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SPORTS 12



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Ayodhya's Son set to welcome the Sun

¬he ancient city of Saket Ajodhia, now Ayodhya, is ready to

restore the legacy of Lord Ram on Monday after a wait of around five centuries. Today, it narrates the story of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat which is ideologically synced the incumbent government's motive of a

strong nation.

journey.

The Ram Mandir is not just a monument in Ayodhya; it is a living testament to the unifying power of faith. Every stone, carving, bell, and fabric tells a story of Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat transcends geographical boundaries and unites hearts in a collective spiritual

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' initiative resonates deeply with this notion and is a testament to the unwavering faith and generosity that transcends state borders, uniting a nation in the pilgrimage for a temple. Kashmir

Kanyakumari, the echoes of Ram's name have woven a tapestry of devotion across India. The majestic temple stands tall as a symbol of India's unity and devotion, not just in grandeur, but also the tapestry contributions woven across States and borders.

The core of the temple stands



Inside view of the Ram Temple ahead of its consecration ceremony, in Avodhya

majestic, covered in the pristine white elegance of Rajasthan's Makrana marble. Karnataka's deities, takes centre stage. sandstone from Rajasthan's Bansi Paharpur has been utilised in the entrance gate's imposing

The contributions go far beyond building materials. Charmouthi Gujarat's generosity extends sandstone, when it comes to to the divine melody that will the exquisite carvings of echo through its halls, gifting majestic Ashtadhatu bell. Alongside this divine bell, Gujarat also presents a 700 kg chariot carrying a special "nagada", crafted by the All India Darbar Samaj

The black stone used for Lord Ram's idol originates from Karnataka. From foothills, Himalayan Arunachal Pradesh, and offered Tripura have intricately carved wooden doors and handcrafted fabrics, standing as gateways

to the divine realm.

The list of contributions does not end as brassware hails from Uttar Pradesh, while polished teakwood arrives from Maharashtra. The story of the Ram Mandir is not just materials about geographical origins. It is about the countless thousands of talented craftsmen and their hearts, souls, and skills into this sacred endeavour. The temple has received

technical assistance from at least four leading National Institutes of CSIR (Council of Scientific & Industrial Research) and DST (Department of Science & Technology) under the Ministry of Science & Technology, in addition to certain inputs from other institutions like IITs as well as ISRO (Indian Space Research

CSIR-CBRI Roorkee has played a major role in contributing construction of the Ram CSIR-NGRI Temple. Hyderabad provided inputs on significant foundation design and seismic safety. DST-IIA Bengaluru offered technical support on the Sun's path for Surya Tilak, and CSIR-IHBT Palampur has contributed to making tulips bloom for the divine Ram Mandir Praan Pratishthaa ceremony.

Organisation).

A unique feature is the Surva Tilak mechanism, designed in such a way that the Sun's rays will fall on the forehead of Lord Ram's Idol at 12 noon on Sriram Navami day every year for about 6 minutes.

Ram Navami, celebrated on the ninth day of the first month of the Hindu calendar, which is usually in March-April, marks the birthday of Lord Ram, the seventh incarnation of Lord Vishnu.



Artists perform during a programme ahead of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on Sunday

Birthplace echoes with Jai Shri Ram

BISWAJEET BANERJEE AYODHYA

In the sacred embrace of Ayodhya, a celestial symphony unfolds as the city awaits the historic Pran Pratistha ceremony of Ram Lalla. The echoes of "Jai Shri Ram" reverberate through the hallowed precincts, infusing the very soul of this temple city with divine anticipation. "In every chant of 'Jai Shri

Ram,' Ayodhya glimpses the dawn of a new era, where devotion and progress dance divine harmony," Sudharshan Aiyyar said as he walks on the Ram Path. Thousands of devoted Rambhakts, converging from diverse corners of the country and across the globe, embark on a sacred pilgrimage to partake in this divine odyssey. Temples with resonate the harmonious cadence of

kirtans, bhajans, and the soul-stirring recitations of Ramayana Ramcharitmanas, creating an ethereal ambiance that transcends the earthly realm. As Bhandaras, reminiscent of communal feasts, come to life, the streets pulsate with the rhythmic chanting of 'Shri Ram,' creating an atmosphere of spiritual communion. Amid this sacred tapestry, Ram Chandra Desai, a pilgrim from Vadodara, reflects on the profound historical journey: "Our ancestors witness to the bore demolition of the temple and the subsequent construction of a mosque atop the Ram Temple almost five centuries ago. My father witnessed the demolition of the mosque, and now, I consider myself fortunate to witness the construction of the Ram Temple."

Continued on Page 2

CAPSULE

Ayodhya event 'golden' moment for Jains: Seers

AYODHYA: Ayodhya is the "original land" of Jainism and the community is looking forward to the development of the holy city with the consecration of the Ram temple, Jain seers said The entire Jain society is happy over the construction of the Ram Temple in said, Ravindra Kirti Swami, Peethadheesh Digambar Jain Teerth.

AIIMS reverses decision to shut till 2:30 pm

NEW DELHI: The All India Institute of Medical Sciences here will remain open on Monday, reversing its earlier decision to shut OPD services till 2:30 pm on the occasion of the consecration ceremony at the Ayodhya Ram temple.

Cracks wide open in Opp bloc in Bengal

KOLKATA: The fissures in INDIA alliance degenerated into a wide crevice with Bengal Congress president Adhir Chowdhury reacting sharply to reported direction given by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to the Trinamool Congress cadre to start preparing for Congress defeat.

All bands, caterers in **Delhi booked for Ram**



Devotees during a procession at Chandni Chowk in New Delhi on Sunday on the eve of Ayodhya's Ram temple consecration ceremony Ranian Dimri I Pioneer

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

 $T_{\text{Ram Temple in Ayodhya}}^{\text{he consecration of the}}$ has indeed brought euphoria to citizens across the country, but it has also led to a crisis for the wedding season. People are finding it difficult to book bands, DJs, musical troupes, caterers, and bhajankirtan singers for their weddings scheduled on the same day, January 22.

Even caterers are not available on Monday, as most of them have been booked by temple organisations, market associations, and RWAs for bhandaras. Musical troupes, scheduled to perform devotional songs and bhajans, have slotted their timings

events are planned in Delhi, and around 25 lakh diyas will be lit in 1000 small and big markets here.

and Bandwalas event management companies have been receiving multiple booking requests, far exceeding their usual capacity during a regular season. Notably, the Ayodhya celebrations have coincided with the beginning of the wedding season not only in Delhi NCR but also across the

country Ramlal, who has scheduled his son's marriage for January 22, is now encountering difficulties in booking bandwalas and musical troupes, as they have all been booked for Monday. "I am throughout the day. going to Rohtak to manage all It is estimated that over 2000 these arrangements for my

son's marriage," said Ramlal, a resident of Yamuna Vihar in East Delhi.

A dhol wallah associated with the Janta Band group, set to perform at a temple, mentioned that they would play instruments during the special playlist of bhajans and kirtans

Similarly, the Ashoka Band group, Original Naveen Band, and Asha Band are also gearing up to perform religious songs dedicated to Lord Ram and Lord Hanuman. Interestingly, the charges for these band groups dholwallahs doubled or even tripled for an hour on the day of the consecration of the Ram

Mandir. Jas Karan, owner of a wedding band, noted that musical groups were experiencing a shortage of members due to the date clash. Band members who usually perform wedding songs are now preparing to play devotional songs in

praise of Lord Ram. 'This year has witnessed a substantial increase in the demand for dhol and bands due to 'Ram Barats' being taken out," said a bandwala from Delhi Royal Band. He said they have divided band members into smaller teams to handle requests for January 21 and 22.

Continued on Page 2

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Kerala Begum breaks barriers for consecration Allah has not forbidden anybody from worshiping Begum Nuzrath Jahan from Kozhikode in Kerala has Lord Rama," she said Nuzrath Jahan is a familiar always ploughed a different face in Kerala's intellectual

furrow from her peers or other members of her aristocratic and orthodox Muslim family. She has been a voracious reader, especially of Indian and Western classics. On Monday, she will be one of the chosen few (elected by the merciful Allah, in her own words) to witness the consecration of the Ram Lalla statue at Ayodhya.

"Lord Ram is my God too, and I adore Prabhu and Maa Sita," said Nuzrath Jahan



Ayodhya, where she arrived on Saturday evening. She met many famous saints and monks before reaching Ram Nagari. "This is the rarest of

circles, advocating for equal rights for women in all spheres of life. She is credited as the chief organiser of a series of seminars held across the State, demanding the introduction of a Uniform Civil Code and equal rights for women in

property inheritance.
"I do not seek any special consideration for Muslim women. Instead, they should have equal opportunities and status as men. The Muslim

discriminatory women and need to be abolished," said Nuzrath Jahan, a former aviation expert. She is an ardent supporter of

Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The abolition of the Triple Talaq system and the abrogation of Article 370 are landmark events that define the Modi regime. The Prime Minister is on a mission to establish a society where all Indians have equal rights and status. He is a unique leader, and I consider him the best Prime Minister India has ever had," she explained.

Continued on Page 2

Bengal decked up for rally, Ram event

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

ven the TMC and BJP geared up to utilise the Monday's inauguration of Ram Temple Ayodhya in their own ways apparently to test their respective strength the State police went on a high alert to avert any kind of unpleasant

While parts of Bengal decked up to celebrate the Monday's grand event the Kolkata prepared for a mega all-religion "harmony rally" to be led by Chief Minister Banerejee. The much awaited consecration of Ram Temple would take place on Monday with Prime Minister Narendra Modi likely to play the leading role in the

In an apparent bid to create a counter-narrative Banerjee has directed her party men and appealed to the people of Kolkata and Bengal to organise harmony rallies to one of which she would lead from South Kolkata after offering prayer at the iconic Kali Temple



at Kalighat. The rally will pass by temples, Gurdwaras, churches and mosques and conclude at Park Circus Maidan a minoritydominated locality.

Similar rallies have been asked to be organized throughout the State right till the block level. The BJP has termed her rally a "gimmick show" at a time when "the entire country and the State is filled with love for

Lord Rama."

While slamming Banerjee, Bengal Opposition Leader Suvendu Adhikari said, "her rally is aimed at appeasing a particular community ... as the TMC wants to create a law and order situation in the state ahead of the Lok Sabha polls," his party comrade and State BJP president Sukanta Majumdar sought forgiveness for the "sinners" saying, "those

trying to stop celebrations regarding Ram temple inauguration will be given a befitting reply in the next elections. The TMC is taking out the rally to counter the event in Ayodhya.... They do not know that they are doing ... I will pray to God to forgive these people."

CPI(M)'s rising star Meenakshi

Mukherjee said that Chief Minister was putting up a fake

show as she had brought the BJP in Bengal which was a communally peaceful State.

"It is for Mamata Banerjee to reply as to how so hundreds of Sakhas are been allowed to come up in the State and why RSS mouthpiece went on record calling her Goddess Durga and claiming that demo-cratic culture of the State had improved during her times, she said.

Meanwhile, security was beefed up throughout the State includ-ing the State Capital to avert any kind of untoward incident with the Kolkata Police Commissioner on Sunday saying, "all the security arrangements are in place and there will be no disturbance.

A senior IPS officer of the State Police said "commensurate to the Calcutta High Court directive ... the police have been maintaining a strong vigil throughout the State and no attempt to provoke any disturbance will be allowed. Things will be monitored from

Indians won't forgive Congress for turning down invite to Praan Pratishthaa: Scindia

Union minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Sunday that the country's 140 crore people won't forgive Congress for the "sin" it has committed by declining the invitation for the Ram temple consecration on January 22

He also heaped praise on Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying the PM has been tirelessly working for the temple cause. 'Congress lawyers told the court that Ram was imaginary. The trust invited Congress leaders to the Ram temple consecration function on January 22, but they turned it down," said the Union civil aviation minister at a public meeting. "The country's 140 crore people will not forgive Congress for committing this sin," said the scion of the erstwhile Gwalior

kingdom. The country has waited for a "son" (Modi) who will lead the nation for the consecration of the Ram temple, he said.



Seeking to highlight his family's connections with the temple movement and BJP, he said, [']Rajmata (Jyotiraditya's grandmother Vijayraje Scindia) picked up the saffron flag and rolled out a new ideology? Vijayraje was one of the founding members of BJP.

Scindia said, "That time the prime minister (Modi) had hopped onto the Rath (taken out by BJP patriarch LK Advani then for Ram temple movement) and crisscrossed the country for awakening." His (Modi's) sacrifice will bear

"He (Modi) has inspected each stone and pebble (used in the Ram temple construction) and was seeking blessings at Ram temples since the last 11 days in the run-up to the consecration ceremony," he said.

Scindia said Modi was giving free ration to 80 crore people for five years.

In the last nine years, the poor have got four crore houses, while 10 crore women have got cooking gas connections, he



On Ram temple consecration eve, Congress Indore office readies to celebrate event

On the eve of the Ram temple consecration at Ayodhya, the Congress office in Indore, an over-a-century-old structure, is turning heads with an impressive array of decora-

Magnificent lights of different hues adorn the Gandhi Bhawan, while a huge poster of Lord Ram has been placed in the middle of the historic building. The poster is clearly visible from Shastri Bridge, an overpass that most Indoreans

According to historians, Gandhi Bhawan was earlier known as King Edward Hall. It was designed by British archistructed in 1904.

Besides, many vantage points in Indore, India's cleanest city, are dotted with posters of Lord Ram put up by the opposition party in Madhya Pradesh.

This comes amid an exchange of barbs between the BJP and the Congress over the grand old party turning down the invite for the Ram temple consecration on January 22 calling

it a BJP-RSS function.

"Congress has never opposed Ram Mandir. We welcome its consecration at Ayodhya. In fact, it was our party's prime minister Rajiv Gandhi who had got the locks of the Ramjanmabhoomi opened," Congress spokesperson Nilabh Shukla told PTI.

Shukla said they want the temple to be consecrated according the wishes of the Shankaracharyas Dharmacharyas as "they have the authority"

"But the BJP has made the temple consecration an event for its electoral gains and Congress is opposing that," he added.

dent Surjeet Chaddha said, "Congress will celebrate the Ram Mandir consecration ceremony as a festival and Ram Dhun will be played through Monday at our office."

Also, the recitation of Sunderkand of Ramayana will be done at 4 pm to mark the day, he added.

SAUGAR SENGUPTA KOLKATA

The hair-line fissures in INDIA alliance further degenerated into a wide crevice with Bengal Congress president Adhir Chowdhury reacting sharply to reported direction given by Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to Trinamool Congress cadres to start preparing for contesting in all the 42 Lok Sabha seats of the State. INDIA stands for Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance

In a brainstorming session Banerjee, who is also the TMC chairperson told the top leaders of Murshidabad district to make preparations to defeat Chowdhury a five time MP from Behrampore. "Don't think that Adhir

Chowdhury is undefeatable . he is not a factor if you fight united ... he can be defeated and we will defeat him this time round," Banerjee reportedly told her comrades in an in-house meeting. Chowdhury has been a five-time MP from Behrampore which constitutes

Cracks in INDIA bloc widen in Bengal one of the three parliamentary

seats from Murshidabad dis-trict — the other two being Jangipur and Murshidabad. When asked for his reactions Chowdhury told reporters, "those who think that I am not a factor, it's okay. I don't care about anyone. Our leaders have already spoken. I have reached here only by contesting and winning. We know to

contest and win

Though he would not name the Chief Minister he said, "there are some people who are trying to harm the Alliance... It will gradually become clear to the people as to who is serving the interests of the BJP." Banerjee's pep talk to her party comrades against the backdrop of ongoing seat-sharing talks between the two parties where the Congress has reportedly placed a demand of 6-8 seats whereas the TMC has offered only 2 seats of Behrampore and Malda South which the Congress presently retain. "I



will only want the elective representatives including the MLAs and organizational incharges to resolve their differences and talk in unison towards the interest of the party ... if you do so then Adhir Chowdhury is not a factor ... we will win all the 42 seats," Banerjee reportedly told her party leaders not only indicating that INDIA alliance was not on her mind but also that TMC would contest from all the 42 seats including the

ones presently held by the

Early this month the Chief Minister had told the media that in Bengal the TMC would solely take on the BIP because only her party was capable of containing the saffron wave and in rest of the country INDIA would fight as a united force.

When asked to comment on Chowdhury's comments TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said that while his party was loyal towards the cause of opposition unity it was the Congress which was looked

"If you think of taking advantage of apparent political fluidity by putting up a hard bargain ... make absurd demands for seats presumption would that you are insincere towards the alliance ... and if so then you should be reminded that the TMC is sufficient to fight alone and with the elections as it did in 2021 Assembly elections reducing you to Zero," he said in apparent reference to the Congress.

Another Bengal Minister Snehashis Chakrabarty said, 'TMC is ready to fight in all the 42 seats and our workers are raring to go ... Mamata Banerjee had from the outset spoken about seat-sharing talks which no other party took seriously ... now there is no point sitting back ... The TMC will do remarkably well if it fights alone." fights alone."

Ram temple start of new cycle in India's resurgence, Murmu writes to PM Modi

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The nationwide celebratory atmosphere around the inauguration of the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya is an uninhibited expression of India's eternal soul and start of a new cycle in the country's resurgence, President Droupadi Murmu said on Sunday as she complimented President Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the 'Pran Pratistha'.

In a two-page letter to Prime Minister Modi, the president said that "as you prepare yourself to go for 'Pran Pratishtha' of Prabhu Shri Ram's 'murti' (idol) at the new temple built at his birthplace in Ayodhya, I can only contemplate the unique civilisational journey that will be accomplished with each step taken by you in the hallowed

precincts' Referring to the 11-day rigorous 'anushthan' that the prime minister has undertaken. Murmu said it is not only a sacred ritual but also a supreme spiritual act of sacrifice and submission to Lord

wide celebratory atmosphere the grand temple of Prabhu Shri Ram in Ayodhya Dham is an uninhibited expression of the eternal soul of India. "We all are fortunate to witness the commencement of a new cycle in the resurgence of

India to send back 276 Myanmarese soldiers who fled to Mizoram last week

India will send back 276 Myanmarese soldiers who fled to Mizoram last week following gunfights with an eth-Sunday.

With this repatriation, which will continue for two days - Monday and Tuesday, more than 600 Myanmarese soldiers who fled to Mizoram will be sent back to their country, he said. The 276 personnel will be airlifted by Myanmar air force planes from the Lengpui airport near Aizawl to Sittwe in the neighbouring country's Rakhine



state the Assam Rifles official told PTI They entered Bandukbanga village, located at the India-Myanmar-Bangladesh trijunction, in southernmost Mizoram's Lawngtlai district with and approached the Assam Rifles, she

They were taken to the nearby Assam Rifles camp at Parva, and later the majority of them were shifted to Lunglei, she added. They have been under the supervision

of the Assam Rifles since then, the official said.

These 276 soldiers were brought to

Aizawl over Saturday and Sunday for their transport to Myanmar from the Lengpui airport, she said.

The group is headed by a colonel, and has 36 officers and 240 lower-rank personnel, officials said. Since November. 635 Myanmar soldiers have fled their country and entered Mizoram after their camps were overrun and captured by ethnic armed organisations and prodemocratic forces, officials said.

Of them, 359 soldiers have already been ck to their country, the While 104 Myanmar army personnel were sent to the border town of Moreh in Manipur from different places in Mizoram by Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopters in November, 255 soldiers were moved via the Lengpui airport by Myanmar air force planes on January 2 and January 9, they said.

Mizoram shares a 510-km-long border with Myanmar.

Sending heartfelt wishes, the around the inauguration of

our nation," she said.

Kerala Begum breaks barriers for consecration

From page 1 When asked whether her support for the Prime Minister goes against the stance of her community, she retorted: "I don't know if Muslims have a standalone view towards the Prime Minister. But everything he has done since becoming the Prime Minister has been aimed at elevating the status of Muslim women. Those who want Muslim women to be eternal slaves may not like him, but that is their fate," said Nuzrath Jahan.

All bands, caterers in **Delhi booked for Ram**

From page 1 'This year has seen a 50-60 per

cent rise in the demand for wedding bands," he added. 'We are fully booked due to the significant event. We are practicing special songs for the day. Performers are preparing to play the popular bhajan 'Ram Aayenge to Angana Sajaungi, and special dhol beats during the aarti," he continued. The members of the band will wear special saffron-colored uniforms on

Similarly, the Ashoka Band group is preparing to play religious songs in praise of Lord Ram and Lord

Hanuman. Brijesh Goval, the chairman of the Chamber of Trade and Industry (CTI), stated that over 1,500 events will take place across Delhi, including temples, societies, markets, and communities, leading up to and on the day of the consecration ceremony Salim, a member of the Hira Band group, mentioned that they are booked for weddings and multiple events on January 21 and 22. "During the same time last year, we received bookings for just one or two weddings. However, this year's Ayodhya ceremony has brought a lot of work to us," he added. over 2000 events are planned in Delhi, and around 25-30 lakh diyas will be lit in 1000 small and big markets here. "A massive Ram Jhanda Yatra will be taken out on January 22 at Kashmiri Gate. Saffron flags have been installed in Kamla Nagar, Khan Market Sunderkand will take place in Karol Bagh, Laxmi Nagar, Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazar, Kashmeri Gate, Mori Gate, Shahdara market, Kamla Nagar market, Mayapuri, Connaught Place. There will be lighting in almost all major markets including Karol Bagh, Chandni Chowk, Dariba Kalan, like Diwali. Jewelers will offer discounts on gold and silver ornaments with every transaction," they

According to traders' bodies

Do extra exercise

People who predominantly sit at work would need to

The study involving 481,688 individuals over a mean follow up period of 12.8 years found that individuals, who predominantly engaged in sitting at work, exhibited a higher risk of mortality from all causes (16 per cent) and cardiovascular disease (34 per cent) compared with those who predominantly did

increasingly sedentary, with prolonged sitting now pervasive as an integral part of normal life, effects. The study, published in the journal JAMA Network Open, suggests that reducing

The cohort study included participants in a health surveillance

Uddhav declines Ram event invite sent by speed post

Despite his party being the champion of Hindutva cause and a part of the Ramianmabhoomi movement. Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddahv Thackeray has declined to accept the invite for the Ram temple consecration ceremony to be held in Ayodhya, sent to him at the last moment by speed post. Instead, Uddhav will be away in Nashik on Monday, offering prayers at the historic Kalaram temple.

Apart from being in line with the stand taken by the Congress and other allies in the Opposition INDIA bloc, Uddhav's decision to skip the Ram temple consecration ceremony to be held in Ayodhya stems from the "shabby" manner in which the ruling BJP has chosen to treat the Shiv Sena (UBT) chief despite his party having been closely associated with the Ram Mandir move-

ment. Mincing no words about the BJP treating the Thackeray family in a "shabby" manner, Shiv Sena's chief spokesperson and MP Sanjay Raut said:, 'You worship Lord Ram, but rule like Ravan (demon king). Lord Ram will curse you. All film stars have been invited but the Thackeray family that has been closely associated with the movement is treated in such a

manner." The invitation for the Ram



temple consecration ceremony to be held in Ayodhya on Monday reached Uddhav on Saturday night, two days prior to the actual ceremony.

Uddhav -- who will perform a 'maha aarti' on the Godavari river bank and offer prayers at the Kalaram temple around the consecration of Ram Lalla takes place at Ayodhya on Monday has gone on record expressing his displeasure over the manner in which the BJP turned the ceremony into a party event. 'I am a Ram bha*kt, a desh bhakt, and not andh bhakt. The construction of Ram Temple was my father's dream, Uddhav said as he announced his party's plan to offer prayers at Nashik's Kalaram Mandir on

January 22. In his effort to embarrass the

President has invited President Droupadi Murmu to take the lead in offering prayers at Kalaram Temple at Nashik on January 22.

