



Follow us on: @TheDailyPioneer facebook.com/dailypioneer instagram.com/dailypioneer/

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY JANUARY 16, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3

RNI No. 2016/1957

Established 1864

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

Late City Vol. 160 Issue 15
*Air Surcharge Extra if Applicable

www.dailypioneer.com

DADLS-81

JAI JAGANNATHA



**SHREEMANDIRA
PARIKRAMA
PRAKALPA**

Pousha Shukla Saptami
17 January 2024



With the Blessings of
Mahaprabhu Shree Jagannatha
The '**Shree Mandira Parikrama Prakalpa**'
will be inaugurated on
17th January 2024

The inauguration ceremony will be telecast live on
all Odia TV channels and live streamed on the "**IPR Odisha**" YouTube Channel 7 AM onwards

OIPR-15001/13/0260/2324

Six grand gate complexes to be built in Ayodhya

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to restore the glory and grandeur of ancient Ayodhya, the Yogi Adityanath government is spending Rs 140 crore to construct six grand gate complexes in the city. The government has started the process of building grand entrance gates on all entry routes of Ayodhya, which would be reminiscent of gates in the ancient capitals. In line with Chief Minister Yogi's vision, work has started on the Navya Ayodhya Phase-2 project to develop Ayodhya into the world's most beautiful city. Under this project, the Uttar Pradesh Project Corporation Limited has initiated the construction process of three grand gate complexes in the first phase. Once the contractor is selected, they would

be expected to complete the construction of gates within 100 days. In the initial phase, approximately Rs 45 crore will be spent on constructing impressive gate complexes on Ayodhya-Gonda Road (Rs 15.21 crore), Ayodhya-Gorakhpur (Basti) Road (Rs 15 crore), and Ayodhya-Sultanpur Road (Rs 14.69 crore). It is notable that after construction, all these gate complexes will be named after mythical and Ramayana characters. The construction of all entrance gates will be done according to the designs and standards prepared by the National Highway Authority of India (NHAI). The Public Works Department (PWD) will collaborate and incorporate the architecture of Ayodhya into the design. A budget of Rs



67 crore was approved for the land acquisition process to complete the construction of

gate complexes at designated locations, while a separate provision of Rs 73 crore has been

made for developing public facilities in this area. In this sequence, a fund of

Rs 50 crore was released by the government, and now, using approximately Rs 45 crore from this fund, the selection process of contractors has begun for carrying out the construction work on Ayodhya-Gonda Road, Ayodhya-Gorakhpur (Basti) Road, and Ayodhya-Sultanpur Road. Additionally, land has been acquired near Rajapur on Lucknow Road, Sariyawan on Rae Bareli Road, Mainuddinpur on Ambedkarnagar Road, Ismailpur on Basti Road, and near Katra Bhagchand on Gonda Road to build the grand gate complexes. Under the guidance of the chief minister, as per the special project, five acres of land is being acquired for each entrance gate. These gates will be developed based on the

IN A NUTSHELL

- The entrance gates to Ayodhya will be built in the names of these mythological and Ramayana period characters.
- A grand gate complex named 'Shri Ram Dwar' will be constructed on the Lucknow-Ayodhya road.
- Construction of a grand gate complex named 'Hanuman Dwar' is proposed on the Gorakhpur to Ayodhya road.
- Construction of a grand gate complex named 'Lakshman Dwar' is proposed on the Gonda to Ayodhya road.
- A grand gate complex named 'Bharat Dwar' will be constructed on the Prayagraj to Ayodhya route.
- A grand gate complex named 'Jatayu Dwar' is proposed on Ambedkarnagar to Ayodhya road.
- A grand gate complex named 'Garun Dwar' will be constructed on Rae Bareli to Ayodhya road.

vision of the Treta Yuga. An effort is being made to provide devotees with an experience of the Ramayana era right from the time they enter Ayodhya. Arrangements for parking and public facilities will be made near the gate. In addition, there will be provisions for toi-

lets and drinking water. Green belts and greenery-enabled dividers will also be developed here. Along with this, promoting e-mobility on these routes, charging points for e-vehicles will be set up, and the establishment of a food court is also planned.

Situation in J&K under control: Army chief

Lucknow: Chief of Army Staff General Manoj Pande said on Monday that the situation in Jammu and Kashmir is under control but there has been an uptick in terrorist activities in the southern region of Pir Panjal and Rajouri-Poonch over the last few months.

He, however, asserted that due to the efforts of the security forces, there has been a significant drop in violence in the interior areas of Jammu and Kashmir. Addressing the 76th Army Day parade in Lucknow, General Pande said, "The situation in Jammu and Kashmir is under control. But in the past few months, there has been an increase in terrorist activities in the southern region of Pir Panjal and Rajouri-Poonch." "There is a ceasefire along the Line of Control (LoC), but from the attempts made to infiltrate, it is clear that the terror infrastructure across the border is intact. Attempts to infiltrate have been foiled by the Army," he said.

The Army chief underlined that the number of terror-related incidents has seen a significant drop in the interior areas of Jammu and Kashmir due to the continuous efforts of the security forces. "We are working with all the stakeholders in a committed manner to uproot the terror network from the country," he said.

General Pande also said important peace accords have been signed and peace dialogues held with insurgent groups in the northeast in the recent past. "As a result of this, there has been a positive development in the region. The proactive policies of the gov-



ernment have played a major role in restoring peace," he said. The Army chief said the situation in ethnic strife-torn Manipur has been brought under control as the government was proactive and due to the efforts of the Army. He said the soldiers have shown maturity in a sensitive atmosphere, adding that "concrete efforts are on to establish peace and harmony in the state." The Army is "fully ready and competent to deal with any situation" on the northern borders, he added.

"To develop our capability on the northern borders, we have taken a number of concrete steps. Through the provisions of emergency procurement, we have got a number of modern equipment, including arms and weapons with niche technology. Special attention has been paid to develop critical infrastructure in border areas and good progress has been made," General Pande said.

"Today, we pay tributes to those bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice of laying

down their lives for the country's security. The tales of their sacrifice and bravery will always inspire us. I would like to assure their family members that they are an important part of the armed forces family and their welfare is our priority," he said.

The Army chief pointed out that last year onwards, the Army Day parade is being held outside Delhi and expressed happiness that this year, Lucknow was chosen as its venue. "The history of this city and region is full of tales of bravery of bravehearts, who had contributed in the freedom struggle. This programme is dedicated to the struggle and sacrifice of those soldiers," he said. General Pande also said the efforts to make the Indian Army a more powerful ("prabal"), competent ("saksham") and alert ("tatpar") force will continue.

He said the Army has focused on force restructuring and optimisation, technology infusion, and making systems, processes and functions more effective. The Army chief also

Rajnath lauds soldiers

Lucknow: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Monday said an Indian soldier fights the enemy till his last breath not out of hate for the foe but out of his love for the motherland. "When it comes to patriotism, I feel that words cannot describe our soldiers. (They fought) on the peaks of Kargil, where there is an oxygen shortage. It will give you an idea of the wave of patriotism running through an Indian soldier."

"But our soldiers bore that suffering with a smile because of their love for this motherland," he said. Addressing a gathering at 'Shaurya Sandhya', a military and combat display event held in Lucknow on Army Day, the defence minister said patriotism, courage and humanity are inherent in Indian soldiers. Referring to the humanity among Indian soldiers, he said that when 90,000 Pakistani soldiers surrendered in the 1971 war, "we never mistreated them."

"We treated those soldiers in the same manner as one human being treats another



human being," Singh said, adding, "When an Indian soldier fights an enemy till his last breath, he does not fight because he hates the enemy, but he fights because he loves his country. Patriotism fills him with such courage that, inspired by it, he does not shy away from even risking his life." Singh said patriotism, courage, humanity and loyalty towards the Indian Constitution are the four most important qualities of a soldier. **PTI**

mentioned other initiatives of the armed forces, such as the Agnipath scheme and women empowerment through posting women officers in operational theatres like Siachen.

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan and other senior military personnel attended the parade. The Army Day celebrations commenced with a wreath-laying ceremo-

ny at the Smritika War memorial here to honour the soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice for the country. Twenty-three foreign service attaches from 19 countries attended the parade, which was also witnessed by veterans, NCC cadets, school children, soldiers and their families. Around 500 soldiers of the Indian Army were part of the parade. **PTI**

CM Yogi offers khichdi to Guru Gorakhnath

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Monday offered khichdi to Guru Gorakhnath on the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti as per the tradition of the Nath Panth and prayed for the welfare of the people.

