 647th birth anniversary celebrations of Sant Ravidas at Seer Govardhan, the CM said that a new form can be seen in Seer Govardhan on the lines of Kashi. “Ten years ago, this was an imagination, there were controversies. A place for a grand gathering could not be found. The roads were narrow, but under the foresight, guidance and leadership of the PM today the holy shrine of revered Sant Ravidas is

seen shining with new divinity and grandeur,” he said. The CM said the country got independence in 1947. “Even before that, people used to make announcements, but what work was done. The PM has implemented the works following the teachings of Jagadguru Ramanand and Ravidas. This is what Jagadguru Ramanand Ji had said we are seeing today. The mantra of everyone’s support, everyone’s development is coming true in the society. Every poor person is getting a house, toilet and Ayushman Bharat guarantee of ₹5 lakh. Also the necessities of life are being fulfilled. For the first time in independent India, the work of paying respect to the Panch Teerths of Baba Saheb has been done. For this the entire country and society expresses gratitude to the PM,” Yogi said. The CM said through the land of Kashi, the PM has given new inspiration to the country and the world. “During the Corona period, everyone was doubtful as to

how 140 crore Indians would be able to survive and move forward, but the PM made arrangements for free tests, vaccines and treatment. About 600 years ago, Sadhguru had said that “I want such a rule, where everyone gets food, small and big all live equally, Ravidas remains happy} and the PM implemented this statement of Sant Ravidas. For the last four years, 80 crore people have been getting free ration without any discrimination. The programmes are being taken forward by taking Sadhguru’s work to the ground level,” he said.

Then welcoming the PM at Banas Dairy Complex premises where the latter gifted projects over ₹13,202 crore to Purvanchal, including Varanasi, Yogi said all this development has been possible due to the far-sightedness. “Today Kashi is emerging as a great holy city in the world arena,” he said, adding that now Banas Dairy has become a ‘pilgrim’ centre for milkmen and farmers.

43,068 operated for cataract

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Health department is continuously making efforts to reduce the rate of blindness and visual impairment in the district. For this purpose, under the National Blindness and Visual Defect Control Programme, people suffering from eye-related problems are being provided testing, treatment and medical facilities. From April 2023 till now, 43,068 cataract patients have been identified and treated in the district.

Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Dr Sandeep Chaudhary said there is a need to pay special attention to blindness in children. The main reasons for this were said to be eye infections, Vitamin A deficiency, malnutrition and eye injuries. Along with this, the problem of cataract is being seen more in the elderly, for this the CMO has appealed that the families of children and elderly people should take better care of their

health, do regular exercise, eat a balanced, healthy and nutritious diet. “Elderly people should not smoke, avoid the use of gutka, tobacco and khaini, it affects the nervous system”, he added.

ACMO and Nodal Officer of the programme Dr Sanjay Rai said that under the National Blindness and Visual Impairment Programme, all the people of rural and urban areas are being given the benefit of this scheme. From April 2023 till now, cataract operation of 43,068 patients was done through government hospitals, private hospitals and voluntary organisations of the district. Dr Rai said apart from this, about 2,800 school children have been identified and provided free spectacles through the Rashtriya Bal Swashtya Karyakram (RBSK) from April 2023 till now. Along with this, free spectacles were provided to about 1,800 elderly people identified at community and primary health centres (CHCs and PHCs).

Health camp organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Under the Pradhan Mantri TB-Mukt Bharat Abhiyan and National Tuberculosis Eradication Programme (NTEP), a health camp for TB-Mukt Panchayat Abhiyan was organised in Bhidur village of Cholarpur block here on Friday. This camp was organised under the joint aegis of Health Department and Piramal Foundation. The work of TB free Panchayat campaign is being conducted continuously in all the eight blocks of Varanasi.

In the health camp organised under the leadership of Superintendent of Community Health Centre (CHC) Cholarpur, Dr RB Yadav, the team examined 48 people, in which possible TB symptoms were found in eight persons. All these persons were referred for screening and testing.

Arvind Gupta of Piramal Foundation said that TB bacteria spread in the air when the patient coughs, sneezes and spits and when inhaled, they reach the lungs of a healthy person and cause the disease. Therefore, in this campaign, all

persons with symptoms of TB (potential patients) must get tested. He appealed to all supporting organisations to give full emphasis to screening, testing, diagnosis and complete treatment in all the gram panchayats.

He appealed to all to make people aware in the community by coordinating with ASHA-Anganwadi workers, including gram pradhan, community health officer (CHO) and panchayat assistant. Under the leadership of Dayashankar Yadav, gram pradhan of Bhidur village, continuous work is being done regarding TB free panchayat. He said TB screening is being done in the village by the Health department team. Persons with possible symptoms are being referred for testing for TB.

Along with this, the community is being made aware about the symptoms of TB, screening, testing, diagnosis, treatment, nutrition and emotional support etc. On the occasion, Avnish Rai, Suraj Patole and Amit Sharma from Piramal Foundation team, Manoj Singh from CHRI, STS Anant Singh and others were present.

Shivpur-Lahartara Marg inspected

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On his arrival to his parliamentary constituency (Varanasi) after a long and packed day in Gujarat, Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi went to inspect the Shivpur-Phulwaria-Lahartara Marg around 11 pm on Thursday. The Shivpur-Phulwaria-Lahartara Marg was inaugurated recently. It is of great help to around five lakh people living around southern part, BHU, BLW, etc who want to go towards the airport, Lucknow, Azamgarh and Ghazipur.

It was built at a cost of ₹360 crore and is helping to reduce traffic congestion, reducing the travel distance from BHU towards the airport from 75 minutes to 45 minutes and from Lahartara to Kutchery (district court) from 30 minutes to 15 minutes.

This project saw inter-ministerial coordination, including from Railways and Defence, to enhance ease of living for citizens of this holy city. Earlier, after landing at the Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport, Babatpur, the prime minister



Prime Minister Narendra Modi inspecting the Shivpur-Phulwaria-Lahartara Marg on Thursday night

went to the Officers’ Guest House in Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) for a night stay.

During his long road journey till BLW Guest House, despite late night hours, the people of Kashi warmly welcomed the PM. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MLAs, workers and office-bearers welcomed him at six places

with 460 kg flowers amid the beat of drums and slogans of ‘Jai Shri Ram’ and ‘Har Har Mahadev’.

The PM’s convoy reached the BLW Guest House directly by road via Shivpur, Bhojpur, Kutchery via Phulwaria four lane. Earlier when the prime minister landed at the airport, he was wel-

comed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, along with Union Minister Mahendra Nath Pandey, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) State President Bhupendra Chaudhary, Uttar Pradesh ministers Jaiveer Singh, Anil Rajbhar, Ravindra Jaiswal and Dr Dayashankar Mishra ‘Dayalu’ and senior army, administrative and police officers.

Workshop on IPR today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A one-day workshop on Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) will be organised by the Indian Institute of Information Technology, Allahabad, on Saturday on Jhalwa campus. Dr Amit Prabhakar, Coordinator, National Innovation & Start-up Policy (NISIP), IIIT-A said the IPR workshop will serve as a platform for industry leaders, legal professionals and experts in the field to discuss and explore the latest trends, challenges and innovations related to IPR.



उ.प्र. आवास एवं विकास परिषद
कार्यालय अधीनस्थ अभियन्ता, विद्युत-सुरक्षा
आवास कार्यालय, पटार पहा, सील पहा-4, लखनऊ-226001
फ़ोन नं. 210 / M-6-ED-III / 32



दिनांक: 23.02.2024

ई-निविदा सूचना
अवरोहस्तारों द्वारा जागरित विद्युत (विस्तार) योजना संख्या-11, मेरठ, सेक्टर-3ए रिथरि 33 / 11 केओवी विद्युत उपकेंद्र से सेक्टर-एए में निर्माणित 672 नए आवासों का आवास योजना के अन्तर्गत 11 केओवी लाईन का निर्माण कार्य हेतु परिषद में विद्युत/यंत्रिक कार्य हेतु आरंभ श्रेणी में पंजीकृत फर्मों से ई-निविदा निविदा आमंत्रित की जाती है, जो कि दृढ़-निविदा प्रणाली के अन्तर्गत ई-प्रोक्यूरमेंट पोर्टल पर दिनांक 14.03.2024 को खोली जायेगी। शेष नियम व शर्तें परिषद की वेबसाइट www.upavp.com एवं एनएसआईटी की वेबसाइट <https://tenderup.nic.in> तथा अधिसूची अभिनयन, विद्युत उपकेंद्र-नवीय, उद्योग आवास एवं विकास परिषद, कानपुर के कार्यालय में देखी जा सकती है।
अधीनस्थ अभियन्ता (वि/वी)

Alternative plots allotted



The KDA organised a lottery to allot alternative plots on Friday.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Following some dispute in plots allotted to the applicants in the Highway City part-2 scheme, a lottery to allot them the alternative plots in the extended scheme of Highway City Extension part-3 was organised at the Atal Behari Vajpayee auditorium of KDA on Friday. Alternative plots of 112.5, 60 and 30 sq metres were allotted to five, 26 and six allottees respectively. Total 37 alternative plots were allotted on Friday. After getting the alternative plots, the allot-

tees were upbeat and praised the efforts of the KDA. OSD/zonal sales in charge Sat Shukla, executive engineer zone 4 Dharendra Bajpai, assistant accounts officer Suresh Kumar Mishra, law officer SB Rai and other officers and employees along with allottees were present on the occasion.

NEW KANPUR CITY PROJECT: The draft layout plan of New Kanpur City Project is ready for submission before the Vice-Chairman of Kanpur Development Authority. Apart from residential, commercial plots will also be developed in the project. Provision for developing a park before or near the residential plots will also be made. The 1,350 residential plots to be developed include plots of 112, 150, 200, 300 and 400 sq metres. Besides, big plots for setting up the group housing, commercial complex, mall, school, institution, hospital etc. will also be made available. KDA

Secretary Shatrohan Vaishya said the draft layout plan of New Kanpur City project had been prepared which will soon be put up before the Vice-Chairman/DM Rakesh Kumar Singh. He said provisions had been made to set up police station, police outpost, fire station, power sub-station and other public utility services. Meanwhile, KDA has also geared up the process of buying farmers’ land to set up the project on 153 hectares of land. For this, apart from reserved fund of ₹150 crore, the state administration had also released ₹150 crore. In a bid to facilitate movement to the project site, construction of developmental works had also been started. Initially, road dividers were being construction on the five-km-long road from the DPS school culvert to Singhpur. The contractor was asked to complete the work within three months. Electricity poles and street lights will also be installed on the road dividers, he said.

‘Prayogik Shabdawali’ released

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

An English to Hindi dictionary ‘Prayogik Shabdawali’ comprising technical words and terms generally used in sugar, alcohol and allied industries, prepared by the National Sugar Institute (NSI) was on Friday released by Director Prof Narendra Mohan in the presence of faculty members and other technical staff of the institute.

Not only are a large number of sugar and alcohol units are situated in the Hindi belt of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh etc. but workers from these Hindi speaking areas are working in these units in other states as well. These workers face difficulties in developing understanding of these technical words and terms which are used exclusively in sugar and alcohol industries and when used in English. This compilation will help them and also the students pursuing courses related to sugar technology, sugar engineering and alcohol technology etc., Prof Mohan said. The compilation is a result of cohesive effort of staff and research scholars in particular. To follow the directives of the Government of India regarding



The NSI Kanpur launches English to Hindi dictionary ‘Prayogik Shabdawali’ on Friday.

Hindi ‘Rajbhasha’, the institute has taken many initiatives and this publication is another in this direction which is going to benefit all those related to sugar and allied industry on pan India basis, said Senior Administrative Officer (SAO) Brajesh Kumar.

Copies of this publication will be provided to apex organisations of sugar and alcohol industry viz. Indian Sugar and Biofuel Manufacturer Association, UP Sugar Mills Association, National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Mills and All India Distillers Association for wider circulation. Scientific Officer Dr Sudhanshu Mohan said.

POOL CAMPUS DRIVE: Dr Virendra Swarup Institute of Computer Studies, Saket Nagar, will organise a pool campus drive on Saturday. Executive Director Dr Arpit

Awasthi said as Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) had been visiting the institute for the past several years to select students for job, it will again conduct the interview of short-listed BCA, BSc, CS, IT students (boys and girls) at the pool campus drive to be held on Saturday.

INAUGURATED: The All India Sir Padampat Singhania Memorial Bridge Tournament was started at the Kamla Club on Friday. Dy Managing Director, JK Cement Ajay Kumar Saraogi inaugurated the tournament. Chairman, Kailashpat Singhania Sports Foundation Anil Kumar Agarwal along with the Organising Secretary Jitendra Awasthi and tournament director VK Sharma were also present.

SUICIDE CASE: A mason Krishna Kumar (43) committed suicide by hanging himself from a tree in a garden in Tilsada village under the Patara outpost area under the Ghatampur police station on Friday morning. On information of his kin, the police rushed to spot and sent the body of the deceased for an autopsy. Forensic team also collected evidence from the spot. The cause of incident could not be ascertained.

High alert in view of Maghi Purnima bathing today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In view of Maghi Purnima, the last bathing festival of Magh Mela, a high alert has been issued in the Mela area as well as the city. Lakhs of devotees will come to the Sangam city on Saturday and will go back after bathing, meditation and worship. Like other major bathing festivals, an emergency plan is ready with three-tier security on Maghi Purnima. Police Commissioner Ramit Sharma held a briefing of the force on Friday. Every person coming and going in the Magh Mela area is being monitored. The IDs of people staying in hotels, dhabas and dharamshalas of the city are being verified by checking. Police, PAC, RAF have been advised to be on high alert in the Magh Mela area and behave with the devotees in a friendly manner.

Security arrangements have also been increased at every sensitive place in the Mela area including Hanuman Temple, Sangam Nose. Along with 10 companies of PAC, ATS commandos are also camping in the Mela area.

The RAF has also been put on standby to deal with any emergency. Two RAF teams have taken up position in the Mela area. A total of 19 COs along with four additional SPs

have been deployed for the security of the Mela area.

The number of six CO level officers has been increased. Continuous monitoring has also been increased in the Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC). Policemen have been deployed here shift wise 24 hours who are doing live monitoring through live feed from 300 CCTV cameras installed in the Mela area. Special arrangements have also been made on Maghi Purnima for the convenience of Divyang devotees. There is a provision of e-rickshaw for them from the parking lot to the ghat. Policemen are on duty to ensure that the Divyangs reach the Sangam easily. In view of the snan festival, a checking campaign was conducted at Prayagraj Junction, Prayagraj Sangam, Prayag, Rambagh, Subedarganj, Jhansi and other railway stations. Along with monitoring the suspects through CCTV cameras, checking was also done in important trains.

Meanwhile the Railways and Roadways have finalised the preparations for Maghi Purnima. Keeping the convenience of passengers in mind, the Railways has made preparations to run 10 special trains. The stoppage of all special trains at Prayagraj Rambagh and Jhansi railway stations has also been announced on the occasion of Maghi Purnima. A special train will

depart from Prayagraj Rambagh at 09.25 am on February 24 and reach Banaras at 1 pm. Another special train will run from Banaras to Prayagraj at 8 am on the same day which will reach here at 11.30 am. From here this train will leave at 5.10 pm on February 24 and reach Banaras at 8.45 pm. There will be 12 coaches in all these trains. Similarly, two special trains will also be run from Prayag Junction to Ayodhya on Saturday. Seeing the crowd from Prayagraj Junction, preparations have been made to run special trains towards Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya, Kanpur and Manikpur stations. The Prayagraj Express, Humsafar and Prayagraj-Bikaner Express will have stoppage at Subedarganj station from both sides on February 24. There will be a ban on entry of passengers from the Civil Lines side at Prayagraj Junction even on the day of Maghi Purnima. During this period, there will be the exit of passengers only from Civil Lines side. Passengers will enter from the city side only. This restriction will remain in force till 12 midnight on February 24. Besides, the UP Roadways will run 1,500 buses during the festival. Buses will operate from Civil Lines and Zero Road bus station and if the crowd increases, buses can also be run from Jhansi, Naini and Leader Road, a press release said.

Goods worth lakhs gutted

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Goods worth around Rs.10 lakh were gutted in a fire which broke out from the blast in a gas cylinder in a house in New Patel Nagar under Orail Kotwali police station area on Friday morning. Ajay Kumar of Churkhi Road, New Patel Nagar, is engaged in band-baja trade. Around 7 am on Friday, when family members were preparing tea, the gas cylinder suddenly caught fire. When

they failed to control the fire, they escaped out of the house. The fire soon spread to other parts of the house and within next few seconds, the gas cylinder exploded. Fire brigade rushed to spot and controlled the fire. The victim said that household and other valuable goods worth around ₹10 lakh were gutted in the fire.