Through a letter dated January 12, the Sena (UBT) had invited President Murmu to Nashik on January 22. It is quite unlikely that the President will accept Úddhav's invite. With the battle lines already

drawn between the BJP and the

united Opposition - of which

his party is a part - for the Lok Sabha polls, Uddhav will launch his party's poll cam-paign at Nashik on Balasaheb Thackeray's birth anniversary on January 23. The Sena (UBT) is holding a party's state convention at Nashik on that day. Uddhav has chosen Nashik as the city to launch his party's Lok Sabha poll campaign, keeping in view its historical connection. Nashik is Veer Savarkar's birthplace. Ahead of launching his campaign, the Sena (UBT) president will be paying tributes to late Savarkar at the latter's memorial at Bangur Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, as Veer Savarkar was known for most part of his life, was born on May 28, 1883 in Bhagur village of Nashik district where he spent his childhood days..Savarkar has written in detail about his birth-

place Bhagur and Savarkar . Wada in ȟis autobiography

'My Memories- Bhagur.

guished personalities from India and abroad. Delegates Temple is not merely a reli-From page 1 Desai, aged 28, undertook a gious symbol; it is a transforremarkable pilgrimage, trafrom different nations are also mative force for our economy. versing over 2000 km on his poised to grace this historic Devotees will seek mementos occasion, underscoring its bicycle in seven days to be a and we are prepared for a substantial uptick in sales. This is part of this momentous occaglobal resonance. As the spiritual heart of sion. As he waves at reporters not just a spiritual milestone; it at Lata Mangeshkar Chowk, Ayodhya undergoes a monuis an economic opportunity."

Birthplace echoes with Jai Shri Ram

he exclaims, "Jo Ram ka nahi, transformation wo kisi kaam ka nahi," and through the construction and departs shouting "Jai Sri Ram". consecration of the Ram Temple, a palpable ripple effect is felt across the eco-In the midst of this spiritual tapestry, the participation of Prime Minister Narendra nomic landscape. Local ven-Modi in the consecration ceredors, shopkeepers, and busimony from 12:20 PM to 12:40 nesses brim with anticipation, PM on Monday elevates the foreseeing a surge in prosperisignificance of the moment

Ramesh, a hawker specializing The event is set to unfold in religious artifacts, shares his before over 7,500 esteemed guests, including distinexpectations: "For us, the Ram testament to our heritage."

Wandering through the vibrant streets of Ayodhya, a profound sense of pride and identity emanates from its residents. Shyam, a local resident, articulates, 'The Ram Temple is not just a religious edifice; it symbolizes our identity. The consecration will thrust Ayodhya onto the global stage a source of immense pride. It's

more than just a temple; it's a

temple as a fount of inspiration: 'The temple signifies that dreams, no matter how grand can come true. I believe this event will not only bring prosperity to businesses but to the entire community. As Ayodhya stands on the cusp of a historical and tech-

Ritu, a student, perceives the

nological transformation, the collective voice of its residents resonates with optimism. The consecration of the Ram Temple, coupled with the unfolding smart city initiatives, represents a holistic approach to development-one that harmoniously amalgamates tradition and moderni-

to lower mortality risk: Research PNS NEW DELHI

engage in an additional 15 to 30 minutes of physical activity per day to mitigate an increased risk of mortality, new research has

not sit. Modern lifestyles have become

despite the fact that, with some exceptions, the scientific literature agrees on its deleterious prolonged sitting in the workplace and/or increasing the volume or intensity of daily physical activity may be beneficial in mitigating the elevated risks of all-cause mortality and cardiovascular disease associated with prolonged occupational sitting, the authors said.

programme in Taiwan who were followed-up between 1996 and

25 lakh diyas to lit markets to celebrate Praan Pratishthaa

Markets in Delhi and other parts of the country will remain open on Monday (January 22) as Ram Mandir celebrations will take place in these markets. A day ahead of the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple, the streets and the skyline of Delhi and NCR the skyline of Delhi and NCR have turned saffron with flags flying atop buildings, small and big, across the national capital region. It is estimated over 2000 events are planned in Delhi and around 25 lakh diya will be lit in 1000 small and big markets here. According to Chamber of

Trade and Industry (CTI), a huge Ram Jhanda Yatra will be taken out on January 22 at Kashmiri Gate, saffron flags have been installed in Kamla Nagar, Khan Market, Sunderkand will take place in Karol Bagh, Laxmi Nagar. There will be lighting in Dariba

give discounts, there will also be a Ram concert here, there will be bhandaras for everyone. Boxes of laddus will be distributed in Bhagirath Palace, gates will be decorated. Beautiful lighting arrangements are being made in Naya Bazaar, Around 21000 lamps will be lit in Sarojini Nagar Market. Saffron balloons and flags will be installed in Lajpat Nagar market. Sundar Kand will be recited, Special arrangements are being made in Rohini, shopkeepers of Nehru Place will also celebrate Diwali on the day of Pran Pratistha. Special decorations will be done in Chandni Chowk and Sadar Bazaar on 22nd January and a

"The fervour has led to a surge in demand for Ram Mandirrelated goods, with a four-fold increase in requests for flags,

Shobha Yatra will be taken

out, Sunder Kand will be recit-

photos," CTI chairman Brijesh Goyal and president Subhash Khandelwal said in a joint

Besides, many companies are joining the bandwagon of Ram Temple consecration, from declaring a contribution in lighting at the complex to planning to screen the event live on multiplexes. Some companies are donating a portion of their profit from sales in the region during the inauguration period to distribute special foods across the city of Ayodhya. Several companies operating in consumer space have activated on-ground marketing campaigns by putting up large numbers of hoardings, gate branding, shopboards, and kiosks offering products to devotees, arriving in the holy city for the Ayodhya Ram

The Confederation of All





Khandelwal said there will be more than 2,000 events of various scales in Delhi alone, while across the country, over 30,000 Shri Ram programs are scheduled. "This will mark the largest day in this century when such a multitude of events will happen simultane-ously. There was a significant increase in the demand for flowers to decorate homes, markets, temples, and other places. There was also a surge in the purchase of clay lamps. Sweet shops witnessed substantial crowds, with people buying sweets on a large scale for tomorrow's Prasad. There is a shortage of Shri Ram flags and banners in the markets," he said. CAIT has initiated a nationwide campaign called Har Shahar Ayodhya-Ghar Ghar Ayodhya The extensive programs and

the sale of items related to Lord Ram have resulted in a business

turnover surpassing one lakh crore," he said. He further stated that January 22's extensive celebrations are a testament to the overwhelming enthusiasm and anticipation related to the dedication of Ram Mandir. People from all walks of life are coming together to make this day truly historic He mentioned that due to the

consecration of Ram Mandir, the country has experienced tremendous enthusiasm and excitement. The extensive programs and the sale of items related to Lord Ram have resulted in a business turnover surpassing one lakh crore. The NDMC has adorned key

locations in Lutyens' Delhi with captivating flower boards to celebrate the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. According to NDMC, prominent locations, including Khan Market, BKS Marg, Connaught Place, Mandi House roundabout, PM House

Market, Yashwant Place Market, Dilli Haat, Birla Mandir and 11 Murti, have been decorated. New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) main building is also illumi-nated with radiance" in view of the auspicious occasion. In a testament to the enduring

cultural richness of the Ramayan, residents of the capital are organising vibrant celebrations in their areas to mark the Pran Pratishtha ceremony of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya People in Delhi are going to celebrate the auspicious day in line with festivities of Diwali by lighting diyas (clay lamps) and candles, and lighting the entire neighbourhood with colourful electric lights. Furthermore, many social groups have decided to organise and attend several religious events like Sundarkand Paath, Ramlila, hosting langars in their locali-

Delhi is fully prepared to welcome Bhagwan Shri Ram. On the one hand, in all con-

stituencies of Delhi, last

Multilevel security cover in city for consecration

Amulti-level security cover and extensive CCTV surveillance have been put in place at prominent temples and different markets of the national capital for celebra-tions to mark the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, Delhi police officials said on Sunday. "No one will be allowed to

breach law and order. Multilevel security checkpoints have been put up at temples and markets. The night patrolling staffers are directed to check hotels, guest houses, and dharamshalas," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Northeast) Joy Tirkey. The 'Pran Pratishtha' of the Ram temple in Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh will be held on Monday.

Tirkey said members of temple trusts were called for a meeting on Sunday to review the security measures.

"Several temples like Prachin Mandir. Hanuman Ihandewalan Mandir, Birla Mandir and Kalka Ji temple will celebrate the 'Pran Pratishtha'. We are expecting high footfall

at these temples. Paramilitary forces will also be deployed and will be on standby for any situation," the officer said.

The DCP added that police teams visited the temples to check the security measures in "The major temples here have CCTV cameras installed. Teams from Delhi police will keep strict vigil from the control room of the temples to maintain law and order. Strict action will be ensured against those who do not comply with the orders," said the officer.

Different markets of Delhi like Chandni Chowk, Sadar Bazaar, Chawri Bazaar, Khari Baoli, Kashmiri Gate, Naya Bazaar, Connaught Place, Lajpat Nagar, Sarojini Nagar, Bhagirath Place, Kinari Bazaar and several others -- big or small -- are making arrangements to celebrate the Ram Mandir consecration

The Delĥi police have already stepped up security measures for the Republic Day celebrations. A senior officer said the Delhi Police is "keeping an extra vigil in sensitive areas" and "using drones to monitor security".

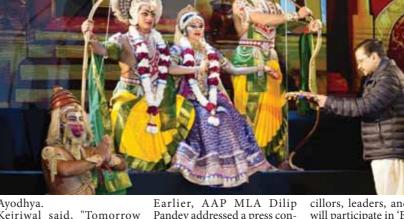
More than 8,000 police personnel have already been deployed in Delhi for the January 22 event and Republic Day parade, officials had ear-

AAP plans Shobha Yatra, bhandara

The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has announced to take out procession on the occasion of Ram Temple consecration on Monday all over Delhi. All big leaders will take part in the procession and bhandaras will also be organised all over Delhi. The programme coincides with the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya

Meanwhile, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday attended the threedays special Ramlila programme being organised by the party in the national cap-

Kejriwal said the AAP government in Delhi is inspired by the concept of "Ram Rajya" and draws motivation from it in providing various facilities to the people of the national capital. Kejriwal made the remarks at the three-day Ramlila event being organised by the Delhi government's Art, Culture and Languages department. The conclusion of the event, which began on Saturday, will coincide with the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in



Kejriwal said, "Tomorrow (Monday), there is the 'pran prathistha (consecration) ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya. Many people will not be able to attend it despite wanting to. I am happy that the Delhi government has organised this event." Kejriwal said one should seek inspiration from Lord Ram and follow what their parents say and speak the truth. "Lord Ram's administration is considered 'Ram Rajya'. We are inspired by 'Ram Rajya' and try to run the government taking inspiration from it," he added.

Pandey addressed a press conference and said on the day of consecration of Ram Mandir on Monday, a myriad of auspicious events, including Sundarkand' recitations, majestic 'Shobha Yatras' (processions), 'aarti,' and prasad distribution, will unfold across all 70 assembly constituencies. Pandey said that while the entire country is enthusiastically lined up to welcome Lord Shri Ram, Delhi is not lagging behind. On one hand, Ramleela is being staged in Delhi, and on January 22, all party ministers, MLAs, coun-

cillors, leaders, and workers will participate in 'Bhandaras', prasad distribution, and Shobha yatra programs organised in celebration of Lord Ram's welcome. "Bhagwan Shri Rama is the ideal of humanity, inspiring the entire nation. The arrival of Prabhu Shri Ram, born in the 'Raghukul' dynasty, has filled the entire country with a sense of devotion. The entire nation is warmly welcoming Bhagwan Shri Ram, with folded hands in reverence. In this auspicious process, Delhi is not lagging," he added.

stituencies of Delhi, last Tuesday, the recitation of Sundarkand was conducted for the worship of Sankat Mochan Bajrang Bali Ji. On the other hand, on the auspi-cious occasion of 'Pran Pratishtha' (consecration) of 'Ram Lalla' in Ayodhya on Tuesday, various events are being organised in all 70 constituencies of Delhi. "On this joyous and fortunate occasion, 'Bhandaras' (feasts) are being arranged in many locations across 44 constituencies in Delhi. 'Shobha Yatras' are taking place in seven locations to commemorate the arrival of Prabhu Shri Ram. Additionally, the recitation of Sundarkand is being performed in 3 constituencies. Moreover, in 16-17 constituencies after the aarti (worship), a program for distributing fruit prasad has been scheduled. In other words, there are programs for aarti, Sundarkand recita-

tion, Shobha vatras, and fruit

orasad distribution in various

ocations across all 70 con-

stituencies of Delhi," the AAP

MLA shared.

BJP leaders to watch Ayodhya event with people in city temples

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

 $D^{\text{elhi BJP on Sunday said}}_{\text{that senior central \& Delhi}}$ BJP leaders will join community viewing of the Pran Pratistha at different temples in Delhi. The party office stands illuminated and decorated as the country prepares to witness the Pran Prathistha of Bhagwan

Ram's new idol at Ayodhya. Delhi BJP President Virendra Sachdeva said that Delhi BJP Workers have made arrangements to organise community viewing of Pran Prathistha Samaroh by putting up screens & TV at over 2000 locations across the city in temples at booth level. Many Delhi BJP Office bearers, MPs, MLAs & Councilors have made announcements to organise community viewing of Samaroh in their offices and of distributing ladoos. Special screen is being set up at Pradesh Office where all employees & their families will sit and watch the Samaroh. Making a scathing attack on

Aam Aadmi Party over the cel-



ebrations, the Delhi BJP President has said that not only the people of Delhi are shocked to see the changing political colors and statements of the AAP and its leaders regarding the construction of Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya Dham even the chameleons are feeling shy to see AAP leaders changing their political statements on Ram Mandir.

Sachdeva has said that be it AAP leader Saurabh Bhardwaj's announcement of celebrating Shri Ram Mandir Utsav tomorrow without any preparation or the announcement of Ramlila depiction made yesterday, all this is a part of the growing political rest-



STAFF REPORTER **NEW DELHI**

The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here will remain open on Monday, reversing its earlier decision to shut OPD services till 2:30 pm on the occasion of the consecration ceremony at the Ayodhya Ram temple. "In continuation of the Office

Memorandum dated January 20, all clinical services including the Outpatient Services (OPD) shall remain open to prevent any inconvenience to patients and to facilitate patient care services," a fresh office memorandum issued by AIIMS said on Sunday. Later in the day, the Delhi-based centre-

run Lady Hardinge Medical College (LHMC) too announced that all services, including OPD and emergency, will be functional throughout Monday. On Saturday, an official memorandum by AIIMS, Delhi, had noted that the government has declared a halfday holiday on January 22 because of the Ram temple consecration ceremony.

"It is notified for information of all the employees that the Institute will remain half day closed till 14.30 pm on January 22. All Chiefs of Centres, Heads of the Departments, Units and Branch Officers are requested to bring this to the notice of all staff working under them," it

AllMS to remain open, | City records minimum temperature of takes back earlier order | 4.6 degrees, four notches below average

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Tt was a bone-chilling cold in Ithe national capital on Sunday with the maximum temperature settling at 15.8 degrees Celsius, four notches below the normal. The national capital on Sunday recorded a minimum temperature of 4.6 degrees Celsius, three notches below the season's average. Lodhi Road recorded the lowest minimum temperature at 4 degree Celsius, three notches below the normal. Icy day conditions continued in Delhi-NCR as an 'uplifted' fog kept the sun hidden and northerly winds added to the chill on a freezing Sunday

morning.
According to the India
Meteorological Department
(IMD), visibility at Delhi-Palam was reduced from 400 meters at 2:00 am to 100 meters at 2:30 am on Sunday, and it further reduced to 'zero' meters since 3:00 am, causing inconvenience to passengers as several flights and trains were delayed. Visibility at Palam, Safdarjung, Ridge



50 meters at 8.30 am Around 100 flights were delayed while over dozen of Delhi bound trains were delayed by one to 12 hours. Much like the day before, the Capital got no sunlight as a thick and dreary fog, coupled with shivering winds, continued to engulf the city. The Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 358, which comes

in the 'very poor' category, at

and Ayanagar was reduced to

9 am, according to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). The minimum temperature was recorded in Palam at 6 degree Celsius, a notch below the normal, Ridge at 5.6 degree celsius, three notches below the normal and Ayanagar at 4.6 degree Celsius, three notches below the normal.

The maximum temperature recorded in Palam at 13.1 degree Celsius, Lodhi Road

at 15.6 degree Celsius, Ridge at 15.7 degree Celsius and Ayanagar at 15.8 degree

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted mainly clear skies and cold day conditions for the day. It had earlier said that the city might witness dense fog from January 22 to 27. The north Índia has been reeling under intense cold wave conditions with dense fog lowering the visibility and disrupting rail and air traffic in the region. Very dense fog was observed in isolated pockets in Delhi, north Haryana, West Uttar Pradesh, and West Madhya Pradesh while dense fog in isolated pockets of Punjab, northwest Haryana, West Rajasthan, East Madhya Pradesh and Bihar.

According to IMD's classifications, a "cold day" is when the maximum temperature is 4.5°C or more below normal, with the minimum temperature also being below 10°C. It is considered a "severe cold day" when the maximum temperature is 6.5°C or more

G for issue of all India licence permit to renowned shooters

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has directed the Delhi Police to issue fresh licences to renowned shooters with "All India" validity instead of validity within Delhi only. According to Raj Niwas officials, this has been done keeping in mind the fact that they frequently need to travel across the country for various sporting events. The officials said that their cartridge quota has also been increased significantly from 20 to 10,000 annually with the one-time

increased from 10 at present to 1,000.

"Following a decisive push by the LG to rationalise and ease the licensing processes, the Delhi Police has initiated a major reform in the grant of arms licenses, till now marred by complaints of favouritism, corruption and arbitrariness. The move apart from helping applicants at large will specifically benefit the country's shooting sportspersons," an official said.

Apart from speedy disposal of pending applications, it will also be ensured that fresh

applications are disposed in a time-bound manner through an online portal, which will be modified specifically for this purpose, he added. The official said that the LG has also directed for rationalizing the renewal of arms licenses. In a departure from the present system where the online portal does not prescribe any timeline for the arms licensing procedures, Saxena has asked the Delhi Police to make all services -- fresh licenses, renewal, area validity, registration, sale of arms etc. Time bound, he added. The official said that Saxena

has asked the police to expedite the disposal of all nearly 6,000 pending applications

by the end of this year. Similarly, all redundant documents required for fresh

licenses as well as renewal are being reviewed and those found unnecessary will be removed subsequently, he added. Saxena has directed

added. Saxena has directed for making the modified arms licensing portal operational by March-end.

The modified portal will provide the applicants the liberty to schedule the date and time of their interview online as per their convenience and as per their convenience and preferably via video conference or video call. This is aimed at cutting possibilities of human interface that often lead to harassment and corruption, the official said.

ing January 15, the Delhi Police has already started granting provisional renewal during the pendency of Local Police Report (LPR) after verifying the applicants' criminal record (if any) from Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS) and State Crime Record Bureau (SCRB), the official said.

In such cases, the Delhi Police may revoke/cancel the renewal of license in case it receives a negative police report in the due course. Further, the LG has directed to allow the renewal of arms

in case the applicants are involved in minor cases that do not involve use of any weapon, bodily offence or

licenses on case to case basis

moral turpitude.
Similarly for registration of arms in Delhi that have been issued licences in other Indian states prior LPR and gen-uineness will not be required, the official said. Instead, the registration in such cases will be done in Delhi on the basis of the report from the National Database of Arms Licences - Arms Licence Issuance System (NDAL -ALIS), he added.

Bharat reconstruction campaign begins with Ram event: RSS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

head of the consecration of ARam Temple in Ayodhya, Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat delved into the historical significance of the occasion as he urged to end the decades of conflict surrounding the Ayodhya dispute. In an article posted on the RSS website, Bhagwat referred to the "continuous struggle of the Hindu society" for the construction the "continuous struggle of the Hindu society" for the construction of the temple in Ayodhya and said the "conflict and bitterness" over the dispute should now come to an end. "The "entry" of Ram Lalla in his birth place in Ayodhya and the temple's 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony will be the beginning of the campaign for "reconstruction of Bharatvarsh" which is for harmony, unity, progress, peace and well-being of everyone," he said.

RSS chief highlighted India's prolonged struggle against invaders spanning 1,500 years and what he described as the systematic destruction of religious places by foreign forces to weaken and demoralise society. After years of legal struggle, the Supreme Court pronounced a verdict on 'balanced"

November 9, 2019, after examining "the truth and facts" and also hearing the arguments of all the parties in the case, he said. Bhagwat said from a "Dharmic" point of view, Lord Ram is the "most worshipped deity" of the majority society in the country and is still accepted as an ideal of conduct by the entire society.

"Hence, now the conflict that has arisen as for and against over the dispute should be also end. The enlightened people of the society must see that the dispute ends completely," he

"Ayodhya means a city where there is no war, a place free from conflict. On this occasion, in the entire country, reconstruction of Ayodhya is the need of the hour and also the duty of all of us," Bhagwat said. The RSS chief said the occasion of construction of the Ram temple in Ayodhya marks the "reawakening of national

This also signifies the "acceptance of the vision of life behind the character of Shri Ram by the modern Bharatiya society", he added.

The 'pran pratishtha' (consecration) ceremony will be held at the Ram temple on January 22 and will be attended by Prime Minister Narendra



Minister Yogi Adityanath, Bhagawat and more than 7,000 people, including seers.

"This world is (in a) destructive frenzy due to egoism, selfishness and discrimination and is bringing infinite calamities upon itself. The entry of Shri Lalla Ram Janmabhoomi and his Pran Pratishtha is the beginning of the campaign for reconstruction of Bharatvarsh which is for the well-being of all, accepting all without enmity and showing the path of harmony, unity, progress and peace," Bhagwat

"We are the active followers and implementers of that campaign. In the devotional celebration of January 22, along

temple, all of us have resolved for the reconstruction of Bharat and through it paving the way for reconstruction of the entire world," he said. "Keeping this guiding light in mind, moving forward is the need of the hour," he added. The RSS chief said the history of Bharat is the history of "continuous struggle against the invaders for around the last one and a half thousand

He said the aim of early inva-sions was to plunder and sometimes, like Alexander's invasion, it was for colonisation. "But the attacks from the West in the name of Islam only brought complete destruction and alienation of the society. To demoralise the nation, society, was necessary to destroy their religious places. Hence, foreign invaders also destroyed temples in India. They did this the Bharatiya society" so that they could rule over Bharat "unhindered with the weakened society", Bhagwat said. "The demolition of Shri Ram

temple in Ayodhya was also done with the same intention and for the same purpose. This policy of the invaders was not limited to just Ayodhya or any one temple, but was a war strategy for the entire world," he added.

The RSS chief said the faith, commitment and morale of the society in Bharat never diminished. "The society did not bow down, their struggle of resistance continued. Therefore, repeated attempts were made to take control of the birthplace (of Lord Ram) and build a temple there (in Ayodhya). There were many wars, struggles and sacrifices for him. And the issue of Ram Janmabhoomi

Bhagwat said that in 1857, when war plans started being made against the British rule, Hindus and Muslims "together expressed their readiness" to fight against them and then there was a mutual exchange of ideas between them. And at that time, a situation evolved where there would be a reconciliation on the issue of banning cow slaughter and liberation of

Turning the pages of history,

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi. "Bahadur Shah Zafar also guaranteed a ban on cow slaughter," "As a result, the entire society fought together. Bharatiya peo ple showed bravery in that war but unfortunately this war of Independence failed. Then, Bharat did not get indepen-

dence, British rule remained

uninterrupted, but the struggle

for Ram temple did not stop,"

theatrical celebrations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

s the air resonates with the Atales and tribulations of God Ram revered by millions of Indians across the country, an array of theatrical performances are being held in the Capital in a vibrant celebration of mythology and tradition with the consecration ceremony being held at Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22.