After the rituals were performed by Yogi Adityanath at 4 am, khichdi was also offered on behalf of the King of Nepal's dynasty. Then Nath yogis, sadhus and saints also offered khichdi and offered prayers. With this, the doors of the sanctum sanctorum of the temple were thrown open to the public. On the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti, lakhs of devotees thronged the Gorakhnath temple braving bitter cold to offer khichdi to the Shiva avatar Guru Gorakhnath. Devotees, who came from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and neighbouring country Nepal, queued up after 4 am on Monday and offered khichdi of reverence to Guru Gorakhnath.

The devotees also worshipped the idols of all the Gods and Goddesses on the temple premises and took blessings by bowing before the 'Samadhi' of Brahmaleen Mahant Baba Gambharnath, Brahmaleen Mahant Digvijay and



Brahmleena Mahant Avaidyanath. Arrangements were made by the temple and district administration for the safety, comfort and convenience of the devotees.

Meanwhile, Yogi extended his heartfelt greetings and best wishes to the citizens on the occasion of Makar Sankranti and said that comprehensive arrangements had been made for the safety and comfort of devotees across Uttar Pradesh as part of the government's commitment to respect the faith of the people.

After offering the sacred khichdi at the Gorakhnath temple as part of the tradition on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, the chief minister, in a media interaction, said that the government's effort was to ensure that there was

no inconvenience to the devotees anywhere.

"Adequate arrangements have been made throughout the state for the safety and comfort of devotees. In Gorakhnath temple, arrangements have been made for the convenience of lakhs of devotees who throng the temple to offer khichdi," he remarked.

He further mentioned that a large number of devotees have been visiting the Gorakhnath temple since Sunday to offer khichdi, adding that the number of devotees in the temple as on Monday, on the occasion of Makar Sankranti, runs into lakhs. Extensive arrangements have been made by both the administration and the temple management, he pointed out.

3 killed in sugar mill blast

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Three people were killed and about half a dozen others were injured in a powerful explosion in a sugar mill in Sitapur on Monday noon.

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed his condolences to the family members of those who died in the mishap. He also directed the district magistrate to make arrangements for the treatment of the injured.

Reports said that a steam tank exploded in Ramkot's

Jawaharpur Sugar Mill in Sitapur. While three workers died on the spot, more than five workers were seriously injured. At the same time, two labourers were reported to be missing.

Sources said that after the accident, the sugar mill officials fled the spot which led to strong protest by the workers who created a ruckus till the local police reached the spot and assured them of all possible help.

Senior officials visited the spot and were making further investigations. The bodies were sent for autopsy.

Fake appointment letters come to light, probe on

Lucknow (PNS): An investigation is underway after 21 alleged fake appointment orders from the Housing and Urban Planning department were reportedly circulated on its WhatsApp group. The incident came to light on December 16, 2023, and an FIR was registered in this regard at the Hazratganj police station on Monday following a complaint by Special Secretary, Housing and Urban Planning, Uday Bhanu Tripathi.

Tripathi stated in his complaint that on December 16, 2023, he was informed about the fake appointment letters by Under Secretary Mohammad Wasif. "He received the appointment order on WhatsApp which he forwarded me. Apparently, the forged appointment order was issued through fake signature on July 26, 2023 and it has the names of 21 candidates, who have been deployed in municipal bodies," the special secretary stated in his complaint.

"The undersigned officer had been relieved as a result of his transfer and taken charge as Special Secretary, Excise, on July 12, 2023," he further pointed out.

PPGCL
PRAYAGRAJ POWER GENERATION COMPANY LIMITED
Regd Office: Shatabdi Bhawan, B12 & 13, Sector 4, Gautam Budh Nagar, Noida, Uttar Pradesh-201301
Plant Address: PO - Lohgara, Tehsil-Bara, Prayagraj (Allahabad), Uttar Pradesh-211207
Phone : +91-125-6102000/6102009 CIN: U40101UP2007PLC032835
NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST
Prayagraj Power Generation Company Limited invites expression of interest (EOI) from eligible vendors for **External Painting of Plant buildings** of 3x660 MW Thermal Power Plant at Prayagraj, Power Generation Company Limited, Bara, Dist. Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh, India.
Details of pre-qualification requirements, bid security, purchasing of tender document etc. may be downloaded using the URL-<https://www.ppgcl.co.in/tenders.php> Eligible vendors willing to participate may submit their expression of interest along with the tender fee for issue of bid document latest by **22nd January 2024**.

OPEE ESTATES PRIVATE LIMITED
[CIN: U70109UP2012PTC076945]
Registered Office: 622, City Centre, 63/2, The Mall, Kanpur – 208001 (U.P.)
Tele No: 9585505555; Email: achandak89@gmail.com
Before the Regional Director (Northern Region), New Delhi
In the matter of sub-section (4) of Section 13 of Companies Act, 2013 and clause (a) of sub-rule (5) of Rule 30 of the Companies (Incorporation) Rules, 2014
And
In the matter of Opee Estates Private Limited having its Registered Office at 622, City Centre, 63/2, The Mall, Kanpur – 208001 (U.P.)
PUBLIC NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given to the General Public that the Company proposes to make an application to the Central Government through the Regional Director, Northern Region, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, New Delhi under Section 13 of the Companies Act, 2013 seeking approval of alteration of Clause II of the Memorandum of Association of the Company in terms of the Special Resolution passed at the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 30th December, 2023 to enable the Company to shift its Registered Office from the State of Uttar Pradesh to the State of Gujarat.
Any person whose interest is likely to be affected by the proposed shifting of Registered office of the Company may deliver either on the MCA-21 portal (www.mca.gov.in) by filing Investor Complaint Form or cause to be delivered or send by registered post of his / her objections supported by an affidavit stating the nature of his / her interest and grounds of opposition to the Regional Director, Northern Region, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, B-2 Wing, 2nd Floor, Pt. Deendayal Antyodaya Bhawan, CGO Complex, New Delhi – 110003 within fourteen days from the date of publication of this Notice with a copy to the Applicant Company at its Registered office at the address mentioned above.
For OPEE ESTATES PRIVATE LIMITED
Sd/-
(ANAND CHANDAK)
DIRECTOR
DIN: 05256853



सूचना

मेरे कुछ अभिलेखों में त्रुटिबस 'Smritih Rastogi के स्थान पर 'Smriti Rastogi' अंकित हो गया है, जबकि वास्तविक नाम Smritih D/o निखिल रस्तोगी 442/46 जनरलराज, मनोहरनगर काला, नैनी, ठाकुरगंज चौक लखनऊ है।

NOTICE

I have changed my name from suhel Anis Ahmad to Suhel Ahmad for all futur purpose.Suhel Ahmad S/O Anis saif अहमद R/O Bhopatpur handia Prayagraj

सूचना

सूचित हो कि मैं मुजम्मिल खलीक (MUZAMMIL KHALIQ) पुत्र मोहम्मद खलीक (MOHAMMAD KHALIQ) काला का नाम हिना परवीन (HINA PARVIN)हूँ। मुझे इसी नाम से जाना व पहचाना जाये तथा सभी अभिलेखों में मेरा यही नाम लिखा पड़ा व दर्ज किया जाये। मुजम्मिल खलीक पुत्र मोहम्मद खलीक ग्राम बरूआ पोस्ट अमेठी जिला लखनऊ

सूचना

मैं सैयद मो. अमन काजमी पुत्र सैयद नसीम अख्तर काजमी निवासी 358/13 सी ब्लॉक राजा. जीपुसम लखनऊ 226017 मेरा नाम हाई स्कूल के सर्टिफिकेट व पासपोर्ट में मो. अमन काजमी दर्ज हो गया है जो कि गलत है सही नाम सैयद मो. अमन काजमी है। सैयद मो. अमन काजमी मो. अमन काजमी दोनों नाम एक ही व्यक्ति के हैं।

Woman robbed of purse

Lucknow (PNS) A woman was robbed of her purse by two bike-borne men in Gomti Nagar on January 13. Later, one of them came close to her near a police station and told her that he had her mobile phone.

As per reports, Ranjana Verma of Vikas Khand, along with her friends, was going towards Shanker crossing from Mayo Hospital in the area when two bike-borne whizzed past her and the pillion-rider robbed her of her purse containing an iPhone, around Rs 10,000 in cash and keys to her house. The incident took place around 6:30 pm on January 13.