In another incident a moving car suddenly caught fire on Rura flyover in Maharajpur police station area late on

Thursday night. The fire brigade had a tough time in extinguishing the flames. The car riders somehow saved themselves by jumping off the vehicle. According to the police, information about a car catching fire on the Rura flyover near the Kulgaon outpost was received through the mini control room. The fire brigade rushed to the post quickly and controlled the fire. A probe was on to ascertain cause of the incident, police said.

Jaishankar cautions against China mind games

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

As tension persists at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) for the last three years, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday here cautioned against Beijing's "mind game" to restrict India-China issues under the bilateral framework and said New Delhi must not forgo its rights to harness other factors in the world to get better terms on an "equilibrium" in the relations. He said arriving at an equilibrium and maintaining it is going to be one of the "biggest challenges" for India-China ties even as he asserted that the immediate issue at hand was Beijing's departure from laid down norms triggering the border row in eastern Ladakh.

Making this point in an interactive session at the Raisina Dialogue, Jaishankar cautioned against China's "mind game" to restrict the issues under the bilateral



framework and said India must not forgo its rights to harness other factors in the world to get better terms on an equilibrium.

On the economic front, the external affairs minister said there would be a period when the Chinese economy will be flattening out and India will be growing and referred to projections by Goldman Sachs that suggested that by 2075, both countries could end up as USD 50 trillion plus economies.

Jaishankar said India should be confident enough to "leverage" the international

system to create the "best possible outcome".

His remarks came when asked whether there would be a settling point between China and India and would the two countries finally find an equilibrium or a balance in their frosty relations.

"Here is the immediate issue which is: From the late 1980s, we had an understanding on the border precisely because it suited both of us. Now there was a departure after almost 30 years. A departure on their side in terms of how they behaved on the border. And there was a

pushback from our side," he said. "I think arriving at an equilibrium, then maintaining those and refreshing those is going to be one of the biggest challenges for both countries. It is not going to be easy," he noted.

The external affairs minister said "mind games" will be played which would be that it is "just between the two of us". "The other 190 odd countries do not exist in our relationship. That will be the mind game which will be played. I do not think we should play it," he said.

"Because if there are other factors out there in the world which can be harnessed by me to get better terms on an equilibrium, then why should I forgo that right," he said.

"Today, when I say think through your own solution, do not give another country, which is clearly a competitive country, a veto over our policy choices. Unfortunately, in the past that has happened from time-to-time," he said.

Talking about the two economies, Jaishankar said the Chinese started off "earlier and much more intensively and robustly" than India did. "But it is in the nature of things that at some stage everybody flattens out. So there will be a period when they will be flattening out and we will be growing," he said.

"I am not in denial of what the numbers today suggest. But if one looks for an example in Goldman Sachs predictions which is that we will both really by around 2075 end up as USD 50 trillion plus economies and will be the two closest to each other," he said.

"The international version of that issue will be -- if both of us are moving vis-a-vis each other and vis-a-vis the world, how do we construct an equilibrium; that There will be occasions when one or the other would want to do something to press home a particular advantage and the other would resist it," he said.

President, PM condole demise of Manohar Joshi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on Friday condoled the death of former Maharashtra Chief Minister Manohar Joshi. He was also Lok Sabha Speaker from 2002 to 2004.

In her condolence message, President Murmu said Joshi endeared himself to people and was loved by leaders cutting across party lines.

"Sad to learn about the demise of Shri Manohar Joshi, a veteran leader who had served as Lok Sabha speaker and Maharashtra chief minister. In his long public life, Shri Joshi endeared himself to people, earned admiration for his sharp wit and intellect and was loved by leaders cutting across party-line. My heartfelt condolences to his family



members and followers," the President wrote on X.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed pain at the death of former Maharashtra chief minister Manohar Joshi and recalled his contribution in various capacities. He will be remembered for his diligence as a legislator too, the prime minister said.

Modi wrote on X, "He was a veteran leader who spent years in public service and held various responsibilities at the municipal, state and national level. As Maharashtra CM, he worked tirelessly for the state's progress. He also made note-

worthy contributions as a Union Minister."

During his tenure as the Lok Sabha speaker, Modi said, Joshi strove to make parliamentary processes more vibrant and participative.

"Manohar Joshi Ji will also be remembered for his diligence as a legislator, having had the honour of serving in all four legislatures. Condolences to his family and supporters. Om Shanti," he said.

Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said Joshi established the best parliamentary traditions during his tenure as Speaker.

"I express my condolences on the demise of former Lok Sabha Speaker and senior politician Shri Manohar Joshi. Enriching democratic values, he established the best parliamentary traditions," Birla said on X.

Due to his distinctive and fair style of running the House, he had the respect of leaders of all parties, Birla recalled.

Talking for early discharge of Indians working as Russian Army support staff, says MEA

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Amid reports that some Indians are working as support staff for Russian forces in the ongoing Ukraine conflict zone, India on Friday said it was in touch with Moscow for early "discharge" of Indians working as support staff to the Russian Army, and urged its nationals to stay away from the conflict zone in Ukraine.

The comments by Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal came following a report that some Indians are working as support staff to the Russian Army in the conflict zone. "We are aware that a few Indian nationals have signed up for support jobs with the Russian army. The Indian Embassy has regularly taken up this matter with the relevant Russian authorities for their early discharge. We urge all Indian nationals to exercise due caution and stay away from this conflict," said Jaiswal.

The family of one of the men, Sufiyan from Hyderabad, along with All India Majlis-E-

"We urge all Indian nationals to exercise due caution and stay away from this conflict," he said.

This reaction came after reports indicated that dozens of Indians were allegedly duped into military service in Russia. The unsuspecting Indians were promised support jobs but were ultimately enlisted in the Russian army, receiving misleading translations of documents and undergoing military training against their initial understanding.

"We are aware that a few Indian nationals have signed up for support jobs with the Russian army. The Indian Embassy has regularly taken up this matter with the relevant Russian authorities for their early discharge. We urge all Indian nationals to exercise due caution and stay away from this conflict," said Jaiswal.

The family of one of the men, Sufiyan from Hyderabad, along with All India Majlis-E-

Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi, on Wednesday sought the intervention of the Centre and the External Affairs ministry to secure the safe evacuation of the trapped Indian nationals and take stringent action against the fraudulent agents responsible.

Imran, Sufiyan's brother, revealed the deceptive tactics employed by agents associated with Faisal Khan, who runs a YouTube channel named 'Baba Vlogs'. The unsuspecting men were allegedly promised support jobs but were ultimately enlisted in the Russian army.

With nine Indian men reportedly within the Ukrainian borders, facing danger and injuries, the distressed families seek help from the Centre. Owaisi formally wrote to External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, seeking intervention to bring back the affected Indians.

Russia a power with enormous tradition of Statecraft: Jaishankar

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Russia is a power with an enormous tradition of statecraft and it is turning more towards Asia or non-West parts of the world, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Friday, delving into current geopolitical developments and their fall-outs.

Jaishankar's comments came days after he said India has had a "stable" and "very friendly" relationship with Russia, and that Moscow never hurt New Delhi's interests.

In an interactive session at the Raisina Dialogue here on Friday, Jaishankar, replying to a question on Moscow's growing proximity with Beijing, said it makes sense to give Russia multiple options and that railroading it into a single option and criticising it for that would be like a self-fulfilling



prophecy.

"I think it makes sense to give Russia multiple options. If we railroad Russia into a single option and say that's really bad because that's the outcome, then you are making it a self-fulfilling prophecy," he said.

"Today it is important for other countries, especially in Asia to engage Russia," Jaishankar said.

"Russia is a power with an

enormous tradition of statecraft. Such powers would never put themselves into a single relationship of an overwhelming nature. It would go against their grain," he said.

The external affairs minister was asked to comment on intensification of ties between Russia and China and whether India was uncomfortable with it.

"What's happened today with Russia essentially is that a lot of doors have been shut to

Russia and the West. We know the reasons why. Russia is turning more to Asia or to parts of the world which are not West," he said. The external affairs minister suggested that policies of the West are bringing Russia and China closer.

"It's kind of funny -- on the one hand you have people who set policies (and) bring the two together and then you say beware of them coming together," he said.

Jaishankar's comments came days after he said India has had a "stable" and "very friendly" relationship with Russia, and that Moscow never hurt New Delhi's interests. The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding the ongoing Ukraine conflict.

India's import of Russian crude oil has gone up significantly despite increasing disquiet over it in many Western countries. In his remarks,

Jaishankar also highlighted India's G20 presidency and how it ensured induction of the African Union as a permanent member of the grouping. He noted that if the G20 could be expanded, the permanent membership of the UN Security Council can also be increased. "When the sort of smoke clears and people look back on this G20, it will surely be recognised for the fact that the African Union's membership was agreed upon," he said. The external affairs minister also highlighted India's foreign policy priorities including combating terrorism and attempting to ensure inclusive global welfare.

It could be millets, it could be yoga, it could be solar energy, it could be combating terrorism, it could be black money. You today see an India, which is really pushing and trying to get itself and its ideas on the global stage, he said.

Modi to inaugurate world largest grain storage plan in cooperative sector pilot project today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Aligning with the Centre's vision of "Sahakar se Samridhi," Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday will inaugurate "World's Largest Grain Storage Plan in Cooperative Sector" pilot project at 11 Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) across 11 states at an event here, a move aimed to fortify food security and fostering economic development in the country.

Additionally, the Prime Minister will also lay the foundation stone for 500 more PACS nationwide for construction of godowns and other agri infrastructure such as warehouses, custom hiring centers, PUs, and fair price shops among others under the mega grain storage scheme.

The aim is to ensure farm-



ers get modern grain storage facilities at the block level through PACS, which will strengthen food security, and empower the farmers by enabling them to realize better crop prices.

The monumental project which has been approved with a financial outlay of more than Rs 2,500 crore, is supported by NABARD and

spearheaded by the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC), an autonomous financial institution for cooperatives in the country.

The scheme is being implemented through convergence of various existing schemes like the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Agriculture Marketing

Infrastructure (AMI), etc. to enable PACS participating in the project to avail subsidies and interest subvention benefits for undertaking infrastructure development, the statement said.

NABARD has developed the National Level Common Software for this project, tailored to meet the diverse needs of PACS across the country. Onboarding of 18,000 PACS on ERP software has been completed, marking a significant milestone in the project's implementation, according to the statement.

A senior official from the Ministry said that over the next five years, India is poised to enhance its storage capacity to 215 million tonnes with the establishment of a widespread network of grain storage facilities at the PACS level. Currently, India's storage capacity stands at 145 mil-

lion tonnes, despite an annual food grain output exceeding 300 million tonnes. This shortfall in storage infrastructure leads to significant food grain losses each year due to inadequate storage facilities.

At the same time, modernizing PACS through comprehensive computerization will foster multipurpose PACS, Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs), and retail outlets.

Already, a trial run of the ERP software has commenced in 15,783 PACS spanning 27 States and Union Territories (UTs), marking a significant milestone in the project's implementation. This trial phase serves to assess the functionality and effectiveness of the software in real-world settings, paving the way for its full-scale deployment.

Nation must become industrially strong, self reliant in aerospace: IAF Deputy Chief

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Underlining the importance of aerospace sector, Deputy Chief of Air Staff Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit said here on Friday a nation has to become "industrially strong" and full spectrum self-sufficiency is required in defence, especially in the aerospace sector.

Delivering a keynote address at an international conference, he also said it is being seen that 'atmanirbharta' (self-dependence) is becoming more and more important after the "two wars" happening around us in the world.

The conference, titled 'Emerging Indian Aerospace Industry: Challenges for 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and hosted at Manekshaw Centre in Delhi Cantonment, is being attended by many other senior



officers of the Indian Air Force and representatives of various leading defence industry firms. "Every nation wants to become self-reliant, 'atmanirbhar'. And we are seeing that... After these two wars happening around us in the world, it is becoming more and more important," Air Marshal Dixit said.

His remarks come in the backdrop of the Russia-Ukraine conflict and Israel-Hamas conflict.

He emphasised the need for

'atmanirbharta' in the IAF and the challenges that the force faces at present as it forges ahead.

"We have to become industrially strong, full spectrum self-sufficiency is required in defence, especially in the aerospace sector," the deputy chief of the air staff said.

He also shared a historical aspect of manufacturing of IAF aircraft in India in the 1950s and the force's journey in the realm in the decades that followed.

"Today, the situation has become such that if a user doesn't come forward and drive this whole gamut of 'atmanirbharta', I don't think it is going to be successful," he added.

Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and air force think-tank Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS) are also co-organisers of the event.

India, Oman agree to cooperate in field of archives

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India and Oman have "agreed to cooperate" in the field of archives during a visit by a delegation of the National Archives of India to the Gulf country on February 21-22, the Culture Ministry said on Friday.

In a statement, the ministry said the members of the Indian delegation, led by NAI Director General Arun Singhal, were shown around various sections and divisions of the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) of Oman.

In bilateral discussions with NRAA chairman Hamad Mohammed Al-Dhawayani, Singhal dwelt upon the historical ties between India and Oman and informed him about the existence of a large number of records pertaining to Oman in the NAI as well as in other



repositories of India, NAI officials said.

As a gesture of goodwill, Singhal handed over "a list of 70 select documents pertaining to Oman" that are available in the NAI in Delhi. These documents cover a period from 1793 to 1953 and deal with a wide range of subjects, they said. Also, 523 pages of copies of records were handed over to the NRAA chairman, covering several important subjects such as "change of Omani Flag from

red to white (1868); succession of Sayyid Faisal bin Turki as ruler of Oman after the death of Sultan Sayyid Turki (1888); official visit of the Sultan of Muscat and Oman to the Viceroy in India (1937); and the Treaty of Friendship, Commerce and Navigation between the Republic of India and the Sultan of Muscat and Oman signed on the 15th March 1953 at Muscat (English, Hindi and Arabic versions)", the statement said.

Scientists engineer synthetic human antibody to neutralise deadly neurotoxin in snake venom

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

In a groundbreaking development having potential to significantly benefit India which is grappling with a high number of snakebite cases, scientists have engineered a synthetic human antibody capable of neutralising a deadly neurotoxin found in the venom of over 200 dangerous snake species worldwide.

This achievement, published in the journal Science Translational Medicine, marks the first application of a strategy previously used for screening antibodies against HIV and COVID-19 to create a venom-neutralizing antibody for snakebite treatment.

Senji Laxme, a PhD student at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bengaluru, emphasized the novelty of this approach, which was conducted in collaboration with scien-



tists from the US-based Scripps Research Institute. The goal is to develop a universal antibody solution that can provide broad protection against venom from various deadly snakes, including cobras, king cobras, kraits, and black mambas.

Snake venom, a potent mixture of compounds targeting nerve cells and tissues, causes thousands of deaths annually and disables many more world-

Sunagar, Associate Professor at IISc and joint corresponding author of the study, highlighted the limitations of current antivenom production methods, which involve injecting snake venom into equines and collecting antibodies from their blood. However, this process yields antibodies against microorganisms, which are not therapeutically relevant, with less than 10 percent of antivenom vials comprising antibodies targeted towards snake venom toxins.

However, the synthetic antibody developed by the research team targets a conserved region in the core of a major toxin called the three-finger toxin (3FTx) present in elapid venom. Despite variations among 3FTxs produced by different elapid species, the antibody strongly binds to various 3FTxs.

Extensive testing identified

an antibody capable of binding strongly to various 3FTxs, including those from the Taiwanese banded krait, monocol cobra from Eastern India, and black mamba from sub-Saharan Africa.

Animal experiments demonstrated the efficacy of the synthetic antibody, with mice injected with the toxin-antibody mixture surviving beyond the 24-hour observation window and appearing completely healthy.

In India, Karnataka government has become the first state to declare snakebite a notifiable disease across all its 31 district health facilities in the wake of increased incidents of snakebite in the State.

The World Health Organization (WHO) designated snakebite as a neglected tropical disease in 2017 and set a goal to reduce its global impact by 50 percent by 2030.