Also, a three-day Ramlila at Pyarelal Auditorium at ITO is being organized by the Delhi Government. The second day i.e. on Sunday the play was witnessed by a packed hall of the Delhiites and City Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, his entire cabinet and MLAs. Entire auditorium was packed prompting people to watch Ramleela on LED screens outside the venue. The Ramlila was staged by the Shriram Bharatiya Kala Kendra. The play will culminate on January 22, coinciding with the Pran Pratistha ceremony at



However, the euphoria will continue even after the D day. For instance, theatre production company, Felicity Theatre, is presenting "Humare Ram," a theatrical extravaganza of epic proportions from January 25th at Kamani Auditorium, New Delhi. It will run for seven shows, concluding on January

Directed by filmmaker Gaurav Bharrdwaj, this magnum opus showcases scenes from the Ramayana with leading Bollywood luminary Ashutosh Rana portraying the role of Ravan, acclaimed actor Rahull R Bhuchar as Lord Ram, Danish Akhtar as Lord Hanuman,

Tarun Khanna as Lord Shiva, Harleen Kaur Rekhi as Seeta, and Karan Sharma as Surya

This ensemble also features accomplished artists from the world of theatre." Elevating the auditory experience, playback maestros Kailash Kher, Shankar Mahadevan, and Sonu Nigam have contributed their voices to original compositions crafted exclusively for the show.

"This grand theatrical experience promises extraordinary performances, powerful dialogues, soul-stirring music, vibrant choreography, exquisite costumes, and state-of-the-art lights and special effects," said Gaurav Bharrdwaj.

Capital abuzz with vibrant Ayodhya Ram temple gets tech support from CSIR

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

From early stages of structural design to seismic safety, from Sun's path for Surya Tilak to tulips for Praan Pratishthaa ceremony of Shri Ram on January 22, the much-revered temple in Ayodhya has got technical support from four reputed institutes under the country's premier scientific research agency, Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR). Besides, additional input for the grandiose structure also came from the Department of Science & Technology (DST) and top entities such as IITs as well as Indian Space Organisation(ISRO).

'The four CSIR institutes which made a significant contribution include Central Building Research Institute, Roorkee, Hyderabad-based National Geophysical Research Institute (NGRI), Institute Indian of Astrophysics (IIA) Bengaluru, and Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology



(IHBT) Palampur," Union Minister of State Science & Technology Dr Jitendra Singh disclosed here ahead of the much awaited ceremony to be held in Ayodhya.

The Minister elaborated that while CBRI has majorly contributed towards the construction of the holy temple, NGRI gave significant inputs on foundation design and seismic safety. Similarly, IIA Bengaluru provided technical support on Sun's path for Surya Tilak and IHBT Palampur has made tulips bloom for the divine Ram Mandir Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya being held on January 22.

Tulips do not flower in this season. It grows only in Jammu & Kashmir and few other higher Himalayan regions and that too only in the spring season. The IHBT has recently developed an indigenous technology through which tulip could be made available throughout the year, without waiting for its season, the Minister said adding that in celebration of faith, unity and the spirit of devotion, the institute is the divine ceremony in Ayodhya on 22nd January. Similarly, "the CBRI has been involved in the construction of Ram Mandir since early stages. The Institute has contributed towards Structural Design of the main temple, designing Surya Tilak mechanism, design vetting of temple foundation, and Structural

Health Monitoring of main temple," he further added. The main temple building, which is 360 feet long, 235 feet wide and 161 feet high, is made of sandstone quarried

from Bansi Pahadpur, Rajasthan. Cement or iron and steel is not used anywhere in its construction.

The structural design of the 3storey temple is earthquake resilient and can withstand strong tremors of magnitude 8 on the Richter scale for as long as 2,500 years, he shared. The Minister highlighted that the NGRI also gave significant inputs on foundation design and seismic/ earthquake safety. Few IITs were also part of the expert advisory committee and even Space technologies from ISRO have been used in the construction of the grandiose structure.

A unique feature of the Ram Temple, said Dr Jitendra Singh, is the Surya Tilak mechanism, designed in such a way that the Sun rays will fall on the forehead of Lord Ram's Idol at 12 noon on Sriram Navami day every year for about 6 minutes.

The IIA did its bit by providing technical support on Sun's path and Optica, Bangalore is involved in manufacturing of the lenses and

Meningitis can leave 1 in 3 children with permanent neurological disabilities: Study



 $B_{\text{tis can currently be cured}}^{\text{acterial infection meningi-}}$ with antibiotics but it can leave at least one in three children with permanent neurological disabilities due to the infection, a study published in medical journal JAMA Network Open

has said. And since children are often affected, the consequences are significant, according to a new epidemiological study led by Karolinska Institutet. For the first time, researchers have identified the long-term health burden of bacterial meningitis. "When children are affected, the whole family is affected. If a three-year-old child has impaired cognition, a motor disability, impaired or lost vision or hearing, it has a major impact. These are lifelong disabilities that become a major burden for both the individual and society, as those affected need health care support for the rest of their lives," said Federico Iovino, associate in Medical professor Microbiology at the Department of Neuroscience, Karolinska Institutet, and one of the authors of the current

study. By analyzing data from the Swedish quality register on bacterial meningitis between 1987 and 2021, the researchers have been able to compare just over 3,500 people who contracted bacterial meningitis as children with just over 32,000 matched controls from the

general population. The average follow-up time is over 23 years. The results show

that those diagnosed with bacterial meningitis consistently have a higher prevalence of neurological disabilities such as cognitive impairment, seizures, visual or hearing impairment, motor impairment, behavioral disorders, or structural damage to the head.

The risk was highest for structural head injuries -- 26 times the risk, hearing impairment -- almost eight times the risk, and motor impairment almost five times the risk. About one in three people

affected by bacterial meningitis had at least one neurological impairment compared to one in ten among controls. 'This shows that even if the bacterial infection is cured, many people suffer from neurological impairment afterwards," said Iovino.

With the long-term effects of bacterial meningitis identified, Federico Iovino and his colleagues will now move forward with their research.

"We are trying to develop treatments that can protect neurons in the brain during the window of a few days it takes for antibiotics to take full effect. We now have very promising data from human neurons and are just entering a preclinical phase with animal models. Eventually, we hope to present this in the clinic within the next

few years," he said. Bacterial meningitis is a rare but very serious infection that can affect people of all ages, but is most common in newborns, children and adolescents, and the elderly. Untreated, bacterial meningitis is fatal, but the infection can now be cured with antibiotics

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday flagged the tination weddings abroad and said people should be encouraged to "Wed in India" so that wealth remains within the country. Virtually addressing the foundation laying ceremony of the Khodaldham Trust Cancer Hospital to come up in Gujarat's Amreli city, the PM also appealed to the people to help promote domestic tourism.

Addressing the gathering of members of the Leuva Patidar community which manages the Shri Khodaldham Trust-Kagavad, PM Modi urged the well-to-do class to perform wedding ceremonies in the country and refrain from foreign destination weddings. 'Just like Made in India, now Wed in India", the Prime Minister concluded.

Addressing on the occasion, the Prime Minister expressed great privilege in connecting with the holy land of Khodal Dham and the devotees of Khodal Maa. Shri Modi underlined that Shri Khodaldham Trust has taken another important step in the field of public welfare and service with the foundation stone laying of the Cancer Hospital and Research Center in Amreli. He also noted that Shri Khodaldham Trust-Kagwad will complete 14 years of its establishment and conveyed his best wishes.

The Prime Minister informed that the Leuva Patidar community established the Shri Khodaldham Trust with the resolve of service, values and dedication 14 years ago. Since then, the Prime Minister said that the trust has worked to change the lives of millions of people through its service. "Be it the field of education, agriculture or health, this Trust has done excellent work in every direction", the Prime Minister said expressing confidence that the cancer hospital being built in Amreli will become another example of the spirit of service and will hugely benefit a large area of Saurashtra includ-

ing Amreli.



thinking, the Prime Minister said, about 30 new cancer hospitals have been developed in the country in the last 9 years, and work is underway on 10 new cancer hospitals. The Prime Minister underlined the importance of detecting Cancer at the right stage for

its treatment. He pointed out that the cancer already starts to spread by the time the people of the villages get diagnosed. To avoid such situations, the Prime Minister informed that the Central Government has built more than 1.5 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs at the village level where the emphasis is being laid on the early detection of many serious diseases including cancer. "When cancer is detected early, doctors also get a lot of help in its treatment", he added.

The Prime Minister underlined that Gujarat has made unprecedented progress in the health sector in the last 20 years and it has become a huge medical hub of India.

He informed that till 2002, there were only 11 medical colleges in Gujarat whereas today, the number has increased to 40. He further added that the number of MBBS seats here increased almost 5 times in 20 years and the number of PG seats have also increased by

about 3 times. "Now we even have AIIMS in Rajkot", he said. He also pointed out that there were only 13 pharmacy colleges in Gujarat till 2002 whereas their numbers have increased to around 100 today and the number of Diploma Pharmacy Colleges has also increased from 6 to around 30 in the last 20 years. PM Modi underlined that Gujarat has presented a model of major reform in the health sector with the opening up of community health centers in every village, thereby extending health facilities to tribal and poor areas. "People's trust in the facility of 108 ambulances in Gujarat has continuously strengthened", he

Highlighting his long-term association with the trust, Prime Minister Modi put forward 9 requests. Firstly, to save every drop of water and create awareness about water conservation. Second - Create awareness about digital transactions at the village level.

Third- Work to make your village, locality, and city number one in cleanliness. Fourth-Promote local products and make use of Made in India products as much as possible. Fifth- Travel within the country and promote domestic tourism. Sixth- Create awareness among farmers about natural farming. Seventh - Include Shri-Ann in the daily diet. Eighth - Indulge in fitness, yoga or sports and make it an integral part of life. And final- Stay away from any kind of drugs and addiction.

PM bats for 'wed in India' Aircraft crashed in Afghanistan not Indian, refuelled at Gaya: Officials

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

more than 40-year-old Asmall aircraft carrying six people that crashed in a rural Afghanistan province was not an Indian aircraft and only did refuelling at the Gaya airport on Saturday en route from a Thailand airport to Moscow, officials said on Sunday. The Morocco-registered Dassault Falcon (DF-10) plane, operating as an air ambulance, was flying from Utapao airport in Thailand to Moscow.

Amid reports that it was an Indian plane that was involved in the crash, the civil aviation ministry on Sunday said the aircraft did not belong to any Indian carrier.

'The unfortunate plane crash that has just occurred in Afghanistan is neither an Indian Scheduled Aircraft nor Non-Scheduled

(NSOP)/Charter aircraft. It is

a Moroccan-registered small Badakhshan province, news ed," the ministry said in a post on X at 1.07 pm.

An official said that the plane departed the Gaya airport after refuelling at 4.02 pm on Saturday.

There were six passengers onboard, including a female patient, the official added. A source in the know said the plane had started from Utapao airport in Thailand. per available information, the crashed aircraft is a DF-10 (Dassault Falcon) small aircraft registered in Morocco. It is not an aircraft of Indian car-

"The aircraft was an air ambulance and was flying from Thailand to Moscow and did refuelling at Gaya airport," the ministry said in a statement.

The crash happened on Saturday in a mountainous area near Zebak district in quoting regional spokesman Zabihullah Amiri

Zebak is some 250 kilometres (155 miles) northeast of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, a rural, mountainous area, home to only several thousand people, it added.

. Citing Russian civil aviation authorities, the report said the plane went missing with four crew members and two passengers, and it "stopped communicating and disappeared from radar screens". Quoting Abdul Wahid Rayan,

a spokesman for the Taliban's Information and Culture Ministry, the report said there was an engine problem with the plane.

The report quoting Russian officials said the plane involved in the crash had been built in 1978 and belonged to Athletic Group LLC and a private individual

Modi congratulates Kishida on Japan 1st successful lunar landing

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ **NEW DELHI**

India's ISRO is looking forward to cooperating with Japanese agency JAXA in the field of space exploration, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said while congratulating Japanese counterpart Fumio Kishida on Tokyo's successful

lunar landing. Japan made history on Saturday by becoming only the fifth country to land a spacecraft on the moon, a mission that was helmed by the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency. Prime Minister Modi congratulated PM Kishida for JAXA's first soft moon landing, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said on Sunday.

JN.1 cases reported in country so far PIONEER NEWS SERVICE

1,513 Covid subvariant

NEW DELHI

A total of 1,513 cases of Covid-19 sub-variant JN.1 have been recorded in the country so far with Maharashtra and Karnataka registering the highest number of cases of the variant, according to INSACOG on Sunday. Data compiled by the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Genomics Consortium (INSACOG)

showed Maharashtra has recorded the highest number of JN.1 cases at 382 followed by Karnataka at 249. Andhra Pradesh recorded 189 JN.1 cases while Kerala registered 156 cases of the variant

and Gujarat recorded 126 such West Bengal recorded 96 JN.1 cases, Goa 90 and Tamil Nadu

Rajasthan has recorded 38 JN.1 cases, Telangana recorded 32, Chhattisgarh 25, Delhi 21, Uttar Pradesh nine, Haryana five, Odisha three, and Uttarakhand, Manipur and Nagaland one each.

The Centre has asked the states and Union territories to maintain a constant vigil amid an uptick in the number of Covid cases and the detection of the IN.1 sub-variant in the country.
The states have been urged to

ensure effective compliance of the detailed operational guidelines for the revised surveillance strategy for COVID-19 shared with them by the Union Ministry of Health and Family

Praan Pratishthaa ritual in 84 seconds

In a remarkable display of spiritual precision, the upcoming Praan Pratishthaa ceremony for Ram Lalla's idol in Ayodhya is set to unfold in a mere 84 seconds, marking the most auspicious time for this sacred endeavour. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust reveals a detailed schedule for the momentous occasion:

Musical Prelude:

The ceremony kicks off at 10 am with the enchanting 'Mangal Dhvani,' resonating Shri Janmabhoomi. Over 50 musical instruments from various States will fill the air with celestial melodies, creating an enchanting atmosphere for two hours. Guests are encouraged to enter by 10:30 am to partake in this harmonious prelude.

Guest Arrival and Entry **Protocols:**

Esteemed guests for the consecration ceremony will begin arriving simultaneously, with entry into the Ram Janmabhoomi complex scheduled by 10:30 am. Strict entry regulations are in place, permitting access only through the Trust-issued admit cards. The entry process involves matching the QR code on the admit card, ensuring a secure and organised congregation.



Timing and Rituals of Praan Pratishthaa:

The pivotal moment of consecration, the Praan Pratishthaa, commences at 12:20 pm on January 22. The main puja unfolds in the auspicious Abhijeet Muhurta, meticulously determined by Kashi scholar Ganeshwar Shastri Dravid. This sacred event aligns with a celestial configuration of Dwadashi date of the Paush month, Indra Yoga, Mrigashira Nakshatra, Aries Lagna, and Scorpio Navamsha.

Auspicious Time Window: The auspicious window for the Pran Pratistha spans a mere 84 seconds, symbolising the sanctity and precision of the consecration process—from 12:29 minutes and 08 seconds to 12:30 minutes and 32 sec-

Participants and Dignitaries: Prime Minister Narendra Modi, overseeing the puja rituals, will

Prays at Ram temple near Dhanushkodi in TN

conduct the consecration of

the idol of Shri Ram Lalla.

Orchestrated by 121 Vedic

Acharyas under the guidance of

renowned Vedic Acharya

Ganeshwar Dravid and Acharya

Laxmikant Dixit, the ceremony

will witness the presence of over

150 saints, religious leaders,

and representatives from more

Completion of Programme:

Champat Rai, General Secretary of Shri Ram

Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra

Trust, assures the entire program of Praan Pratishthaa will

conclude by 1 pm. Post-puja,

Prime Minister Narendra

Modi, Uttar Pradesh Chief

Minister Yogi Adityanath, and

Sangh chief Mohan Bhagwat

will address the gathering. Mahant Nritya Gopal Das, President of Shri Ram

Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra

Trust, will impart his blessings,

marking the culmination of

this historic event.

than 50 diverse traditions.

PTI ■ RAMESWARAM

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday completed his spiritual journey to temples with a Ramayana link in southern parts of the country by worshipping at a Lord Ram shrine near Arichal Munai, where he prayed and paid floral tributes at seashore. Marking completion of his visits to temples ahead of the consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22, Modi performed pooja and had darshan at the Sri Kothandaramaswamy temple, which is on the way towards Dhanushkodi and Arichal Munai, from where Sri Lanka is a stone's throw away.

Kothandaramaswamy in Tamil denotes Lord Ram with

bow and arrow. The PM laid flowers on the Arichal Munai beachfront and also paid floral tributes at a pillar with the national emblem.

Modi rounds off south

spiritual sojourn

Arichal Munai is on the southern tip of Rameswaram island in Ramanathapuram district in southern Tamil Nadu.

The Prime Minister performed 'pranayama' (breathing exercise) at the beach and offered prayers using the sea

Earlier this week, he prayed in temples in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala that have a Ramayana relevance.

Modi, who stayed at Rameswaram on Saturday night, drove to Arichalmunai, which is said to be the place from where the Ram Setu was built.

Ram Setu, also known as Adam's Bridge, is said to have been constructed by Lord Ram with the help of the Vaanara sena' to travel to Lanka to wage war against Ravana.

Following his visit to the Kothandaramaswamy temple and Arichal Munai, the Prime Minister reached Madurai and boarded an aircraft to New

Temple priests said Modi carried with him 'kalash' of holy waters from Tamil Nadu. Modi arrived in Chennai on

January 19 and inaugurated the Khelo India Games 2023. On Saturday, he visited the Sri Ranganathaswamy Arulmigu Ramanathaswamy temples in Srirangam and Rameswaram, respectively.

Arunachal priest bowled over by Ayodhya hospitality



PTI ■ ITANAGAR

Arunachal Pradesh, who will attend the consecration of Ram temple in Ayodhya, has appreciated the hospitality given to him in the temple town. Mogi Ori, who is a Donyi-Polo Kargu Gamgi priest in West Siang district, said he found heaven on earth after visiting Ayodhya.

"I think I have found heaven on earth by visiting the place," he told PTI from Ayodhya.

He said he is attending the consecration event to propagate and promote Donyi-Poloism in other parts of the country. Ori said three to four priests from the state are attending the event and all of them are staying with the karsevaks.

Meanwhile, preparations are on to celebrate the historic occasion in the northeastern state on Monday.

Cleanliness drives in various temples are going on and in many places, big screens have been installed to live stream the

consecration ceremony. The ruling BJP in the state is also gearing up with various

programmes to mark the event. The party is installing big screens for live streaming the consecration ceremony in various district offices and even ministers and MLAs are organising similar events in their own capacities," party's general secretary Tadar Niglar said. Niglar, who is also the chairman of Sadbhaav Arunachal, a social organisation, informed that his NGO had launched the Ram Jyoti vitaran abhiyan (distribution of lamps) on Saturday in the state capital and is contemplating to distribute around 10,800 diyas (lamps) to the

Sunday evening.
"Our NGO had already installed five LED TVs in prominent locations of the state capital to enable people witness the historic occasion and our volunteers will distribute around six quintals of sweets to the citizens," Niglar

people of the state capital by

Fadnavis posts his picture with Ayodhya bound karsevaks

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Sunday posted a picture of himself at the Nagpur railway station where he is seen with karsevaks going to Ayodhya for the Ram temple consecration, saying it brings back old memories. The much-awaited Ram tem-

ple consecration will be held in Uttar Pradesh's Ayodhya city on Monday in a grand ceremony with Prime Minister Narendra Modi attending the rituals, following which the shrine will be opened for the public a day

mony is happening in Ayodhya by the Nagpur-based daily tomorrow, this picture brings Navbharat. The photograph



back old memories," Fadnavis said while sharing the picture on his X social media handle. The 53-year-old BJP leader Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay

was published in the newspa-

Asked about Fadnavis' post, "We don't need to give proofs. Questioning Shiv Sena's con-

tribution to the Ram Mandin movement is childish. The picture is taken at the Nagpur railway station while we have photos of Shiv Sainiks on the dome (apparently referring to Babri mosque) in Ayodhya." The consecration ceremony is being held after the first phase of the temple's construction, made possible by a historic Supreme Court judgment in 2019 on the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid

The Hindu litigants argued that the Babri Mosque was constructed at the site of a temple marking the birthplace of Lord

mosque was demolished by

Temples in Puducherry to livestream consecration of Ram temple

Temples in Puducherry will livestream the consecration of the Lord Ram temple at Ayodhya on their premises after the territorial government issued circulars directing them to make arrangements, official sources said here on Sunday.

The consecration ceremony of the Ayodhya Ram temple will take place on January 22. The temple managements here are gearing up to perform customary rituals for the idols of Lord Ram and his consort, Goddess Sita, prior to the live telecast, the sources

other Ministers and legislators would be among those who



Vishnu temple, official

ating across the country. "Let the hearts of the devout people who are already charged with pious thoughts be filled with the blessings of Lord Ram," the Chief Minister

said that a spiritual ambience

has already started reverber-

The Puducherry government has already announced a full public holiday on Monday for all state government offices, educational institutions and undertakings. Spiritual organisations held special concerts today to walcome the 'historic today to welcome the 'historic event' of consecration of Ayodhya Ram temple.

Leading exponents hailed the sustained initiative of Prime Rangasamy, in a message on ensure that the consecration the eve of the consecration, took place as scheduled.

DMK asks people not to watch Praan Prathishtaa, alleges Sitharaman

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

The DMK Government led by M K Stalin has issued stern warning to the people from watching Monday's live telecast of the Praan Pratishtaa (consecration) of Lord Rama temple at Ayodhya. This was stated by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman who also asked the people to strongly condemn the State administration's move. The minister's comments came

as a fallout of news that local DMK leaders and goons issuing orders to the people to stay away from temples after 11 am and no pujas or annadanam (poor feeding) or bhajans would be allowed, according to Sree Priya Iyer, a Hindu

"In Tamil Nadu there are over 200 temples for Shri Ram. In these temples no puja/bhajan/prasadam/annadanam in the name of Shri Ram would be allowed. Police are stopping privately held temples also from organising events. They are threatening organisers that they will rip off pan-dals. Strongly condemn this anti Hindu, hateful action," Nirmala Sitharaman said in

her social media post. The minister who has her roots in Tiruchirappalli in the State said that she came across heart-breaking scenes in several parts of Tamil Nadu. "People are threatened for organising bhajans, feeding the poor, celebrating with sweets even as we wish to



Prime Minister watch Narendra Modi participate in the consecration ceremony at Ayodhya. Cable TV operators across the State had been told that there is a likely power-shut down during the live telecast. This is INDI Alliance partner DMK's anti-Hindu efforts," said Nirmala Sitharaman.

Prime Minister's visit to Tiruchirappalli Rameswaram on Saturday to offer pujas as Sri Ranganatha Swami Temple and Sri Ramanatha Swamy Temple evoked major interest among the people. Thousands had gathered along the thoroughfares to greet the Prime Minister who held road shows in the towns. Many old persons, particularly religious scholars, were seen blessing Narendra Modi reciting slokas from scriptures. "This has rattled the anti-national DMK and hence the decision," said

Sri Priya Iyer. Though serving police officers feigned ignorance about any such orders, recent statements by ministers Udhayanidi (Stalin's son) and his sidekicks demanding the destruction of Sanatan Dharma is seen as a threat to the Hindus in the State.



Srimanta Sankardeva at Batadrava on January 22, as there can be no competition between Lord Ram and the medieval age Vaishnav saint revered as an icon in the State. Sarma said that commandos will be deployed along sensitive routes of minority-dominated areas to be taken by Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra on January 22, the day of the Ram temple in Ayodhya. not to visit Batadrava on Monday during the consecra-

ference here.

Batadrava in Nagon district is the birthplace of Srimanta Sankardeva (1449-1568), an Assamese saint-scholar, socialreligious reformer, poet, playwright and a towering figure in the cultural and religious history of Assam from the 15th-

Himanta urges Rahul not to visit Sankardeva birthplace during Ram temple event

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

ssam Chief Minister Assam Chief Millister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Sunday said Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should avoid visiting the birthplace of the consecration ceremony of 'We will request Rahul Gandhi tion ceremony of the Ram Temple as it will reflect Assam in the wrong light, the chief minister said at a press con-

He can go to the 'satra' (Vaishnavite monastery) at Batadrava after the consecration ceremony without creating "unnecessary competition which will be sad for Assam", he said.

16th century.

Sarma said that he was pained to read a report in the national media that said when Prime



Minister Narendra Modi will participate in the consecration ceremony at Ayodhya, Gandhi will be present at the Batadrava

'This is a wrong projection. There is no competition between Ram and Sankardeva and when the nation's focus is on Ayodhya, it should not be unnecessarily diverted to Assam. We will be grateful if he avoids going to the satra during the Pran Pratistha of the Ram Temple,' he said.