"It was dark and I could not see the faces of the robbers, one of whom was wearing a jacket. I called my husband and he immediately reached the scene. We left for Gomti Nagar police station in a car but got stuck in a traffic jam at the crossing outside the police station. I got down from the car and was walking towards the police station when a bike-borne man stopped near me and said he had my mobile phone. He then escaped in another direction," she said. The incident puzzled the cops who were scanning CCTV footage to find the man who spooked the woman near the police station.

Meanwhile, four men got fresh with three girls on their way home in PGI police station area on Sunday evening. The girls had gone to purchase some medicine and were returning via a mango grove when intercepted by the accused. The accused forced the girls to accept their proposals and tried to touch them improperly. The girls raised an alarm after which score of villagers flocked to the scene. Three of the accused took to their heels while one was caught by the villagers. Later, the maternal uncle of one of the girls lodged a complaint.

Mortal remains of Rana laid to rest

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

The mortal remains of renowned poet Munawwar Rana, who died late on Sunday night, were laid to rest at the Aishbagh graveyard on Monday afternoon after prayers were held at Darul Uloom Nadwatul Ulama.

Poet and lyricist Javed Akhtar, who also attended Rana's funeral, said it's a great loss for Urdu poetry.

"A strong pillar of Indian *tehzeeb* has fallen. He was from the generation of poets like Rahat Indori and Nida Fazli. No one can fill the void created by Munawwar Rana's death. He will always be remembered and we will always miss him," Akhtar said. Munawwar Rana's daughter Sumaiya Rana, who is also a national spokesperson of the Samajwadi Party, said he had been suffering from chron-

ic kidney disease for which dialysis was held regularly, but he died of cardiac arrest. Born on November 26, 1952, Rana was an economic graduate.

Brought up in Kolkata, his family included his wife, five daughters and a son.

"He has written over 20-35 books. The first book which he wrote was 'Ghazal Gaun', and his paternal home in Rae Bareli also has the same name. He has written most of his 'shayari' on 'Maa' (mother) and he became famous because of these couplets. One his his most famous couplets goes like this.. 'Kisi ko ghar mila hiise mein ya koi dukaan aayi, main ghar mein sabse chhota tha mere hisse mein maa aayi', Sumaiya said.

She added that her father was always full of hope and never gave up. "In 2015, he had fought and conquered cancer. He had undergone knee trans-

plant 9-10 times. It was majorly after his mother's death in 2016 that his health started declining.

"My father become very sorrowful after his mother's death since he was very much attached to her," she said, adding his emotional support system collapsed with the death of his mother and he could not fight the multiple diseases which he was suffering from and finally succumbed.

"However, his face was at peace when he died. It was reflective of his couplets — 'Maula yeh tamanna hai ke jab jaan se jaaoon, jis shaan is aaya hoon usi shaan se jaaoon. Har lafz mahekne lage likha hua mera, mein likhta hua yaadon ke lobaan se jaaoon', she said, adding he was attached to his family and did not want to stay in the hospital in his last moments.

Fake website created, several duped on pretext of franchise distribution

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Unidentified accused duped several people on the promise of facilitating them franchise of a company whose name they used unauthorisedly to create a fake website, in Ghazipur police station area.

Company's director Vijay Sharma of Indiranagar came to know about the fraud when a woman advocate and a Mumbai police team raided his establishment. Sharma was told that someone had distributed the franchise of his company to gullible people in Mumbai and that he was also under the scanner. Shocked at the revelation, Sharma cooperated with the team that found nothing fishy on his part. "I told them them

that I never gave the franchise to anyone and those who did it must have done it unauthorisedly. However, the investigating team refused to take my claims on face value. I cooperated with them and they were convinced that I had nothing to do with the fraud," he said. Sharma said as the police team did not share any information with him, he conducted an inquiry on his own.

"It surfaced that someone had used the name of my company to make a fake website and invited applications from those interested in the franchise of the company. The accused had opened a bank account in Worli, Mumbai using fake identity. I complained to the bank but did not get any satis-

factory reply," he said. Sharma said that the accused defrauded gullible people by selling them franchises of his company and used counterfeit documents. Police registered a case under relevant sections of the IPC.

A group of men realising extortion from businessmen carrying out land excavation in Sushant Golf City area allegedly opened several rounds of fire and damaged the car of a miner on January 13 night in a bid to stop the work. Complainant Vivek Bhardwaj of Madaon said a group of men reached the site in two SUVs around 9:30 pm and opened fire in the air. Some of them broke the window panes of his car.

Jagannath cult stretches back to 3000 BC

Contrary to the findings of history which say that the cult of Lord Jagannath started from 1112 AD, the Rig Vedic period together with Hindu mythological scriptures unmistakably point out that the cult stretches back to 3000 BC and even beyond that period. Quoting copiously from scriptures about the Lord's existence, it has been proved to be time older than the dull dispensation of pedantic scholars, observes Sugyan Choudhury.

That the cult of Lord Jagannath is nothing but a part of the Vedic civilization is evident from the Rig Veda. The cantos from the Rig Veda "Adaujaru Plabate Sindhuti Apoursham" (10/155) means that an unborn tree from the water, air and earth the trunk of which floats across the ocean and which is not caused by any subject whosever. And again in the Taittiriya Prakarana of Rig Veda Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Maa Subhadra exist outside the south ocean, which speaks very much for itself.

In the Utkal Skandh of the Skadh Purana, Lord Brahma has said to have exhorted to the Gods that "Long before my creation, Lord Jagannath shines in His blue sapphire colour being resplendent from time immemorial. Today in the second half of my life, Lord Jagannath has taken the icon of a demon size one and shall continue in this holy land of Puri till my life ends". The scriptures have ascertained that one day in the life of Lord Brahma amounts to 432 crores of years of human era.

Likewise 360 days of Lord Brahma contributes to one Brahma year. It is depicted in the pages of Purana that the tribal king Biswabasu was worshipping the Lord as Nilamadhaba at Nilakandara. Similarly, it has been described



that Asasabar was worshipping the Lord as Sabarinarayan in Kalebar dense forest. It is all acceptable that Lord Nilamadhaba and Lord Sabarinarayan are one and the same being identified with Lord Jagannath. Sir Samant Chandrasekhar has mentioned in his epoch-making book "Siddhant Darpana" that anyway in the first half of the creation Lord Jagannath existed in the form of Nilamadhaba. In the second half of the creation the Lord has assumed the form of Darubrahma underneath beautifully embellished crowned blue wheel of temple of Srimandir. But the said temple may not be possible at the very beginning of the creation of the time.

Although Herman Kulke has traced the origin of Lord Jagannath to 12th century (AD), but from the scripture of Indrabhuti, it is proved that Lord Jagannath belongs to 8th Century AD. Dr Benumadhab Padhi has mentioned in his book 'Darudevata' that Lord

Jagannath belongs prior to 1200 century AD. From the museum at Karachi, three deities are opined to have been

historians opine that this temple was constructed in 1112 AD by King Anangbhim Dev. But the cult

the pages of the Mahabharata wherein at page 114, the Mohavedi beside the Mahodadhi or the ocean has

ultimately stretches our findings to the face that Lord Ramachandra had instructed Bibhisana to worship Lord

Bramhapurusha of the great Lord sleeping beside the sea-shore unmistakably point out to the same purusa is no one but Lord Jagannath himself. All the abatares or manifestations owe their origin to that great Lord or creator. The incarnations may come out from this world. But according to Utkaliya Baishnab cult, all the incarnations come from Lord Jagannath. It is mentioned that Lord Krishna and Arjun had come to Purushottam Khetra i.e. Puri and observed three days' penance and paid their obeisance to Lord Jagannath. In the divine scripture of 'Prem Panchamruta' of Bhupati Pandit, it is mentioned that King Basudev had come as a pilgrim to visit Lord Jagannath at Puri. During his rest at Puri and on the auspicious day of Hari Uthan Ekadasi. King Basudev was placed with boons from Lord Jagannath. Consequently, King Basudev was blessed with two sons, Krishna and Balaram.