Religious apartheid

Karnataka’s proposal to tax several Hindu temples smacks of discrimination

In a move reminiscent of the historically partisan practice of jizya, the Congress Government in Karnataka has proposed a plan to collect funds from Hindu temples as a form of tax. Understandably, the move has sparked a controversy and reignited debates over the treatment of Hindu places of worship and whether these are being unfairly targeted. While some argue that the move is a necessary step to ensure the upkeep of Hindu religious institutions and support the livelihoods of the priests involved, others see it as discriminatory and belonging to a regressive era when non-Muslims were subjected to jizya, a special tax. While the proposed tax is not explicitly religious in nature, its resemblance to jizya has not gone unnoticed and critics view it as a form of economic discrimination. One of the primary concerns raised by the move's opponents is the selective targeting of Hindu places of worship as similar demands are not being made of other religious institutions, such as mosques or churches. This asymmetry has led



to accusations of bias and favouritism on the part of the Government. If the aim is to genuinely improve facilities at religious places, it should be even-handed and not selective. Our Constitution is clear about religious freedom and equality and all Governments across the country must comply with that. Arguing that it is a matter of fiscal responsibility, however, the tax proponents point to the vast wealth accumulated by some temples. They reason that it is only fair for these temples to contribute to the broader welfare of society. Additionally, they contend that the funds collected will be used for the benefit of the community, including the preservation of cultural heritage and the support of religious practitioners. The proposal has sparked widespread outrage among certain segments of the Hindu population, which sees it as an encroachment on their religious freedoms and an attempt to undermine their heritage. For many Hindus, temples are not just places of worship but symbols of their cultural identity. Any attempt to impose financial burdens on these institutions is viewed as an attack on their way of life. Moreover, the Government's involvement in the financial affairs of temples raises broader questions about the separation of religion and State. By exerting control over the finances of Hindu religious institutions, the Govt risks overstepping its boundaries. In this light, it is essential for the policymakers to tread carefully and consider the implications of their actions. While temple maintenance and priest welfare are undoubtedly important issues, these must be addressed in a manner that respects the rights and sensitivities of all citizens. Ultimately, the debate over the temple tax in Karnataka raises fundamental questions about religious freedom and the role of the State in religious affairs. Meanwhile, it is crucial for all stakeholders to engage in constructive dialogue and seek solutions upholding the principles of fairness; only then can we ensure that our society remains true to its values of pluralism and tolerance.



Youth employment: From seekers to innovators

Active participation in Govt schemes and emphasis on entrepreneurship offer promising avenues towards a brighter future for India’s rural youth

In 2023, India experienced a notable surge in unemployment rates, impacting both rural and urban areas. Particularly concerning was the rise in urban unemployment, escalating from 8.5% in October to 9.3% in November and further climbing to 10.1% in December, mirroring levels from a year prior. This surge has undeniably heightened stress among the younger generation, actively seeking job opportunities, with thousands applying for each available position. In the age of technology, however, a paradigm shift is encouraged—from job seekers to job providers. The youth grappling with unemployment challenges are urged to redefine their goals and leverage their potential and skills. Sayyed Toiba Kousar, a 22-year-old resident of the border district Poonch in Jammu and Kashmir, emphasises the transformative role technology can play in the employment landscape. Through the strategic use of technology, the younger generation can not only secure employment but also venture into



becoming job providers. Azhar Ali, a 24-year-old cricket enthusiast, underscores the importance of effective facilities for skill enhancement. He believes that with the provision of adequate facilities, the youth can excel in their respective fields, significantly contributing to societal and national development. Azhar contends that timely access to essential facilities is crucial for the younger generation to play a more impactful role in the country's progress. Muhammad Waqar, a 22-year-old, advocates for a focus on sports activities at the school level to divert youth from addictive behaviours and guide them towards establishing self-employment opportunities. Ajaz Hussain, aged 27, emphasises creating opportunities aligned with children's interests to inspire

self-reliance, benefiting both the individual and the country. Rashid highlights the importance of parental involvement in identifying and nurturing their children's interests, guiding them towards the numerous opportunities available today in areas such as sports, the internet, singing, dancing, art, painting, photography, and sculpture. In the current scenario, various skill-related schemes are being implemented by both central and state governments across India. Notably, the National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM), operated by the Ministry of Rural Development, stands out as one of the most effective projects. This initiative focuses on promoting self-employment and supporting rural individuals, especially economically disadvantaged young men and women. In Jammu and Kashmir, the Jammu and Kashmir State Rural Livelihood Mission (JKSRLM) oversees the implementation of NRLM, aiming to integrate the poor into self-help groups and connect them with self-employment opportunities.

The primary goal of JKSRLM is to reach 66% of the rural population in 125 blocks of Jammu and Kashmir, providing sustainable livelihood opportunities to uplift them from poverty and enhance their standard of living. The Indian government has initiated various poverty alleviation schemes to improve the quality of life for the poor. It is crucial for the youth to actively engage with and benefit from these government schemes, fostering self-reliance in employment matters and contributing to societal development. To ensure the success of these schemes, relevant departments should actively provide information and guidance, encouraging their 100% implementation and timely achievement of goals. By embracing the shift from job seekers to job providers, youth can play a vital role in shaping a more prosperous and self-sufficient future for themselves and the nation. (The writer is from the Poonch district of J&K. He writes on socio-economic development challenges of his community; views are personal. Charkha features)



SOHAIL ALI

The boycott at Doha

The Taliban’s obscurantist mindset and their harbouring of terrorist organisations pose a serious threat to Muslim countries

Given the obscurantist and misogynistic mindset of the Taliban, it is hardly surprising that they boycotted the conference, hosted by the United Nations, to discuss the humanitarian crisis facing Afghanistan, and cooperation on the human rights issue. They spurned the UN's invitation saying that they would attend only if they alone were officially representing Afghanistan, as inclusion of other groups would jeopardise progress. This exclusivist mindset, which reflects their intolerance of the existence of any organisation that does not share their obscurantist Islamist worldview, and does not owe allegiance to them, is at the core of their rejection of democracy, and advocacy of an Islamist theocracy manifest in their designation of Afghanistan as an Islamic Emirate, run according to the dictates of mullahs. The Taliban are unlikely to have realised that they have shot themselves in the foot by boycotting the conference held in Doha on February 18 and 19 under the chairmanship of the UN secretary-general, Antonio Guterres. Besides the special envoys of 25 countries, members of Afghanistan's civil society and women's groups, it was attended by representatives of the European Union (EU), Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). By not attending the conference, the Taliban have only perpetuated their isolation in the world. They obviously do not seem to mind that since humanitarian assistance continues to come in for the sake of the country's people suffering from natural disasters like floods and earthquakes as well as the violence stalking the country. The OIC's role was outlined by Ambassador Tarig Ali Bakheet, special envoy of organisation's secretary-general. During his interventions, Bakheet recalled his organisation's commitment to support Afghanistan and engage in a constructive dialogue with the country's de facto authorities [Taliban] "on issues and topics included in the relevant resolutions of the [OIC's]



Council of Foreign Ministers. In this regard, he reviewed OIC efforts in providing humanitarian assistance, sending scholars delegations, and holding a conference on women's rights in Islam hosted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." Ambassador Bakheet was referring to the international conference on "Women in Islam: Status and Empowerment" (November 6 to 8, 2023), organised by the OIC's general secretariat and hosted by Saudi Arabia. It included in its Final Declaration 20 recommendations highlighting the rights that Islam gave to women and the status of women in Islam. These also addressed the challenges and opportunities pertaining to the realisation of women's rights and enhancement of their role across all fields and at all levels of society. The conference also produced "The Jeddah Document on Women's Rights in Islam" which, as stated by OIC's secretary-general, Hissein Ibrahim Taha, in his address at the conference's closing session, would serve as an intellectual and practical reference document that could be adopted by legislative bodies and human rights organizations in member states and all Muslim societies when considering the

“ IF THE OIC AND THE MUSLIM COUNTRIES ARE SERIOUS ABOUT WOMEN'S RIGHTS, THEY MUST WORK OUT TOUGH ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL SANCTIONS THAT WOULD COMPEL THE TALIBAN TO CHANGE THEIR POLICIES IN THIS REGARD

rights of Muslim women. It will be submitted for adoption at the forthcoming Islamic Summit, scheduled to be held in Gambia at the end of this year, and subsequently presented to all relevant international fora. He hoped that those doubting Islam's fairness toward women would consider women's rights as set out in this document, and not on the basis some isolated social practices in some Muslim societies that in no way reflect the sublime vision and universality of Islam and its teachings. Taha's not-so-veiled rejection of the Taliban's views on women's rights in the last sentence above, will not please the mullahs running Afghanistan. Nor will they be amused by his affirmation that women's empowerment issues would remain high among the OIC's priorities, and that the OIC would launch and support numerous efforts and initiatives to elevate the status of women in Muslim societies. Taha's words carry a special significance as he spoke in Saudi Arabia where, under the leadership of the crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, significant steps have been taken to improve women's position. Women can now attend sporting events, need not wear the abayah, a long, loose-fitting, garment covering the entire body,

except the face, hands and feet, in public, and can get driving licenses and can go to work, study or run errands without male escorts. While women demanding more freedom are treated harshly and much more remains to be done, the gains have been considerable compared to the situation earlier. One can be certain that the Taliban would not change their views. Bigots dig their heels deeper and deeper the more people reject their creed. If the OIC and the Muslim countries are serious about women's rights, they must work out tough economic and political sanctions that would compel the Taliban to change their policies in this regard. They must also take measures to compel the Taliban to act against terrorist outfits like a Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State of Khorasan Province (ISKP) active in Afghanistan. The former is targeting Pakistan and the latter Iran. Given, however, their obscurantist creed, and determination to impose their version of sharia law globally, there is no reason why they will not strike other countries in future, particularly the Muslim ones they consider as apostatic. (The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DEMOCRACY UNDER THREAT?

Sir — As per a report the Congress Party on Thursday alleged that democracy is being "murdered" in the country after microblogging platform X voiced disagreement with the Centre's order to block accounts and posts related to the ongoing farmers' protests. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi claimed the public knows that the government has "murdered democracy" and will give a strong answer. Rahul Gandhi asked "If farmers ask for MSP, shoot them. Is this the mother of democracy? When the youth ask for appointments, refuse to even listen to them this is the mother of democracy? If a former governor tells the truth, send the CBI to his house. Is this the mother of democracy?" Freeze the bank account of the most prominent opposition party. Is this the mother of democracy? Section 144, internet ban, sharp wires, tear gas shells is this the mother of democracy? Be it media or social media, suppressing every voice of truth — is this the mother of democracy?" the Congress leader Gandhi said. According to sources The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology had ordered social media platforms to temporarily block 177 accounts linked to the farmers' protests at the request of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). Farmers from across the country have been protesting to press the Centre for their demands, including a legal guarantee on the minimum support price (MSP) for crops and farm loan waivers. Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

PASSPORT OFFICE WOES

Sir — It is observed that a huge gathering above five hundred applicants including aged and mothers carrying just born babies are standing in queue, outside the office on Thursday i.e. open day, to get solve the problems of passports to be issued at RPO, Secunderabad. Moreover over the area traffic police lift the vehicles parking outside the said office. The concerned authorities of the passport

Two legendary figures depart



India has lost two of its most illustrious and influential personalities, Fali S Nariman and Ameen Sayani, who left behind a legacy of excellence and innovation in their respective fields of law and radio. Fali S Nariman was a renowned jurist and senior advocate of the Supreme Court of India. He was involved in several landmark cases that shaped India's constitutional law and judicial system. He was a champion of civil liberties and the independence of the judiciary. He resigned as Additional Solicitor General to protest against the Emergency in 1975, the only law officer to do so.

office should provide the same facility i.e. open day at all passport offices of Hyderabad to solve the aroused problems instead of a single door at Secunderabad. Thus the applicants can reach their nearest office and the rush at a single door will also be diluted. The concerned area traffic police should also provide sufficient parking places instead of lifting and imposing huge penalties on applicants. Hope the area Corporator, MLA, Concern Minister and the authorities of passport offices and traffic police will take necessary action soon and will provide mental and physical relaxation to the applicants. Arif Hussain | Secunderabad

ODISHA TO IMPROVE SPORTS INFRA

Sir — The Odisha government has decided to renovate Barabati Stadium in Cuttack. The Barabati stadium is one of the oldest stadiums in the state. This stadium has witnessed many national and international sporting events in the past. Barabati Stadium is also known to be the

He received several awards and honours, including the Padma Vibhushan, the Gruber Prize for Justice, and a nomination to the Rajya Sabha. He was also an avid reader, writer and speaker on various topics of law, politics and culture. Ameen Sayani was the iconic radio presenter and host of the popular radio show Binaca Geetmala, which ran from 1952 to 1994 on Radio Ceylon. He revolutionised Indian broadcasting with his signature greeting, "Behno aur Bhaiyo", and his warm and friendly style of hosting. Nariman and Sayani were both Parsis who belonged to Mumbai and made their mark on the national and international stage. They were both respected and admired by their peers and fans for their passion, integrity and innovation. They were both involved in the mission of nation-building and inspiring generations to fight for a just society. They will be dearly missed by their family, friends and fans. May their souls rest in peace. Amarjeet Kumar | Hazaribagh

hub of cricket in Odisha. To revive Odisha's cricketing history and groom young cricket aspirants in the state, it was necessary to redevelop it. A Sports complex having world-class facilities for other sports will also be built along with the new stadium. A few days back a cricket stadium in Sambalpur was also decided for renovated. After Hockey and Football, Odisha is now investing in the cricketing ecosystem and infrastructure. This move will assist youths in the state who want to make a career in sports. The developed sports infrastructure will make Odisha a hub for many national and international sporting events. The development of sports in the state will boost the economy as well. Odisha has already hosted the Hockey World Cup and FIFA World Cup and in its way to becoming the sports capital of India. Deba Prasad Nayak | Dhenkanal

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

THE STRESS BEHIND THE TEACHING PROFESSION


Teachers have alarming rates of burnout and attrition worldwide



College degrees, good education and satisfying jobs are all things that people generally strive for. Teaching is one of the most visceral jobs most people will ever experience. Teachers since ages have proven to be vital because they shape the lives of students and help them develop the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in the world.

It is interesting to note that many people today believe the stereotype that teaching is a stress-free job. It is the only profession that gets summers and weekends off. Moreover, it is typically a job that people only do because they cannot do anything else. The adage those who can, do; those who can't, teach is widely believed. However, the reality is that there is a great amount of stress associated with this type of profession.

There is no denying the fact that the teaching profession is emotionally, physically and mentally exhausting. Many teachers across the world are experiencing teacher shortages. As per the latest survey, it was found that almost 50% of the new teachers who join with super excitement, passion and a dream to take on the world quit within the first five years of teaching, which begs the question: why do so many of them leave after going through years of college for this profession? Without enough teacher, one cannot successfully educate their children. Moreover, the most disturbing part is that the education system relies on massive amounts of unpaid labour. According to the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the average teacher works for 52.5 hours a week, over 30% more than they are contracted for. Multiple surveys declare uncertainty, workload, negative perception about the job, concern for others' well-being, health struggles and playing multiple roles have hampered school teachers' mental health and well-being.



Not only this, research also indicates that burnout contributes to high attrition rates among educators. Making teachers work beyond their contracted hours and not paying for it; giving them five hours or less per week to plan for 30 hours of instructions, grading and providing feedback on assignments for almost 200 students on an average, analysing data, contacting parents, attending meetings, preparing teaching materials, expecting teachers to implement new initiatives, programs and practices without proper training, completing administrative tasks, expecting teachers to differentiate and individualise instructions for a class with 30+ students and above all blaming teachers for all education-related issues despite not including teachers in decision making of education-related issues prove out to be a few reasons for teacher burnout. The constant turnover rate of teachers, lack of interest in teaching and lack of commitment to the profession continue to be a major concern for school systems all over the nation. Stress has become a common characteristic of teachers and with the increased amount of accountability, teachers play a significant role in students and schools resulting in poor classroom engagement and ultimately low student achievement.

To be an effective educator, all teachers need to maintain their psychological well-being. For an ordinary human being not related to this profession, a teacher is a person who is working around 1800 hours a year, whereas in reality, they are the ones who are working around 2300 hours a year on average which shows that approximately 550 hours are unpaid working.

Remember, the teachers cannot effectively accomplish all necessary tasks only during their contract hours. The growing concern is the psychological well-being of teachers not only at the school level but also at the college level.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Farmers demand MSP protection

The imperative need for a legislation-backed MSP grows ever more urgent, promising stability and prosperity for the backbone of India's economy

The resurgence of protests by farmers has brought attention to their longstanding struggle for sustainable profitability in the agricultural sector. Although their demands are diverse, their primary request is for a legal guarantee for MSP (Minimum Support Prices). Farmers believe that the government has not shown genuine interest in effectively implementing MSP, which has led to distrust, frustration, and the need for a legal guarantee. These issues have forced them to leave their homes and farms and take to the highways in protest, resulting in the death of three farmers a couple of injuries, and disruption of normalcy that has affected the commuters and business activities.

In September 2020, the government introduced three controversial farm laws that were met with widespread protests and demands for their repeal. While the laws were eventually repealed in November 2021, there has been no interim report from the Committee on MSP formed to address farmers' concerns. This delay in decision-making perpetuates uncertainties in the agricultural sector and undermines the effectiveness of the present MSP as a stabilizing force.