Besides, it is not that the Sattra authorities have invited him and as there are Hindus in the Congress too, the visit can be rescheduled to early morning or in the evening, Sarma said. For Monday, the Congress has chosen a route through "sensitive areas" of Morigaon, Jagiroad and Nellie which could have been avoided, the

chief minister said. 'These areas are sensitive and I cannot discount any law and order situation arising and as such commandos will be deployed along sensitive routes of minority-dominated areas to be taken by Rahul Gandhi's



The reality in these areas cannot be denied and the administrations will have to monitor the situation, he said.

'The apprehension is genuine and with great risk, I am allowing the Yatra tomorrow. If there is a law and order problem, nothing will happen to Gandhi as he will be surrounded by security personnel but my neck is at stake. The government of India will ask me why permission was granted for the Yatra on this sensitive route on Monday,' Sarma

Nellie had witnessed a carnage during the height of Assam agitation in 1983 when nearly 2000 people, mostly belonging to Muslims stated to be of Bangladeshi origin, were killed. District Commissioners and Superintendents of Police of these areas have been directed to increase patrolling and maintain a strict vigil, Sarma added. 'Maybe nobody will come out as people of Assam have matured. But as a law enforcer, we cannot discount

any possibility', he said.

He said that he was planning to visit a temple tomorrow and watch the consecration ceremony in the Harijan colony

On denying permission to the Congress to take the Yatra through Guwahati city, the chief minister said they have been just asked to avoid the main thoroughfares.

but now I have to monitor the

situation'.

'They had asked for permission at 9:30 am during school and college times. There are hospitals in the area and we cannot allow any traffic snarl during that period. If it were a Sunday, we could have allowed it,' he said.

The Congress hardly gets votes in Assam and 'if they create problems for the people, they will get even less votes, Sarma

Earlier, I thought he was afraid of me but now it seems he is scared of my children too who are not even in politics, said the Chief Minister.

VIPs to be served mahaprasad



PTI ■ AYODHYA

 $T^{\mathrm{he\,Shri\,Ram\,Janmabhoomi}}$ Teerth Kshetra Trust has got 'mahaprasad' prepared for the VIPs coming to attend the consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on Monday.

More than 20,000 packets of 'mahaprasad', which has been prepared with pure ghee, five types of dry fruits, sugar, besan is being handed over to the Trust for the guest after the ceremony, an official said. 'Mahaprasad' is being prepared

by Gujarat's Bhagwa Sena Bharti Garvi and Sant Seva Sansthan under the guidance of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust.

"We have been entrusted with

the responsibility of preparing 'mahaprasad' along with making arrangements for the stay and food of the saints," said Kamal Bhai Rawal, the organisation's national president. He said the 'mahaprasad' has been prepared with more than 5,000 kg of ingredients by a

team of about 200 people.

Office of The Chief Engineer (Bhopal Zone) P.W.D Bhopal (M.P.)

NIT No. 02/G/1/Mis/Bpl.Z./2019 (Year 2024) Bhopal, Date 12-01-2024 Online Tender for mentioned below are being invited. The Tender have been uploaded on the e-Procure

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S. No.	Tender No.	District	Nature of work			Cost of Project (PAC) (Rs. In lack)	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	2024_PWDRB _326095_1	Harda	Plan	Construction of Sarangpur to gram Kharad via Dhanwada road length 4.60 km	5th Call		EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
2	2024_PWDRB _326096_1	Harda	Plan	Construction of Ahelbada to Sanyasa via Gondagoan road length 11.50km	7th Call	100000000000000000000000000000000000000	EMD/All Document are to be submitted online only.
				Total	-	2024 42	

The document can only be purchased online from the above website after making online payment The last date & time for purchase of Document on line is Dated 29-01-24 up to (17:30.) Detailed NIT and other details can be viewed on the above mentioned portal. Amendments to NIT, if any, would be published on website only, and not in newspaper.

Chief Engineer (Bhopal Zone) P.W.D. Bhopal Madhya Pradesh G-23203/23

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-PAPER WITH PASSION-

Give peace a chance

As the rift in US-Israel ties gets more pronounced, the chances of peace in West Asia turn bleak

■ sraeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has unequivocally rejected the idea of granting statehood to Palestine after the resolution of the ongoing war. This stubborn stance not only puts off any hope for an early resolution to the Israel-Palestine conflict but also indicates a widening rift between Israel and its ally, the US. The statement comes amid escalating human cost even as global attention is focused on finding a lasting solution to the decades-old conflict. Netanyahu, known for his strong and conservative stance, has asserted that the establishment of a Palestinian State would jeopardise Israel's security and territorial integrity. This is not only a departure from the earlier stand but also in stark contrast to the approach taken by other Israeli leaders who have at times engaged in discussions about a two-State solution. Netanyahu's statement further complicates an already intricate problem. But what must come as a setback for Netanyahu's Gaza campaign, the US has made a detour



in its West Asia approach. Historically, the US has been a key ally and supporter of Israel. However, differences over the Israel-Palestine conflict have now surfaced. Netanyahu's rejection of Palestinian statehood idea exacerbates these tensions, as it contradicts the US position, which has somewhat consolidated its stance for a two-State solution.

The divergence between Israeli and the US perspectives poses challenges for diplomatic initiatives and could potentially complicate the Biden Administration's efforts to broker peace in the region. Should the US stop helping Israel, it would have to come to the negotiating table. The rejection of

Palestinian statehood by Netanyahu not only has implications for the Israel-US relationship but also raises concerns about regional peace. The issue has long been a flashpoint in West Asia, impacting neighbouring countries and global geopolitics. The war is already spreading beyond regional borders; it is now turning into a catastrophe on a global scale. With trade routes disrupted and tempers running high, it may add to the world's hunger and poverty. Red Sea remains a crucial trade route for India and other Asian countries and it would hamper India's international trade. If the war escalates, it would disrupt the supply lines and lead to a crisis that would affect the entire world. The future of regional peace hinges on diplomatic initiatives, dialogue and a commitment to finding common ground. A unilateral rejection of Palestinian statehood may hinder progress towards a peaceful resolution and perpetuate tensions. International actors, including the United Nations and neighbouring Arab States, will likely play a crucial role in mediating and fostering dialogue to address the underlying issues fuelling the conflict. The future of regional peace depends on the ability of global actors to prevail upon the parties involved to resolve issues with dialogue and work towards a comprehensive solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict.



Members of the Kotas tribe participate in the 'Ayyanur Ammanur' festival, in the Nilgiris

Time to embrace a new dawn



Today marks the historic emergence of a modern Hindu Rajya as India stands more confident and poised for progress than ever before, embracing its cultural heritage

s the sun rises on Monday, January 22, 2024, India becomes a modern Hindu rajya. The north of Bharat slipped out of Hindu rule; the cause ironically, was the Hindu ideal; kshama veerasya bhushanam (forgiveness is the ornament of the brave). In 1191 at Tarain in present-day Haryana, Prithviraj Chauhan of Delhi routed the Turkic invader Mohammad Shabuddin Ghori but soon afterwards, obtaining an apology from the vanquished enemy, pardoned him, and allowed him to return to his native Afghanistan. Ghori did so, only to return to the following year to the same battlefield. Chance had it that this time around, it was Prithviraj who lost and was taken prisoner. The cowardly victor had his prisoner blinded and killed. Thus ended Hindu rule in Delhi. Outbuddin Aibak's Sultanate was

established and the Hindus could not get back to the throne of Delhi. Hindu diyas (earthen lamps) fortunately continued to flicker in many parts south of the Vindhyas as well as Assam. The rest of India more or less trudged along under the heels of Islamic rulers. To this day, both Pakistan as well as Bangladesh continue to brandish their official Islamic constitutions. For the sake of the show, India

became a 'secular' country and proclaimed its commitment to the ideal of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the entire world is a family). Jawaharlal Nehru, the patron father of the Nehru dynasty, called himself —rather proudly — a "Muslim by culture, Englishman by upbringing and a Hindu only by accident (of birth)." The Nehru dynasty still hopes to return to power, but there are other aspirants for the throne. The people of India though, prefer a true Hindu ruler. They have every right to aspire for Hindu rule in a Hindu Rajya and not a nondescript mixture of non-Hindu rulers under whatever

to ensure the fructification of this desire, a change in the implementation of a uniform Constitution is necessary. In any case, an overall amendment is is being over-emphasised. long overdue. The current one When the constitution permits



The divided smaller part went to the extent of assigning its sovereignty to Allah the merciful, and no one on earth. The 1935 Act, if at all, would assign sovereignty to the British Crown. It introduced clauses such as Articles 25 to 30, which even today appear to have been written to induce the Muslim League not to insist on the partition of the country. That it was written in a hurry shows up in the fact that it has had to be amended a hundred and forty times. Some foundational Hindu

aspirations have found a place in the Directive Principles of State Policy, but aren't enforceable fundamental rights, like a ban on cow slaughter, the civil code and others. Equality

POLITICS, RELIGION AND SECULARISM

Sir — Meat and milk both have high

nutritional value. However, consuming

meat with milk can cause several ail-

ments in the body. Similarly, politics and

religion both have high societal value.

But the combination of the two is as toxic as that of the mixture of meat and

milk. The immediate outcome of such

a combination is hate speeches which

can be compared with vomiting acid

after consuming meat with milk. The Supreme Court of India rightly observed

that hate speeches would end the

moment politicians stop using religion

Earlier in feudalism, a king or a feudal

lord used to favour his religion over

other religions. History witnessed that

such a practice spelt disaster on every

occasion. Just like people learned from

their mistakes the need to separate milk

from meat, here also they felt the need

for a complete separation of religion from politics. This gave birth to secu-

larism. All modern progressive nations

have embraced secularism after learn-



SOME **FOUNDATIONAL** HINDU ASPIRATIONS HAVE FOUND A PLACE IN THE **DIRECTIVE** PRINCIPLES OF STATE POLICY, BUT AREN'T **ENFORCEABLE FUNDAMENTAL** RIGHTS

a man to have up to four wives, but not a woman to have more than one husband, the principle goes begging.

Every Constitution has provisions for amendments. If any change is so great as to need a rewriting of the entire document, it can and should be done. Germany and France are now in their fifth polity; why cannot India therefore, enter its second rajya?

In the Indian situation, the need for revision of the entire document and not merely amendment of Articles, as compared to Western constitutions certainly does exist. For example, the Christian ethos can demand equality, because of its belief that God made man equal, whereas in the Hindu work view, the jivatma (individual being) is a meteor that has come down and will, one day return to the Paramatma. Fate will depend on one's karma, and the karmas of no two individuals will be identical.

Constitutions are institutions innovated by the Christian world: other cultures have only adapted themselves to it. In Europe, the Church owned much land and wielded considerable power. France's constitution allotted one house of the National Assembly to

abbots and bishops, enabling the clergy to wield considerable power within the state. A stage therefore came when the State and Church had to be separated. This was the justification for secularism.

Prophet Moses' Commandments prohibit the worship of idols, or any attempt by a worshipper to have a glimpse of the divine. In the Hindu ethos, there is no greater joy for a devotee than to have a glimpse of the divine. There is no place for secularism in the Hindu ethos. In any case, secularism as practiced in India has come to mean preferentialism.

Money from Hindu temples flows to the government, which does not touch churches or mosques in the country. On the contrary, governments in some states go out of their way to pay the salaries of the clergy of Allah. Whether we call our second constitution the "Second Republic" or not, we certainly need a revision of our constitutional structure, to provide the scope for our people to realize their genius to the fullest.

(The writer is a well-known columnist, an author and a former member of the Rajya Sabha. The views expressed are personal)

Tracks to destiny, echoing the resilience of nature



From railways to realities: A reflection on life's journey amidst scorching summers and soaring birds

Summers had arrived with a vengeance. This is the time when increasingly hotter days are interspersed with sprinkling of relatively cooler ones through dust storms, and occasionally a few drops of rain. It was one such pleasant morning, when I noticed birds flying in the sky. There were also a few eagles circling the sky in ever increasing smaller circles.

A few memories surfaced. I had attended many rail accidents during my professional life as a railway officer. Those were not the days of remote-controlled synchronised operation of the four hydraulic jacks used to lift a derailed coach or wagon. Staff would stand at the four corners of the vehicle and shout out in a sing-song voice 'hadia' or 'hadd', depending upon whether he wanted the jack in his corner to be lifted or lowered or stopped. The four staff and the hydraulic jack operator would be immersed in the activity, oblivious to the climate or the environment around.

labourers straining not so developed muscles while performing a hard task like lifting a heavy object all the while singing 'dum laga ke haisha'. This ditty would make them forget the pain of exertion, and they would complete the assigned task

within no time, waiting for

the master to pay them a

paltry sum. These were, and continue to be, people, who fight for their sustenance every day of their lives, uncomplainingly, not only believing, but with an implicit trust in a supreme power, that they would certainly overcome someday. I have yet to meet such a person come to me Supreme being.

The same way that the birds were soaring in the sky, not for an exhilarating experience. They too need to work hard for their daily sustenance. They too need to forage for their food. But they never complain. They seem happy in doing what nature has intended them to do. They too are masters of their life.

I continued contemplating. Is my life going nowhere! Am I not free to do what I want! These were only a few of the emotions flitting through my mind, making me restless.

I met a family a few years back. They had fallen on Another memory is that of with a complaint against the tough times due to the pan-

Each day of our lives, we find ourselves slaves of our life and destiny, thrown into the cesspool of petty biases of gender, caste, creed, religion, politics. Yet, each individual has the

power to choose the course of action for a better life. And each authority - of any kind, be it affluence, governance, religion, or community - has the means to enable the individual to work for a better life. However, in the final reckoning, it is up to us not to be influenced by others. We should, and we must, change the heading of life to Master of my Destiny! Master of my life!

(The writer is an electrical engineer and an author. He has penned three books; views are personal)

demic. They wanted their son to continue studies but did not have the resources for the school fee. They had dreams for future, which seemed distant and elusive. I am happy that my wife and I could be of some use to them. The young boy is now in the tenth standard and wants to be an astronaut.

> ing how painful it would be to deviate from its path. Secularism separates the milk of religion from political meat. It is like a doctor who advises us to consume meat and milk separately. Undoubtedly, there will be several ailments in the body politic without secularism Sujit De | Kolkata

in politics.

LEFT-HANDED DHONI

Sir — It is heartwarming to see talented batsman Rinku Singh coming good on the international platform in the limited overs format, particularly T20. Past and present cricket greats have lauded the young Rinku's exceptional talent, perseverance and presence of mind. Indian captain Rohit Sharma, coach Rahul Dravid and spin ace R Ashwin have sung paean of praise for the 26-year-old. Ashwin has gone to the extent of calling him "left-handed

Dhoni" though he clarified that it is still Sir — The recent fall of Dalal Street's

ETTERS TO THE EDITOR **Ensuring legible prescriptions**

ollowing a recent directive from the Orissa High Court, the Odisha state government has asked both government and private doctors to write prescriptions legibly or in typed form. The High Court's dictum also applies to hospitals in the State to write medico-legal and post-mortem reports legibly or in capital letters or typed form.

Reasons like time pressure, volume of work, and the patients-in-waiting are what have contributed to the community of doctors for their scrawled or unreadable writing. However, doctors must know that their indecipherable notes and prescriptions at times lead to serious

implications, and even to deaths.

There are cases in which pharmacists and healthcare workers give the wrong medicines and administer erroneous medications because of doctors' illegible handwriting in prescriptions. It is time that other States in India follow suit with Odisha's GO since the problem of doctors' bad handwriting is universal. Nevertheless, it is puzzling that living in the digital age why doctors still stick to the ageold practice of hand-written prescriptions. To put it on a lighter note, "a doctor's font sometimes leads to a patient faint."

Ranganathan Sivakumar | Chennai

early days for Rinku to be compared with the former Indian captain. However, it cannot be forgotten that Rinku has modelled his game on the

inimitable Dhoni. He appears unruffled on the field, seems to have a good head on his shoulders and runs like a hare between the wickets. By the look of things, similar to his idol Dhoni, Rinku is a throughand-through-team man. He has earned his praise by doing exceptionally well in recent times. Rinku's bat did the talking both against Australia and Afghanistan in the T20s. The left-hander didn't perform badly at all on South African pitches in the recent away series. By all accounts, he seems destined to play in the Indian T20 team for a long time. At this rate, the day may not be far away when Rinku earns the nickname "left-handed Dhoni"

Ganapathi Bhat | Akola

FLUCTUATIONS IN THE STOCK MARKET

Sensex, Bombay Stock Exchange and National Stock Exchange Nifty index to very low levels has proved harmful for the investors. Many banking giants, especially HDFC Bank, performed contrary to expectations, thus losing thousands of crores of rupees of investors' hard-earned money.

The main reasons for this unfortunate decline of the stock market were foreign forecasts which caused real losses in our economy. Due to the Ukraine-Russia and Hamas-Israel war, economic threats are continuing. It is expected that the Central Government protect the economic interests of the stock market investors. It should keep evaluating the fluctuations in the prices of Sensex so that things do not slip out of hand. The government should pay heed to creating favourable conditions in the stock

Yugal Kishore Sharma | Faridabad

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FIRST COLUMN

EDUCATION'S ROLE IN OPENING THE MIND

Education is all about creating possibilities for a learner to invent and discover



rt is a cornerstone of education and self-portraits play a pivotal role in fostering creativity and self-expression. In a world that's ever-changing, creativity is no longer a luxury but a

In the words of Sir Ken Robinson "Creativity is the process of having original ideas which have value". In the vibrant world, imagination does not become great until human beings, given the courage and strength, use it to create. It's not just about acquiring knowledge rather it's about cultivating the courage to create, innovate and dream beyond limits. For ages, humans have been wired to be curious, but the rigid structure, mandatory curriculum and standardized testing have often extinguished their natural creativity thereby making the learner reluctant to push past the status quo.

Every child is a creator and inculcating a creative curriculum encourages young minds to think out of the box, and spark their imagination and innovation. When children are encouraged to think creatively, they learn to approach challenges in a unique and effective way. It helps them to express themselves more richly. Through art, music and storytelling, they learn to communicate their thoughts and feelings in diverse and profound ways. Creativity builds confidence, as children learn to trust their ideas and abilities

It is often believed that creativity is hereditary and is enhanced by a person's environment. A person who exists in a place where music is a way of life, there is a higher chance that they will grow up with the inherent desire to learn which will mold them to do extremely well in it. In fact, the art of creativity should be brought forth at an early age for doing so, will give the learner a longer time to hone it so as to choose their career and industry fruitfully.



Creative skills are just as important as creative attitude. Today creativity as well as innovation have been legitimised by DfES and other primary schools to develop creative ideas and actions. It is believed that a school with creativity at the heart of the learning process will benefit by increasing the motivation of staff and its learners. More and more schools along with other educational institutions need to offer children a larger variety of creative experiences due to the fact that the world, we live in is constantly developing new ideas, technology and concepts that form a vital element for the future and also a solution to the creative crisis.

Remember, the goal of education is not to increase the amount of knowledge but to create the possibilities for a learner to invent and discover, to create men who are capable of doing new things under

In a world where new ideas, technology, and concepts constantly emerge, fostering creativity is not just a means of preparing for the future; it is a solution to the creative crisis. Education's ultimate goal is not just knowledge acquisition but the creation of possibilities for learners to invent and discover, enabling them to tackle new challenges under any circumstances.

As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, it is imperative that we prioritize creativity in education, acknowledging its transformative power in shaping individuals who can contribute meaningfully to a dynamic and ever-evolving world.

(The writer is an educator, views are personal)

Differentiating welfare schemes from freebies



As election pledges of freebies escalate, Modi Government issues a warning to States at the third National Conference of Chief Secretaries



n the third National Conference of Chief Secretaries held in Delhi on 28th and 29th December 2023 under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the central government cautioned the states against giving freebies, and goaded them to increase capital expenditure by rationalizing welfare schemes with emphasis on eliminating inefficient subsidies.

The Centre's concern over freebies - an acronym for "something given free of charge" - has heightened because of a volley of these promised by almost all political parties in five state elections held in November 2023. It apprehends that the freebies would drain state coffers, lead to similar competing moves in other states and set undesirable and unsustainable

How does one ensure that freebies are not handed out in the garb of welfare

If, the state makes bare essentials such as education, health, food, fuel, water, housing, electricity etc available for free or at subsidized rates, will that be counted as a freebie? This question can't be answered without specifying as to 'for whom' this is meant. If, it is for persons who are poor say 24 million families covered under the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), it can qualify as a welfare measure.

In case however, the government decides to provide any of these essential items free to all and sundry, then it might be difficult to justify this as a genuine welfare scheme. For instance, Modi's promise of free food to about 164 million families corresponding to 820 million persons and taking 5 persons per family - for five years (the announcement was made in November 2023) is more likely to be inter-

preted as a freebie. Similarly, the decision of the AAP government in Delhi led by Arvind Kejriwal to give electricity subsidy on consumption of up to 400 units per month to any household 'who asks for it' is a blatant case of freebie driven solely by electoral politics. Likewise, a full waiver of electricity bills on consumption up to 300 units a month to all such households promised by the AAP government in Punjab is a freebie.



THERE ARE

PRODUCTION SUBSIDIES AS WELL. FOR INSTANCE, YOU HAVE A SUPPLY OF ELECTRICITY AT SUBSIDISED RATES TO FARMERS AND A SUBSIDY ON FERTILISERS TO **KEEP THEIR**

PRICES LOW

At another level, the Centre's assistance to poor families (as per the socio-economic census 2011) for building 40 million houses under the PM Awas Yojna (PMAY) deserves to be classified as a welfare scheme. Likewise, providing free gas connection to 100 million beneficiaries (albeit poor) under the Pradhan Mantri Üjjwala Yojna or PMUY plus a subsidy of Rs 400 per cylinder for up to 12 refills per year may qualify for a similar treat-

However, the Centre's decision announced last year to give a subsidy of Rs 200 per cylinder to all 330 million household consumers of LPG was aimed at alluring voters; hence it won't pass muster as a welfare scheme. The same can be said of parties promising additional subsidies from state coffers to deliver LPG at Rs 500/450 to all consumers.

The parties have also come up with schemes that promise 'cash assistance' to certain target groups. For nstance, you have Gruha Lakshmi in Karnataka where every woman head of a household gets Rs 2000 per month; or Ladli Behna Yojana in Madhya Pradesh (MP) under which the State gives Rs 1,250 per month, the amount to be gradually hiked to Rs 3,000 per month, or Ýuva Nidhi in Karnataka where unemployed graduates get Rs 3,000 every month.

In the absence of specifying whether the beneficiaries are from economically weaker groups or otherwise, such schemes would naturally get the colour of a freebie. Then, you have things like free bus tickets for all women to travel in Karnataka, Delhi and Punjab; free pilgrimages for elderly persons in Delhi, MP etc; 10 grams of gold plus Rs 100,000/- cash to women getting married in Telangana and so on. Such schemes are designed to benefit all including the rich or even super rich. Spending taxpayers' money in this manner is preposterous. There are production subsidies as well. For instance, you have a supply of electricity at subsidized rates

to farmers and a subsidy on fertil-izers to keep their prices low. In addition, there is PM-KISAN under which the Central government provides income support of Rs 6,000 a year to farmers with a valid enrolment (now, some states are giving an additional Rs 6000). This support is meant to enable farmers to buy fertilizers and other inputs. It is ironic that on one hand, farmers are prevented from realizing a

good price for their agri-produce courtesy, obstructionist state laws viz. APMC Act under which they can sell only at designated APMC mandi on the other, the Centre and states spend huge sums to subsidize the supply of agri – inputs. In a way, these welfare schemes end up bolstering the profit margins of traders and commission agents.

What is the way forward? For a Scheme to be wellare-orient

ed, it must address the needs of a person who is desperately in need of a product or service. Here, an overarching criterion has to be her income. If she is poor or very poor having income below a certain threshold, the government's assistance should only go to her. A person who is well off has a high income and hence capable of buying all items needed for a good living must not be allowed to benefit from it.