The Skandha Purana mentions that King Indradyumna was identified to witness the Lords who were metamorphosed as Darubrahma and by visiting whom the people gained wisdom of self or soul. Thus it is concluded that the worship of Lord Jagannath had existed much before the manifestation of Lord Krishna and Lord Rama. As per the rites of the Srimandir, it is seen that the worship of Rama and Krishna takes place, after getting the divine dictum in the form of a garland from Lord Jagannath. Thus it can be safely concluded that worship of Lord Jagannath stretches back to long ages. Many a temple has been either lost to the violent claims of the sea or destroyed by ravages of time but then the presiding spirit and the sanctum sanctorum of Lord Jagannath continues to exist here at Puri since time immemorial where all historians and archaeologists admit their failures in tracing His antiquity.



worshipped from 1st century and their origin belonged to the period of the "Kushan" dynasty. Not only that, Nikolas Natovin of Russia has mentioned that Lord Jagannath belongs to before the birth of Christ and was acclaimed as the quintessential Lord throughout the envelope of Asian continent. But now

of Lord Jagannath did exist much before it and safely be accepted. Noted historian MM Ganguli has mentioned out of his research that the cult of Lord was prevalent before 4th century BC. In his opinion Mahabharata was composed before 4th century BC. Dr Ganguli rests his finding from

been vividly depicted as the sanctum sanctorum of the Lords. In the Balmiki Ramayan preceding the composition of the Mahabharat, it has been mentioned that Lord Jagannath belongs to "Ikshaku Kula Daivatam" or that Lord Jagannath belongs to lineage Ikshaku. This means that this

Jagannath. The Rigveda was ascertained to have been composed 3000 years before the birth of Christ. Probably this is the reason for which Lord Jagannath was already accepted as the God long before. The illustrious descriptions of Krushna -Arjuna riding through their chariot Nandighosh and reaching the



In Charingal GP of Badachana block in Jajpur district, Muslim people take initiative for the Jagannath Parikrama Rath. Sarapanch Nur Jahan Begum leads the event with PS Member Chandrakala Samal



Jagannath Parikrama Arpan Rath moves in Puri town. Ranjan Ganguly

Prarikrama mini model show on Jan 17

To give a thrilling experience to devotees

PNS ■ BHUBANESWAR

A show on the mini model of the Shreemandir Parikrama Prakalpa will be screened on January 17 in the Jagannath Ballav auditorium premises, which will continue till January 22. The devotees after tak-

ing a round of the heritage corridor project will have thrilling experience after they take a whole view of the project. A 60 feet long and 12 feet wide big screen will be fitted for the purpose. The show will display about the Parikrama Prakalpa project, besides many things related to Lord Jagannath. A Delhi-based agency has been assigned to run the show.

Besides, for the first time, light and sound show will be



conducted in the Badadanda Municipality market wall. It will display the Kanchi Abhijan of the Lords, starting from Gajapati Purushotam Dev's love affairs with Kanchi princes Padmabati to the war with the King of Kanchi. The show will run in evening. To make the project inauguration event memorable, the light and sound show has planned as per the direction of 5T Chairman VK Pandian.



On the 4th day of Parikrama, Arpan Rath is in Ghatagaon, Jhumpura and Sadar blocks of Keonjhar district. People particularly, women, are waiting outside their houses to greet the Arpan Rath.

BJP to provide Ram Lalla’s ‘darshan’ to five devotees from each booth

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is leaving no stone unturned to encash Ram Lalla consecration event in Ayodhya in the forthcoming parliamentary elections. The regional unit of the party has decided to provide ‘darshan’ of Ram Lalla to five devotees from each booth. Giving this information here on Monday, party’s regional president Dilip Patel said the party will help the devotees visit Ayodhya from all 1.62 lakh booths of the state.

According to him, before the Lok Sabha elections, BJP has taken a big pledge of charity. “There is a plan to help the people to have smooth darshan of Ram Lalla and the same will be started from January 25 and will continue till March 25,” he said, adding not only vehicles but also accommodation and food facilities will be provided to the people by the party

organisation. “Maximum five people will be selected from each booth. Registration of Ram devotees will be done before the religious procession and the responsibility of which will be of the booth committees,” said Patel, adding that according to the information received from the state BJP, the grand divine statue of Lord Shri Ram will be consecrated as per rituals on January 22.

He said that after this, Ram devotees from all over the country will go to Ayodhya Dham to visit Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple on the scheduled date of their district/ Lok Sabha constituency between January 25 and March 25. “Information about the scheduled dates of all the districts and Lok Sabha constituencies will soon be made available to the BJP’s regional organisation,” he said and added that all Ram devotees will be able to have ‘darshan’

only on the scheduled date of their region.

The regional BJP chief said in the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Darshan Abhiyan (campaign) of Ram devotees, two to five people will be selected from all the 1.62 lakh booths of the state.

“The party organisation will make arrangements to bring Ayodhya Dham for ‘darshan’ on the appointed date. Arrangements will also be ensured for all Ram devotees to reach their homes safely from Ayodhya Dham. After having ‘darshan’ of Lord Shri Ram from Ayodhya Dham, when they come to his villages and wards, all the citizens living there will gather at one place and welcome and greet them,” Patel said.

According to him, we will hear about the experiences of Ayodhya journey and ‘darshan’ and worship. On the occasion ‘prasad’ will be distributed after

offering flowers on the picture of Lord Shri Ram, he added.

Regional spokesman Navratan Rath, while giving important information received from the state for visiting Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple, said all Ram devotees will be given identity cards before bringing them to Ayodhya. “Information about starting from one’s place and reaching Ayodhya Dham will have to be filled in the format given by the state earlier. The arrangements for those districts around Ayodhya Dham which can come within a day and return to their place of residence will be different. The arrangements for Ram bhakts coming to Ayodhya Dham through Astha special trains will be different,” Rath said, adding that after reaching the dham, the group of ‘karsevaks’ deployed there will help all the coming Ram devotees to have ‘darshan’ as per the arrangements.

Makar Sankranti: Over 12 lakh devotees take dip in Sangam

PTI ■ PRAYAGRAJ

More than 12 lakh devotees took a dip at the Sangam — the confluence of three holy rivers — on the occasion of Makar Sankranti on Monday, officials said.

The one-and-a-half-month-long Magh Mela also began with Makar Sankranti celebrations. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath extended greetings to people on Makar Sankranti and said extensive arrangements have been made across the state for the celebrations.

Magh Mela officer Dayanand Prasad said around 12.50 lakh devotees took a dip in the Ganga river by 12 noon. Rajendra Mishra, a priest, said devotees had started coming to the Sangam since late Sunday night.

Sangam is the confluence of three rivers - the Ganga, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati. A district adminis-



Devotees on Monday gather to take a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of Makar Sankranti festival in Prayagraj PTI

tration official said two teams of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) were deployed to prevent any untoward incident at the venue.

Eight ghats and six pontoon bridges have been built for the pilgrims. The official said 18,000 street-lights have been installed

in the fair ground. Two make-shift hospitals, 14 police stations, 41 police chowkis and 14 fire stations have been established for the fair.

Cleanliness campaign continues

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the second day of the cleanliness campaign of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to be run from January 14 to 22, regional party president Dilip Patel on the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti on Monday visited the Prabhu Shri Ram Mandir Agia-Jogiya in Sundarpur and conducted a massive cleanliness drive in the temple premises.

On the occasion Patel said after hundreds of years such a historic time is going to come when we will witness the con-



Regional BJP chief Dilip Patel launching a cleanliness drive at a temple in Varanasi on Monday.

secration of Lord Ram at his Janambhoomi (birthplace). He said on the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi,

cleanliness campaign is being run in all the temples and under the Swachh Tirtha Abhiyan before January 22 all the temples will be cleaned and beautified and after decorating them a special puja programme will be organised there on the day of Pran Pratistha on January 22.

Patel said on this day the entire country will be gripped in religious fervour and colours of celebration and by celebrating the Deepotsav in the evening, this day has to be engraved in the pages of history in golden letters.

BLW college building gets zero plus certificate

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) Inter College (IC) building has been awarded a zero plus certificate on Monday by M/s Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), New Delhi. The BEE is an agency of the Union Ministry of Power, which encourages the efficient use of energy in the country by developing programmes to support it.

The Net Zero Energy Building (Nzeb) or Zero Labelling Programme of BEE aims to encourage building owners to adopt good operating and maintenance practices along with energy efficient technologies to reduce their energy consumption. The Nzeb or zero labelling of a building demonstrates the commitment of the owner towards reducing its carbon footprint and contributing to the cause of mitigating global warming. BLW IC building is powered from a network of on-grid solar plants of capacity 223 kWp installed on its rooftop. It has a connected load of 32.21 kW and its total built up area is 7635 sq mtrs.

The building has two floors with 53 rooms in 3274 sqm on the ground floor and 37 rooms in 4361 sqm on the first floor. The conditioned area of the building is 18.81 sqm which is 0.25 per cent of the total built up area.

Stray bull kills teenager

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A teenaged bicycle-borne boy was killed by a stray bull in the Barra police station area on Sunday evening. The entire incident has been recorded in CCTV cameras.