MSP was introduced in 1966-67 to ensure food security amid food scarcity. Despite broad political support for a legal guarantee for MSP, successive governments have failed to formalize this issue, leaving the agricultural sector in a state of uncertainty. However, it is high time to address the weakening of the decades-old MSP policy, remove the complexities surrounding its legislation, and recognise the potential benefits of legalising MSP to fuel the wholesome growth of the agriculture sector, which is the country's lifeline. The Modi government has demonstrated its commendable ability to revamp decades-old mechanisms with various robust reforms such as the amendments to Indian Penal Codes and the abrogation of Article 370 in Kashmir, and now they must take bold steps to address this pressing issue.

Why farmers asking for legal guarantee: The MSP is an administered advisory price for 23 crops and is determined annually by the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) as a key government intervention to insulate farmers from price volatility when the market prices fall below the MSP as well as of consumers against corrupt manipulative market inflation and maintains food security. It has been in existence in India for more than five decades. Why, then, are farmers asking for a legal guarantee? Only 6% of farmers benefit from MSP, and it procures just 11% of total agricultural output in the country, according to the latest available NITI Aayog data.

Over 90 % of crops are sold at prices that are 20-30% lower than the declared MSP, leading to average losses of Rs 20,000 per acre and about Rs 10 lakh crore annually for farmers. A study by the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development found that Indian farmers have been suffering losses since 2000 due to ineffective policies. The report revealed that Indian farmers lost Rs 45 lakh crore during 2000-2017 due to low prices.

Misconceptions in legalising: The legalisation of MSP has been hindered by exaggerated claims about its fiscal costs. These claims have misled successive governments, and it is essential to clarify that legalising MSP does not entail the government procuring all agricultural produce. The apprehensions over excessive fiscal requirements are unfounded and should not prevent the legalisation of MSP.

To make MSP a legal guarantee, necessary amendments are needed in the Agricultural Produce & Livestock Market Committee (APMC) Act by incorporating a clause that 'auction of farm produce in APMC's markets is legally not permitted below the declared MSP prices'. The apprehensions on the operation of MSP legal guarantee are that most of the sales of farm produce are not in APMCs, and traders may boycott the purchases of farm produce. The government does not have physical and economic resources to purchase, store, and market the procured farm produce, which is an irrational argument. Government intervention is necessary only when market prices fall below MSP, and it does not require the procurement of the entire marketable surplus.

The potential boycott of farm produce in places MSP legal regimes by the traders is an irrational argument because the commodity's supply is tight against the demand for farm produce. First, this was also evident from the fact that the government could manage to procure only 26 million tonnes of wheat at MSP against the target of 44.4 million tonnes fixed for the 2023 season. Second, the government's expenditure on procurement and imports of farm produce like edible oil and pulses, and on procurement of food grains on MSP in 2022-23, has already surpassed Rs 5 lakh crore and Rs 2.28 lakh crore, respectively.

Claims that the MSP legal guarantee will create fiscal disasters for India are baseless. According to government estimates, the MSP values of the total production of the 23 crops worked out to be around Rs 17 lakh crore, and some studies worked out to be around Rs 10 lakh crore. Furthermore, only 70% of the farm produce comes to markets as a marketable surplus, and farmers' families consume the rest for household purposes. The MSP legal guarantee will cost the government about Rs 5 lakh crore if traders or big corporations engaged in processing boycott the APMC's markets, which is an unlikely scenario. It is time to dismiss the misconceptions surrounding the legalisation of MSP and focus on the merits of providing a legal guarantee for MSP. Merits of legalising MSP: Farming is inherently risky, influenced by factors such as weather conditions, pest attacks, and market dynamics. By establishing a legally binding framework for minimum floor prices across all crops, will mitigate the current challenges and safeguard farmers from unpredictable fluctuations in the prices of their produce.

However, the government has proposed buying cotton, maize, tur, urad and Masur for five years directly from the farmers at the MSP without any quantitative limit. Notably, these crops are grown outside Punjab and Haryana, the home states of the protesting farmers. From this, can it infer that small pulses growing farmers all over the country stand to benefit? Legalising MSP for a wider variety of crops ensures that the benefits of price stability are not limited to specific segments of the farming community.

Small and marginal farmers cultivating diverse crops can access the protective shield of MSP, contributing to inclusive agricultural growth, and playing a pivotal role in ensuring food security for the nation by maintaining a stable production environment for key staples, contributing to the overall food security of the country.

A legal framework enables the government to conduct strategic operations in domestic and international markets. By selling procured produce at minimal markups during times of higher market prices, the government can manage inflation surges, ensuring price stability for consumers.

MSP reduces the vulnerability of farmers to market fluctuations, ensuring a minimum income for their produce. Farmers can navigate uncertainties more confidently, knowing that the government is legally bound to intervene when market prices fall below the MSP. A guaranteed MSP leads to increased rural income. This, in turn, stimulates the rural economy by boosting demand for goods and services, creating a positive ripple effect in various sectors.

The way forward: Policymakers can pave the way for a more secure and prosperous future for farmers by dispelling misconceptions and addressing concerns. Replacing the decades-old and inefficient MSP policy with a legally guaranteed MSP offers a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector. It not only ensures consistent implementation but also promotes diversification, inclusivity, and economic resilience, contributing to the wholesome well-being of farmers and the prosperity of the rural economy. This will help to fuel the dream of a 'Viksit Bharat'.



LEGALISING MSP FOR A WIDER VARIETY OF CROPS ENSURES THAT THE BENEFITS OF PRICE STABILITY ARE NOT LIMITED TO SPECIFIC SEGMENTS OF THE FARMING COMMUNITY

generated claims about its fiscal costs. These claims have misled successive governments, and it is essential to clarify that legalising MSP does not entail the government procuring all agricultural produce. The apprehensions over excessive fiscal requirements are unfounded and should not prevent the legalisation of MSP.

To make MSP a legal guarantee, necessary amendments are needed in the Agricultural Produce & Livestock Market Committee (APMC) Act by incorporating a clause that 'auction of farm produce in APMC's markets is legally not permitted below the declared MSP prices'. The apprehensions on the operation of MSP legal guarantee are that most of the sales of farm produce are not in APMCs, and traders may boycott the purchases of farm produce. The government does not have physical and economic resources to purchase, store, and market the procured farm produce, which is an irrational argument. Government intervention is necessary only when market prices fall below MSP, and it does not require the procurement of the entire marketable surplus.

The potential boycott of farm produce in places MSP legal regimes by the traders is an irrational argument because the commodity's supply is tight against the demand for farm produce. First, this was also evident from the fact that the government could manage to procure only 26 million tonnes of wheat at MSP against the target of 44.4 million tonnes fixed for the 2023 season. Second, the government's expenditure on procurement and imports of farm produce like edible oil and pulses, and on procurement of food grains on MSP in 2022-23, has already surpassed Rs 5 lakh crore and Rs 2.28 lakh crore, respectively.

Claims that the MSP legal guarantee will create fiscal disasters for India are baseless. According to government estimates, the MSP values of the total production of the 23 crops worked out to be around Rs 17 lakh crore, and some studies worked out to be around Rs 10 lakh crore. Furthermore, only 70% of the farm produce comes to markets as a marketable surplus, and farmers' families consume the rest for household purposes. The MSP legal guarantee will cost the government about Rs 5 lakh crore if traders or big corporations engaged in processing boycott the APMC's markets, which is an unlikely scenario. It is time to dismiss the misconceptions surrounding the legalisation of MSP and focus on the merits of providing a legal guarantee for MSP. Merits of legalising MSP: Farming is inherently risky, influenced by factors such as weather conditions, pest attacks, and market dynamics. By establishing a legally binding framework for minimum floor prices across all crops, will mitigate the current challenges and safeguard farmers from unpredictable fluctuations in the prices of their produce.

However, the government has proposed buying cotton, maize, tur, urad and Masur for five years directly from the farmers at the MSP without any quantitative limit. Notably, these crops are grown outside Punjab and Haryana, the home states of the protesting farmers. From this, can it infer that small pulses growing farmers all over the country stand to benefit? Legalising MSP for a wider variety of crops ensures that the benefits of price stability are not limited to specific segments of the farming community.

Small and marginal farmers cultivating diverse crops can access the protective shield of MSP, contributing to inclusive agricultural growth, and playing a pivotal role in ensuring food security for the nation by maintaining a stable production environment for key staples, contributing to the overall food security of the country.

A legal framework enables the government to conduct strategic operations in domestic and international markets. By selling procured produce at minimal markups during times of higher market prices, the government can manage inflation surges, ensuring price stability for consumers.

MSP reduces the vulnerability of farmers to market fluctuations, ensuring a minimum income for their produce. Farmers can navigate uncertainties more confidently, knowing that the government is legally bound to intervene when market prices fall below the MSP. A guaranteed MSP leads to increased rural income. This, in turn, stimulates the rural economy by boosting demand for goods and services, creating a positive ripple effect in various sectors.

The way forward: Policymakers can pave the way for a more secure and prosperous future for farmers by dispelling misconceptions and addressing concerns. Replacing the decades-old and inefficient MSP policy with a legally guaranteed MSP offers a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector. It not only ensures consistent implementation but also promotes diversification, inclusivity, and economic resilience, contributing to the wholesome well-being of farmers and the prosperity of the rural economy. This will help to fuel the dream of a 'Viksit Bharat'.

antedeed by maintaining a stable production environment for key staples, contributing to the overall food security of the country.

A legal framework enables the government to conduct strategic operations in domestic and international markets. By selling procured produce at minimal markups during times of higher market prices, the government can manage inflation surges, ensuring price stability for consumers.

MSP reduces the vulnerability of farmers to market fluctuations, ensuring a minimum income for their produce. Farmers can navigate uncertainties more confidently, knowing that the government is legally bound to intervene when market prices fall below the MSP. A guaranteed MSP leads to increased rural income. This, in turn, stimulates the rural economy by boosting demand for goods and services, creating a positive ripple effect in various sectors.

The way forward: Policymakers can pave the way for a more secure and prosperous future for farmers by dispelling misconceptions and addressing concerns. Replacing the decades-old and inefficient MSP policy with a legally guaranteed MSP offers a comprehensive solution to the challenges faced by the agricultural sector. It not only ensures consistent implementation but also promotes diversification, inclusivity, and economic resilience, contributing to the wholesome well-being of farmers and the prosperity of the rural economy. This will help to fuel the dream of a 'Viksit Bharat'.

(The author is Vice-Chairman of Sonalika Group, Vice-Chairman of the Punjab Economic Policy and Planning Board, and Chairman of ASSOCHAM Northern Region Development Council; Views expressed are personal)

The enduring legacy of Ameen Sayani, the radio icon

Sayani's influence extended far beyond the confines of the studio, earning him a place in the hearts and minds of millions

In the melodic realm of post-independence, India emerged a captivating voice that transcended mere broadcasting to become a cherished companion for countless listeners for almost four decades. With the resounding greeting, "Namaskar bhaiyon aur behno, main apka dost Ameen Sayani bol raha hoon," Ameen Sayani forged an indelible connection through the airwaves, beckoning listeners to join him on a journey of music and camaraderie. This golden voice of radio passed into eternity on February 21, 2024, in Mumbai. He was 91.

His voice, emanating from vintage radio sets, possessed a captivating charm, diverging from the seriousness of his peers. Ameen Sayani's pioneering radio show, starting as a modest segment on Radio Ceylon, swiftly became a cultural sensation in the 1950s. From Binaca Geetmala to Hit Parade and Cibaca Geetmala, his presentation remained timeless, bridging simplicity and connection, resonating with ordinary hearts. Geetmala transcended borders, captivating audiences across Asia and East Africa



and fostering unity through Hindi film melodies. With 90 million listeners, it has evolved into a cherished tradition, binding families over enchanting tunes. They were not merely a fleeting waltz through the sonic realms; it was a timeless symphony, a melody that lingered in the hearts of generations. With the gentle caress of nostalgia, it continued its melodious journey, spanning the years from 1952 to 1994, a testament to its enduring charm and universal appeal. And like a phoenix rising from the ashes of bygone eras, it experienced resurgences in the dawn of new millennia, revivals in 2000-2001 and 2001-2003, each breathing new life into its hallowed name.

Beyond the airwaves, Ameen Sayani's unparalleled contribution as a voiceover artist echoes through the annals of time, with over 54,000 radio programmes and approximately 19,000 jingles to his credit — a testament to his lasting impact on the hearts and minds of a nation. Bhajan Samrat, Anup Jalota while sharing his thoughts with me on hearing the news of Ameen Sahab's demise said that he was one of the pioneers in the field of entertainment in broadcasting media and the texture of his voice captivated many people. "Today many of the anchors try to copy his texture and finesse", he said, adding, "It was almost a miracle that any song that Ameen Sahab would announce in his Binaca Geetmala, would go on

to become a hit. Phrases like "Aawaz ke duniya ke doston", and "Bhaiyon aur Beheno" were introduced by him which people are using today and trying to establish themselves. He was very mild in his behaviour and very gentle. "Listening to Ameen Sayani's iconic radio show, 'Binaca Geet Mala,' with my siblings was a cherished ritual in our household," reminisces Dr Sumitra Guha, a renowned classical vocalist and recipient of the Sangeet Natak Akademy award. "The mesmerising voice of Ameen Sayani filled our hearts with joy, as we eagerly awaited the melodious tunes of legendary playback singers like Lata Mangeshkar. His captivating narration and the golden era of Bollywood music left an indelible mark

on my soul. It was truly a magical time, enhanced by the charm of our beloved host." Writer, social activist and President of the Guild of Services, Meera Khanna shares her memories of growing up listening to Ameen Sayani. She says, "With the passing away of Ameen Sayani it is as if a precious memory of childhood has slipped away. The 'Binaca Geetmala' which he hosted in his amazing voice was an integral part of a childhood when television had not invaded homes. Gathered around the radio or with the transistor stuck to the ear Ameen Sayani invited you to float on the melody or foot tap to the rhythm of the most popular Hindi film songs. Thus, every week Ameen Sayani was the friend who visited

with a bouquet of melody rhythm and poetry. Millions in this country will remember with the nostalgia of the times when pleasures were simple and radio hosts made you feel good about our world." Smita Vats, Founder and President of ITIHAAS (Indian Traditions Heritage and Society) kept it simple when she said, "My memories are just of his voice... diction, and metre while reading and talking. All lost now, as no one speaks well these days." Throughout his illustrious career spanning decades, Sayani epitomised innovation and authenticity. Amidst evolving media landscapes, he championed radio's timeless ability to unite communities. Beyond the airwaves, Sayani's magnetic charisma

made him a sought-after emcee, infusing every event he hosted with enchantment. Veteran journalist and author, Khushwant Singh eloquently captured Sayani's significance, saying, "Ameen Sayani wasn't just a radio presenter; he was a storyteller whose voice painted vivid images in the minds of his listeners." In the words of the man himself, "This is Ameen Sayani, signing off with the hope that you'll join me again next week, same time, same station." As we bid farewell to this titan of the airwaves, his voice and legacy will long be cherished. Farewell Ameen Sahab!

(The writer is programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

PM to start poll campaign in Bengal soon

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to flag off his electoral campaign in Bengal in the first week of March, State BJP sources on Friday said.

The Prime Minister who is coming to Bengal amid ongoing rural unrest at Sandeshkhali block in North 24 Parganas will address three rallies at Arambagh, Krishnagar and Basirhat on March 1, 2 and 6 respectively.

“We have information that the Prime Minister will address three meetings in the first week of March. The rest will be informed formally at a subsequent date,” a BJP State leader said. Earlier State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari had said that the Prime Minister may visit Basirhat and address a rally there on March six. Subsequently State party president Sukanto Majumdar said that his party would also try to arrange a meeting between the tortured women of Sandeshkhali and the Prime Minister.

“If the mothers and sisters of Sandeshkhali want then we



may take them to the Prime Minister for a meeting,” Majumdar said.

“If we can bring him here then he will be the first Prime Minister to visit this area since Independence ... it will be a big thing and we have already started our preparations in right earnest ... only the dates are to be obtained... our cadres and the local people are ready to receive him,” BJP leader and MLA Agnimitra Paul.

When asked to comment on the Prime Minister's visit TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that unlike in the BJP-ruled States, democracy prevailed in Bengal and anyone can come and go. “Unlike the BJP-ruled

double-engine States where the farmers are fired at and they are not allowed to travel on the national highways even there is full democracy in Bengal ... anyone can come and go like they did in 2021 ... why only the Prime Minister let the whole regiment come like tourists but finally it will be the Bengal's own daughter that will win ... because the people know that Mamata Banerjee is not a seasonal bird.”

Arambagh is a parliamentary seat in Hooghly district and Krishnagar is a Lok Sabha constituency in Nadia district. Basirhat is in North 24 Parganas. Trinamool Congress' Aparupa Poddar is the sitting

MP from Arambagh while former MP and TMC leader Mohua Moitra was elected from Krishnagar in 2019.