On this fundamental consideration alone, most of the schemes that are being accessed by all and sundry should be disbanded or reconfigured to give help only to the poor. While focusing on the poor, a distinction should be made between a product or service that helps in imparting skills and augments the productive capabilities of a person besides keeping his health in good shape. Accordingly, housing, education and health should receive top priority

As for food subsidies, a consumption-oriented welfare scheme, in principle, should be given only to the poor. This logic also holds for subsidies on fuel and electricity. The government should shun existing support systems for farmers viz. MSP and subsidy on fertilizers and other agri-inputs etc, instead it should work on facilitating a good price to them through market reforms.

Subsidies like pilgrimages of elder-ly persons, free bus travel, cash help for marriages, gold etc even if these are meant for the poor should go. If the State starts taking care of almost everything under the roof, the potential ben-eficiary will stop working and simply wait for help from the former to come. This will be disastrous for the state coffers, the economy and the society.

Ideally, the government should shun the existing practice of subsidizing dozens of products and services; instead, give lump sum income support to the poor 'only' and let the beneficiary prioritize its use depending on where the shoe pinches the most.

The list of beneficiaries should be periodically reviewed to delete those who have come out of poverty. Meanwhile, the government should augment and strengthen the social infrastructure such as schools, hospitals etc where facilities for all people are available at 'affordable' rates. Moreover, policy reforms in key sectors such as food, fertilizers, fuel etc should be brought about to enable 'efficient' and 'competitive' markets so that each of the 1.4 billion Indians gets access to these products at low prices. However, for all this to happen, electoral politics has to give some space for decisions based on economic merit.

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

As the publishing industry

continues to evolve, a pertinent

Jaipur Literature Festival 2024 promises stellar lineup

This world-renowned literature festival is a global celebration providing thought-provoking sessions and interaction with the authors

s anticipation builds for the seventeenth edition And the prestigious Jaipur Literature Festival (JLF), slated to unfold from February 1st to 5th at Hotel Clarks Amer, Jaipur, the Festival Producer Teamwork Arts recently treated literary enthusiasts to an exclusive preview at The Leela Palace, Delhi. The forthcoming JLF is poised to be an unparalleled celebration of global literature, featuring an extensive lineup of approximately 550 speakers and artists hailing from diverse nationalities, including recipients of esteemed awards like the Booker, the International Booker, the Pulitzer, and more. The Global Tapestry of Literary Discourse:

The 2024 edition of JLF is set to transcend cultural and lin-



SANTANU GANGULY

guistic boundaries, with a rich tapestry of themes spanning Fiction & Non-Fiction, Literary Criticism, History, Politics & Current Affairs, Economics, Poetry, Art & Culture, Art & Architecture, Translation, Graphic Novels, Gender, Science & Medicine, Food & Memory, Biographies & Memoir, Mythology, Spirituality & Religion, Mental

Law & Justice, Geopolitics, Sports, Crime Fiction, Climate Change + Environment & Climate Justice, Pet Parents + Pets & Animals, Cities, Literary Icons Through The Ages, Bollywood & Cinema, and more.

Namita Gokhale, acclaimed writer and Co-Director of JLF emphasized the festival's unwavering commitment to the rich diversity of the multilingual literary heritage. Gokhale urged attendees to explore the brilliant program detailed on the festival's web-

A Literary Extravaganza:

William Dalrymple, writer, historian, and Co-Director of JLF, expressed his excitement while disclosing the stellar lineup for the upcoming festi-Health, Fashion & Lifestyle, val. The impressive list tors, and booksellers from

Diaz, Ben Macintyre, Bonnie Garmus, Richard Osman, Peter Frankopan, Colin Thubron, Mary Beard, Kai Bird, Katie Kitamura, Monica Ali, Nicholas Shakespeare, Damon Galgut, Luke Syon, Katherine Rundell, Merve Emre, Vincent Brown, Amia Srinivasan, Patrick Radden Keefe, Jerry Brotton, and many more luminaries from the literary world.

includes Paul Lynch, Hernan

Parallel Exploration: Jaipur BookMark (JBM):

Beyond the main festival, South Asia's most definitive publishing conclave, the Jaipur BookMark (JBM), will run concurrently in its 11th edition. JBM is set to bring together publishers, editors, literary agents, writers, translaaround the world. The forum, focusing on the business of books, will extend over five days and feature a myriad of interesting sessions.

The increasing global interest in translated works and their recognition in book awards will be a focal point. An erudite panel, including Ranjit Hoskote, Arunava Sinha, and Mini Krishnan, will engage in discussions with Karthika VK on the topic of "Infinite Horizons: The Landscape of Translation," exploring the reach and impact of books that traverse linguistic and cultural borders.

Exploring Indian Language Publishing:

The vibrant hum of energy resonates across the landscape of Indian language publishing. Sessions such as "Ear to the sation with Sanjoy Roy, walks

Ground: Evolving Lists of Indian Language Publishers" will offer a peek into the diverse worlds of Tamil, Malayalam, Telugu, Hindi, Bangla, and Punjabi publish-ers. Parminder Singh Shonkey, Kannan Sundaram, Gita Ramaswami, Shailesh Bharatwasi, Ravi DC, and Esha Chatterjee will engage in a conversation with Mita Kapur, shedding light on the evolving trends and dynamics in Indian language publishing. Celebrating Seagull Books' **40th Anniversary:** In 2023, Seagull Books marked

its 40th birthday. The iconic publishing house has left an ndelible mark, creating fine literary works that transcend borders and boundaries. Naveen Kishore, in a conver-

us through the extraordinary journey of Seagull, reflecting on leaps of faith, friendships, and rewarding literary connections, all encapsulated in the theme of "Journeys Across Boundaries.

Digital Dreams: OTT and Publishing:

A contemporary perspective on publishing will emerge in sessions like "Digital Dreams: OTT and Publishing," where specialists in the OTT space, including Sahira Nair, Radhika Gopal, Anish Chandy, and Anand Neelakantan, will explore ways in which publishers can leverage content, both old and new, with the OTT industry. The session promises to open windows to fresh ideas and exchange. Questing for Data and

Industry Insights:

discussion on the scarcity of data on the book market in India will take centre stage. The Nielsen Report, providing valuable insights on market size, trends, and growth factors, will be explored in-depth in the session titled "Questing for Data: The Nielsen Report and Other Insights." Industry experts, including Vikrant Mathur, Col Yuvraj Malik, and Rick Simonson, will engage in a dialogue with Hemali Sodhi, emphasizing the need for more comprehensive data collection across the spectrum of publishing. (The author is a filmmaker,

producer, film festival curator and freelance writer; views are personal)

Tesla light show dedicated to Lord Ram enthrals California

Over 1,100 enthusiastic riders, carrying saffron banners with the image of the Ram temple, participated in a massive car rally in the Bay Area, California, ahead of the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

The car rally, organised by six volunteer Hindus from the Bay Area, passed through the iconic Golden Gate Bridge and various parts of San Francisco and Silicon Valley before culminating in a public meeting that and dances to the popular Ram songs on Saturday evening. The event was followed by prasad distribution and a Tesla car light show.

Led by a giant Ram Rath, the rally covered almost 100 miles and was escorted by two police cars for security reasons. Three digital trucks alongside the rally played videos of Ram's life story with life-size pictures of Ram, Sita, Lakshman and Hanuman. "The event, held in celebration of the Ram temple, drew an overwhelming

included a cultural program response, surpassing all expectations," Rohit Sharma, one of the six organisers, told PTI over the phone.

"Despite unexpected rain, prompting a change in the ending station to Warm Spring BART station, over 2,000 enthusiastic Ram bhakts, waving saffron flags, singing Ram Bhajans, beating drums, transformed the area into a mini-Ayodhya," said Deepti Mahajan, the lead organiser. "It was a first-of-its-kind rally held by Hindus in America and participants were emotionally



charged and overjoyed. Mainstream Americans were surprised with the amount of devotion amongst participants

when they were told about the event being held thousands of miles away in Ayodhya for the inauguration of Ram temple after 500 years," Deepak Bajaj, one of the organisers, said.

The Tesla light show, a special feature with 170 registered cars coordinated by Vamsi Rajanala, exceeded expectations with over 300 cars dazzling the crowd.

"The rally, complemented by a Tesla light show, rhythmic dhol beats, and a delectable food feast elevated the event to unprecedented heights," Bajaj said. Param Desai, also one of the organisers, said the grand celebration not only marked a significant cultural event, but

togetherness and the deeprooted cultural ties within the

INDIAN AMERICANS CELEBRATE RAM MANDIR INAUGURATION

Indian-Americans living in the Boston city of the US celebrated the Ram Mandir (Temple) inauguration, which is scheduled for January 22, and India's 75th Republic Day at an event. The event held at the historic Union Station of Worcester, over 45 miles west of Boston, was Worcester Mayor Joseph M. Petty and Massachusetts State Senator Mike Moore. Mayor Petty issued a proclamation for January 26 as the 75th Republic Day of India. The proclamation encouraged all residents of the city of Worcester to recognise and participate in its observance and extend "our warmest congratulations to the American Hindu, Sikh, Jain and Asian-American communities on the auspicious inauguration of the Shri Ram Temple in Ayodhya on

Palestinian death toll surpasses 25k

AP ■ RAFAH (GAZA STRIP

The Palestinian death toll I from the war between Israel and Hamas has soared past 25,000, the Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said on Sunday, while the Israeli government appeared far from achieving its goals of crushing the militant group and freeing more than 100 hostages. The level of death, destruction and displacement from the war already is without precedent in the decades-old İsraeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet Israeli officials say the fighting is likely to continue for several more months.

The slow progress and the plight of the hostages held in Gaza has divided ordinary Israelis and their leaders even as the offensive threatens to ignite a wider war involving Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen that support the Palestinians

The United States, which has provided essential diplomatic and military support for the offensive, has had limited success in persuading Israel to adopt military tactics that put civilians at less risk and to facilitate the delivery of more humanitarian aid.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also has rejected US and international calls for postwar plans that would include a path to Palestinian statehood.

GAZA DEATH TOLL CLIMBS

The war began with Hamas' surprise attack in southern Israel on October 7, during which Palestinian militants killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took around 250 hostages back to Gaza.Israel responded with a blistering three-week air campaign and then a ground invasion into northern Gaza that laid waste to entire neighbour-

People march during a protest in support of Palestinians, calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, in Barcelona on Saturday. AP/PTI

hoods. Ground operations are now focused on the southern city of Khan Younis and builtup refugee camps in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's cre-

Israel continues to carry out airstrikes throughout the besieged territory, including areas in the south where it told civilians to seek refuge. Many Palestinians have ignored evacuation orders, saying nowhere feels safe.

Since the war started, a total of 25,105 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, while another 62,681 have been wounded, the Health Ministry reported on Sunday.

The death toll included the 178 bodies brought to Gaza's hospitals since Saturday, Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf al-Qidra said. Another 300 people were wounded in the past day, he said.

The overall toll is thought to be even higher because many casualties remain buried under the rubble from Israeli strikes or in areas where medics cannot reach them, Al-Qidra The Health Ministry does

not differentiate between civilians and combatants in its figures but says around twothirds of the people killed in Gaza were women and minors. The ministry is part of the

Hamas-run government, but its casualty figures from previous wars were largely consistent with those of UN agencies and even the Israeli military.

The Israeli military says it has killed around 9,000 militants, without providing evi-

dence, and blames the high civilian death toll on Hamas because it positions fighters, tunnels and other militant infrastructure in dense neighbourhoods, often near homes, schools or mosques.

The military says 195 of its soldiers have been killed since the start of the Gaza offensive.

The war has displaced some 85 per cent of Gaza's residents from their homes, with hundreds of thousands packing into UN-run shelters and tent camps in the southern part of the tiny coastal enclave.

ISRAELIS DIVIDED

Netanyahu has vowed to keep up the offensive until Israel achieves "complete victory" over Hamas and returns all the remaining hostages. But even some top Israeli officials have begun to acknowledge that those goals might be mutually exclusive.

Hamas is believed to be holding the captives in tunnels deep underground and using them as shields for its top leaders. Israel has only managed to rescue one hostage since the war began, and Hamas says several have been killed in Israeli airstrikes or during failed rescue opera-

A member of Israel's War Cabinet, former army chief Gadi Eisenkot, said last week that the only way to free the remaining hostages was through a cease-fire. In an implicit criticism of Netanyahu, he said claims to the contrary amounted to "illusions".

Hamas has said it will not free more hostages until Israel ends its offensive. The group also is expected to make any further releases conditional on securing freedom for thousands of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel, including highprofile militants involved in attacks that Israelis.Israel's government has ruled that out for now, but it faces rising pressure from families of the hostages, who are pushing for another exchange, and from Israelis frustrated by the security failures that preceded the October 7 attack and by Netanyahu's handling of the war. Thousands of people gathered in Tel Aviv over the weekend to call for new elections. Netanyahu's far-right coalition partners are meanwhile pushing him to step up the offensive, with some calling for the "voluntary" emigra-tion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from Gaza and the re-establishment of Jewish settlements there. Israel withdrew soldiers and settlers from the territory in 2005, two years before Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces.

Non-Aligned Movement calls Israel's war in Gaza illegal

Kampala (Uganda) (AP): Heads of states of the Non-Aligned Movement Saturday called Israel's military campaign in the Gaza Strip "illegal" and strongly condemned indiscriminate attacks against Palestinian civilians, civilian infrastructure and the forced displacement of the Palestinian population.

While calling for a cease-fire desperately needed for humanitarian aid to access the Gaza Strip, the movement in a joint statement called for a two-state solution, on the basis of the borders before 1967, when Israel seized Gaza, the West Bank and East Jerusalem in a brief war with neighboring Arab states.

The group also reiterated support for a Palestinian state to be admitted as a member of the United Nations to take its rightful place among the community of nations.

Non-Aligned Movement, formed during the collapse of the colonial systems and at the height of the Cold War, has played a key part in decolonization processes, according to its website. Member countries aspire not to be formally aligned with or against any major power bloc.

Ninety representatives, including 30 heads of state, from the 120 countries that are members of NAM took part in the week-long conference in the Ugandan capital, Kampala. It culminated in a summit of heads of state on Friday and Saturday.Gaza's Health Ministry says more than 24,400 Palestinians have died in the current war, and the United Nations says a quarter of the 2.3 million people trapped in Gaza are starving.

Ram Temple billboard allures thousands of motorists in Houston

PTI ■ HOUSTON

A mid ongoing celebrations across the globe ahead of the Ram temple consecration in Ayodhya, a majestic billboard conveying the essence of Shri Ram has been put up in Houston and is alluring thousands of motorists daily on the busiest highway since Monday. Three hundred feet tall billboard, depicting information about the inauguration of the temple, provides warmth and rare surprise for Houstonians, amidst current freezing temperatures.

Designed and conceived passionately by Dr Kusum Vyas of Living Planet Foundation, founder of the Green Kumbh Yatra and Save Ram Setu Campaign, the billboard project was executed along with Houston's longtime volunteer, Umang Mehta. Hindus of Greater Houston, (HGH), an umbrella organisation that aims to inspire and encourage the community by sharing positive vibes and the energy of Sanatan Vedic Dharma, came forward and funded the billboard, which is placed at a premium location in Houston. HGH-funded billboard also acts as an open invitation to all Houstonians about the celebration on January 21 at Gujrat Samaj of Houston (GŚH). "The main objective was to create a billboard that is engaging and visually interconnected to the ethos of Shri Ram and Ayodhya as both are inseparable," Dr. Kusum Vyas told PTI. "Our design focuses on making the billboard feel welcoming and emanate the true essence and sanctity of Shri Ram and Ayodhya by maximising daylight, augmented with an atypical use of appropriate colours, bringing warmth and peaceful vibrations to everyone's experience."

"First time in history, the skies of a major US city will be adorned by Prabhu Shri Ramji and an estimated 1.5 million people weekly will have the privilege of Darshan of Shri Ram & the Ayodhya Mandir for a whole month", Dr Vas emphasised. "Ram Temple at Ayodhya is the result of a 500-year-long struggle of sacrifice and determination. While we cannot personally go to Ayodhya, we want to usher Shri Ram and Ayodhya Temple to Houston and give everyone a feel of being a part of this momentous occasion in our lifetime. With this beautiful giant-sized billboard, we achieved that goal," said Umang

"In addition to putting Hindus of Greater Houston on the map, the billboard aims to remind the community about the consecration ceremony, in the presence of the world's leading saints and luminaries on January 22 in Ayodhya. To mark the momentous event, a grand celebration is being organised in Houston on January 21, where everyone is invited to join the celebration," Vijay Pallod of HGH said. The celebration in Houston will be held on January 21, at the Gujarati Samaj of Houston Event Hall. HGH has invited all to participate in the historic occasion of "Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Ayodhya Mandir "Pran Pratishtha" celebrations. In addition, several other temples are participating in the celebration starting with Pran Pratishtha Mahotsav on Saturday at Vadtal Dham, Shree Swami Narayan Hindu Temple, with a Havan, grand parade, hanuman chalisa path, cultural programmes and Maha Deep Aarti, followed by fireworks.

Trump joined by South Carolina leaders at New Hampshire rally

AP MANCHESTER

 $D^{onald\ Trump\ surrounded}_{himself\ with\ leaders\ from}$ Nikki Haley 's home state in a show of strength ahead of Tuesday's New Hampshire primary. Trump was joined at a rally at the NHU Arena in Manchester Saturday night by South Carolina Gov. Henry McMaster, the state's lieutenant governor and a slew of other senior officials, including the state's attorney general, treasurer and House speaker. The statewide officials, along with U.S. Reps. Joe Wilson, William Timmons and Russell Fry,

appeared on stage with Trump.
"Almost every politician from South Carolina's endorsing me," Trump declared. The

voters to carry Trump to a win in New Hampshire before the contest moves to their state and its decisive early contest set for next month. "If you do that and you

win by a big margin here, we'll finish the job in South Carolina," said Murrell Smith, the speaker of the South House Carolina Representatives The appearances are yet

another blow from South Carolina against Haley, who is hoping her appeal among independent and unaffiliated voters will propel her to a strong enough finish in New Hampshire to turn the race into a two-person contest against Trump. It comes a day

South Carolinians urged the after Trump received the endorsement of South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, who joined him at a rally in Concord. Scott dropped his own bid for the Republican nomination in November. A dozen years ago, Haley, then serving as governor of their state, elevated Scott from the House by appointing him as senator, making him one of the nation's most prominent Black

> Republicans. McMaster and other top officials had already endorsed Trump. Haley has a famously fractious relationship with many of her state's Republican power brokers even as she was twice elected governor defeating McMaster in the GOP primary the first time.

Her response on Saturday made clear she hadn't forgotten that rivalry. "I'm sorry, is that the person I ran against for governor and beat?" she said. Just checking.

Haley campaign manager

Betsy Ankney also brushed off

the appearances at an event hosted by Bloomberg News, insisting endorsements had "never been Nikki's game." Trump on Saturday repeatedly railed against Haley and New Hampshire's voting laws, which allow unaffiliated voters

to participate in either the

Republican or Democratic pri-

The state's more moderate electorate is expected to make the contest much closer than it was in leadoff Iowa

'Lot of ways to drive change in US'

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Tndian-origin former US presidential candidate Vivek Ramaswamy has declined to say what job he would want if former president Donald Trump made it back into the White House but insisted that there are a lot of ways to drive change in this country. Ramaswamy earlier this week announced that he was leaving the Republican presidential race and endorsing Trump.

In an interview with Fox News on Friday about a possible job in a second Trump administration, the 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur said: 'There are a lot of ways to drive change in this country, inside and outside govern-

"For the last few years, I've been doing it through the market," The Hill quoted



Ramaswamy, who campaigned as the most Trumpfriendly, "America first" alternative in the Republican field, just one day after ending his presidential campaign gave a passionate speech and asked voters to vote for Trump.

'We are in the middle of a war in this country," Ramaswamy said, portraying a country divided between "those of us who love the United States of America and a fringe minority who hates this country and what we stand for." And right now we need a commander in chief who will lead us to victory," he

Trump, who had accused him of "deceitful campaign tricks" and not being "MAGA", soon returned the favour by praising Ramaswamy. Make America Great Again or

MAGA is an American political slogan and movement popularised by Trump during his successful 2016 presidential campaign and is used to refer to his political base.

I've been a friend of his even though we were competing against each other," Trump said. "But I was a friend of his and we got along and ... I kept saying, 'Why is he running? He keeps calling me a great president. But he's a fantastic guy, a very smart guy. He's got some tremendous ideas."

"He's going to be working with us for a long time," Trump said Tuesday after some in the crowd chanted "VP, VP, VP."

The race for the Republican presidential nomination makes its next stop in New Hampshire, where Haley is 11.4 points behind Trump, according to a poll average from Decision Desk HQ/The

Colorado newspapers stolen after running story about rape charges

Denver (US) (AP): Nearly all the copies of a small-town Colorado newspaper were stolen from newspaper racks on the same day the Ouray County Plaindealer published a story about charges being filed over rapes alleged to have occurred at an underage drinking party at the police chief's house while the chief was asleep, the owner and publish-

er said on Friday. Mike Wiggins vowed to get to the bottom of it, posting on Thursday on X, formerly Twitter: "If you hoped to silence or intimidate us, you failed miserably. We'll find out who did this. And anoth-

er press run is imminent." The newspaper posted the story on social media and removed its website paywall so people could read about the felony sexual assault charges filed against three men, including a relative of the police chief, for actions that allegedly occurred at a May 2023 party in Ouray where drugs and alcohol were used, according to court records. The suspects were ages 17, 18 and 19 at the time, and the person who reported the rapes was 17, records said. By Thursday evening, someone had returned a garbage bag full

newspapers to the

Plaindealer and supporters had donated about USD 2,000 to the paper, something Wiggins called "extremely heartening and humbling".

Wiggins believed the person who returned the newspapers was the person who took them and that only one person was involved in the theft. Wiggins declined to identify the person, but he reported the information to police. Officers also had surveillance video of some of the thefts, he said. Police identified a suspect who will be cited for the theft, the Ouray County Sheriff's Office said in a statement posted on social media on Friday.

India-US relationship significant for global good: Sandhu for the global good," Sandhu,

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

 $T^{\text{he US-India relationship is}}_{\text{very important and signif-}}$ icant not only for the two countries but also for the global good, outgoing Indian Ambassador to the US Taranjit Singh Sandhu has said, stressing that the bilateral ties are destined to grow big. Addressing a group of some 200 eminent Indian Americans from across the US on Saturday, Sandhu urged them to ensure that the second generation remains connected to India and that they travel to the country frequently. "This relationship is very

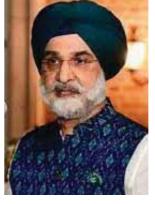
important and significant, not

only for our two countries but

who retires from the Indian Foreign Service at month-end after an illustrious 35-year, said. "You must ensure that your

children remain invested in India; they travel to India. Like so many other communities here in the United States, you can ensure through your associations, through your groups because all of you can afford them going to India," he said. 'If there's any issue regard-

ing the security of the children, I can assure you the embassy and the consulates will help you out. We'll organise that so that it's foolproof. They have support when they go," he said. "But do send them because



unique position. If they know India well, they will be hired by most of the international companies which will be moving

into India," Sandhu said.

The relationship between two countries, he said is destined to grow in the coming

"Whether it's affordable healthcare or it is energy or it is technology, startups, innovation, new emerging technologies, the US-India relationship is destined to grow big," he said.

Sandhu has been instrumental in opening the Indian Consulate in Seattle, the sixth one after New York, Chicago, Houston, Atlanta and San Francisco.

He also told the diaspora that two more Indian consulates would soon open in the

'The Indian American

community has given us a lot of pride. We have two more consulates which have been promised and we hope that those two will also open quickly," he said. Sandhu said during his

term as the ambassador, he has spoken to at least 44 governors of different states of the United "Met so many of the may-

ors because having spent time here, I understand that a lot of authority is there in the states and the cities. A lot of business can be done there and that's why all of you have a very, very critical role to play. You have played it in the past but still, it's the tip of the iceberg," Sandhu

Russia expressed "deep thanks" to North Korea for its

'full support" over its war on

Ukraine, the North Korean

ministry said. It said Choe

and the Russian officials

expressed "serious concern" over the United States' expand-

ing military cooperation with its Asian allies that they blamed

in Russia-occupied Ukraine

At least 25 people were killed on Sunday by shelling at a market on the outskirts of the city of Donetsk in Russianoccupied Ukraine, local officials reported on Sunday, A further 20 people were injured in the strike on the suburb of Tekstilshchik, including two children, said Denis Pushilin, head of the Russian-installed authorities in Donetsk. He said that the shells had been fired by the Ukrainian military.