According to a report received here, Rajesh Mishra alias Bablu of E Block, Barra Vishwa Bank, is employed in a plywood shop. His family comprises wife Anupam Mishra, sons Krishna and Raj Mishra (15). Anupam said on Sunday evening, Raj, a student of high school, had gone to bring some goods from the shop on a bicycle. On return he saw two bulls fighting near his house. Suddenly, a black bull moved towards Raj and slammed him on the street. The residents rushed to the spot and took Raj to the LLR (Hallet) Hospital here where he was declared dead by the doctors. The police sent the body for autopsy.

MEMORANDUM: The convenor of Indian Catholic Forum Chhotetbhai raised objections to the proposal of “One Nation, One Election” (ONOE) and sent a memorandum to the Secretary, High-level Committee, ONOE, Delhi, to this effect on Monday. It may be recalled that the Committee is headed by the former President Ramnath Kovind. He said the main logic/ reason given for ONOE is that it will reduce costs and limit the repeated abeyance of Government schemes because of the Model Code of Conduct. This does not hold water as the difference in expenditure, if at all, will be minimal, he said.

Lakhs take holy dip in Kashi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Braving the cold wave, lakhs of devotees thronged internationally famous 88-odd Ganga ghats to take a holy dip in the sacred water of Ganga river on the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti here on Monday. It was the second day when the ghats witnessed a rush of devotees as thousands of people celebrated the festival a day ago too as per the traditional date. But most people preferred to celebrate the festival on January 15 as per the Hindu Panchang. As this festival is celebrated across the country with different names and this ancient city has a PAN-India character as there are separate localities for South Indians, Gujaratis, Marathis, Bengalis, Nepalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Biharis etc for over a century, the festival gave different colours of unity in diversity. The crowd of devotees started thronging the ghats, especially the famous ones like Dashashwamedh, Sheetla, Assi, Panchganga, Kedarnath, Bainsasur, and many others right from the wee hours. As the day progressed the crowd increased as the sun was bright and less foggy conditions compared to the previous day. Elaborate security arrangements were



A crowd of devotees at Dashashwamedh Ghat on the occasion of Makar Sankranti in Varanasi on Monday.

made apart from several traffic restrictions and diversions. Thousands of people also came here from Magh Mela at Sangam in Prayagraj to offer prayers at Kashi Vishwanath Temple where long queues of devotees were seen throughout the day. The personnel of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and Water Police were deployed at the ghats to keep a close watch on the activities and avoid any untoward incident. After taking bath, the devotees also donated rice, gur and til made articles, coins etc to the Brahmins and beggars as per tradition of ‘daan’ importance in this festival, which

is popularly known as Khichdi in this region of Purvanchal (eastern UP). Throughout the day, the ‘khichdi’ was also distributed among devotees at the Khichdi Baba Temple in Dashashwamedh area. Since the city is famous for kite flying like Gujarat, a large number of people, including Gujaratis, went across the river to enjoy kite flying on the sandy side of the river. A large number of customers were seen in the markets throughout the day purchasing gur-til, groundnut items, chuda, lai etc. The rush of people, especially children and youth, was seen at stalls selling kites and their related articles.

Workshop on various dimensions of Sanskrit, CS concludes

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A two-day national workshop on ‘various dimensions of Sanskrit and Computer Science (CS)’ organised by the Centre for Vedic Science, Banaras Hindu University (BHU) concluded at centre’s hall here on Sunday. The keynote speaker of the valedictory session was the former Vice-Chancellor, Maharishi Panini Sanskrit and Vedic University (Ujjain) Prof Ramesh Chandra Panda. He said the sentence of any language can be analysed through the

Paniniya Shabdanvakhyapan process which can be linked to New Education Policy (NEP). The guest of honour and former head of the Department of Sanskrit, Faculty of Arts, BHU, Prof Jaishankar Lal Tripathi said our aim is to impart knowledge to others and such seminars/ workshops should be organised from time to time.

Specialty sugars, jaggery displayed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

On the occasion of Makar Sankranti and Pongal festival, a display of specialty sugars, jaggery and other sweeteners was done by the Sugar Technology division of National Sugar Institute (NSI) on Monday. “With the festivities on and wedding season to follow when we see lot of special sweet dishes been prepared, we considered it to be befitting to showcase various sweeteners which are different from conventional ones having different taste, calorie content and nutritional profile”, said NSI Director Narendra Mohan. These sweeteners are developed through innovative processes using no or minimum amount of chemicals having reasonably good shelf life. “We have displayed sugars in both crystalline and liquid form, low calorie and low glycemic index sugars, fortified sugars and jaggery, jaggery blended with dry fruits, natural cane spreads and cane spreads blended with ginger, cinnamon, chocolate and other



The NSI organised a display of specialty sugars, jaggery and other sweeteners on Monday.

natural ingredients”, said Anushka Agrawal Kanodia, Senior Research Fellow. “Going one step forward, we have also displayed various bakery and confectionary products viz. brownie, cake, nutritive biscuits and other traditional sweet dishes using these sweeteners, including jaggery-based chocolate”, she

said. “Our endeavour is to develop sector specific sweeteners at low cost. The improved nutritional profile of sugar shall help in improving its acceptability in consumers also. Otherwise also, it is a myth that sugar alone is responsible for many health issues viz. diabetes and obesity”, said Shruti Shukla, Research Fellow.

Civil engineering conclave ‘Sankalan’ on Jan 27, 28

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

The Department of Civil Engineering at the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT-K) is all set to host a national-level civil engineering conclave, ‘Sankalan’, on January 27 and 28. The event is being organised by the department’s student-run society, the Society of Civil Engineers (SoCE). Sankalan’s overarching objective is to establish itself as a central hub for knowledge sharing, innovation, and collaboration in civil engineering. Sankalan’24 aims to provide a platform for fostering knowledge exchange, hands-on learning and collaboration within the civil engineering domain. It promises an immersive experience through interactive work-

shops, lectures by industry leaders, competitions addressing real-world challenges, and networking opportunities. Participants can get a chance to garner insights into the latest methodologies shaping the future of civil engineering. The event features workshops providing hands-on exposure to modern methodologies shaping everything from structural design to geotechnical engineering. Renowned experts from across India will share insights on civil engineering’s pivotal role in building resilient and sustainable societies via engaging speaker sessions. Some of the competitions at Sankalan’24 include the Spaghetti Bridge Design Challenge, Optimising Water Resources for Sustainable

Agriculture, Remote Satellite Design Challenge and Crack Detection-Image Classification Challenge using Machine Learning which addresses real-life problems. Participants will have the opportunity to creatively showcase their solutions with a chance to win prizes exceeding ₹1 lakh.

Head, Department of Civil Engineering, IIT-K, Prof Priyanka Ghosh, said, “The inaugural edition of Sankalan is designed to assemble a diverse range of opportunities for knowledge exchange and immersive experiences in the realm of civil engineering for students, researchers and professionals. The event will facilitate a cross-over of ideas, champion collaborative innovation and highlight emerging

career opportunities. We look forward to hosting civil engineering enthusiasts from all over India to the event that puts the spotlight on how civil engineering tackles global challenges and fosters innovation.”

Sankalan’24 promises an unforgettable experience against the backdrop of IIT Kanpur’s leading facilities. The attendees can look forward to exciting exhibitions, informal networking events and exploring the vibrant IIT Kanpur campus. Sankalan aims to inspire the civil engineering community and shape the future trajectory of infrastructure development. Interested students, academicians and professionals can register for the event at <https://sankalan-iitk.in/>.