She was expelled from Lok Sabha last year in a cash-for-query case. TMC's Nusrat Jahan holds the Basirhat parliamentary seat.

The BJP has a good presence in all the three districts. While party MP Locket Chatterjee holds the Hooghly parliamentary seat adjacent to Arambagh, the Ranaghat Lok Sabha seat neighbouring Krishnagar was won by the saffron party in 2019.

As the Left too has made a considerable progress in all these regions an early rally addressed by the Prime Minister could put the saffron outfit ahead of the Left in these regions where the TMC is known to have suffered a considerable alienation particularly in the wake of recruitment scams.

According to sources in the TMC, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee too was not happy with the MPs of Arambagh and Basirhat and could drop them this time round.

Sandeshkhali: Mass protest spreads like wildfire to neighbouring villages

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

Even as Sandeshkhali unrest betrayed all the signs of drifting characteristically towards Nandigram movement that catapulted Mamata Banerjee to power in 2011, the mass protest continued in the North 24 Parganas block this time spreading like wild fire to neighbouring villages.

On Friday there were new areas of violence at Belmajur and Tebhaga More where hundreds of villagers blocked roads and burnt wood blocks after being attacked by the armed men of Sheikh Shahjahan. Subsequent to their resistance the police resorted to mild lath-charge and arrested several agitators which further ignited the matter when the women in great numbers blocked the roads and jostled with the police.

The situation deteriorated soon after Director General and Additional Director General of Police Rajeev Kumar and Supratim Sarkar



left the area assuring justice to the villagers, sources said.

“Their senior officers assured us that all the houses that were ransacked and destroyed by the men of Shahjahan would be restored in a couple of days should there prevail peace ... but after they left the island the police swooped down on us arresting our men indiscriminately ... so how do we rely on the police ... we are poor people and Shahjahan and his men have literally looted us of our lands and honour for the past one decade ... instead of arresting

them the police are torturing us ... now we have no fear ... we are ready to see the end of it all,” the women fumed.

The police had clamped Section 144 of CrPC in several villages of Sandeshkhali.

Sandeshkhali hit the national headlines on January 5 when the goons of Shahjahan a TMC strongman and a district board member --- close to jailed Food Minister Jyotipriya Mallick --- attacked and injured a team of Enforcement Directorate when they went to search his house in connection to the Rs 10,000 crore ration

scam. Even as he went underground thereafter Sandeshkhali erupted with the locals, gheraoing the police station demanding their usurped lands and seeking justice for their women who had been sexually assaulted for years.

Subsequently two henchmen of Shahjahan Shibui Hajra and Uttam Sardar, both district board members were arrested. However former CPI(M) MLA Nirapada Sardar too was arrested on charges of inciting the locals against the government.

Meanwhile, the TMC leadership in Kolkata continued to blame the BJP and the Left for fishing in troubled waters even as State minister Shashi Panja on Friday said, “the BJP and the CPI(M) may try their best to incite the poor gullible people but they will not succeed because the anger of the people is not against the government policies but some local leaders who are being taken care of ... the people will continue to love and vote for Mamata Banerjee.”

Modi Government dealt body blow to Maoists: Shah

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Narendra Modi government has dealt a body blow to the Maoists with a holistic approach to development and security and left-wing extremism is now breathing its last, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Friday.

He also said that due to the visionary policies of the Modi government, left-wing extremism has lost its breeding ground.

In a series of posts on X with the hashtag #NaxalFreeBharat, the home minister said under the guidance of the prime minister, the Union home ministry has adopted an offensive strategy to curb Naxalism.

“As a result of the hammer blow to left-wing extremism, it is today breathing its last,” he said.

Shah said the NDA government has won the hearts of the poor living in Naxalism-affected areas by building adequate healthcare and education infrastructure.



structure.

“On account of PM @narendramodi Ji's visionary policies, left-wing extremism has today lost its breeding ground,” he said. Shah said the Modi government has dealt a body blow to Naxalism with a holistic approach to development and security in the Naxalism-affected regions.

“The Modi govt has won people's trust by taking the state governments along for overall development,” he said.

He also posted a few videos giving details of Naxal issues, the destruction and casualties suffered by the people due to the menace and how government is dealing with it.

According to the data of the Ministry of Home Affairs, left wing extremism-related violence has declined by 52 per cent and the number of deaths by 69 per cent from 6035 to 1868 in the decade 2014-23 compared to 2004-14.

Similarly, the incidents of leftist extremism have reduced from 14,862 to 7,128. The number of deaths of security forces due to left wing extremism has declined by 72 per cent from 1750 in 2004-14 to 485 during 2014-23 and the number of civilian deaths has declined by 68 per cent from 4285 to 1383.

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Haryana Police has initiated proceedings to seize the assets of farmers who have damaged public property during their ‘Dilli Chalo’ protest march. Hours after announcing that action would be taken under the National Security Act (NSA), 1980 against farmer leaders who are protesting along the state's border with Punjab, the Haryana Police on Friday morning said the NSA will not be invoked against them. Officers added that the police had not yet invoked NSA against the farm leaders and had only initiated the process for the same. In a statement Friday morning, Inspector General of Police (Ambala) Sibash Kabiraj said, “This is to clarify to all concerned that the matter of invoking provisions of the National Security Act on a few farm union leaders in Ambala district has been reconsidered and it has been decided that the same will not be invoked.”

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) observed a “black day” on Friday and burnt effigies of



BJP leaders in protest against the Haryana Police's action against agitating farmers camping at two of the state's border points. The Bharti Kisan Union (Ekta Ugrahan), which is a part of the SKM, said it held demonstrations at 47 places in 17 Punjab districts in protest against Singh's death.

Meanwhile, a 62-year-old farmer died of heart attack in Khanauri at the Punjab-Haryana border. The deceased identified as Darshan Singh, a native of Amargarh village, Bathinda district. This is the third death during the Delhi Chalo March, started by Punjab farmers unions on February 13. Meanwhile, farmer leaders on

Friday refused the cremation of Shubhkaran Singh who died amid clashes between Haryana Police and Punjab farmers on Wednesday, saying the last rite will not be performed till the Punjab government registers a case against those responsible.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Friday announced a compensation of Rs 1 crore and a government job for the sister of farmer Shubhkaran Singh who died at the Khanauri border point. Before Shukaran's death, a 73 year old farmer, part of the same agitation, had earlier died of cardiac arrest.

In a statement, the Haryana Police said that it would move

to recover damages through the seizure of properties and bank accounts of protesters. The damage caused to properties was being assessed, it said. In a statement, police said continuous efforts were being made by the farmers to break the barricades put up at the Punjab-Haryana border and impair law and order by pelting stones at the police. Before the farmers had kicked off their protest on February 13, the Haryana Police had sent notices to the unions threatening to seize their assets if they damaged public property during their agitation.

The notice said that if public property was damaged during the protests, bank accounts would be frozen and assets seized to compensate for the losses.

The police had initially said it would take action against the protesting farmer leaders under the National Security Act (NSA), 1980. The order was later revoked. A press release issued by the Ambala Police stated there had been persistent efforts by farmers to dismantle the barriers erected at the Shambhu border as part of the ‘Dilli Chalo’ march.

The police reported incidents of protesters throwing stones at officials, destruction of public and government property, and attempts to disrupt peace and order. The press release also highlighted concerns over the use of social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, and Instagram by some farm leaders to spread provocative content aimed at disturbing harmony.

The Police has also used tear gas to disperse Haryana farmers heading towards Khanauri on Punjab's border with the state where farmers, mostly from Punjab, have been camping since last week after their ‘Delhi Chalo’ march was halted by security forces. A few protesters threw stones at police personnel when farmers from Kheri Chopta village were stopped from going to Khanauri. A clash between police personnel and farmers ensued, forcing Haryana security personnel to fire tear gas shells. Some police personnel and farmers were injured in the clash, officials said, adding some farmers have been detained.

ECI allots Man blowing turha symbol to Sharad faction of NCP

TN RAGHUNATHA ■ MUMBAI

After it recognised the breakaway faction led by Ajit Pawar as the “real” Nationalist Congress Party (allotted) it the original “clock” symbol, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has allotted a ‘Man Blowing Turha’ (Man Blowing Trumpet) poll symbol to the Sharad Pawar-headed NCP for the Lok Sabha elections in the state.

Alluding to a Supreme Court order dated February 19 and the list of symbols in order of preference submitted through a letter by NCP president Sharad Pawar, the ECI has allotted the symbol “Man Blowing Turha” to his party. The symbol has been allotted to the NCP (Sharad Pawar) for use in all Parliamentary constituencies in the state.

Welcoming the allotment of ‘tutari’ (traditional trumpet), the NCP (Sharad Pawar) said that the symbol granted to it “enjoys great relevance for all important or auspicious or military events in Maharashtra and is a well-recognised musical instrument across the state since times immemorial”. They said that they were now fully ready to blow the trumpet for the Lok Sabha 2024 elections, as the clock ticks away.

“The Tutari, in the form of great valour of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, had once deafened the emperor of Delhi. It is a great honour for our party to get Tutari (Man Blowing Turha) as our symbol for upcoming elections.

Our Tutari is now ready to shake Delhi's throne under the leadership of Sharad Pawar,” the NCP (Sharad Pawar) said in a post on X.



Welcoming the ECI's order allotting it Man Blowing Turha” symbol, State NCP (Sharad Pawar) president by saying: “Jai Bhavani, Jai Shivaji, while state party general secretary Jitendra Awhad said: “Let's go to Lok Sabha polls by blowing the trumpet and vowing the bury the traitors (the rival Ajit Pawar-led NCP).”

The allotment of symbol “Man Blowing Turha” to the NCP (Sharad Pawar) little over a fortnight after the ECI recognised the Ajit Pawar-led faction as the “real NCP” and gave it control over the party's name and “clock” symbol, on February 6 2024.

It may be recalled that on July 2, 2023, senior NCP leader and then leader of the Opposition in Maharashtra Ajit Pawar rebelled against his uncle and his party chief Sharad Pawar, walked out of the party with a sizeable number of supporters and took oath as deputy chief minister in the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena-BJP alliance government in the state.

On its part, the NCP (Sharad Pawar) has moved a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the ECI's order of February 6, 2024, recognising the Ajit Pawar-led faction as the “real NCP” and giving it control over the party's name and “clock” symbol.

STF busts fake call centre duping people, 8 held

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

A fake call centre duping people on the pretext of providing loans was busted here and eight people, including a woman who was running the operation, were arrested, officials of the Uttar Pradesh Special Task Force (STF) said. They said the gang had been operating from a rented office space in the industrial area of sector 63 in Noida for the past six months and is estimated to have duped over 300 people of crores of rupees.

“Eight accused, including the gang's mastermind, have been arrested from Noida for involvement in duping people on the pretext of getting them an online loan from India Bulls Consumer Finance using forged documents that were sent to loan-seekers through Whatsapp,” the STF said in a statement. The gang was busted by the Lucknow unit of the STF under the supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police Vishal Vikram Singh on Thursday.

The STF seized five mobile phones, 17 ATM/credit cards, three laptops, two tablets, 13 pre-activated SIM cards, 13 accounting registers, 75 fake documents and data of more than one lakh customers from the call centre, the officials



said.

The forged documents included ID cards issued in the name of India Bulls, loan approval letters and loan confirmation letters, the statement said, adding that loan-seekers were duped in the name of charges for registration, processing fees, GST and insurance against loans among others.

Those arrested have been identified as the gang's mastermind Chhaya Singh, Priya Shukla, Aanchal Chaudhary, Sulekha, Ankit Singh, Vijendra Pratap Singh, Archana Prajapati and Shivani Thakur, according to the statement.

An FIR has been lodged in the case at the local Sector 63 police station in Noida under Indian Penal Code sections 419, 420 (related to cheating), 467, 468, 471 (all related to forgery) and provisions of the Information Technology Act and an investigation is underway, it added.

DDA to hold e-auction offering 257 flats on March 5

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) will on March 5 hold an e-auction for Phase III of its Diwali Special Housing Scheme, offering 257 flats in various categories, officials said on Friday.

This phase of the scheme was launched on February 19. It offers 257 flats in the penthouse, high-income and middle-income group categories in different sectors of Dwarka.

According to a February 16 official circular on the e-auction of flats, two penthouses and 123 high-income group category flats are in Sector 19B while 132 middle-income



group category flats are in Sector 14. The tentative reserve prices for them will be Rs 5 crore, Rs 2.02 crore to Rs 2.19 crore and Rs 1.25 to Rs 1.42 crore, respectively.

The last date to register for the e-auction and submit an online earnest money deposit (EMD) is February 28. The e-

auction will be held on March 5, the DDA said.

The deposit for middle-income group category flats is Rs 10 lakh, high-income group flats Rs 15 lakh and penthouses Rs 25 lakh. Participants will have to get themselves registered on the e-auction portal by paying Rs 2,500 (including GST) for each flat they wish to bid for.

This amount is non-adjustable and non-refundable. The DDA on last November approved the launching of ‘Festival Special Housing Scheme 2023’, with more than 32,000 flats of different categories at various locations such as Dwarka, Lok Nayak Puram and Narela.

Lok Sabha poll dates...

From Page 1

The agency said in a post on X that action will be taken against ‘liquor kingpins’. Directions have been given to dry up the inflow and distribution of liquor, cash, freebies, and drugs.

The EC is also planning to use Artificial Intelligence for the smooth conduct of polls this year. According to officials, the poll body has decided to deploy Artificial Intelligence technology for the free and fair conduct of the Lok Sabha polls, scheduled to be held before May. A dedicated division for Artificial Intelligence has been created within the EC to identify and remove false information on social media and digital platforms.

According to the EC, nearly 96.88 crore Indians are enrolled to exercise their franchise to choose the next government at the Centre in the forthcoming general election. Over 2.63 crore new electors have been included in the electoral roll, with about 1.41 crore being women, surpassing the newly-enrolled male voters (1.22 crore) by over 15 percent, according to the EC. There has been a six percent increase in registered voters since 2019, when the last Lok Sabha polls were held. According to data shared by the EC, 1.85 crore voters have been identified as above 80 years of age, while the total number of ‘centenarians’ stood at 2.38 lakh. The poll body considers those who are 80 years and above as senior citizens. As of February 8, Uttar Pradesh has the maximum number of voters at 15.30 crore, while Lakshadweep has over 57,000 registered voters. Of the total voters, 49.72 crore are male and 47.15 crore are female. Over 10.64 lakh advance applications were received from those above 17 years of age for enrollment in the voters’ list.

For BJP, Bullet train...

From Page 1

The method includes the preparation of shafts in areas with high population density and adjoining utilities like various pipelines, electrical installations, and other adjacent infrastructure projects such as Metro and highways.

The tunnel will be a single tube tunnel to accommodate twin tracks for both up and down tracks. Thirty-nine equipment rooms will also be constructed adjoining the tunnel location as part of the package.

To construct this tunnel with a diameter of 13.1 metres, Tunnel Boring Machines (TBMs) with a cutter head of 13.6 meters in diameter will be used. Usually, 5-6 meter diameter

cutter heads are used for urban tunnels used in Mass Rapid Transit Systems (MRTS) such as the Metro system. Three Tunnel Boring Machines will be used to create about 16 km of the tunnel portion, and the remaining 5 km will be constructed using the New

Austrian Tunnelling Method (NATM).

This tunnel will be about 25 to 57 metres deep from ground level, with the deepest construction point being 114 metres below the Parsik Hill.

Vaishnav asserted that the high-speed line will usher in economic growth.

The bullet train corridor will have ‘limited stop’ and ‘all stop’ services. While the limited-stop trains will cover the distance between Mumbai and Ahmedabad in just two hours, the other service will take about 2 hours and 45 minutes. A total of 12 stations have been planned for the project, which is being implemented by the National High-Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL).

“Had the (then) Uddhav Thackeray government given all the permissions faster, this project might have progressed much further by now,” Vaishnav said.

He said as soon as the Eknath Shinde-Devendra Fadnavis (Shiv Sena-BJP) government came to power in the state, permissions were given in 10 days. The Maha Vikas Aghadi government under Thackeray fell in 2022 after Shinde split the Shiv Sena with his rebellion. Shinde then aligned with the

BJP to form the government and became the chief minister, with Fadnavis taking the deputy CM's post.

The railway minister said that the 284-km-long bullet train corridor viaduct is ready in Gujarat, where work has progressed swiftly. To speed up tunnel construction, innovations have been made and work was started from four points at a time. Of the four points two are shafts, one ADIT (additionally driven intermediate tunnel) and one final point at BKC (Bandra-Kurla Complex) station.