Kyiv has not commented on the event and the claims could not be independently verified by The Associated Press. Emergency services continue to work on the scene, Pushilin said.

Also Sunday, fire broke out at a chemical transport terminal at Russia's Ust-Luga port following two explosions, regional officials said. Local media reported that the port had been attacked by Ukrainian drones, causing a gas tank to explode.

The blaze was at a site run by Russia's second-largest natural gas producer, Novatek, 165 kilometers southwest of St. Petersburg. In a press statement to Russian media outlet RBC, the company said that the fire



The Russian Ministry of

Defense did not report any

drone activity in the Kingisepp

area in its daily briefing. It said

that four Ukrainian drones

had been downed in Russia's

Smolensk region, and that two

more had been shot down in

Russian officials previous-

y confirmed that a Ükrainian

drone had been downed on the

outskirts of St Petersburg on

Thursday. In the fighting on the

front line, Russia's Ministry of

Defense announced Sunday

that Moscow's forces had taken

control of the village of

Bilawal hints

the Oryol and Tula regions.

was the result of an "external influence." It also said that it had paused operations at the port. Yuri Zapalatsky, the head of Russia's Kingisepp district, where the port is based, said in a statement that there were no casualties, but that the area had been placed on high alert.

News outlet Fontanka reported that two drones had been detected flying towards St Petersburg Sunday morning, but that they were redirected towards the Kingisepp district. The Associated Press could not independently verify the

Kharkiv region. Ukrainian forces confirmed that the settlement had been occupied, but described its capture as a "temporary phenomenon." Volodymyr

spokesperson for Ukrainian Ground Forces Command, said that Kyiv's troops had been pulled back to pre-prepared reserve positions. He said that Krokhmalne had a population of roughly 45 people before the start of Russia's full-scale invasion in February 2022. "That's five houses, probably," he was quoted as saying by Ukrainian news outlet Hromadske. "Our main goal is to save the lives of Ukraine's defenders."

Russian and Ukrainian

forces have continued to fight from largely static positions along the roughly 1,500-kilometer (930-mile) front line throughout the winter. Recent Russian attacks have tried to find gaps in Ukraine's defenses by using large numbers of various types of missiles in an apparent effort to saturate air defense systems. The massive barrages — more than 500 drones and missiles were fired between December 29 and January 2, according to officials in Kyiv — are also using up Ukraine's weapons stockpiles.

25 dead in shelling at market N Korea stresses alignment with Russia against United States

North Korea said Sunday it has agreed to further strategic and tactical cooperation with Russia to establish a "new multi-polarised international order," as the two countries work to build a united front in the face of their separate, intensifying tensions with the United States.

In describing North Korean Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui's meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minster Sergey Lavrov in Moscow last week, the North's Foreign Ministry said Putin also reaffirmed his willingness to visit Pyongyang and said that could come at an "early date."

North Korea has been actively strengthening its ties with Russia, highlighted by leader Kim Jong Un's September visit to Russia for a summit with Putin. Kim is trying to break out of diplomatic isolation and strengthen his footing as he navigates a deepening nuclear standoff with Washington, Seoul and Tokyo.

In a separate statement on Sunday, the North's Foreign Ministry condemned the UN Security Council for calling an emergency meeting over the country's latest ballistic test,

which state media described as a new intermediate-range solid-fuel missile tipped with a hypersonic warhead. The ministry said the test-firing on January 14 was among the country's regular activities to improve its defense capabilities and that it didn't pose a threat to its neighbours.

South Korea on Thursday rged the Security Council "to break the silence" over North Korea's escalating missile tests and threats. Russia and China, both permanent members of the council, have blocked USled efforts to increase sanctions on North Korea over its recent weapons tests, underscoring a divide deepened over Russia's

The alignment between Pyongyang and Moscow has

war on Ukraine.

for worsening tensions in the region and threatening North Korea's sovereignty and security interests. Tensions on the Korean Peninsula are at their highest raised international concerns point in years, after Kim in about alleged arms cooperarecent months used Russia's tion, in which the North proinvasion of Ukraine as a distraction to ramp up his weapons tests and military vides Russia with munitions to help prolong its fighting in Ukraine, possibly in exchange demonstrations. The United for badly needed economic States, South Korea and Japan aid and military assistance to have responded by strengthenhelp upgrade Kim's forces. Both ing their combined military Pyongyang and Russia have exercises, which Kim portrays denied accusations by as invasion rehearsals, and Washington and Seoul about sharpening their deterrence plans built around nuclear-North Korean arms transfers to Russia. North Korea's Foreign capable US assets.

In the latest tit-for-tat, North Korea on Friday said it conducted a test of a purported nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by the United States, South Korea and Japan last week, as it continued to blame its rivals for tensions in the region.

'Russian jet with 6 people aboard crashes in Af'

AP ■ ISLAMABAD

Russian private jet carrying Asix people is believed to have crashed in a remote area of rural Afghanistan, authorities said on Sunday.

The crash happened on Saturday in a mountainous area near Zebak district in Badakhshan province, regional spokesman Zabihullah Amiri said, adding that a rescue team had been dispatched to the area. Zebak is some 250 kilometers (155 miles) northeast of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, a rural, mountainous area, home to only several thousand people. Badakhshan police chief's office also confirmed the report of the crash in a statement.

In Moscow, Russian civil aviation authorities said a Dassault Falcon 10 went missand two passengers. The Russian-registered aircraft "stopped communicating and disappeared from radar screens", authorities said.

It described the flight as starting from Thailand's U-Tapao-Rayong-Pattaya International Airport.

The plane had been operating as a charter ambulance flight on a route from Gaya, India, to Tashkent, Uzbekistan, onward to Zhukovsky International Airport in Moscow, Russian officials said the plane belongs to Athletic Group LLC and a private individual. The Associated Press could not immediately reach its owners. They also said the Falcon 10 involved in the crash had been built in 1978.

Russia's Investigative Committee later said it had opened a criminal case on charges relating to potential violations of air safety rules or negligence. Procedures call for

at releasing over 10k jailed workers of **Imran's party**

Lahore (PTI): Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chief Bilawal such investigations to open over suspected crashes. Foreign Ministry spokes-Bhutto Zardari has hinted at woman Maria Zakharova also releasing over 10,000 jailed said that the Russian Embassy workers of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party in Afghanistan was working after coming to power in next month's general elections in the with local officials on the inci-A separate Taliban statecountry.

Addressing a well-attendment from Abdul Wahid ed rally in Lahore on Sunday, Rayan, a spokesman for the Bilawal urged the PTI workers Taliban's Information and Culture Ministry, described the plane as "belonging to a to support him in the February 8 polls and in return he will Moroccan company".

Indian civil aviation offibury the politics of vengeance and free all incarcerated politcials similarly described the airical workers.

"The PML-N of Sharifs is craft as Moroccan-registered. taking revenge from the PTI. I ask the PTI workers to support The discrepancy could not be immediately reconciled. Rayan blamed an "engine me. If I come to power, I will problem" for the crash, without set free all political workers, elaborating. The Taliban's chief including the PTI's," Bilawal spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, said Afghan air force promised

The PTI says over 10,000 guishing in jails, mostly in and Pakhtaunkhawa provinces, for their alleged involvement in the attack on military installations in May last year.

As the Supreme Court has deprived the PTI of its iconic symbol cricket 'bat', all its candidates are now contesting independently. Since the military establishment is not allowing the PTI-backed candidates to campaign, the other parties like PPP and Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan are luring the PTI supporters. "I want to bury the politics of hate and division with the support of the people. Nawaz Sharif doesn't want to. He wants revenge and is interested in the politics of the

The PTI workers and supporters should not waste their votes," said Bilawal, who remained foreign minister for the 16-month government of Shehbaz Sharif

Imran warns of further instability in Pakistan in absence of fair polls

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has sought a level playing field for his party in the run-up to the February 8 general elections, saying a lack of fairness in conducting polls would lead to further "instability and uncertainty". The remarks by Khan, 71, the founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, came during an informal media interaction at the Adiala Jail on Saturday.

Internet users faced major interruptions during the virtual event. The cricketer-turned-politician claimed that the PTI is facing obstacles in conducting its election campaign, with restrictions preventing the party from holding public gatherings. He said the PTI candidates "are being harassed and detained" by the authorities to

stop them from contesting elections and warned that if fair polls were not conducted then it would lead to further "instability and uncertainty", the Dawn newspaper reported.

Khan said the establishment could not "dismantle the party since it has roots in the masses". He also warned 'turncoats' that their politics would end if they parted ways with the PTI. Khan also claimed that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) deliberately delayed the matter related to the PTI's intra-party elections to take "a stern and sudden action" to deprive the political party of its electoral symbol.

Pakistan's Supreme Court on January 13 stripped the PTI of its iconic 'bat' election symbol, a move after which those contesting in elections from the party will have to fight as independent candidates.

This ruling comes after a continued legal tussle between the ECP and PTI over the electoral symbol and rejection of intra-

In a reference to attempts by the presidency to bring down the political temperature, Khan said that President Arif Alvi had made efforts to mediate but to no avail. Speaking about his rival Nawaz Sharif, the PTI founder said that the country would suffer "irreparable loss" if attempts were made to impose an 'absconder' on the country. Khan said that Sharif cancelled his Layyah rally because his party did not have the strength to organise a power show.

He claimed that the PTI would hold the 'biggest ever' gathering even if he was released from jail only a couple of days before the elections. "Set me free for just three days me to hold only one public gathering, and everyone will see what we can achieve," The Express Tribune quoted Khan

Ministry, in comments pub-

lished by state media, said

Choe and the Russian officials

in their meetings expressed a

"strong will to further strength-

en strategic and tactical coop-

eration in defending the core

interests of the two countries

and establishing a new multi-

polarized international order."

Talking about his cases in courts, he said despite the disposal of his plea by the Lahore High Court on the rejection of nomination papers, the order on the matter was not released. Imran also raised concerns about the selective application of justice, pointing to his disqualification while Sharif was cleared of his conviction. He questioned the delays in

hearing appeals against his disqualification, emphasising the perceived lack of democracy in the country. He said that another petition filed by him against violations of human rights was also pending before the Supreme Court for a long

Prachanda concerned over recruitment of Nepalis by Russian Army to fight in Ukraine

Kathmandu (PTI): Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" on Sunday expressed concern over the woes faced by Nepali youths in Russia after being recruited in the Russian Army to fight in Ukraine and asked Moscow to immediately stop the practice.

Talking to reporters at the Tribhuvan International Airport upon returning home after attending the 19th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Kampala, Prachanda said that he was trying his best to stop it since the government has no policy to allow Nepalis to join the mili-

tary force in any other countries except India and the UK.

"The government is very much concerned and serious regarding the reports that Nepali youths are recruited in the Russian forces and mobilised in the Russia-Ukraine war. We don't have such a policy on behalf of the

In Kampala, Nepalese Foreign Minister N P Saud told Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Vershinin Sergey Vasilievich "not to recruit Nepalese nationals into the country's Army and to help repatriate those who have already joined the forces", according to the private secretariat of Saud.

At least 200 Nepalese youths have joined the Russian Army through illegal channels and 12 of them have already lost their lives while

informed that a diplomatic note has been sent to the Russian government on the issue and Foreign Minister Saud has repeatedly talked about this agenda. Prachanda said that talks were held regarding the youths killed in the war and the government has seriously taken the issue of compensation for them.

Indonesia's Mount Merapi unleashes lava as other volcanoes flare up, forcing thousands to evacuate

Tndonesia's Mount Merapi erupted on Sunday, spreading searing gas clouds and avalanches of lava down its slopes as other active volcanoes flared up across the country, forcing the evacuation of thousands. On the densely populated island of Java, Merapi unleashed clouds of hot ash and a mixture of rock, and lava that travelled up to 2 kilometers (1.2 miles) down its slopes, said Agus Budi Santoso, the head of Indonesia's Geological Disaster Technology Research and Development

A column of hot clouds blasted 100 metres (about 109 yards) into the air as ash blanketed several villages without

the most active out of more than 120 volcanoes across the country. Sunday's eruption is the latest since authorities raised its alert level to the second-highest in November 2020 after sensors picked up increasing activity.

Residents living on the slopes were advised to stay 7 kilometers (4.3 miles) away from the crater's mouth and be aware of possible threats from flowing lava. In 2010, an eruption killed 347 people and displaced 20,000 villagers.

The 2,968-metre (9,737foot) mountain is about 30 kilometers (18 miles) from Yogyakarta, an ancient centre of Javanese culture and the seat of royal dynasties going back centuries. About a quarter million

(6 miles) of the volcano. Several other active volcanoes also blew up this weekend, prompting authorities to evacuate thousands of residents, said Indonesia's Centre for Volcanology and Geological Disaster Mitigation in a statement released on social media platform X, formerly Twitter. No casualties were reported, it said. The agency said Mount Lewotobi Laki Laki in East Nusa Tenggara province spewed hot clouds as high as 700 metres (2,300 feet) into the air on Sunday, as more than 6,500 people fled to shelters. Also on Sunday, Mount Marapi in West Sumatra province erupted again, its third biggest flare-up this month, albeit without discharg-

ing near it were evacuated. Last month, it erupted, killing 23 climbers and injuring several others. Mount Semeru in East Java province released searing gas clouds and rivers of lava on Saturday, as did Mount Ibu on Halmahera island in North Maluku province which shot a column of hot ashes as high as 1,300 metres (4,265 feet) into the air. In December 2021, Mount Semeru, the highest volcano on Java island, erupted, leaving 48 people dead and 36 missing. Indonesia, an archipelago of 270 million people, is prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity because it sits along the "Ring of Fire", a horseshoeshaped series of seismic fault lines around the Pacific Ocean.

fighting against Ukraine.
The Prime Minister also

ISSR's founder seems to be an afterthought in modern Russia

Not long after the 1924 death of the founder of the Soviet Union, a popular poet soothed and thrilled the grieving country with these words: "Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin

A century later, the onceomnipresent image of Vladimir Lenin is largely an afterthought in modern Russia, despite those famous lines by revolutionary writer Vladimir Mayakovsky.

The Red Square mausoleum where his embalmed corpse lies in an open sarcophagus is no longer a nearmandatory pilgrimage but a site of macabre kitsch, open only 15 hours a week. It draws far fewer visitors than the Moscow Zoo. The goateed face with its intense glare that once seemed unavoidable still

many of those have been the targets of pranksters and vandals. The one at St. Petersburg's Finland Station commemorating his return from exile was hit by a bomb that left a huge hole in his posterior. Many streets and localities that bore his name have been rechristened. The ideology that Lenin championed and spread over a vast territory is something of a sideshow in modern Russia. The Communist Party, although the largest opposition grouping in parliament, holds only 16 per cent of the seats, overwhelmed by President Vladimir Putin's political power-base, United Russia.

Tracking data from FlightRadar24 for the aircraft,

analysed by the AP, showed the

aircraft's last position just south

of the city of Peshawar,

Pakistan, at around 1330 GMT

on Saturday. International car-

riers have largely voided

Afghanistan since the Taliban's

2021 takeover of the country.

Those that briefly fly over rush

through Afghan airspace for

only a few minutes while over

the sparsely populated Wakhan

Corridor in Badakhshan

province, a narrow panhandle

that juts out of the east of the

country between Taiikistan and

Pakistan, before continuing

toward the corridor make a

sharp turn north around

Peshawar and follow the

Pakistani border before briefly

entering Afghanistan. Zebak is

just near the start of the

Wakhan Corridor.

Typically, aircraft heading

their way.

Lenin "turned out to be completely superfluous and unnecessary in modern Russia", historian Konstantin Morozov of the Russian Academy of Sciences told the

Gennady Zyuganov talks as if Lenin still was in charge: "100 years since the day when his big and kind heart stopped, the second century of Lenin's immortality begins," he said. Putin himself appears

inclined to keep Lenin at arm's length, even aiming some darts at him. In a speech three days before the 2022 invasion of Ukraine, Putin dismissed its sovereign status as an illegitimate holdover from Lenin's era, when it was a separate republic within the Soviet "As a result of Bolshevik

policy, Soviet Ukraine arose, which even today can with good reason be called Vladimir Ilyich Lenin's Ukraine.' He is the author and the architect," Putin said. In a speech a year earlier, Putin said that allowing Ukraine and other republics had planted "the most dangerous time bomb".

Whatever objections to those policies, Putin also is clearly aware of the emotional hold that Lenin retains for many Russians, and he does not support initiatives that arise periodically to remove the body from the mausoleum.
"I believe it should be left

as it is, at least for as long as there are those, and there are quite a few people, who link their lives, their fates as well as certain achievements ... of the Soviet era with that," he said in 2019. Such links may persist for decades. A 2022 opinion survey by state-run polling agency VTsIOM found that 29 per cent of Russians believed Lenin's influence would fade so much that in 50 years he would be remembered only by histo-

rians. But that response was

lower than one to the same question a decade earlier, suggesting Lenin remains impor-

Lenin's hold on Russia's heart is still strong enough that three years ago, the Union of Russian Architects succumbed to a public outcry and cancelled a competition soliciting suggestions for how the Red Square mausoleum could be repurposed. That competition did not even specifically call for the removal of Lenin's body.

Lenin died on January 21, 1924, at age 53, severely weakened by three strokes. His widow, Nadezhda Krupskaya, wanted him to be buried in a conventional grave.

Artist Yuri Annenkov, sum-

dacha where he was convalesc-

Lenin's close associates had feared his death for months.

ing, said he had "the helpless, twisted, infantile smile of a man who had fallen into childhood". Amid those concerns, Josef Stalin told a Politburo meeting of a proposal by "some comrades" to preserve Lenin's body for centuries, according to a history by Russian news agency Tass. The idea offended Leon Trotsky, Lenin's closest lieutenant, who likened it to the holy relics displayed by the Russian Orthodox Church a staunch opponent of the Bolsheviks— that had "nothing in common with the science of Marxism".

But Stalin, once a divinity school student, understood the value of the secular analogue to a saint. The weather may have tipped the scales. Temperatures were reportedly as low as minus 30 C (minus moned to do his portrait at the 22 F) when Lenin's body was

displayed during a wake in

tion and inspiring authorities to hastily build a small wooden mausoleum in Red Square and make further efforts to preserve the body.

A later version, a more modernist take on ancient stepped pyramids clad in somber deep red stone, opened in 1930. By that time, Trotsky had been forced into exile and Stalin was in full control, bolstered by a determination to portray himself as absolutely loyal to Lenin's

In the end, the cult of "Lenin After Lenin" may have worked against the Soviet Union rather than strengthening it by enforcing a rigid mindset, in the view of some historians. "In many ways the tragedy of the USSR lay in the fact that all subsequent generations of leaders tried to rely

Lenin," Vladimir Rudakov, editor of the journal Istorik, wrote in this month's issue. The Mayakovsky poem that proclaimed Lenin's immortality was "a parting word, or a spell, or a curse", Rudakov said. About 450,000 people file

past Lenin's corpse per year, according to Tass, about a third of the number of Moscow Zoo visitors and a sharp contrast from the Soviet era when seemingly endless lines shuffled across Red Square. The honour guards whose goose-stepping rotations fascinated visitors were removed from outside the mausoleum three decades ago At the annual military parade through Red Square, the structure is blocked from view by a tribune where dignitaries watch the festivities. Lenin is still there — just harder to see.

Loan guarantee by States

more than triples since

FY17 to ₹9.4 lakh crore

Government likely to do heavy lifting, capex to increase

rith private investment still muted, the gov-ernment is likely to maintain its momentum on increasing capital expenditure, especially for the infrastructure sector in the upcoming Budget to propel economic growth. Post COVID-19, the Budget has been laying special emphasis on capex. It has kick-start-

ed a dormant cycle for the economy. As a result India has witnessed over 7 per cent growth in the last three years, the highest among the large economies of the world.

During the current financial year, the government has made a record high provision of Rs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Many companies are joining the bandwagon of

Ram Temple consecration,

from declaring a contribu-

tion in lighting at the com-

plex to planning to screen the

Some companies are donat-

ing a portion of their profit

from sales in the region dur-

ing the inauguration period

to distribute special foods

across the city of Ayodhya.

Several companies operating

in consumer space have acti-

vated on-ground marketing campaigns by putting up large numbers of hoardings,

gate branding, shopboards, and kiosks offering products

to devotees, arriving in the

holy city for the Ayodhya

The 'Pran Pratistha' cere-

mony commenced on 16

January and will continue till

Leading multiplex operator PVR INOX has announced

live screening of Ram

Mandir inauguration dur-

ing the consecration ceremo-

across 70-plus cities on

"It will be a privilege for us

to be able to connect the

devotees with this celebration

in a truly unique manner. We

hope that we will be able to

recreate the buzz of the tem-

ple, the auspicious chants

and the breath-taking visuals

and bring alive the magic of

the most awaited moments

in India's contemporary history," said PVR INOX Co-

India will be donating a por-

tion of the profits from the

sale of its products from

January 17 to January 31 to

Shree Janmabhumi Teertha

"The Ram Mandir consecra-

tion is undoubtedly one of

the most momentous occa-

sions in our history. To mark

this occasion, Dabur, as a

home-grown Indian brand,

has committed to donate a

portion of the profits gener-

ated from the sale of our

products from January 17 till

Janmbhoomi

January 31 to Shri Ram

Kshetra," said Dabur India

Besides ramping up distrib-

ution of products in the city

anticipating the demand

CEO Mohit Malhotra.

Teerth

CEO Gautam Dutta. Homegrown major Dabur

Kshetra.

January 22, 2024

Ram Temple

22 January

event live on multiplexes.

On-ground campaigns to

screening, firms join Ram

Temple consecration fervour

10 lakh crore towards capex. During 2020-21, the government earmarked Rs 4.39 lakh crore which increased by 35 per cent to Rs 5.54 lakh crore in the subsequent year.

Another 35 per cent hike in capex was done in 2022-23 to Rs 7.5 lakh crore which subsequently reached a high of Rs 10 lakh crore, an increase of 37.4 per cent.

In the upcoming Budget too, the government is expected to earmark a large amount towards capex as such invest-ment has a multiplier effect on the economy and it also crowds in private investment 'We estimate Government of

India to budget for a capex of Rs 10.2 lakh crore in FY25,

surge for daily essentials, it is

also creating special experi-

ence zones where visitors

and pilgrims arriving in

Ayodhya can touch, feel and

experience its products. It has

tied up with dhabas and

eateries on the Lucknow, Gorakhpur and Varanasi

highways leading to

Food FMCG company Adani

Wilmar has plans to distrib-

ute jalebis and organise a

one-day event of bhog on a

grand scale. It has also plans

for BTL activities such as gate

branding, hoardings, shop-boards, and kiosks to capture

the attention of the large con-

gregation of devotees who

essence of being Indian,'

said Adani Wilmar MD &

Conglomerate ITC has asso-

ciated with Shri Ram

Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra

and its Agarbatti brand

Mangaldeep has donated its

dhoop for a duration of six

months from the Temple's

Besides two agarbatti stands

have also been installed at

'Ram Ki Phedi' where devo-

tees can light incense sticks

and offer their prayers to

Lord Ram. Mangaldeep has

also provided platforms for

Pujaris at river ghats as well

as pooja outlets, hawker

setups and umbrellas for

shade in the markets of

Ayodhya.In addition to that

Mangaldeep will be also providing 300 barricades at the

main Temple and over 100

barricades at the Temple

entrance to facilitate the

management of large crowds.

indeed an honour to be a

part of this historic and

sacred event. Our mission is

to serve as the enablers of

devotion in Temples as well

as at devotees' homes.

"For us at Mangaldeep, it is

opening date.

CEO Anghsu Mallick.



implying a relatively sedate YoY expansion of about 10 per cent, compared to over 20 per cent expansion seen in each of post-COVID years. The slow-

Demand for industrial and logistics spaces hit an all-

time high across eight major cities last year with leasing activity rising annually by 8 per cent, according to CBRE.