U.P. RAJKIYA NIRMAN NIGAM LTD. (ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company) Viseshwariya Bhawan Gomtinagar, Lucknow		
E-Tender Notice		
On behalf of Managing Director, U.P.R.N.Ltd, E-Tenders are invited by General Manager (Prayagraj zone), on two bid system for construction works :-		
S.No.	NIT No.	Place of Work
1	2619(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of barrak at PAC Dhoomanganj, District- Prayagraj
2	2618(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of Transit Accommodation Building at PAC Dhoomanganj, District- Prayagraj
3	2620(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of barrak at Police Line Campus, District- Pratapgarh.
4	2617(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of Transit Accommodation Building at Police Line Campus, District- Pratapgarh.
5	2616(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of Transit Accommodation Building at sandeepan ghat, Police thana Campus, District- Kaushambi.
6	2613(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of barrak Building at Barghar, District- Chitrakoot.
7	2614(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of Transit Accommodation Building at Barghar, District- Chitrakoot..
8	2615(gm/Pzone)/Imn/Invinda /24 Dated-13-01-2024	Construction of 60 seated Nursing College in Rani Durgavati Medical College, Distt-BANDA
The tender should be submitted up to 04.00pm on or before 03.02.2024 (si no-1 to 8), Other details on-website: www.etender.up.nic.in and www.upnm.upscd.gov.in		

verka Har Din De, Har Din De		
THE PUNJAB STATE COOPERATIVE MILK PRODUCERS FEDERATION LTD. SCO 153-155, SECTOR 34-A, CHANDIGARH-160022, EPABX NO. 0172-5041812,66		
Notice Inviting Tender		
e/sealed tenders are hereby invited for the purchase and supply of following items :-		
Sr. No.	Name of Work/Item	Period/Tentative City
1.	For Verka Bathinda Dairy Hiring the outsource Agency (service Provider) for providing Manpower (unskilled/semi-skilled/skilled/highly skilled & other categories) at Verka Bathinda Dairy.	01-04-2024 to 31-03-2026
2.	For Verka Gurdaspur Dairy a) Hiring of insulated Road Milk Tankers for transportation of :- i. Milk from BMCs/MCCs to Verka Gurdaspur Dairy Capacity -10MT. ii. Milk from Verka Gurdaspur Dairy to other milk unions (vice- versa) within and outside state.Capacity 15 MT, 20 MT. b) Hiring of power Plant for conversion of skimmed milk into SMP(Skimmed Milk Power) c) Supply of fresh cut fire wood.	04 03 01 No's 1000 MT
3.	For Verka Ludhiana Dairy a) Outsourcing of various activities of city supply dispatch dock. b) invited for sale of the unserviceable material.	One year with extension upto 3 months. One Time Basis
4.	For Verka Amritsar Dairy Sealed tender for :- a) Allotment of Verka milk booth through Draw System at :- i. Civil hospital Fatehgarh Churian, ii. Civil Hospital Majtha, iii. Govt. Bhai Dharam singh Memorial hospital, Ranjit Avenue iv. Primary Health Centre, Naushera. v. DTO Office Amritsar. b) Hiring of vehicles for supply of fresh milk and milk products on cash & carry basis at valtoha and surrounding areas (Distance Approx 200 km.	05 01
5.	For Verka Jalandhar Dairy a) Steam Coal having calorific value not less than 5500 kcal/kg. b) The transportation of LSHS Premium & LDO from Panipat, Mathura & Hissar refinery to Milk Plant Jalandhar.	1500 MT (400-500 MT per month) Annual
6.	For Verka Mega Dairy, Bassi Pathana Engaging of outsource agency for providing un-skilled/semi-skilled/skilled/highly-skilled and other post against manpower at Verka Mega Dairy Bassi Pathana.	Annual
NOTE: 1. For complete details regarding above tender (NIT), please visit our website i.e. www.verka.coop & e Tendering portal i.e. eproc.punjab.gov.in . 2. Corrigendum, if any, will be uploaded on website only.		
Dy. General Manager (Purchase)		

OPINION 6
TRUMP EXPLOITS
LEGAL LOOPHOLES

WORLD 10
MISSILE STRIKES US-OWNED
VESSEL OFF YEMEN

MONEY 11
SENSEX CLOSES AT
RECORD HIGH

LUCKNOW, TUESDAY JANUARY 16, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3



the pioneer

www.dailypioneer.com



JAISWAL: TOLD
TO EXPRESS
FREELY
12 SPORTS

Ayodhya opens its arms to tradition and modernity

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

The upcoming consecration of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, where Ram Lalla will be enshrined on January 22, unveils a unique architectural marvel that sets it apart from conventional structures.

"Crafted without the use of iron, steel, or cement, this temple showcases a blend of traditional Nagara style with cutting-edge construction technology," Anil Mishra, a trust member of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust said.

One of the distinguishing features of the Ayodhya Ram Temple is its exclusive use of stone, a decision rooted in making the structure earthquake-resistant.

Mishra explained, "We have chosen stone for its durability, surpassing that of other construction materials. The temple was constructed using remarkably malleable stone, deliberately avoiding iron due to rust concerns and ensuring earthquake resistance."

The stones utilised in the temple's construction are distinctive, each bearing a groove cut into it, eliminating the need for cement joints between them. These stones hail from Bansi Paharpur in Rajasthan's Bharatpur, enhancing the temple's unique character.

During the initial foundation testing, the construction team encountered an unexpected challenge — the absence of soil, replaced by sand at the site. To overcome this, specialists cleared out the sand and applied 56 layers of a concrete mix known as Rolled Compact Concrete to prepare the rocks for the foundation. This



specialised mix, which eventually adheres to the rocks, served as the base for the temple.

The construction process, steered by the Nagara style, notably seen in structures like the Khajuraho Temple, Somnath Temple, and the Sun Temple of Konark, eschews the use of iron and steel. Collaborating with some of the country's brightest minds from IIT-Chennai and the Central Building Research Institute (CBRI), the temple aims to stand the test of time.

A spokesperson from the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust emphasised, "Using only stones, the temple is designed to withstand decay from air, sun, and water, ensuring its longevity for at least 1,000 years."

The integration of ancient architectural styles with modern engineering techniques positions the Ram Temple as a testament to India's rich heritage and technological prowess.

Ram Nagari to be fortified

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a proactive move to ensure the safety of the sacred city of Ayodhya, widely recognised as Ram Nagari, comprehensive security measures will be enforced from January 20 to 22. As part of this heightened security initiative, the city will transition into a secure zone with sealed borders, imposing restrictions on the entry of vehicles originating from outside Ayodhya Dham.

"No outsider will be allowed to enter the city from midnight on January 20," Special Director General (Law and Order) Prashant Kumar said.

He shared insights into the security arrangements, emphasising the transformation of Ayodhya into a high-security zone during this crucial period. "Special arrangements have been put in place to ensure the security of the city during the significant ceremony," he disclosed during an interview with this correspondent.

The meticulously planned security protocol includes stringent checks at key intersections such as Udaya intersection, Saket petrol pump, Naya Ghat, and other entry points. Exclusive access will be

granted to residents holding valid identification cards, underscoring the necessity for a meticulous screening process to uphold Ayodhya's security.

In a gesture to accommodate Ayodhya residents amid the heightened security measures, individuals living within Ayodhya Dham and the city will be allowed to return to their homes during the specified period.

An appeal has been issued by the police administration, urging residents to exercise caution and refrain from unnecessary outings on January 21 and 22.

This plea seeks the cooperation of the local populace in adhering to the security guidelines, fostering a collective responsibility for the welfare of the entire community.

Special DG Prashant Kumar underscored the significance of the upcoming event, stating, "The programme in Ayodhya is a very important day for the country and the whole world. Extensive security arrangements are being made for that. Surveillance is also being done through CCTV."

Continued on Page 9

Seven days rituals begin

BHANU PRATAP SINGH ■ AYODHYA

The Secretary of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust, Champat Rai, announced on Monday that the consecration rituals for the idol of Lord Ram, known as Ramalala, in the sanctum sanctorum of the Ram Mandir will commence on January 16 and continue until January 22. He also announced that the statue crafted by Karnataka's Arun Yogiraj would be placed on the pedestal of the sanctum sanctorum.

Speaking to the media in Ayodhya,

Champat Rai said, "During the consecration ceremony, Prime Minister, Narendra Modi; Chief of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Mohan Bhagwat; president of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Trust Mahant Nrityagopal Das; and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will be present in the sanctum sanctorum," Rai said.

Additionally, representatives from various traditions and backgrounds, including engineers from L&T and Tata, are expected to participate in this historic event.

Continued on Page 9

Amitabh Bachchan buys land

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a move that aligns with Ayodhya's burgeoning economic landscape, Bollywood luminary Amitabh Bachchan has reportedly purchased a plot in The Sarayu, a forthcoming seven-star mixed-use enclave slated for a formal launch on January 22. Developed by Mumbai-based The House of Abhinandan Lodha (HoABL), this strategic acquisition by Bachchan underscores the evolving economic dynamics of Ayodhya.

The Sarayu, covering an expansive 51 acre, is strategically positioned to capitalise on the cultural and spiritual significance of Ayodhya, particularly with the imminent inauguration of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple. Bachchan's undisclosed but substantial investment, estimated to be valued at ₹14.5 crore for a 10,000-square-foot plot, reflects not only confidence in the local economic potential but also a keen appreciation for the town's rich spiritual heritage. Cont on Page 9

INDIA Bloc fragments further

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW/KOLKATA

In what could be an advantage for the BJP in the general elections, BSP president Mayawati announced on Monday that her party would contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections on its own and would consider a post-poll alliance.