The bullet train corridor has a 21-km-long tunnel, including a 7-km undersea stretch, he said, calling the work challenging. The deepest point of the tunnel is 56 metres and it will also be very wide with a width of 40 feet. Inside the tunnel too, the trains will run at the speed of 300-320 kmph, Vaishnav said. Work on the tunnel is underway at BKC, Vikhroli and Ghansoli. NHSRCL said they are facing multiple challenges at these shaft construction sites, which have high population density and several utilities like pipelines, electrical installation and infrastructure projects, including the Metro and highways.

Netanyahu seeks open-ended control in Gaza

AP ■ DEIR-AL-BALAH

Israel seeks open-ended control over security and civilian affairs in the Gaza Strip, according to a long-awaited postwar plan by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It was swiftly rejected Friday by Palestinian leaders and runs counter to Washington's vision for the war-ravaged enclave.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented the two-page document to his security Cabinet late Thursday for approval. Deep disagreements over Gaza's future have led to increasingly public friction between Israel and the United States, its closest ally. The Biden administration seeks eventual Palestinian governance in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank as a precursor to Palestinian statehood, an outcome vehemently opposed by Netanyahu and his right-wing government. Netanyahu's plan envisions hand-picked Palestinians in Gaza adminis-

tering the territory. Separately, cease-fire efforts appeared to gain traction, with mediators to present a new proposal at an expected high-level meeting this weekend in Paris. The US, Egypt and Qatar have been struggling for weeks to find a formula that could halt Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza, but now face an unofficial deadline as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches. In Gaza, Israeli airstrikes in the centre and south of the territory killed at least 68 Palestinians, including children and women, overnight and into Friday, health officials and an Associated Press journalist said. Another 24 bodies remained trapped under the rubble. Fidaa Ashour, whose sister was killed in a strike early Friday in the city of Rafah in southern Gaza, said "the world does not feel what we are enduring." At a hospital in the central town of Deir al-Balah, relatives wept over bodies laid out in burial shrouds in the



A Palestinian holds the body of a child killed in the Israeli bombardments of the Gaza Strip in front of the morgue to pray over them at Al Aqsa Hospital in Deir al Balah on Friday.

AP/PTI

courtyard, and a man cradled a dead infant.

The overall Palestinian death toll since the start of the war rose to more than 29,500, with close to 70,000 people wounded, Gaza health officials said. The death toll amounts to close to 1.3% of Gaza's popula-

tion of 2.3 million.

NETANYAHU'S VISION

Netanyahu's plan, while lacking specifics, marks the first time he has presented a formal postwar vision. It reiterates that Israel is determined to crush Hamas, the militant

group that overran the Gaza Strip in 2007. Polls have indicated that a majority of Palestinians don't support Hamas, but the group has deep roots in Palestinian society. Critics, including some in Israel, say the goal of eliminating Hamas is unattainable.

Netanyahu's plan calls for freedom of action for Israel's military across a demilitarized Gaza after the war to thwart any security threat. It says Israel would establish a buffer zone inside Gaza, which is likely to provoke US objections.

The plan also envisions Gaza being governed by local officials who it says would "not be identified with countries or entities that support terrorism and will not receive payment from them". It's not clear if any Palestinians would agree to such sub-contractor roles. Over the past decades, Israel has repeatedly tried and failed to set up hand-picked local Palestinian governing bodies. The Palestinian Authority,

which administers pockets of the Israeli-occupied West Bank, on Friday denounced Netanyahu's plan as "colonialist and racist," saying it would amount to Israeli reoccupation of Gaza. Israel withdrew its soldiers and settlers from Gaza in 2005, but maintained control of access to the territory. The Biden administration wants to see a reformed Palestinian Authority govern both Gaza and the West Bank as a step toward Palestinian statehood. It has sought to chip away at Netanyahu's resistance by holding out the prospect of the normalisation of ties between Israel and Arab powerhouse Saudi Arabia.

THE WAR DRAGS ON

Israel declared war on Hamas on Oct 7, after the militants stormed into southern Israel, killing about 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and taking about 250 hostages. More than 100 hostages were freed in a weeklong cease-fire in late

November. Since the start of the war, 29,514 Palestinians were killed in Israel's offensive and close to 70,000 were wounded, the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza said Friday. Two-thirds of those killed have been women and children, said the ministry, which does not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its count.

Israel says it has killed at least 10,000 Hamas fighters, without presenting details. It holds Hamas responsible for civilian casualties because the group operates and fights from within civilian areas. The United States has repeatedly urged Israel to do more to avoid harm to civilians, but the daily number of deaths reported in Gaza appears to be relatively constant. The Israeli offensive has inflicted immense suffering in Gaza. About 80% of the population have been displaced, infectious diseases run rampant and hundreds of thousands of people are facing hunger.

4 die, 14 missing after apartment fire in Spain

AP ■ VALENCIA (SPAIN)

As firefighters and scientific Apolice Friday began inspecting the interior of two residential towers that were destroyed by fire in the eastern Spanish city of Valencia, killing four people, questions abounded as to how the fire spread so rapidly. Authorities said 14 people were still missing following the blaze at the complex Thursday. Valencia Mayor María José Catalá said that the danger of the 14-story building collapsing and the intense heat from the fire initially prevented emergency workers from getting in to search for possible survivors.

The fire started Thursday evening and quickly engulfed the buildings. Experts said that the building's polyurethane cladding may have contributed to the fire's ferocity. The vice-president of the Valencia College of Industrial and Technical Engineers, Esther

Puchades, who once inspected the building, told the state news agency Efe that when the material "is heated it is like plastic and it ignites".

She said it was the first fire of its type in Spain, but that other blazes involving the material have been similarly destructive in the United Kingdom and China.

The June 2017 fire at Grenfell Tower in London, which also had polyurethane cladding, caused more than 70 deaths. Catalá said the cause of the fire was still not known and it was too early to comment on reports that suggested materials used in construction might have contributed. Puchades said polyurethane was no longer widely used in buildings without extra safety measures to offset its flammability. The complex in Valencia was finished in 2009. In a promotional video, the now bankrupt construction company Fbex boasted that it used a new alu-

minum-based material as part of its façade.

Fifteen people were treated for injuries and five remained Friday in city hospitals, including four firefighters. All were said to be stable.

Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez visited the scene, promising support for those affected and expressing gratitude to firefighters and military personnel who worked to extinguish the blaze.

It was not immediately known how many people were in the two buildings when the fire broke out, but dozens are believed to have lost their homes and belongings. The complex had some 140 apartments. The Valencia regional government declared three days of mourning and announced financial aid to cover accommodation, clothing and food. Residents were housed overnight in hotels or in the homes of relatives and neighbours, authorities said.

Trump's lawyers call for dismissal of classified documents case

AP ■ WASHINGTON

Former President Donald Trump urged a Florida judge to dismiss the criminal case charging him with illegally retaining classified documents, claiming in part that presidential immunity protects him from prosecution even as that sweeping argument has so far in failed in federal appeals courts in a separate case.

In one of a slew of motions attacking the case brought by special counsel Jack Smith, Trump's lawyers late on Thursday echoed arguments that were roundly rejected by a federal appeals court this month in his 2020 election interference case in Washington. Trump has asked the US Supreme Court to intervene in that case as the Republican presidential primary front-runner seeks to delay the trial until after the November election. Trump's lawyers wrote that the classified



documents charges turn on his alleged decision to designate the papers as "personal" records under the Presidential Records Act, and argued that he cannot be prosecuted since that was an "official act" made while he was still in the White House. Washington's federal appeals court in its decision this month was unsparing in its repudiation of Trump's novel claim that former presidents enjoy absolute immunity for actions that fall within their official job duties.

But Trump's lawyers argued that the appeals court's decision was wrong, telling US District Judge Aileen Cannon she should not follow the court's "poorly reasoned decision" in the classified documents case.

In other court filings late Thursday, Trump's lawyers argued that Attorney General Merrick Garland's appointment of special counsel Smith to investigate the former president was "unlawful" and grounds for dismissing the documents case. They also are attacking the law Trump is accused of violating as "unconstitutionally vague" as applied in his case.

The case accuses Trump of illegally hoarding classified documents at his Mar-a-Lago estate and obstructing government efforts to retrieve them. A June 2023 indictment charging him with dozens of felony counts alleges investigators found boxes of sensitive docu-

ments recklessly stored at Mar-a-Lago in spaces including a ballroom, a bathroom and shower, his bedroom and a storage room.

Prosecutors have said the documents he stowed, refused to return and in some cases showed to visitors risked jeopardizing not only relations with foreign nations but also the safety of troops and confidential sources. They've also accused Trump of asking a staffer to delete camera footage at his Florida estate in an effort to obstruct the federal investigation into his records.

The case is currently scheduled to go to trial in May, but Judge Cannon has pushed back multiple other deadlines and signaled an openness to revisiting the trial date during a pivotal pretrial conference set for March. It's one of four criminal cases the former president is facing as he vies to reclaim the White House in November.

Rape, sexual violence in Sudan's ongoing conflict may amount to war crimes: New UN report

AP ■ GENEVA

The UN human rights office said in a new report on Friday that scores of people, including children, have been subjected to rape and other forms of sexual violence in the ongoing conflict in Sudan, assaults that may amount to war crimes. Sudan plunged into chaos in mid-April when clashes erupted in the capital, Khartoum, between rival Sudanese forces — the country's military, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah Burhan, and a paramilitary faction known as the Rapid Support Forces, under the command of Gen. Mohammed Hamdan Dagalo.

The fighting quickly spread across the African country, especially urban areas but also the restive western Darfur region, and has so far killed at least 12,000 people and sent over 8 million fleeing their homes, the report said.

The report, which covers a period from the outbreak of the fighting up to December 15, documents abuses in a country that has been largely inaccessible to aid groups and rights monitors recently, clouding the impact of a conflict that have overshadowed by wars in places like Gaza and Ukraine.

The report found that at least 118 people had been subjected to sexual violence, including rape — with many of the assaults committed by members of the paramilitary forces, in homes and on the streets.

One woman, the UN said, "was held in a building and repeatedly gang-raped over a period of 35 days."

The report also pointed to recruitment of child soldiers on both sides of the conflict.

"Some of these violations would amount to war crimes," said UN human rights chief Volker Türk, calling for

prompt, thorough and independent investigations into alleged rights abuses and violations.

The report is based on interview of more than 300 victims and witnesses, some conducted in neighbouring Ethiopia and Chad where many Sudanese have fled, along with analysis of photographs, videos, and satellite imagery from the conflict areas.

The ravages of the war, beyond the period examined, are continuing, the UN said.

The UN cited video that emerged last week from the country's North Kordofan State showing men wearing Sudanese army uniforms carrying severed heads of members of the rival paramilitary faction.

"For nearly a year now, accounts coming out of Sudan have been of death, suffering and despair, as the senseless

conflict and human rights violations and abuses have persisted with no end in sight," Türk said.

"The guns must be silenced, and civilians must be protected," he added.

Speaking from Nairobi, Kenya, by videoconference to the UN briefing in Geneva on Friday, Seif Magango, a regional spokesman for the UN human rights office said that "the number of people displaced (in Sudan) has now crossed the 8 million mark, which should concern everyone."

Earlier in February, UN Secretary-General António Guterres told reporters that there is no military solution to Sudan's conflict and urged the rival generals to start talking about ending the conflict.

He stressed that continued fighting "will not bring any solution so we must stop this as soon as possible."

Angry French farmers with tractors back to Paris for another protest

AP ■ PARIS

Angry farmers were back to Paris on their tractors Friday in a new protest demanding more government support and simpler regulations, on the eve of a major agricultural fair in the French capital. Dozens of tractors drove peacefully into a neighbourhood on the capital's west side carrying flags from Rural Coordination, the farmers' union that staged the protest. The protesters then posed with their tractors on a bridge over the Seine River with the Eiffel Tower in the background.

The latest protest comes three weeks after farmers lifted roadblocks around Paris and elsewhere in the country after the government offered over 400 million euros (USD 433 million) to address their grievances over low earnings, heavy regulation and what they describe as unfair competi-



tion from abroad. "Save our agriculture," the Rural Coordination said on X, formerly Twitter. One tractor was carrying a poster reading: "Death is in the field."

The convoy temporarily slowed traffic on the A4 highway, east of the capital, and on the Paris ring-road earlier on Friday morning. French farmers' actions are part of a broad-

er protest movement in Europe against EU agriculture policies, bureaucracy and overall business conditions.

Farmers complain that the 27-nation bloc's environmental policies, such as the Green Deal, which calls for limits on the use of chemicals and on greenhouse gas emissions, limit their business and make their products more expensive than

Hamas leader leaves Egypt after cease-fire talks

Beirut (AP): Hamas says its political leader, Ismail Haniyeh, has left Egypt after holding talks with Egyptian officials about a possible cease-fire in the Gaza Strip and an exchange of hostages held by the militants for Palestinians imprisoned in Israel. The statement released early Friday by Hamas did not say whether Haniyeh's talks with Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel about ways of ending the war, a hostage deal and the flow of aid to Gaza were successful or led to a breakthrough. The talks in Cairo came ahead of a high-level meeting expected over the weekend in Paris, where international mediators will present a new proposal. The United States, Egypt and Qatar have been struggling for weeks to find a formula that could halt Israel's devastating offensive in Gaza, but now face an unofficial deadline as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan approaches.

Israel seeks a phased deal, including a temporary pause in fighting in exchange for the release of some of the roughly 100 hostages still held by militants since the brutal October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel. Israel has vowed to keep fighting until Hamas is crushed. Hamas initially demanded to end the war, now in its fifth month, before hostages can be released. Hamas has said that it would release the Israeli hostages in return for the all Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails. Israel rejected that demand, and mediators have been working on a new deal.

During Hamas' October 7 attack on southern Israel, militants killed about 1,200 people and took some 250 hostages. Roughly half of the hostages were released during a weeklong cease-fire in November.

About 100 hostages remain in captivity, in addition to the bodies of 30 others who were killed on October 7 or died in captivity. Israel's subsequent offensive in Gaza has killed more than 29,000 Palestinians and driven some 80 per cent of the territory's 2.3 million people from their homes. Most heeded Israeli orders to flee south, and around 1.5 million are packed into Rafah near the border with Egypt.

ISIS bride loses appeal to regain British citizenship

PTI ■ LONDON



Shamima Begum, the London-born Bangladeshi-origin woman, who fled the UK as a 15-year-old schoolgirl to join the Islamic State (ISIS) terrorist network, on Friday lost yet another legal bid to regain her British citizenship and return to the UK from Syria. Previously in 2022, the UK Supreme Court upheld the decision to bar the now 24-year-old from returning to the UK. After a series of legal battles, Begum lost a challenge at the Special Immigration Appeals Commission (SIAC) in February last year and then took her case to the Court of Appeal. However, the appeal judges unanimously agreed with the special tribunal's decision and turned down the appeal. "Ms Begum may well

UK Home Office stressed that the main focus of the case was around national security.

The British government has maintained Begum could seek a Bangladeshi passport given her heritage but her family has argued that she is British and has never held Bangladeshi citizenship.

Last year, the specialist tribunal had accepted then Home Secretary Sajid Javid's conclusion that revoking her British citizenship was "an integral part of the overall national security assessment carried out by the Security Service" and therefore not a matter for the court.

Begum, referred to as an ISIS bride for marrying a Dutch member of the terror network in Syria, gave birth to three children — all of whom later died.

'Indian-origin student in US died due to acute alcohol intoxication'

New York (PTI): An 18-year-old Indian-origin University of Illinois student, who was found dead last month, died due to hypothermia and acute alcohol intoxication with prolonged exposure to extremely cold temperatures significantly contributed to his death," Champaign County Coroner Stephen Thuney said. Thuney ruled the death accidental. A report in WANDTV.com said that according to the University of Illinois Police Department's investigation, Dhawan had met with friends at approximately 9 pm on January 19 and had consumed alcohol. At approximately 10 pm, they said Dhawan and his friends went to a local club in Urbana.

"Security video showed him consuming more alcohol before the group returned to the club," the report cited police as saying. University police said Dhawan's friends re-entered the club between 11:25 pm and 11:29 pm while Dhawan stayed outside.

longed exposure to extremely cold temperatures significantly contributed to his death," Champaign County Coroner Stephen Thuney said. Thuney ruled the death accidental. A report in WANDTV.com said that according to the University of Illinois Police Department's investigation, Dhawan had met with friends at approximately 9 pm on January 19 and had consumed alcohol. At approximately 10 pm, they said Dhawan and his friends went to a local club in Urbana.

"Security video showed him consuming more alcohol before the group returned to the club," the report cited police as saying. University police said Dhawan's friends re-entered the club between 11:25 pm and 11:29 pm while Dhawan stayed outside.

Private US company lands first commercial spacecraft on Moon

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

A private American company has scripted history by landing the first commercial spacecraft on the Moon as well as the first US vehicle on the Earth's only natural satellite in more than 50 years, joining earlier feats by India, Russia, the US and China.