In its latest report, real estate consultant CBRE said that the

leasing of industrial and logistics spaces rose to 38.8 million

square feet in 2023 from 36 mil-

lion square feet in the previous

year driven mainly by demand

from third-party logistics (3PL)

Anshuman Magazine, Chairman & CEO, India, Southeast Asia, Middle East &

Africa, CBRE, said, "As we

envision the future of the indus-

trial and logistics sector, this

robust growth is a testament to

the sector's resilience despite global economic challenges."

Leasing activities across the

top eight cities remained robust

companies.

down in capex growth is likely to have some bearing on economic activity and GDP growth," Icra said in its pre-Budget expectations.

"The leasing landscape in 2023

reflects a pronounced influence

of 3PL players, commanding a

substantial 45% share,

The consultant noted that

diverse industries, including

e-commerce, retail, and manu-

facturing, chose to outsource

their supply chain operations to

This strategic move was aimed

at meeting storage require-

ments, attaining increased flex-

ibility, cost reduction, and over-

coming challenges associated

with labour sourcing.

Magazine said.

3PL firms.

Industrial and logistics space demand hits

record 38.8 mn sqft in 8 cities in 2023: CBRE

The capex rose by 31 per cent to Rs 5.9 lakh crore in April-November of the current fiscal (58.5 per cent of FY2024 BE) from Rs 4.5 lakh in April-November FY23 (60.7 per cent of FY23 Prov).

While the growth remained high, capital spending contracted in October 2023 (-14.9 per cent; first instance of contraction since April 2023) and then rose by a marginal 1.6 per cent in November 2023. Moreover, it has averaged at R73,210 crore/month, 12.2 per cent lower than the required monthly average of Rs 83,400 crore to meet the budgeted tar-

get of Rs 10 lakh crore. India is a hugely infra deficit country and heavy lifting in

per cent of the total leasing

activity. The proactive govern-

ment policies and initiatives

such as the Production Linked

Incentive (PLI) scheme played

a pivotal role in fuelling the

growth of domestic engineering

and manufacturing firms. Leasing of industrial and logis-

tics spaces in Mumbai touched an all-time high, registering 9.9 million sq ft in 2023 as against

7.3 million square feet in the

fell to 7 million square feet last

year from 9.4 million square

Delhi-NCR, the demand

previous year.

this regard is being done by the government which crowds in private investment.

With the growth in the economy, there has been a pick-up in private investment in recent times in some of the sectors like steel, cement and petroleum sector.

According to Emkay Global Financial Services head research Seshadri Sen, capex by the government would continue and it will happen at a faster

The capex would help unlock the virtuous cycle. Investment leading to productivity growth, job creation, demand and exports feed into each other and enable animal spirits in the economy to thrive.

million square feet from 5.9 million square feet. Kolkata too witnessed a dip to 3 million

square feet from 3.8 million

square feet. However, in Hyderabad, the demand grew

to 4.3 million square feet from

Leasing of industrial and logistics spaces in Chennai increased to 6 million square

feet from 3.9 million square

feet. In Pune, the leasing went

up to 1.7 million square feet

from 0.7 million square feet. The demand for industrial and

logistic warehousing spaces in

Ahmedabad rose to 2.2 million

square feet last year from 1.2

million square feet in the 2022

"Driven by increased demand

for high-quality spaces, restrict-

ed availability of quality supply

in specific locations, and an

escalation in land costs, rental

values witnessed an annual rise

in prominent micro-markets

calendar year.

3.7 million square feet.



whole remains resilient. States often sanction and issue on behalf of their various enterprises, cooperative institutions, and urban local bodies guarantees in favour of their lenders which are generally banks or other financial institutions.

so that the financial system as a

FY17, says a report.

The total loan guarantees extended by the 17 major states to their entities have more than tripled to Rs 9.4 lakh crore as of FY23 from Rs 3 lakh crore in FY17. This is equivalent to the entire increase in such guarantees of these states during FY2017-22, Icra Ratings chief economist Aditi Nayar said in the report.

In fact, such guarantees have been steadily increasing over the years, from Rs 3 lakh crore in FY17 to Rs 7.7 lakh crore in FY21 and to Rs 9 lakh crore in FY22.

The states excluded from the report are the Northeastern states and other hilly states along with Goa.

The RBI guidelines include tighter rules for ascertaining guarantee ceiling by a state than is being currently implemented by most states as well as assigning risk weights to guarantees, in addition to enhanced monitoring.

The guidelines also state that guarantees should not be extended for external commercial borrowings, the amount guaranteed should be limited to



80 per cent of the loan, etc. Moreover, the guarantees should not be used for obtaining finance through state-owned entities, which substitutes budgetary resources of the states. According to Nayar, this is in line with the change in guidelines on off-budget debt issued by the Centre in FY23 and she feels that together, these two will nudge states to become more selective while extending guar-

Additionally, the working group has also urged the lenders to assess a loan proposal from state-owned entities without taking comfort of a guarantee, which should make the lenders more cautious, going forward as

antees to their entities.

After the 32nd conference of the state finance secretaries in July 2022 favoured some regulatory caps on their guarantees, the Reserve Bank had in the same month set up a working group on state government guarantees, and its report was released on January 16 which suggested that the states charge a minimum fee for guarantees extended by them on loans taken by their enterprises, local bodies, and cooperative institutions. The report specifically calls for a specific ceiling of 0.5 per cent of GDP for additional guaran-

tees to be issued by the Centre

Engineering and manufacturannually as stipulated under the FRBM Act. feet during 2022 calendar year. across cities, except in the case Bengaluru saw a decline to 4.7 of Kolkata," CBRE said. in 2023, showing a steady annuing companies constituted 17 al space occupancy, he said. India's power consumption grows 8 per cent to 1,221 bn units in Apr-Dec

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

will gather in Ayodhya. Simultaneously, the brand is $P^{\rm ower\ consumption\ in\ the}_{\rm country\ witnessed\ an\ on-}$ also leveraging television with its sponsorship for the entire duration of the year rise of nearly 8 per cent to Shrimad Ramayana, which 1,221.15 billion units (BU) coincides with the celebraduring the April-December tions at Ayodhya. period of this fiscal, indicating The consecration of Ram a surge in economic activities. Mandir in Avodhya is a Power consumption in the country stood at 1,132.11 BU momentous occasion for every Indian. In keeping in April-December 2022-23. Industry experts said that with Fortune's brand sentipart of this celebration, as in power consumption in the first nine months of this fiscal this historical event is akin to a festival that celebrates the

year shows a surge in economic activities.

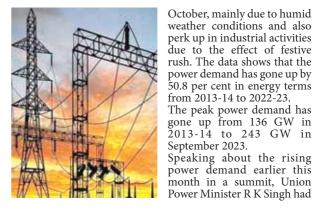
Power consumption in the entire fiscal 2022-23 was 1,504.26 BU, higher than the 1.374.02 BU witnessed in the 2021-22 financial year.

The power ministry had estimated the country's electricity demand to touch 229 GW during summer in 2023. The demand did not reach the projected level in April-July due to

touched a new high of 224.1

GW in June before dropping to 209.03 GW in July 2023. Peak demand touched 238.82 GW in August. In September this fiscal year, it was at a record high of 243.27 GW. The peak demand was 222.16 GW in October, 204.77 GW in November and 213.62GW in December 2023. According to experts, power consumption was affected in March, April, May, and June this year due to

The peak demand, however, They said power consumption grew in August, September, and



weather conditions and also perk up in industrial activities due to the effect of festive rush. The data shows that the power demand has gone up by 50.8 per cent in energy terms from 2013-14 to 2022-23.

The peak power demand has gone up from 136 GW in 2013-14 to 243 GW in September 2023.

Speaking about the rising month in a summit, Union Power Minister R K Singh had

informed that "By 2030, the peak electricity demand is liketo cross 400 GW, indicating the fast growth of the economy. The demand grew at 9 per cent last year, and is growing at 10 per cent this year. On a daily basis, the demand is 8 GW - 10 GW more than the same day of the previous year. There is no other market as big and grow-

Singh had also said that the ity to meet this burgeoning

ing as fast as us.'

Reliance to commission new energy giga complex this year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

 $B^{\text{illionaire Mukesh Ambani's}}_{\text{Reliance Industries Ltd will}}$ commission a new energy giga complex in Gujarat in the second half of 2024, the company said in an earnings statement and investor call

Reliance is building a giga complex spread over 5,000 acres in Jamnagar in Gujarat. The complex comprises five giga factories for photovoltaic panels, fuel cell system, green hydrogen, energy storage and power electronics.

On track to commence new energy facilities in phases this year," the company said in a post-third-quarter earnings call with investors. Post announcement of third-quarter earnings on Friday, Ambani stated that the "New Energy Giga Complex is all set to be commissioned in the second half of CY24. I am confident that



Reliance's New Energy business will play a pivotal role in the global movement for adoption of cleaner fuels. The Dhirubhai Ambani Green

Energy Giga Complex will be among the largest integrated renewable energy manufacturing facilities in the world. Reliance has signed an MoU with the Gujarat government to set up 100 gigawatt renewable power at Rs 5 lakh crore capex. It has received in-principle approval for 74,750 hectares (ha.) of land parcels in Kutch for green hydrogen.

The firm has strategically invested in ten global technology innovators with strong expertise across the new ener-

gy value chain. "Reliance is nearing the commissioning of the first tranche of 5GW module manufacturing capacity in mid-CY24," Nuvama said in a January 17 note. It has via REC Solar signed a supply agreement with China-based Suzhou Maxwell Technologies to buy a high efficiency production line for HJT cells (4.8GW capacity). It signed a 5.2GW HJT modula statement of the signed and signed as the signe ule automation production agreement with China-based SC Solar in January 2023.

It won PLIs under both rounds of solar modules PLI (Round 1: USD 0.3 billion, 4GW; Round 2: USD 0.4 billion, 6GW). Reliance (apart from Greenko) is the only company to win incentives for both green hydrogen and electrolysers concluded recently.

India Inc lauds launch of gender equity Alliance at WEF

PTI ■ DAVOS

Indian industry on Sunday lauded the government for establishing the 'Alliance for Global Good- Gender Equity and Equality' announced on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum annual meeting 2024 here.

The idea of this alliance emerged from the G20 Leaders' Declaration and India's abiding commitment to the cause of women-led development as propounded by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

As a follow up to the activities of the Engagement Group and initiatives under the G20 framework, inter alia, the Business 20, Women 20 and G20 EMPOWER, this alliance aims at taking forward the commitments of the G20 lead-

ers for the benefit of the larger global community, the government said while announce ing the alliance.

Lauding the initiative, apex industry chamber CII's president R Dinesh said, "The leadership of India for women empowerment during its Presidency of G20 was well recognized and the launch of the Alliance for Global Good -Gender Equity and Equality' at Davos is yet another opportunity for us to converge stakeholders to make the world a better place for women.' 'We in corporate India are

excited to partner with governments and companies across the globe to promote Gender Equality and strengthen Women Leadership," he added. "The launch is a purposeful initiative with the participation of key stakeholders," said CII.

India's goods & services exports rise by .4 per cent

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The country's exports of goods and services rose marginally by 0.4 per cent to USD 765.6 billion in 2023 despite global economic uncertainties, according to the commerce ministry data. Sectors which helped keep

India's exports afloat include electronics, pharmaceuticals, cotton yarn, fabrics and madeups; ceramic products, meat, dairy and poultry products, fruits and vegetables and information technology. Goods exports in the last cal-

endar year, however, contracted by 4.71 per cent to USD 431.9 billion while services exports are estimated to have risen by 7.88 per cent to USD 333.8 billion, the data showed. The merchandise imports also dipped by 7 per cent to USD 667.73 billion last year as against USD 720.2 billion in 2022. The latest data for the services sector released by the RBI is for November 2023. The data for December 2023 is an

the UK and Germany. Goods

shipments are impacted due to

the Russia-Ukraine war, the

Israel-Hamas conflict and the

Red Sea trade route crisis due

to attacks by Yemen-based

The only way the automotive industry can contribute towards helping the nation in countering air pollution, fuel

port, which is being given because of a very high technology cost. Also, there is a lack of a complete ecosystem of supplies, and charging infrastructure. We need to develop all this for a long-term play," he

estimation by the ministry. The main export destinations for India are the US, the UAE, the Netherlands, Bangladesh,

Houthis on cargo ships. Economic think-tank Global Trade Research Initiative said that India's exports and imports have dipped by 2.6 per cent to USD 1609 billion in 2023 compared to USD 1651.9 billion in 2022.

Only zero emission cars can help tackle air pollution, reduce oil imports: Tata Motors ing fossil fuel imports. He noted that hybrid and CNG ing "fossil fuel". Chandra said that there is a Japanese automakers like ment for a fossil fuel-based technology" Toyota, Suzuki and Honda are

Only zero emission cars can contribute towards a reduction in air pollution, cutting burgeoning fuel imports and attaining net zero targets, according to Tata Motors Passenger Vehicles Managing Director Shailesh Chandra. Amid demands from a certain section of the industry to cut

taxes levied on hybrid cars,

Chandra said that such vehicles

do not align with the key

national objectives of achieving

net carbon-zero target, improv-

ing air quality levels, and reduc-

technologies in cars help in improving fuel efficiency and meeting emission-related regulatory compliances but cannot be compared with pure battery electric vehicles.

In an interaction with PTI, Chandra said that the government already supports hybrid vehicles in terms of lower taxation and there is no need to bring those at par with electric vehicles.

He noted that hybrid cars cannot be compared with EVs as they essentially run on pollut-



push to give hybrids "unnecessary status" as compared with EVs. The government however has been very supportive and firm regarding the support to the EVs, he added. The total tax incidence on

hybrid vehicles in the country is 43 per cent, which is inclusive of GST, while battery electric vehicles attract a tax of about 5 per cent.

Domestic automakers like Tata Motors and Mahindra & Mahindra are focussing on bat-

betting on hybrid technology in their cars in the domestic market. A hybrid car has more than one source of power. Usually, it combines a conventional commotor to run the vehicle.

fuel vehicle which is being presented as an EV because it fossil fuel as the energy source," Chandra said.

bustion engine with an electric The hybrid is actually a fossil

uses a motor and a miniscule battery pack. Essentially it uses

He further said: "Why should tery electric vehicles while there be a differentiated treat-

imports and net zero targets is by supporting the zero-emission technology, he added. "We (EV makers) need the sup-

SATWIK, CHIRAG PAIR ENDS RUNNER UP

Home favourites Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty went down in a tense final against world champions Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Sang Jae at India Open, settling for their second successive runners-up finish, here Sunday.

Satwik and Chirag, the Asian Games champions, lost 21-15 11-21 18-21 to Kang and Seo after the two pairs fought for 65 minutes in what was some breath-taking badminton at the KD Jadhav Indoor stadium here. The Indian duo, which won the 2022 edition, had finished second best at the Malaysia Super 1000 last week as well.

Satwik and Chirag always had tough matches against their Korean rivals though they boasted a 4-1 head-to-head count in five meetings coming into the match with the latest being at the Malaysia Open last week. The Indian duo played some breath-taking rallies, displaying amazing reflexes as they kept the Korean pair under the pump with some relentless hitting in the opening game. Chirag dazzled in the front

the pioneer

court with some brilliant net interceptions as the duo led 11-9 and soon jumped to 19-13 after the break before pocketing the game when the Koreans netted a shot.

The Indian pair made a sloppy start in the second, falling behind 1-5 but change of pace and angled returns helped them make it 5-7 with Satwik standing tall at the front court and producing a net kill.

A couple of net errors from Chirag during flat exchanges gave the Koreans a six-point advantage.

The Koreans defended well, while India's attack seemed to lose a bit of sting as Kang and Seo grabbed a 10-point advantage at 15-5. Kang stepped up with his serve and showed good game points and they convert-ed in the second chance to roar back into the contest.

In the decider, the Koreans kept a high tempo with Kang flying across the front court as they lead 9-5. The Koreans didn't allow the Indians to play their attacking game.

Another exciting rally ensued with the Indians finding the net as Kang and Seo grabbed a five-point cushion at the interval. After the change of sides, Satwik stepped up at the front court as the momentum seemed to change in India's favour with the

Korean committing a service error and then finding the net. The Koreans opted for low serve but Chirag was upto the task as they brought the equation down to two points at 13-15 soon. Satwik then sent one to the corners, while Chirag unleashed a smash as one point separated the two pairs at 15-16.

A superb low shot from fore-



negated by Chirag's net error. Kang then sent one down the line to put themselves two point away from the title.

away from the title.
Kang found the net next, while
Chirag dominated a flat
exchange as it was 18-19. The
Koreans grabbed two championships point when Satwik sent
one wide. It was all over when Chirag sent one to the net and

Chirag sent one to the net and fell on the floor.

TAI TZU, SHI YU QI WIN WOMEN'S AND MEN'S SINGLES TITLES: An inspired Tai Tzu Ying secured her first women's singles India Open title with a dominating 21-16 21-12 win over Chen Yu Fei, while world no. 2 Shi Yu Qi outwitted giant-killer Lee Cheuk Yiu of giant-killer Lee Cheuk Yiu of Hong Kong 23-21 21-17 in a tense battle to reclaim the men's singles crown.

The former world number one from Chinese Taipei, who is set to retire after this season, used her cross court smashes and

outplay her Chinese rival 21-16 21-12 in the summit clash which was a rematch of the Tokyo Olympic final.

On that evening, the Chinese had the last laugh but Tai Tzu on Sunday showed why she is revered as one of the greatest players of the game with a masterclass performance at the KD

Jadhav Indoor stadium here. Earlier, Thailand's Dechapol Puavaranukroh and Sapsiree Taerattanachai claimed the Mixed Doubles title, defeating World No. 5 duo Jiang Zhen Bang and Wei Ya Xin of China 21-16, 21-16 in the final of Super 750 badminton tourna-

Japan's Mayu Matsumoto and Wakana Nagahara were crowned women's doubles champions after they beat World Championships bronze medallist Zhang Shu Xian and Zheng Yu of China in the final 21-12, 21-

Lemi, Mineswo lead Ethiopia domination in Mumbai Marathon

Ethiopian runners expected-ly dominated the Mumbai Marathon as defending champion Hayle Lemi Berhanu and Aberash Minsewo won the men's and women's titles respectively, here on Sunday.

Among Indian men, Srinu Bugatha recorded the best finish with a timing of 2:17:29 and was followed by Gopi Thonakal (2:18:37) and Sher Singh Tanwar (2:19:37).

The top 10 elite men's runners featured two Indians with Srinu placed at the eighth spot and Gopi at the 10th.

"I was aiming for the course record but the last five kilometres were not good," Indian Army's Srinu told media after his win, adding that he was not aware of marathon racing until 2013 but he has been working hard to improve his timing.

Gopi and Srinu were together until the 27 kilometre mark but the former faced fitness issues and was forced to take a few

"I was cramping, I had to stop for a bit for stretching and then I continued," Gopi told media. In the men's elite event, Lemi recorded a second consecutive win in the gold label race with a timing of 2:07:50. Haymanot Alew (2:09:03) came second while Mitku Tafa (2:09:58) finished third.

course record too but missed beating the mark in the last three kilometres or so.

However, he enjoyed a massive gap between him and the second-placed Alew in the ending stages, which he credited to



being focussed on beating the course record.

"I was focussed on beating the course record and nothing else. That helped me in building such a big gap," Lemi told PTI. Lemi became only the second athlete in the history of the race to win with a time of two hours and seven minutes.

Among women, Minsewo clinched the gold medal with a timing of 2:26:06 while compatriots Muluhabt Tsega was second with 2:26:51 and Medhin Bejene 2:27:34 came in third. While the victory was more memorable for Minsewo for the fact that she won it on her debut at the race, it was a special finish for the third-placed

28 seconds in the last two kilometres to move to the third spot from the fourth.

Nirmaben Thakor Bharatjee was the first among the Indian women runners to finish the elite race with a timing of Yadav took the third spot.

2:47:11, which was personal best for the 26-year-old. "I had to move from Gujarat to Nasik since my results were not good enough back home. But the move has helped me clock results consistently," said Nirmaben, whose father is a farmer. She had to work hard to arrange funds for her training.
"I wanted to finish the race in

around 2 hours 40 minutes or so but could not push towards the end," added Nirmaben, who now aims to get her numbers in range of the Olympic qualification mark. The silver medal went to Reshma Kevate who clocked 3:03:34 while West Bengal's Shyamali Sing took the bronze medal with 3:04:35

In the men's half marathon, Sawan Barwal clinc with Kiran Matre and Mohan Saini finishing second and third respectively.

Amrita Patel won the women's half marathon while Poonam Sonone came second and Kavita

PTI WIJK AAN ZEE (THE NETHERLANDS)

Indian GM D Gukesh over-whelmed Dutch player Max Warmerdam for his third victory on the trot and elevated himself to a joint lead after the sev enth round of the Tata Steel Masters Chess tournament here on Sunday.

With this result, Gukesh took his tally to 4.5 points out of a possible seven and now shares the lead alongside Nodirbek Abdusattarov of Uzbekistan and overnight sole leader Anish

Giri of Netherlands.
The beginning of the second half also brought cheers in the Vidit Gujrathi camp as he scored his first win in the tournament at the expense of Firouza Alireza of France.

Gukesh outplays Warmerdam, moves to joint lead

The victory helped Gujrathi move to joint fourth spot on four points along with compatriot R Praggnanandhaa and Alireza. Praggnanadhaa played out a draw with Jorden Van Foreest of hosts, but Giri suffered a rare defeat at the hands of Abdusattarov.

Gukesh was surprised early in the opening if his clock was any indication. Warmerdam had come fully prepared in a Tarrasch defence in black as he blitzed the first thirty moves. To Gukesh's credit, he kept on trying to find the best resources even though the computers suggested that the resulting endgame with rooks and

was still a complicated endgame. However, by this time, Gukesh had fully recovered and moves flowed showing some immaculate technique. It took 66 moves for a very satisfying vic-Coming to the seventh round, Gujrathi had said his draws were

knights was just about equal.

Soon Warderman erred and

ended up a pawn less in what

obviously not part of the plan. In the game against Alireza he took all the chances with white

Starting with the king pawn, Gujrathi faced the Sicilian Defence and Alireza sacrificed a piece early to initiate an attack against the white king. As it turned out, it was not

enough compensation for the sacrificed material as Gujrathi found a few correct moves to steer his king to safety. It was all over in 42 moves. Praggnanadhaa could not make

much use of his white pieces against Foreest out of a standard Queen's gambit declined as the

latter was well-prepared. It was still a middle game when the players decided to sign peace. In the challengers' section, Leon Luke Mendonca improved his chances while defeating Stefan Beukema of while Divya Belgium Deshmukh scored over Liam

Vrolijk of Netherlands. The other Indian, D Harika played out a draw with Anton

Korobov of Ukraine. Masters Results (Round 7, Indians unless stated): Vidit Gujrathi (4) beat Firouzja, Alireza (Fra, 4); Wei Yi (Chn, 3.5) drew with Ding Liren (Chn, 3.5); Nodirbek Abdusattorov (4.5) beat Anish Giri (Nadi

(4.5) beat Anish Giri (Ned, 4.5); Parham Maghsoodloo (Iri, 2) drew with Ian Nepomniachtchi (Rus, 3.5); R Praggnanandhaa (4) drew with Jorden Van Foreest (Ned, 2.5); D Gukesh (4.5) beat Max Warmerdam (Ned, 3.5); Alexander Donchenko (Slo, 2) drew with Ju Wenjun (Chn 3).

Brentford beats Nottingham

AP ■ LONDON

Ivan Toney scored just 19 minutes into his return from an eight-month ban as Brentford ended a five-match losing run in the Premier League by beating Nottingham Forest 3-2 on Saturday.

Wearing the captain's armband in his first game since being banned for breaching betting rules, the England striker showed he hasn't lost his scoring touch during the long layoff. Given the opportunity to take a free kick just outside the area, Toney beat U.S. International Matt Turner by bending a low shot around the wall and just inside the near post to make it 1-1 in the 19th.

That made it a perfect return for Toney whose previous Premier League goal was also a direct free kick against Forest on April big moments in an entertaining game at the Gtech Community Stadium

It started with Forest midfielder Danilo volleying in a spectacular long-range strike in just the third minute, before an eventful 10minute span in the second half saw Brentford go in front twice.