The announcement by the BSP, though politically expected, will weaken the prospects of the Opposition alliance INDIA Bloc, comprising the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, which was hoping to rope in the BSP for a mega Congress, SP, and the BSP combine to upset the ruling party's tally in the State which sends the highest number of Lok Sabha members.

On the other hand, the tussle continues in the larger Opposition Bloc INDIA as the West Bengal Congress has now officially communicated that any truck with the TMC would be "suicidal".

The BSP is not part of the Opposition INDIA Bloc. Although there have been reports that some alliance members have tried to persuade Mayawati to join the group, the SP has indicated that it is not keen on this.



Talking to reporters at the State party office in Lucknow on her 68th birthday, Mayawati also categorically denied reports in a section of the media about her retirement from politics and stressed that she will continue to strengthen the party until her last breath.

Mayawati also cautioned her party members against her rival in the State, Samajwadi Party president Akhilesh Yadav, saying he changed colours like a chameleon to mislead them.

She said after the Lok Sabha elections, the BSP can join the Government at the Centre on the basis of proper representation to the party.

"The party will not contest the elections in alliance with

anyone, but after the polls, unlike the previous times, the party is no longer going to give free support from outside," the BSP chief said.

"Regarding the elections, I want to make it clear again that our party will fight the Lok Sabha polls alone on the strength of the poor and marginalised sections, especially Dalits, tribals, Muslims, and people of other religious minority communities. It was on their strength that in 2007, we formed a Government with full majority in Uttar Pradesh by contesting the elections alone. Therefore, keeping in mind the past experience, our party will contest the Lok Sabha elections alone," she said.

Rejecting reports of her retirement circulating on social media after she recently made her nephew Akash Anand her political successor, Mayawati said they are "fake" and have no basis. "I will continue to strengthen the BSP until my last breath," Akash Anand was not present at the Press conference.

Mayawati clarified that the BSP will keep its distance from all parties having casteist, capitalist, and communal views.

Continued on Page 9

Scindia rebuffs hooligans for unpalatable behaviour

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said on Monday that unruly passenger behaviour is unacceptable and 'will be dealt with strongly' in line with existing legal provisions. Scindia said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) will issue an SOP (Standard Operating Procedure) to ensure 'better communication and facilitation of passengers to minimise discomfort in view of flight cancellations and delays due to adverse weather.'

Besides, Delhi airport operator DIAL has been directed to expedite the operationalisation of the CAT III-enabled fourth runway. "It is my earnest request to all travellers to bear with us during this difficult period. All stakeholders are trying their best to minimise passenger inconvenience. Incidents of unruly behaviour amidst this are unacceptable and will be dealt with strongly in line with the existing legal provisions," Scindia said.

Meanwhile, the DGCA on Tuesday asked airlines to publish accurate real-time



information regarding flight delays and appropriately sensitise staff at airports to suitably communicate with passengers amid fog-related disruptions at airports.

The DGCA has invoked the Civil Aviation Requirement (CAR) Section-3, Series M Part IV, titled "Facilities to be provided to passengers by airlines due to denied boarding, cancellation of flights and delays in flights." Against the backdrop of a significant number of flights getting delayed and cancelled and passengers facing tough times, the DGCA has come out with a set of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

Continued on Page 9

PM Modi embraces welfare for all

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Monday that the country can only develop if various welfare schemes reach everyone. He asserted that it is his guarantee that everyone, even those in the remotest areas, will benefit from these schemes. Releasing the first instalment of ₹540 crore to one lakh tribal beneficiaries of a rural housing scheme under the Pradhan Mantri Janati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) via video conferencing, he said the 10 years of his Government have been dedicated to the poor.

Invoking Shabari, a tribal woman depicted in the epic Ramayana who served berries to Lord Ram during his stay in forests, the PM said it is natural for him to remember her when he has undertaken a special religious ritual till the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

"The story of Shri Ram is not possible without Mata Shabari," he said, asserting that she played a significant role in the transformation of 'prince' Ram into 'maryada purushottam' Ram. "Be it the story of Raja Ram in Treta Yuga or the current situation, welfare is not possible without uplifting the poor, deprived, and the tribals," he said, noting that over four crore permanent houses were constructed for the poor in the last 10 years. "Modi has reached out to those who were never cared for earlier," he added.

The budget of many welfare schemes for the Scheduled Tribes has risen by five times, and the scholarship for tribal students has grown by two-and-a-half times in the last 10 years, the PM said, adding that the work is on to construct more than 500 Eklavya model schools for them while only 90 existed earlier.

His Government has exerted its full force to



ensure that the extremely backward among the tribal population benefit from every scheme, he said. Modi also credited guidance from President Droupadi Murmu, India's first tribal woman head of State, for the PM-JANMAN scheme, saying as someone who has come from the same background she often spoke about the issues facing them during her interactions with him.

Noting that Diwali is being celebrated in Ayodhya in the run-up to the consecration of Lord Ram's idol at the temple there, he said the festival is also being celebrated in the homes of these one lakh families who have received the first instalment of the funds to construct their own houses. This is a matter of significant happiness for him, the PM said.

Continued on Page 9

Indian economy welcomes Ayodhya power boost

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

As the consecration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22 enters its final stages, and the countdown begins for one of the largest events of the decade, it is likely to generate business worth ₹one lakh crore across India due to the high demand for replicas of the Ram Mandir, printed kurtas, caps, T-shirts featuring the image of the Ram Mandir, flags, hotel bookings, diyas, mithai, etc.

The Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) based its estimate on feedback received from trade associations in 30 cities across different States. Initially, trade bodies and shopkeepers expected to generate business worth over ₹50,000 crore. In Delhi alone, traders' bodies

are expected to do business worth over ₹20,000 crore, as temples, markets, and residents' welfare associations are ready to decorate the national Capital like Ayodhya.

According to Praveen Khandelwal, the national secretary-general of the CAIT, traders had initially estimated a business of ₹50,000 crores. Still, given the tremendous enthusiasm among the people and the feedback received from trade associations in 30 cities across India, they have now revised the figure to ₹1 lakh crore by way of spending on the purchase of goods and availing different services for the events.

The demand for models of the Ram Mandir has also seen a rapid increase, and it is expected that over five crore

models will be sold across the country, with small manufacturing units working day and night in many cities in different States. "Mass-scale devotional musical programmes, hiring a large number of traditional musical instrument players like dhol, tashe, naffiri, shehnai, band groups, and craftsmen for the preparation of tableaux for Shobha Yatra, etc., are also going to contribute significantly to the temple economy. Hoardings and other outdoor publicity on a large scale are also on the agenda. Electrifying markets will be another significant step in the celebrations," Khandelwal said.

Speaking about the revised estimate of one lakh crore, Khandelwal highlighted that the passion and commitment



People are shopping for Ram flags at Sadar Bazar in New Delhi ahead of the upcoming inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya
Ranjani Dilmir / The Pioneer

of businesses and other sections of society towards the Shri Ram Mandir are resulting in the organisation of approximately 30,000 different programmes by trade associations across the country. These events include market processions, Shri Ram Chowki, Shri Ram rallies, Shri Ram Pad Yatra, scooter and car rallies, and Shri Ram assemblies.

Sharing details about the upcoming events in Delhi markets, Khandelwal said Delhi will also witness numerous cultural programmes, with folk dancers and singers coming from Vrindavan and Jaipur for performances in many markets.

"Over 200 Shri Ram Dialogue programmes will be organised, along with approximately 1000 Shri Ram

Assemblies, Shri Ram kirtans, recitations of Shri Sundarkand, Shri Hanuman Chalisa, continuous 24-hour chanting of Ramayana, uninterrupted lighting of lamps for 24 hours, and devotional music evenings on a large scale are scheduled by trade associations. Besides, more than 200 major markets in Delhi and a large number of smaller markets will witness Shri Ram flags and decorations, with every market adorned with decorative lights. Over 300 Shri Ram processions and Shri Ram pad yatras are planned in various markets across Delhi, along with the lighting of thousands of clay lamps in all markets and at the homes and shops of traders.