Built by Intuitive Machines, the lander — named Odysseus — touched down on the Moon at around 6:23 p.m. ET on Thursday, making it the first American spacecraft on the Moon since the Apollo 17 mission in 1972.

"Today, for the first time in half a century, America has returned to the Moon," Bill Nelson, National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) Administrator said



after Intuitive Machines, a Houston-based company, landed its Odysseus robot near the lunar south pole.

The lander carries a bounty of NASA scientific instruments, "and bearing the dream of a new adventure in science, innovation and American leadership in space, well, all of that aced the landing of the lifetime," Nelson said. "What we

can confirm, without a doubt, is our equipment is on the surface of the Moon, and we are transmitting." Flight Director and Chief Technology Officer Tim Crain announced amidst cheers among his colleagues and others across the country as there were some tense moments before the landing on the Moon.

As the spacecraft made its final descent, mission controllers lost contact with it, as was expected to occur, NBC News reported. "After troubleshooting communications, flight controllers have confirmed Odysseus is upright and starting to send data. Right now, we are working to downlink the first images from the lunar surface," Intuitive Machines said, announcing the historic feat.

Shareholders vote to oust Byju

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

More than 60 per cent of shareholders of edutech Byju's on Friday voted for removal of founder CEO Byju Raveendran and his family over alleged "mismanagement and failures" at what was once India's hottest tech startup, but the company dug in its heels, calling the voting done in the absence of founders as "invalid".

Prosus - one of the six investors who had called the extraordinary general

meeting (EGM) - in a statement said "shareholders unanimously passed all resolutions put forward for vote.

"These included a request for the resolution of the outstanding governance, financial mismanagement and compliance issues at Byju's; the reconstitution of the board of directors, so that it is no longer controlled by the founder of T&L; and a change of leadership of the company."

Raveendran and his family stayed away from the EGM,



calling it "procedurally invalid."

However, the outcome of the vote at the EGM will not be applicable until March 13, when the Karnataka High Court will next hear Raveendran's plea challenging the move by certain investors to call the EGM.

The High Court on Wednesday had refused to stay the EGM, called by shareholders collectively holding more than 32 per cent stake in Think & Learn (T&L) - the firm that operates

Byju's, but any resolution passed shall not be given effect till the next date of hearing. Raveendran and family own 26.3 per cent in the company.

Byju's in a statement, issued even before the EGM results were declared, said it "rmly declares that the resolutions passed during the recently concluded EGM -- attended by a small cohort of select shareholders - are invalid and ineffective. The passing of the unenforceable resolutions challenges the rule of law at worst."

NPCI to help Paytm UPI users migrate to banks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank has asked the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) to examine the possibility of migrating Paytm Payments Bank customers using the UPI handle @paytm to 4-5 other banks, in a bid to prevent any disruptions in the payment ecosystem.

On Friday, the central bank came out with additional steps for the benefit of customers, wallet holders and merchants who are availing banking services from Paytm Payments Bank, which has been barred from accepting deposits and credits after March 15, 2024.

As per the website of Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL), it has 30 crore wallets and 3 crore bank customers.

NPCI, an umbrella organisation for operating retail payments and settlement systems in India, is an initiative of RBI and Indian Banks' Association (IBA) for creating a payment and settlement infrastructure in India.

As the PPBL cannot accept further credits into its customer accounts and wallets after March 15, 2024, certain additional steps have become necessary to ensure seamless digital payments by UPI customers using @paytm handle operated by the bank, and minimise concentration risk in the UPI system by having multiple payment app providers, the RBI said in a statement.

"NPCI has been advised by the RBI to examine the request of One97 Communication Ltd (OCL) to become a Third-Party Application Provider (TPAP) for UPI channel for continued UPI operation of the Paytm app, as per the norms," it added.

One97 Communications Ltd (OCL), which owns the Paytm brand, holds a 49 per cent stake in PPBL.

RBI further said that in the event of NPCI granting TPAP



status to OCL, it may be stipulated that '@paytm' handles are to be migrated in a seamless manner from PPBL to a set of newly identified banks to avoid any disruption.

"No new users are to be added by the said TPAP until all the existing users are migrated satisfactorily to a new handle," it added.

"For seamless migration of '@paytm' handle to other banks, NPCI may facilitate certification of 4-5 banks as Payment Service Provider (PSP) Banks with demonstrated capabilities to process high volume UPI transactions. This is in line with NPCI norms for minimising concentration risk," RBI said.

Also, for the merchants using PayTM QR Codes, OCL may open the settlement accounts with one or more PSP Banks (other than Paytm Payments Bank), the Reserve Bank said. It further said the migration of UPI handles is applicable only to such customers and merchants who have a UPI handle '@Paytm'. For others who have a UPI address or handle other than '@Paytm', no action is required to be taken by them.

RBI again asked the customers, whose underlying account/ wallet is currently with Paytm Payments Bank, to make an alternative arrangement with other banks well before March 15, 2024.

Rupee falls 8 paise to close at 82.93 a dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee consolidated in a narrow range and depreciated by 8 paise to close at 82.93 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, tracking a strong American currency and muted trend in domestic equities.

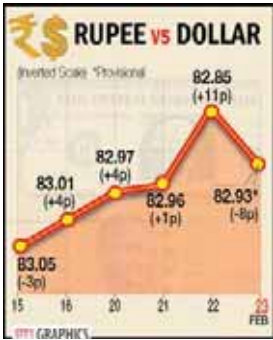
Forex traders said the Indian currency depreciated as foreign fund outflows weighed on the rupee.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 82.87 and finally settled at 82.93 (provisional) against the dollar, down by 8 paise from its previous close.

During the day, the rupee witnessed a range-bound movement. It saw an intra-day high of 82.84 and a low of 82.96 against the American currency.

On Thursday, the rupee had settled at 82.85 against the US dollar. The Indian rupee depreciated on Friday on dollar demand from importers. Elevated crude oil prices also weighed on the rupee, said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

"We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on positive global equities and soft US dollar. However, any bounce back in crude oil prices may cap sharp upside. Geopolitical



Sensex edges lower, Nifty settles flat

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty edged lower in a volatile trade on Friday, reversing early gains due to selling in IT and select banking shares.

The 30-share BSE Sensex slipped 15.44 points or 0.02 per cent to close at 73,142.80 points with 17 of its constituents closing in the red and 13 in the green.

The index opened higher but later slipped into losses due to profit-taking by investors. The barometer oscillated between a high of 73,413.93 and a low of 73,022 during the day. The broader Nifty of NSE closed lower by 4.75 points or 0.02 per cent at 22,212.70 points as gains in FMCG, pharma and financial shares were offset by losses in IT and private bank shares.

The 50-share barometer scaled a record high of 22,297.50 in intra-day trade.

"Nifty opened higher but failed to sustain the morning momentum, leading to a closing at the day's low due to profit booking," Rupak De, Senior Technical Analyst, LKP Securities, said.

Among Sensex shares, HCLTech, Asian Paints, Maruti, JSW Steel, TCS, SBI, ITC and Bharti Airtel were the major losers.

On the other hand, Bajaj Finserv, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, L&T and Wipro were the major gainers.

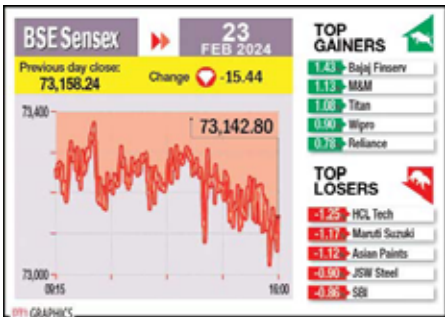
"The domestic market paused momentarily today after reaching another record high earlier in the day, driven by positive signals from global markets," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services, said.

The capital goods and industrial sectors showed strength, supported by advancements in manufacturing and services.

BSE Midcap advanced 0.25 per cent while Smallcap rose by 0.53 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, BSE Oil & Gas dropped by 0.81 per cent, BSE Metal by 0.33 per cent, BSE Energy by 0.36 per cent and Bankex 0.29 per cent. On the other hand, BSE Industrials spurred by 1.22 per cent, Telecommunications by 1.52 per cent, Capital Goods by 1.18 per cent, and Consumer Durables 0.76 per cent.

Reliance Industries rose by around 1 per cent to hit a 52-week high intra-day. Its arm Reliance Jio Financial Services soared by more than 14.5 per cent to hit a year's high level,



Renewable Energy to rise to 170 GW by March 2025: ICRA

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's installed Renewable Energy (RE) capacity, excluding large hydro plants, is estimated to increase to 170 GW by March 2025 from a level of 135 GW in December 2023, rating agency ICRA said on Friday.

"ICRA estimates that the rise in the RE capacity over the next five-six years is estimated to enhance the share of RE plus large hydro in the all-India electricity generation from about 23 per cent in FY24 to around 40 per cent in FY30," ICRA said in a statement.

Given the intermittency associated with RE generation, the availability of Round The Clock (RTC) supply from RE sources remains important, it stated.

This can be made possible through the use of wind and solar power projects complemented with energy storage systems, it suggested.

According to the statement, ICRA expects the installed RE capacity, excluding hydro energy, in India to increase to about 170 GW by March 2025 from 135 GW as of December 2023.

Thereafter, the capacity addition is likely to be supported by the significant improvement in tendering activity in the current fiscal with over 16 GW projects bid so far, and another 17 GW bids



underway by central nodal agencies, it stated.

This is in line with the 50 GW annual bidding trajectory announced by the Government of India in March 2023, it noted.

Girishkumar Kadam, Senior Vice-President and Group Head, Corporate Ratings, ICRA, said in the statement that the tariffs discovered in the RE-RTC tenders remain higher as against the standalone solar and wind energy tenders, with recent RTC bid tariffs seen in the range of Rs 4-4.5 per unit, mainly on account of the cost associated with the storage

component and higher share of wind energy component expected.

Further, based on the prevailing capital cost of Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS) and Pumped Hydro Storage Projects (PSP), the viability of the RTC projects remains relatively better with the use of PSP capacity, he said.

Nonetheless, the supply chain challenges in the wind energy segment could pose challenges for execution of RTC projects, he said.

As per ICRA, the sharp decline in solar PV cell and module prices, abeyance of the Approved List of Module Manufacturers (ALMM) order

till March 2024 and the timeline extension approved for solar and hybrid projects, is expected to lead to an improvement in RE capacity addition to 18 GW to 20 GW in FY24 from 15 GW in FY23.

This, along with the growing project pipeline, is likely to support the scale-up in capacity addition to 23-25 GW in FY25, as per ICRA estimates, mainly driven by the solar power segment.

However, it stated that challenges remain on the execution front with respect to delays in land acquisition and transmission connectivity, which could hamper the capacity-addition prospects

GSTN to share data with RBI frictionless credit

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The government has permitted GST Network to share data about GST-registered businesses, based on their consent, with the Reserve Bank's 'Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit'.

The move will help entities get loans faster on the basis of shared Goods and Services Tax (GST)-related information.

The platform, created by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) subsidiary Reserve Bank Innovation Hub, is intended to enable seamless flow of necessary information to lenders to help in disbursing credit.

In a notification, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has said "the Central Government, on the recommendation of the Council, notifies 'Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit' as the system with which information may be shared by the common portal based on consent...". The platform has been developed for the operation of a large ecosystem of credit, to ensure access of information from various data sources digitally. The financial service providers and

multiple data service providers can converge on the platform using standard and protocol driven architecture, the notification said.

Moore Singhi Executive Director Rajat Mohan said with appropriate consent from the supplier/recipient, GSTN is empowered to disclose specific details submitted in the GST registration application, along with data from outward tax returns, monthly and annual tax returns, and invoice preparations.

"This arrangement ensures that borrowers cannot withhold any transactional information provided to lenders or the government portal. It enhances credit efficiency by minimising costs and the time required for processing."

"Moreover, lenders gain access to authenticated monthly sales and purchase data directly from government-sanctioned sources, allowing for a more accurate and timely assessment of credit risk," Mohan said. GST filings will become a crucial factor for businesses seeking to obtain credit and leverage government-sponsored credit programmes in future, Mohan added.

Tata sells ₹650 cr residential plots in Bengaluru

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Realty firm Tata Housing has sold plots worth Rs 650 crore in its recently launched residential project in Bengaluru.

In a statement, the company on Friday said it has sold all inventories in the first phase of its project, Raagam, achieving revenue of over Rs 650 crore within one week of its launch.

"With 576 plots sold and a total area of 9 lakh square feet, the project's overwhelming response reflects the robust demand for premium residential offerings in Bengaluru's real estate market," it said.

The project is part of township 'Tata Carnatica' in Devanahalli, North Bengaluru.

Tata Housing Development Company Ltd is a subsidiary of Tata Realty and Infrastructure Ltd.

Tata Housing currently has more than 33 projects with a total development potential of over 51 million square feet spread across major cities in India, Sri Lanka and Maldives.

Tata and Tata Housing are registered trademarks of Tata Sons Private Ltd.

World Bank needs to reinvent: NK Singh



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The World Bank needs to reinvent and restructure itself so as to become 'better, bolder and bigger' and harness private capital on the strength of its own balance sheet, said N K Singh, Co-Convener, Expert Group on MDB Reforms.

The World Bank should also look at the possibility of tapping pension funds to increase its capital base and its capacity to fund development projects in developing nations.

"Bretton Woods was the first one, it certainly needs to be reinvented, restructured and recreated. But there is no substitute for multilateral

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Inter-American Development Bank. Bretton Woods institutions, including the World Bank and IMF, were set up for funding reconstruction activities post World War II.

The expert group had said that MDBs would need USD 3 trillion each year between now and 2030. Of this, USD 2 trillion can come from domestic resource mobilisation.


Out of the balance of USD 1 trillion, USD 500 billion could come from the private sector and USD 500 billion could come through official development financing.

Addressing the discussion, titled 'Democratic Dollars: Can the Planet Reclaim the Bretton Wood', Singh said the money has to come from shareholders, as well as the private sector.

However, the World Bank's track record to be able to use its balance sheet to harness private capital has been disappointing, Singh said.


"I would say if the World Bank needs recapitalisation, shareholders have to put in more money, but equally the World Bank needs to harness its ability to attract private capital and improve on its record," he added.

BUSINESS BRIEF




POWERGRID ACQUIRES TWO TRANSMISSION PROJECTS

Power Grid Corporation of India Limited has acquired two Project Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) viz. Sikar Khethri Transmission Limited and Bidar Transmission Limited on 09 th February 2024 for the Transmission System Projects for evacuation of power from REZ in Rajasthan (20GW) under Phase-II Part D Phase I and Solar Energy Zone (2500 MW) in Bidar, Karnataka respectively after competing with various private sector players and emerging as successful bidder in Tariff Based Competitive Bidding (TBCB) process.



GLOBAL MEET ON MATERIAL CHEMISTRY AT SRM

The Department of Chemistry at SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattakulathur organised the 8th International Conference on Recent Advances in Material Chemistry recently. This three-day conference was organised in association with Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA), France and University Gustave Eiffel, France. The idea of ICRAMC-2024 was to provide an excellent platform for the world's Material Scientists to share the latest developments in the area of Materials Chemistry.



VIT-AP UNVEILS V-TAPP 2024

VIT AP University announced the launch of V-TAPP'2024 on Friday, marking the beginning of a two-day extravaganza that brings together students from various colleges, universities, and institutions. Dr Buddha Chandrasekhar, Chief Coordinating officer, AICTE, Ministry of Education, Government of India and Vithal Madyalkar, Director IBM Innovation Centre for Education, have graced the occasion as chief guest and guest of honour respectively.



A SYMPHONY OF LIFE AND NATURAL BEAUTY

Every moment in Meghalaya is a step into a world where nature and culture coexist in perfect harmony. It's a place where the clouds meet the earth, and the heart meets the soul, leaving an indelible mark on all who venture into its embrace writes

GYANESHWAR DAYAL.

PANKAJ KUMAR

captured a glimpse of the abode of clouds with his roving eye



With its captivating landscapes and rich cultural heritage, Meghalaya is a destination that beckons the adventurous spirit and the nature lover alike. Pankaj Kumar takes a whirlwind tour of the state to capture a glimpse of the abode of clouds. Nestled in the northeastern part of India, Meghalaya, aptly named the "abode of clouds," is a state that mesmerises visitors with its enchanting landscapes, warm people, and unique cultural treasures. Renowned for its lush greenery, cascading waterfalls, and vibrant traditions, Meghalaya is a paradise for nature enthusiasts and cultural explorers alike.

Meghalaya's natural beauty is unparalleled, offering a breathtaking panorama of rolling hills, dense forests, and meandering rivers. The state is blessed with an abundance of rainfall, contributing to its luxuriant greenery and earning it the distinction of being one of the wettest places on Earth. The picturesque landscapes come alive with a vibrant mix of flora and fauna, making Meghalaya a haven for biodiversity.