Ben Mee got in front of Forest defender Murillo to head in a corner in the 58th, but Forest leveled in the 65th when Chris Wood Odoi. The visitors could have taken the lead just two minutes later after a well-worked move when Wood teed up Orel Mangala outside the area, but he blasted a shot just wide of the post. Moments later, Brentford scored the win-

ner at the other end, and Toney was

involved in the buildup. The striker sent the ball out wide to Mads Roerslev who picked out Neal Maupay in the area, and the forward swiveled before volleying a left-footed strike inside the far

That secured a much-needed win for Thomas Frank's team, which had been drawn into the relegation scrap after a run of five straight league losses but climbed above Forest and Crystal Palace into 14th

And with Toney back, Brentford should be confident of climbing even higher in the second half of the season.

Tm just buzzing to be back and scoring goals and playing for the team," Toney said. "I manifest things like this. And before I left my house I thought, Yeah, we're winning pen, so it's good."

Forest was coming off back-to-back wins against Manchester United and Newcastle but was missing six players who are away at the Africa Cup of Nations, while the likes of Morgan Gibbs-White and Anthony Elanga missed the game with injuries.

Sania confirms divorce with Shoaib

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Sania Mirza's family on Sunday confirmed that the Indian tennis icon and Shoaib Malik have separated, a day after Pakistani cricketer announced his second marriage with actor Sana Javed. Their split marks the end of a high-profile union that had generated huge interest among sports lovers from the two countries. Malik, 41, on Saturday posted his wedding picture with Sana on social media platforms. "Sania has always kept her personal life away today the need has arisen for her to share that Shoaib and she have been divorced for a few months now. She wishes Shoaib well for his new journey

ahead!," read the statement

issued by Mirza's family.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Djokovic reaches quarterfinals, matching Federer Grand Slam record

AP MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

Novak Djokovic was ruthless in a 6-0, 6-0, 6-3 win over Adrian Mannarino on Sunday, reaching the Australian Open quarterfinals and matching Roger Federer's all-time Grand Slam record. In a rare daytime appearance on

Rod Laver Arena, the 10-time

Australian Open champion hit 31 winners and raced to victory in an hour and 44 minutes to progress to the last eight for the 58th time at a major, equaling Federer's record. Djokovic is into the Australian Open quarterfinals for the 14th time, which is equal second on the all-time list with Rafael Nadal and John Newcombe. The difference is that he's converted most of those quarterfinal runs into titles at Melbourne Park.

He'll next face No. 12 Taylor Fritz, who reached the Australian Open quarterfinals for the first time with a 7-6 (3), 5-7, 6-3, 6-3 win over Stefanos Tsitsipas, the runner-up here last year.

"I think I served well, the whole match, it kept me in it," said Fritz, after his first victory over a top 10 player at a major. "And then at the very end when I really needed it, I feel like I just, I turned it up a level and started playing my absolute best tennis to finish it.

Djokovic, who laboured in his first two rounds, believes he's starting to hit his stride.

"The first two sets were some of the best sets I've played in a while," said Djokovic, who is bidding for a singles title. "I played great from the first to the last point. He added, in jest: "I really wanted

record-extending 25th Grand Slam

to lose that game in the third set because the tension was building in the stadium. The 35-year-old Mannarino had

gone to five sets in all three of his previous rounds. After missing a break-point in the opening game, he seldom threatened Djokovic.

called triple-bagel - only five Grand Slam matches in the Open era have been won 6-0, 6-0, 6-0 - but he was only postponing the inevitable. Djokovic has admitted to feeling unwell in recent rounds but said his

The Frenchman avoided a so-

health is improving. "Last couple of days have been really good," he said. "It's going in a positive direction, health-wise, tennis-

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and US Open winner Coco Gauff cruised into the women's quarterfinals with com-

manding wins. No. 2-ranked Sabalenka, who won her first Slam title here last year, beat



Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-2. Gauff, who picked up her first major at the

If anyone wanted the secret to

⊥ producing a sporting champion

then you might think that having

the DNA of sports-playing parents

would be the key factor. But, while

genetics play a big part, when it

comes to some of the parents at this

year's Australian Open, what they

are looking for in their children,

"For me, what's important is to give

him (her seven-year-old son, Leo)

opportunities and to try things in

life," Victoria Azarenka said. "My

only rule with him is the effort is

non-negotiable. "If you try to do

something, you give 100 per cent

most of all, is the right attitude.

AP MELBOURNE

US Open in September, beat Magdalena Frech 6-1, 6-2. Anisimova had won four of their previous five meetings but she didn't have the answers this time to counter the power of the Belarusian, who hit 18 winners.

"I'm super happy with the level, happy to get this win, she's a tough opponent," Sabalenka said. "I love the atmosphere here, I love playing in front of you guys. I really want to stay as long as possible, and hopefully, we can get this thing one more uly, we can get this thing one

A brief rain delay at 4-1 in the first set stopped Sabalenka's momentum but she quickly recovered and pulled away in the second set. She'll meet either 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva or No. 9 Barbora Krejcikova in the last eight.

effort. Result is something, he's as

competitive as I am, he'll want to

have results, but the effort is non-

negotiable. If he commits to some-

There were eight mothers in the

draw for this year's Australian

Open, including Naomi Osaka,

Caroline Wozniacki and Angelique

Kerber. All eight know what it takes

to become a professional sports-

woman, from the sacrifices they

have to make to the sheer effort

For some tennis stars, the idea of

their child following in their foot-

steps is too much. Andre Agassi

and Steffi Graf were more than

happy when their eldest son, Jaden,

they need to put in.

thing, he's there 100 per cent."

Gauff was the first woman through, needing just 63 minutes to see off Frech in a match played on Rod Laver Arena - in front of the Australian great. Luckily, when I saw him come in

was already well up," Gauff said. "I heard clapping and knew it wasn't for us, it was only the first set. But, thank you for coming, it's an honour."

Gauff will play Marta Kostyuk after the Ukrainian beat Maria Tomafeeva 6-2, 6-1 to reach the major quarterfinals for the first

Still a teenager, Gauff drew attention to her shoes, which carry several messages, including one that says: you can change the world with your racket, something her father told her as a little girl

Tennis parents say attitude key for their sporty children chose baseball instead of tennis.

Others, like Lleyton Hewitt, whose

son Cruz is playing in the junior

event, actively encourage it. Tatjana Maria, the German who reached the semifinals at Wimbledon in 2022, has two daughters. The eldest, 10-year-old Charlotte,

plays tennis and golf. Like Azarenka, Maria is focused on effort, rather than results. "I think it's super-important for

kids to keep going, even if it doesn't go well sometimes because I think sometimes you have a lot of kids, they start a sport, they don't like it, they stop it, they start something else and at the end, nothing



Sabalenka, Gauff cruise into quarterfinals

AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka and 4th-ranked Coco Gauff cruised into the quarterfinals of the Australian Open Sunday with commanding wins. No. 2 Sabalenka, who won her first slam title here last year, beat Amanda Anisimova 6-3, 6-2 while Gauff, who picked up her first major at the US Open in September, crushed Magdalena Frech 6-1, 6-2.

Anisimova had won four of their previous five meetings, but the American was powerless to stop the power of the Belarusian, who hit 18 winners.

"I'm super-happy with the level, happy to get this win, she's a tough opponent," Sabalenka said. "I love the atmosphere here, I love playing in front of you guys. I really want to stay as long as possible, and hopefully, we can get this thing one more time.

A brief rain delay at 4-1 in the first set stopped Sabalenka's momentum, but she quickly regrouped and pulled away in the second set. She'll meet either 16-

year-old Russian Mirra Andreeva or No. 9 Barbora Krejcikova in the last eight. Gauff was the first woman through, needing just 63 minutes to see off Frech in a match played on Rod Laver Arena in front of the man himself. "Luckily, when I saw him come in, I was already well up," Gauff said. "I heard clapping and knew it wasn't for us, it was only the first set. But, thank you for coming, it's an honour." Gauff will play Marta Kostyuk or Maria Tomafeeva next. Still a teenager, Gauff drew attention to her shoes, which carry many messages, including one that says: you can change the world with your racquet, something her father told her as a little girl. "Sometimes, when my mom thinks I'm negative when I look down, I'm just

looking at my shoe, just a reminder that life is much more than tennis, how I do on the court does not define me as a person," she said. "That goes for everyone. Your workplace, whatever you do, doesn't define you as a person. Just surround yourself with good people. Everything I do on court is a plus to my life.

Gavaskar backs Viratball to counter Bazball in 5 Test series

ndian great Sunil Gavaskar has backed 'Viratball' to counter England's much talked about 'Bazball' approach in the five-Test series beginning in Hyderabad on January 25. England's batting lineup has

embraced an ultra-aggressive style, often associated with their head coach Brendon McCullum's approach towards the game in his playing days.

"The way he's (Virat Kohli) been batting, his movement looks good. With the form that he's in, we have Viratball to counter Bazball, Gavaskar told Star Sports

Kohli, who is 152 runs short of joining the 9000-run club in Test cricket, will be India's batting mainstay. He has 29 fifties and 30 centuries in 113 matches.

"Yeah, conversion means having more hundreds than fifties. With Kohli, he has as a similar amount



means he has a good conversion rate," Gavaskar said.

England drew their previous series against India at home. However hosts India, unbeaten in a Test series since their 1-2 los to England in 2012-2013 season, remain a formidable opponent. The Test series promises an intriguing clash between India's spin prowess, led by experienced campaigners like Ravichandran Ashwin, and England's aggressive batting strategy. India also have the likes of Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel. "England have adopted a new approach in Test cricket in the last 1-2 years. It's an aggressive approach where batters look to attack. They just want to play attacking cricket no matter the sit-

Dan to join England squad for India series

PTI ■ LONDON

 $M_{\rm Lawrence\ will\ replace}^{\rm iddle\text{-}order\ batter\ Dan}$ Harry Brook in the England squad for the upcoming fivematch Test series against India after the latter returned home because of personal reasons, the ECB announced on Sunday. Brook had travelled to Abu

Dhabi with the team for a preparatory camp ahead of the series, beginning in Hyderabad from January 25 Lawrence, a 26-year-old from

Surrey, will join the rest of his teammates on Monday before travelling to India. "Harry Brook is set to return

home with immediate effect for personal reasons from the England Men's Test tour of India. He will not be returning to India," the England and Wales Cricket Board said in a statement.

'The Brook family respectfully requests privacy during this time. In light of this, the ECB and the family kindly request the media and the public to respect their wish for privacy and refrain from intruding on

BROOK RETURNS HOME

their private space," it further

Brook made his Test debut in 2022 against South Africa while his last appearance in England whites was against Australia at

the Oval in July 2023. The 24-year-old Yorkshire batter has so far played 12 Tests making 1181 runs at an average of 61 with four hundreds and seven fifties.

Brook's impressive effort had helped England clean-sweep the series against Pakistan in late 2022. He was the Player of the Series after making 468 runs from five innings at an average

of 93.60.

In comparison, Lawrence has made 551 runs from 11 matches at 29 with four fifties It's a bit of a puzzling selection

too as Lawrence last played a Test in 2022, when he came out against the West Indies at the St George's Park. Many were expecting that

Keaton Jennings, though an opener, would get drafted into the squad in place of Brook. Jennings had recently made a free-flowing 154 and a 64 for England Lions against India A in the first of the four-day

unofficial 'Test' in Ahmedabad

Pakistan beats New Zealand by 42 runs in 5th T20

AP ■ CHRISTCHURCH (NEW ZEALAND)

 $P^{\text{akistan had an unlikely hero as it}}_{\text{bowled New Zealand out for 92 to}}$ win the fifth Twenty20 International by 42 runs Sunday and avoid a clean sweep in the five-match series.

The tourists' total of 134-8 after choosing to bat looked inadequate as it was their lowest of the series after their losing efforts of 180, 173, 179-7 and 158-5 in the four previous matches.

But, it proved more than enough on a sub-standard pitch at Hagley and New Zealand only just surpassed its previous lowest total in a T20 International in New Zealand.

Iftikhar Ahmed was the surprise hero for Pakistan. The 33-year-old hadn't bowled in Pakistan's last eight Twenty20s, hadn't taken a wicket since 2022 and had only four wickets in 53 matches before Sunday.

But, he thrived on a pitch which gripped and turned as he took three for 11 to play the leading role in New Zealand's downfall. His previous best was one for seven.

Iftikhar dismissed Tim Seifert (19), Matt Henry (1), Ish Sodhi (1), took a catch to remove Will Young (12) and played a part in the run out of Mark Chapman (1).

"I just read the wicket, it was turning so I just tried to bowl wicket to wicket and that was the key to success," Iftikhar said through captain Shaheen Afridi who interpreted

"I was prepared for this game and I thought I might bowl today. I've been

working very hard on my bowling and today was the result. It's up to the captain, but I'm always available to the team to bowl if necessary.

Pakistan celebrated its win and the avoidance of an unprecedented 5-0 series loss. But it still has some soulsearching to do before the T20 World Cup later this year in the Caribbean and

the United States.

Rizwan remain the strength of Pakistan's batting and again provided the foundation of the Pakistan innings on Sunday with the 20th half-century

Rizwan scored 184 runs in the series at an average of 46 and Babar 213 runs at

53.34. But, Babar looked lost on a slow pitch Sunday and scored only 13 runs

Pakistan's 3-0 loss to Australia in a

one at Hagley Oval and Saheen's decision to bat on winning the toss was based on his belief it might stop and turn late in the match.

It stopped and turned from the first over and batting was extremely difficult for both sides. Pakistan handed the 20year-old Haseebullah Khan an international debut and he was out to only the third ball of the match. Babar and Rizwan put on 52 for the second wicket but slowly: Pakistan was 29 for one after the six-over power play, and 53 for two after 10 overs.

Fakhar Zaman made 33 off 15 balls in an innings that gained stature in context. But, after Rizwan was out for 38 there were few other innings of sub-

New Zealand would have begun with a sense of confidence that it wrap up a series sweep. But, Rashin Ravindra was out in the second over, Finn Allen made only 22 and at the end of the power play it was 35 for two.

Tim Seifert fell for 19, Will Young for 12 and Chapman's run out left New Zealand 54 for four with 10.1 overs gone. Glenn Phillip became New Zealand's main hope for a recovery, but he managed only 26 from 22 balls before he was out in the 18th over. Iftikhar quelled any possibility of a late revival.

The pitch had slowed down a lot but still felt we bowled quite well," New Zealand captain Mitch Santner said. We were pretty happy with the score but we were just outplayed in that sec-



 $F^{ormer\ England\ captain}_{\text{Michael}\ Atherton\ reckons}$ India's superior spin attack will win them the five-Test home series against Ben Stokes and Co. The first Test begins in Hyderabad on Thursday. England decided to prepare for the tour in Abu Dhabi rather than playing a tour game in India.

Only Jack Leach is a seasoned spinner in the England squad with the others being the inexperienced Tom Hartley, Shoaib Bashir and Rehan Ahmed. India boast of R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav. "I think India will win. Their

spinners are better than England's and that will be the defining thing in the end," Atherton told Skysports.

England last won a series in India back in 2012 when Graeme Swann and Monty

Panesar outbowled their Indian counterparts. "If you go to India, spin will play a big part, it historically has done

and I suspect it always will do. India do have a very strong seam attack as well," said Atherton. "India's four spinners are very different to England's. They have two left-arm finger spinners in Ravindra Jadeja and Âxar Patel. They have a wrist spinner in Kuldeep Yadav and Ravichandran Ashwin is one of the greatest spinners of all time. "England have a solid left-arm spinner in Jack Leach and then three very inexperienced spinners after that with Tom Hartley, Shoaib Bashir and Rehan

"It will be a particular challenge for them but the selectors see a high ceiling for them," he added. The pitches are expected to turn from day one in Îndia, providing a massive test also for the England batters.

Ahmed.

Vaibhav Kandpal (49 not out off 125) was the only one who could apply

himself and eventually ran out of part-

ners as Delhi were bowled out in 53.5

overs. Delhi had lost to Puducherry

in their Ranji opener before sharing

to be getting from bad to worse for the

A change in captaincy after the loss

to Puducherry has not been able to

ing skipper Yash Dhull, who scored

33 off 46 balls on Sunday. His open-

ing partner Salil Malhotra lasted only

For MP, the star of their second

innings was skipper Shubham Sharma

transform the fortunes of the team. The batters have let the team down, starting from U-19 World Cup win-

struggling outfit.

three balls

point with Jammu in a game marred by bad light. The season seems

Kishore spins Tamil Nadu to big win over Railways

Skipper R Sai Kishore came up with a phenomenal bowling performance as his seven-wicket match-haul in the Ranji Trophy Elite Group C game helped Tamil Nadu trump Railways by an innings and 129 runs on the third day here on Sunday.

Railways began the day on 126 for two in their first innings against Tamil Nadu's 489 but were bowled out for 246 as pacer Sandeep Warrier and left-arm spinner Sai Kishore shared six wickets equally among them.

Pratham Singh (92 off 94 balls) looked formidable with the bat, but he fell to Warrier. With the hosts enforcing the follow-on, things went from bad to worse for Railways, as it could manage just 114 in their second essay.

Pratham (29) top-scored again for the visitors. But Sai Kishore (4/43) and fellow left-arm spinner Ajith Ram (4/40) mopped up their batting unit.

In another Group C meeting at Mysore, tons from Mayank Agarwal (114), Devdutt Padikkal (103) and Nikin Jose (107) put Karnataka in the driver's seat against Goa.

Resuming the day at 251 for four, with Agarwal and Padikkal having

walked back after scoring their hundreds overnight, Jose gave a hard time to the Goan bowlers before becoming the seventh man to be dismissed, falling to Darshan Misal, who bagged six wickets. Eventually, the hosts declared at 498 for nine to gain a lead of 177 runs. In the second innings, the visitors

finished the day on 93 for one, trail-

ing by 84 runs. Krishnamurthy

Siddharth remained unbeaten on 57

for Goa. Elsewhere, the remaining two Group C matches between Chandigarh and Gujarat and Punjab and Tripura were called off for the

day due to bad light.

BRIEF SCORES

489 beat Railways 246 & 114 (Pratham Singh 29; Ajith Ram 4/40, R Sai Kishore 4/43) by an

(Krishnamurthy Siddharth 57 batting; Vijaykumar Vyshak 1/18) vs Karnataka 498/9 (Mayank Agarwal 114, Devdutt Padikkal 103, Nikin Iose 107; Darshan Misal 6/134). IN CHANDIGARH: Gujarat 86/2

IN COIMBATORE: Tamil Nadu innings and 129 runs.

IN MYSORE: Goa 321 & 93/1

(Sunpreetsingh Bagga 39; Jagjit Singh 2/27) vs **Chandigarh**. IN MOHALI: Punjab 78/7 (Nehal

Wadhera 33; Manisankar Murasingh 2/11) vs **Tripura**.

Veterans Babar Azam and Mohammad partnership of their joint careers.

clueless Delhi suffered another Aembarrassing defeat in Ranji

Trophy, their second in three games

this season, with an 86-run loss to

Madhya Pradesh in their Elite Group

The loss to MP will hurt Delhi more

as they had put themselves in a strong position by bowling out the

hosts for 171 on the opening day. Resuming day three at 157 for five, MP managed to reach 251 in their sec-

ond innings, setting a 218-run target

Delhi's batters looked ill-equipped

even on decent batting conditions and

were bowled out for 131 after the

umpires extended play beyond regu-

D match here on Sunday.

from 24 balls The 4-1 loss in this series follows

three-test series before it arrived in New Zealand and it has now won only one of its last nine T20 series. The pitch for Sunday's match was a used

ond innings

Delhi suffer another embarrassing loss

whose 73 off 74 balls in the second innings made all the difference. It was an all-round effort with the ball as MP's Anubhav Agarwal, Kulwant Khejroliya, Saransh Jain took two wickets each.

BRIEF SCORES: AT INDORE: MP 171 and 251 in 78.1 overs (Shubham Sharma 73; Himanshu Chauhan 4/69). Delhi 205 and 131 all out in 53.5 overs (Yash

Dhull 33, Vaibhay Kandpal 49 not out;

Kulwant Khejroliya 2/30). MP beat Delhi by 86 runs for six points. AT DEHRADUN: Puducherry 204 and 131 all out beat Uttarakhand 123 all out and 157 all out (Yuvraj Chaudhary 46, Kunal Chandela 45;

Gaurav Yadav 7/53) by 55 runs. AT DHARAMSALA: Baroda 482 beat **Himachal Pradesh** 184 and 280 all out in 70.3 overs (Gurvinder Singh 59, Nikhil Gangta 58, Akash Vashist 43; Bhargav Bhatt 4/32, Akash Singh 3/86) by an innings 18 runs. AT CUTTACK: Odisha 130 and 198 all out in 67 overs (Sandeep Pattnaik 100; Aquib Nabi 4/73) vs **Jammu & Kashmir** 180 and 72/4 in 23.2 overs (Abdul Samad 24 batting; Rajesh

Mohanty 3/29). J&K are chasing a target of 149 and they need 77 more runs to win on the fourth day.

Saurashtra, Rajasthan register season first outright victory

PTI ■ NAGPUR

lation close of play.

for Delhi.

PTI INDORE

Spurred by Chirag Jani's a five-wicket haul, defending champions Saurashtra scripted their first knockout win of the season with a 238-run thrashing of Vidarbha on the third day of their Ranji Trophy Elite Group A match here on

Sunday. Veteran Saurashtra batter Cheteshwar Pujara touched a memorable milstone in his 66-run knock, becoming only the fourth Indian batter to score 20000 First-Class runs after legends Sunil Gavaskar. Sachin Tendulkar and Rahul Dravid.

The outright win came as a big relief for Saurashtra in their balls, the visitors were bowled knockout round aspirations out for 244 in their second after a narrow defeat against innings. They lost the last

er. Vidarbha were chasing an improbable 373, but could not even offer a semblance of fight while folding for 134 in their second innings as Jani took five for 51. Atharva Taide made a 54 for Vidarbha but they suffered batting collapse for a second time in the match after getting

Haryana in the previous league

match and a draw against

Jharkhand in the season open-

bundled out for 78 in the first Talking about batting collapse, Saurashtra also suffered one of their own after resuming from their overnight 205 for three. Despite veteran batter Cheteshwar Pujara making 66 off 137

seven wickets for a mere 39 runs but by then the overall lead had touched 372.

At Jodhpur, Rajasthan also registered their first knockout

win of the season with a fluent 10-wicket stroll over Maharashtra.

Maharashtra started the day

from a rather stable 66 for 1 but floundered against India leftarm seamer Khaleel Ahmed who returned with impressive figures of 11-3-19-4. Ahmed got good support from fellow left-arm pacer Aniket Chaudhary (3/32).

The home side needed to score

104 runs for a win, and they did that with ease going past the target without losing any wick-

Openers Abhijeet Tomar (53 off 89 balls) and Yash Kothari (52 off 94 balls) guided Rajasthan home in a little over 30 overs.

At Delhi, captain Rajat Paliwal (111) and Ravi Chauhan (133 batting) made hundreds to place Services on the cusp of taking an important first innings lead over Jharkhand at the end of third day.

for 316, Services ended the day at 315 for 3 while resuming the first innings from overnight 128 for two.

After bowling out their rivals

Chauhan and Paliwal milked 201 runs for the third wicket AT NAGPUR: Saurashtra

206 all out & 244 all out in 89.2 overs (Vishvaraj Jadeja 79, Cheteshwar Pujara 66, Kevin Jivrajani 57; Umesh Yadav 3/42, Aditya Thakare 3/49) beat **Vidarbha** 78 all out & 134 all out in 45.2 overs (Atharva Taide 54; Chirag Jani AT JODHPUR: Maharashtra

189 & 184 all out in 69.5 overs (Siddesh Veer 59; Khaleel Ahmed 4/19, Aniket Chaudhary 3/32) lost to Rajasthan 270 and 106/0 in 30.3 overs (Abhijeet Tomar 53 not out, Yash Kothari 52 not out) by 10 wickets

AT DELHI: Jharkhand 316 vs Services 315/3 in 95 overs (Rajat Paliwal 111, Ravi Chauhan 133 batting).

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