Waterfalls, such as the Nohkalikai Falls, plunge



dramatically from towering cliffs, creating a spectacle that leaves visitors in awe. The living root bridges, a testament to the harmonious coexistence between nature and humans, are iconic to the region. These intricate bridges, crafted from the aerial roots of the ancient rubber trees, showcase the indigenous wisdom of the Khasi and Jaintia tribes.

Meghalaya is not only a haven for nature lovers but also a place where the warmth of its people adds an extra layer of charm. The locals, known for their friendliness and hospitality, embrace visitors with open arms. The Khasi, Garo, and Jaintia communities contribute to the



state's rich tapestry of cultures, and their traditions are reflected in everyday life.

The indigenous communities of Meghalaya are proud of their heritage and are eager to share their customs with visitors. Engaging in conversation with the locals provides a glimpse into their way of life, from traditional music and dance to folklore that has been passed down through generations.

One of Meghalaya's most fascinating features is its living root bridges, which exemplify the symbiotic relationship between humans and nature. The Khasi and Jaintia tribes have mastered the art of training the aerial roots of the *Ficus elastica* tree to form sturdy and durable bridges over rivers and streams. These bridges, some of which are centuries old, are a testament to sustainable living and the ingenious use of natural resources.

Meghalaya's markets are vibrant hubs of commerce where local women play a crucial role in selling a variety of products. The bustling markets showcase the creativity and entrepreneurial spirit of Meghalaya's women. From handmade crafts and traditional textiles to fresh produce and local delicacies, the markets are a treasure trove for those seeking authentic experiences and unique souvenirs.

The markets also serve as social spaces where visitors can interact with the locals, learn about traditional cooking methods, and sample indigenous cuisines. This exchange of cultures adds to the richness of the Meghalayan experience.

Meghalaya, with its mesmerizing landscapes, warm people, and unique cultural treasures, stands as a testament to the incredible diversity India has to offer. Whether exploring the lush greenery, marvelling at the living root bridges, or engaging with the locals in vibrant markets.

INDIA DISCOVERS NEW PACE OPTION IN AKASH

PTI ■ RANCHI

India unearthed a fresh pace talent in debutant Akash Deep but veteran Joe Root single-handedly kept England afloat with a tenacious hundred that shunned 'Bazball' for a more conservative approach as the visitors hobbled to 302 for 7 on the opening day of the fourth Test here on Friday.

At stumps, the 33-year-old Root was unbeaten on 106 and had used up 226 deliveries during his classical Test knock. Giving him company at the other end was Ollie Robinson (26) as England staged a decent recovery from the early jolts given by Akash Deep.

The 27-year-old Bengal pacer, who hails from Bihar, picked up three wickets in his 17 overs, marking yet another confident debut for the home side in the ongoing series.

He made life miserable for England's top-order with the new ball, grabbing the top-three in 10 balls as the visitors lost half of their side in the first session. But Root decided to drop anchor after that, reverting to his natural style of playing the waiting game. The move got him and England the desired results as he struck his first century in 15 innings.

With the sun playing hide and seek during the fag end of the day, the Yorkshire man hit



ENGLAND REACH 302/7 AT STUMPS

the three-figure mark for the 31st time in his Test career, striking a classy cover-drive off Akash Deep. It took him 219 balls to get there and the former skipper did not show much emotion, fully aware that his job was not yet done. A record 10 of his 31 Test centuries are against India and the latest one came at just the right juncture. England are reeling from back-to-back losses in Visakhapatnam and Rajkot to trail the five-match series 1-2. He hit nine fours in his innings and was a picture of determination, noticeably

avoiding the sweep shot due to the variable bounce of the pitch. The absence of rested pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, who had dismissed Root thrice in this series, also gave the Englishman some breathing space. He was happy to play the spinners on the back-foot and slice the field.

His biggest ally in England's splendid recovery was wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes (47 off 126 balls). The visiting side went through the second session without losing a wicket for the first time in the series.

The duo took their time and frustrated India by adding 86 runs in the post-lunch session when the wicket flattened out.

Post tea, Mohammed Siraj (2/60) gave the much-needed breakthrough dismissing Foakes three runs short of his half-century, caught by Ravindra Jadeja at short mid-wicket. The dismissal ended a 113-run sixth wicket partnership. Siraj also dismissed Tom Hartley (13 off 26 balls) with a brilliant delivery that exhibited late movement off the pitch, crashing into the off stump.

Hartley had earlier narrowly avoided a catch by the second slip following an edge that didn't carry. Instead, it went past Yashasvi Jaiswal and reached the boundary rope.

He departed after scoring 13, which included a powerful six off Ravichandran Ashwin over long-on. Ashwin got the scalp of Jonny Bairstow, who made a quick-fire 38 off 35 balls.

STUNNING DEBUT FOR AKASH DEEP: Earlier, India's good run with debutants continued as pacer Akash Deep, the fourth newcomer for the hosts in this series, showed promise for this level.

Bowling one of the finest maiden spells in a Test debut — 7-0-24-3 — Akash Deep dismissed Ben Duckett (11), Ollie Pope (0) and Zak Crawley (42) in 10 deliveries while bowling from the dressing room end. The pacer, who came through the ranks playing domestic cricket in Bengal, hit the deck hard in a sensational display during the first hour's play after Ben Stokes opted to bat. He, however, had to wait a bit for his maiden Test wicket.

In his second over of the day, he uprooted Crawley's off-stump that cartwheeled a couple of metres but the celebration was short-lived as he was found guilty of overstepping.

Root century was due: Crawley

PTI ■ RANCHI

England opener Zak Crawley on Friday said that a century from Joe Root was long due and the veteran batter's unbeaten 106 on Day 1 of the fourth Test against India was a "phenomenal" knock under the circumstances.

After losing half of the side at lunch for 112, England rode on Root's determined 106 not out to end day one on 302 for 7 in the fourth Test against India here.

"He (Root) is unbelievable. We fully expected him to get a good score at some point in this series; he was due, he's the best player we've ever had and he played phenomenally today," said Crawley after the day's play. "He deserves everything he gets, he works so hard at his game and he always comes good."

Root was in the middle of a lean patch and his highest score before Friday's knock in this series was 37.

"He's probably the only bloke in our team who could have done that knock; he's that good, he's our best player and he's stepped up when we needed him to. "We needed him to get a score and he got a score like he's done for so many years now, he's a phenomenal player," said Crawley who made run-a-ball 42 at the top of the order.

Root first got a fine ally in wicketkeeper-batter Ben Foakes who contributed a



valuable 47 runs in a century-plus stand.

"It was tricky with the fields they were setting but we just always talk about the present, and the situation required a bit more caution with that kind of pitch and the variable bounce and that's what they delivered."

"At other times, we counter-punched but they played it perfectly and read it well," he said.

Regarding the pitch, Crawley said, "It was nipping a lot and nipping quickly. It felt like you had to throw a counter-punch, you couldn't

really sit there like those boys did later on in the day. "I expected variable bounce from the look of those cracks. It certainly did less and less as that opening spell went on. I got out still fairly early but it looked like it wasn't bouncing anywhere near as much or as quickly as earlier on against seam."

"It got harder against the spin, it will continue to break up. It might be a new-ball wicket, hopefully it is when we bowl but the I think the spin's only going to get harder," he added.



India women eye victory against Hong Kong in Turkish Cup

PTI ■ ALANYA (TURKEY)

Having played determined football to get the better of Estonia in their opening match, India would be looking forward to another successful outing when they face Hong Kong in the Turkish Women's Cup here on Saturday.

The 4-3 victory against Estonia was the first-ever for a senior Indian women's national team against an European side, and it would have raised the morale of the Chaoba Devi-coached side in the four-team round-robin tournament.

This will be India's fifth encounter against Hong Kong, ranked 79th in the FIFA rankings, and India would be buoyed by the fact that they have won all four previous games, netting 11 goals, while the opponents have managed just two. In their most recent clash, a friendly in 2019, India won by a solitary goal courtesy Pyari Xaxa, who also found the net in India's victory against Estonia in the ongoing tournament.

India currently lead the table

with three points and a goal difference of plus one, while Hong Kong are at the bottom having yet to open their account and a goal difference of -1 after losing 0-1 to Kosovo.

Coach Chaoba Devi said Hong Kong had made a marked improvement since they last played in 2019 and her team would not underestimate the opponents.

"We played against Hong Kong a while ago, but they have shown significant improvement since then. We watched their recent match against Kosovo, where they put up a good fight despite losing by only one goal," said Chaoba Devi on the eve of the match.

"So, we can't underestimate them. We need to focus on our finishing, as we could have scored more goals in our first match against Estonia if our finishing was better. Today, we will do some finishing drills in our training to prepare for the Hong Kong match and ensure the girls are ready to perform well. It's our time to win this tournament," added Chaoba Devi.

Australia beat New Zealand in 2nd T20, win series

AP ■ AUCKLAND (NEW ZEALAND)

Adam Zampa took four for 34 as Australia rolled New Zealand for 102 in 17 overs to win the second Twenty20 International by 72 runs Friday and take an insurmountable 2-0 lead in the three-match series.

The Australians will head towards the T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States in June with more confidence after a comprehensive series win over New Zealand which is the world's second-ranked team.

Australia won the first match by six wickets with a four off the last ball and the third match between the teams is at Eden Park on Sunday.

"It was a great win for Australia," captain Mitch Marsh said. "Our backs were against the wall and we thought we were probably 50 runs short."

"But, the way our bowlers came out and performed was outstanding. All of our teams over the last 12 months have been backed into a lot of corners and we've managed to find a way to get out



of them. Tonight was another example of that."

Australia looked to have fallen short of a competitive total when it was bowled out for 174 in 19.5 overs after being 72 for one at the end of the six-

over power play.

Opener Travis Head blasted 45 from 22 balls including five sixes to give Australia a fast start as it battled after losing the toss. But, Lockie Ferguson took four for 12 and Ben Sears two for

Smriti in confident space with her cricket, leadership: RCB coach

PTI ■ BENGALURU

Smriti Mandhana finding a seamless sync with her twin duty of being the captain and premier batter of the side is intertwined with the fortunes of Royal Challengers Bangalore in the Women's Premier League Season 2, reckoned their head coach Luke Williams.

In the first WPL season, Mandhana struggled under the weight of this two-fold role, and her batting suffered a considerable dip.

The elegant left-hander could only manage 149 runs from eight matches, averaging a feeble 18 and at a strike-rate of 119. "She's practising really well. She's in a really confident

and happy space with her cricket and the leadership. Obviously, there's responsibility with captaining and opening the batting. "But she's got plenty of support from the team with lots of experienced seniors to help her and trying to really separate the two roles," said Williams on Friday, a day ahead of RCB's opening WPL 2024 match against UP Warriorz.

The RCB had finished fourth in the five-team league last season, and Williams said under the leadership of Mandhana the team looked much more settled this time.

"I've been fortunate to have spent a fair bit of time with Smriti through my involvement at the Southern



Brave (the Hundred team) as an assistant coach and we've had lots of conversations around the learnings and experiences from last (WPL) season both as a team and individual. I "think we've really taken on board some of those learnings (from previous

year)," he said.

Williams said Mandhana and other senior players in the side have been working with young cricketers in the RCB fold to create a confident atmosphere.

"This time Smriti and others have invested time with our players, and our senior players have been fantastic working with our young players and getting to know them and everyone is really starting to feel really comfortable and confident in the environment. We're looking forward to taking those learnings into this year," said Williams.

Williams, an experienced

T20 coach who has a Women's Big Bash title under his belt with Adelaide Strikers, said this time the RCB has good options in pace and spin departments. "That was a large part of our auction strategy and around retention. We were trying to get some real variety across all different aspects of the game but bowling certainly was a large part of that. So, we feel like we've got more variety with our pace and spin."

"Hopefully, we will ask some questions to the batters and we have given ourselves some great opportunities with our bowling this tournament," he said.



Bhagat, Kadam reach Para Badminton World Championship semifinals

PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)

Pramod Bhagat and Sukant Kadam on Friday reached the semifinals of the Para Badminton World Championship to assure themselves of at least a medal here. Bhagat defeated France's Mathieu Thomas 21-15, 21-17 to set up a semifinal clash with compatriot Manoj Sarkar.

Kadam got the better of Nigeria's Chigozie Jeremiah Nnanna 21-13, 21-11. He will take on Indonesia's Fredy Setiawan in the semifinal.

In mixed doubles, the Indian pair of Bhagat and Manisha Ramdass defeated Japan's Taiyo Imai and Noriko Ito 21-11, 16-21, 21-18 to seal their place in the semifinal. They will take on the Indonesian pair of Fredy Setiawan and Khalimatus Sadiyah in the last-four.

In the men's doubles quarterfinals, Bhagat and Kadam will take on the French pair of Guillaume Gailly and Mathew Thomas. In other matches, Kumar Nitesh defeated Thailand's Mongkhon Bunsun in the quarterfinals to set up a last-four clash against Daniel Bethell of England.

AC Milan, Roma, Marseille, Benfica advance to Europa League round of 16

AP ■ MILAN

AC Milan advanced to the round of 16 in the Europa League despite a 3-2 loss at Rennes in the second leg of their playoff.

Milan, which won 3-0 at the San Siro last week, eliminated its French opponent on a 5-3 aggregate score on Thursday.

The Italian powerhouse, a seven-time European champion, has never won the second-tier Europa League or its predecessor, the UEFA Cup. Midfielder Benjamin Bourigeaud's hat trick put the hosts up three times with Milan quickly answering twice.

Bourigeaud netted the opener in the 11th minute with a fierce right-footed shot from over 20 meters to beat

goalkeeper Mike Maignan.

Forward Luka Jovic canceled it out 10 minutes later with a header off a cross by captain Theo Hernández.

Bourigeaud made it 2-1 early in the second from the penalty spot but Rafael Leão equalised after four minutes on a fine solo effort.

Bourigeaud sent Maignan the wrong way with another spot kick to make it 3-2.

The eight runners-up in the Europa League group stage played the eight third-place teams from the Champions League group stage in the playoffs.

The eight winners will take on the Europa League's group winners, who qualified directly for the round of 16. They are Liverpool, West Ham and



Brighton from the Premier League, as well Leverkusen, Atalanta, Villarreal, Rangers and Slavia Prague.

The draw is scheduled for Friday.

Nicola Zalewski converted the decisive spot kick for Roma

to prevail 4-2 in a penalty

shootout over Feyenoord to qualify for the next round. Early in the game, captain Lorenzo Pellegrini found the net from the edge of the area to tie it a 1-1 after Santiago Giménez's fifth-minute header

gave the Dutch team a 1-0 lead and silenced more than 67,000 fans at Stadio Olimpico. The teams also drew 1-1 in the opening leg in Rotterdam.

Marseille's new coach Jean-Louis Gasset made a victorious debut after he was appointed Tuesday to replace Gennaro Gattuso.

Geoffrey Kondogbia and substitute Ismaila Sarr sealed a 3-1 win for Marseille over Shakhtar Donetsk with a goal each in the second half. Marseille advanced on a 5-3 aggregate score.

Earlier, Marseille striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang netted his 31st career goal in the Europa League to break the competition record and level the tie after Georgiy Sudakov converted from the spot.

CORRIGENDUM		
No. SS/CW/SMO/LIFT/50/2024/148		Dated 23 rd Feb 2024
In continuation of the tender No. SS/CW/SMO/LIFT/50/2024/140 dated 16 th Feb 2024 invited for the work, "Design, fabrication, supply, installation and commissioning of passenger lift (8 person) including civil & structural works for construction of New Lift Structure at the State Mission Office (G+4 storey), Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19", the following changes will be effective:		
Clause ref. with page no. in the tender document	Present clause	Modified clause
Short Notice Inviting tender, page-3 of IFB	Time of completion – 45 days	Time of completion – 90 days
Short Notice Inviting tender, page-3 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02-2024	Last date & time for submission of tender : 27-02-2024
National/ local competitive bidding, page-2 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02-2024	Last date & time for submission of tender : 27-02-2024
Calender of events, page-4 of IFB	Last date & time for submission of tender : 23-02-2024	Last date & time for submission of tender : 27-02-2024
Page-5 of IFB	Time of completion – 45 days	Time of completion – 90 days
Clause no. 8 of Appendix-I, page 28	The bids will be opened at the Office of the Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 at 1500 hours on 23-02-2024	The bids will be opened at the Office of the Mission Director, Samagra Shiksha, Assam, Kahilipara, Guwahati-19 at 1500 hours on 27-02-2024
Janasanyog/CF/5863/23/24-Feb-24		
Sd/- Executive Director Samagra Shiksha, Assam Kahilipara, Guwahati-19		