Continued on Page 9

Abandonment

Former Union Minister Milind Deora spoils the Cong's Nyay Yatra party with abrupt resignation

In what has come as a surprise to many, second-generation Congress leader Milind Deora resigned from the party the very day Rahul Gandhi kicked off his Nyay Yatra. The departure of the senior Maharashtra leader to Chief Minister Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena adds to the challenges the Congress has been facing in recent times, and raises questions about its internal dynamics and overall strategy. It is also a telling comment on the way the party is being managed. His father Muri Deora was a veteran Congress leader and the family has had a 55-year association with the Congress. Deora's departure adds to a growing list of young leaders who have left the Congress to embark on new journeys. The lack of resolution for lingering issues and intra-party factionalism has prompted several promising leaders from the Rahul camp to leave. Rahul confidant and former Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia resigned to join the BJP in March 2020 and is currently a Minister in the Modi Cabinet. Another ex-UPA Minister, Jitin Prasada, left the



Congress, citing the party's growing disconnect with people. Subsequently, a series of exits occurred, with Priyanka Chaturvedi joining the erstwhile undivided Shiv Sena, former Mahila Congress chief Sushmita Deb quitting for the TMC, former Union Minister RPN Singh, former Punjab Congress chief Sunil Jakhar and party spokesperson Jaiveer Shergill joining the BJP. The exodus began with then Assam Congress leader Himanta Biswa Sarma leaving for the BJP ahead of the 2014 polls. Congress stalwarts Capt Amarinder Singh, Ghulam Nabi Azad and Kapil Sibal also remain on the exodus list.

Though the 47-year-old Deora did not give a reason for severing ties with the Congress, he has strongly criticised it for not focusing on "constructive issues, suggestions, merit and ability". He also blamed the party for engaging in the criticism of industrialists and businessmen. Though certainly a jolt, Deora's exit will not be a major setback for the Congress as it is already aligned with the Shiv Sena led by Uddhav Thackeray. But it must introspect the reasons for such decisions by second-generation Congress leaders. Though poaching is not new to Indian politics, the party leadership must be concerned about the issues its young Turks might have. Deora's departure brings attention to the internal conflicts and dissent within the Congress. It highlights the need for the leadership to address internal grievances and foster a more inclusive and cohesive environment. Learning from such setbacks, the leadership should focus on rebuilding trust within its ranks and projecting a united front to regain public confidence. A transparent and participatory decision-making process should be implemented to foster inclusivity within the Congress since the top-down approach is not working for it anyway. However, the party should take such incidents in its stride and focus for now on its Nyay Yatra, which should be continued with renewed vigour, focusing on grassroots engagement.

PICTALK



Artists perform during the celebration of Bhogi, the first day of the four-day festival of Pongal, in Hyderabad

PTI

The enduring musical heritage of the legends

Both Ustad Rashid Khan and Dr Prabha Atre played pivotal roles in globalising Indian classical music, taking it beyond geographical confines

The news of the passing away of Ustad Rashid Khan on January 9, 2024, came as a big jolt to the entire fraternity of Indian classical music. As tributes poured in – and continue – again the tragic news of the passing away of Dr Prabha Atre on January 13, 2024, has left all of us in shock. This recent departure of two stalwarts, Ustad Rashid Khan and Dr Prabha Atre, has left an indelible void that resonates through the hearts of music enthusiasts globally. These legendary artists were not just virtuosos in their respective domains, but torchbearers who illuminated the path of classical music with their innovative prowess, dedication, and profound 'sadhana'.

Ustad Rashid Khan, a name synonymous with the enchanting strains of Hindustani classical music, embarked on his musical journey from a lineage steeped in tradition. Hailing from the illustrious 'Rampur-Sahaswan Gharana', Rashid Khan was a maestro par excellence, wielding the sarangi of his soul with unparalleled finesse. The delicate



fabric of his melody, woven with intricate raag renditions, left audiences spellbound and created a timeless legacy. One cannot help but marvel at Ustad Rashid Khan's mesmerizing exploration of diverse raags, each performance a celestial journey. His rendition of the timeless raag Yaman, or raag Durga for instance, transcended the boundaries of time and space, echoing the purity and precision that defined his artistry. The maestro's command over the intricacies of taal and laya, coupled with the soul-stirring alaaps, revealed a musical genius at the zenith of his craft. Similarly, Dr Prabha Atre, on the other hand, was a luminary in the realm of Hindustani classical vocal music. Her velvety voice and impeccable command over various raags marked her as a true proponent of her Kirana gharana which she

proudly represented. Dr. Atre's journey began in the vibrant cultural milieu of Pune, where she imbibed the essence of the 'Kirana Gharana', ultimately crafting her unique style. One cannot discuss Dr. Prabha Atre's contributions without acknowledging her groundbreaking research and dedication to the art form. Her scholarly pursuits delved into the intricacies of raag structures, laying the foundation for an enriched understanding of the classical repertoire. Her treatises and writings became invaluable resources for students and scholars alike, elevating the discourse surrounding Indian classical music. Dr Atre's dedication to her craft manifested in her rigorous 'sadhana' – a term encapsulating the disciplined and continuous practice that defines the life of a true artist – manifested during her renditions of complex ragas like Maru Bihag or Jogiya which became a testament to the countless hours spent honing her craft, transcending the realm of mere performance to attain a spiritual communion with the divine through music.

Ustad Rashid Khan and Dr. Prabha Atre globalised Indian classical music, transcending borders through collaborations and performances. Rashid Khan's duets with Yo-Yo Ma highlighted music's universality. Dr. Atre, through captivating international performances, spread classical music globally, fostering understanding and appreciation for this ancient art form beyond geographical confines. Maestros Ustad Rashid Khan and Dr. Prabha Atre, honoured with prestigious awards like Padma Bhushan and Padma Vibhushan, exemplify unparalleled dedication and artistic brilliance, celebrated through numerous accolades. Ustad Rashid Khan and Dr. Prabha Atre's departure has left an irreplaceable void in the world of Indian classical music. Their legacy, however, lives on through the timeless melodies and profound impact they have left on generations of music enthusiasts. Farewell! (The writer is a programme executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti, views are personal)



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Trump exploits legal loopholes

As Trump faces charges of election interference, his reliance on presidential immunity raises concerns about the erosion of democratic values in American politics

Donald Trump has historically abused technicalities to justify his conduct. Trump's businesses have involved over 4,000 state and federal legal actions, including six bankruptcies. Contrary to established precedent, Trump had stoutly refused to release his tax returns during his Presidential campaign and when portions of his returns were released, it was found that he had paid no taxes for years. Trump had brazenly said that he had "brilliantly used" U.S. tax rules to his advantage and that he was "smart", for having done so! He was able to minimize his tax liability by reporting heavy losses across his empire, and reports suggested that before 2020, he had not paid taxes in 10 out of the 15 previous assessment years, despite his confessed suitability for the Oval Office – the amoral man had taken cover of technicalities and shunned moral transparency, to cover his tracks. Trump also had the dubious distinction of being the only US President to be impeached twice in office but acquitted each time with the technicality of having requisite numbers of Republicans in the Senate, bailing him out both times. Today, when Trump faces charges of conspiring to overturn the 2020 Presidential election results (won by Democrat candidate, Joe Biden) – he is yet again invoking the technicality of being a President to seek immunity from prosecution charges. However, the provocative conduct of Trump during the 6th Jan 'insurrection' is well documented when he provoked his supporters in Proud Boys, Oath Keepers, QAnon and other far-right supremacists, neo-Nazis, neo-Confederates etc. Right through the proceedings, Trump's patent and weaponised language of falsehoods and misrepresentations was additionally loaded with inflammatory suggestions e.g., "if you don't fight like hell, you are not going to have a country anymore", "invade the capitol", "storm the capitol" etc., even when he knew that some of his supporters were dangerously armed, as he made his proverbial, 'last stand'. In the bargain, Trump even sold



out his Vice President, Mike Pence, by asking him recklessly to alter the election results and stop Biden from assuming Presidency, unconstitutionally. But as is often the case in participative democracies, many amongst the electorate were convinced and encouraging of Trump's open disdain towards constitutional morality, and propriety and openly supportive of his active 'othering' of those, who didn't fit his worldview. Such diminishment wasn't just reserved for partisan rivals amongst the Democrats, but even for those within the Republican ranks like the late Senator, John McCain, who were shocked at the extent to which the naturally right-wing Republican cadre under Trump had started turning hyper-right, to an extent that it became an exclusivist party. Indecorous aspersions were attributed to Trump's own Vice President, Mike Pence when he refused to toe Trump's wildly unconstitutional advice. Despite his consistently amoral history, Trump leads the Republican Presidential Primaries by a huge margin, and that says something about the 'new normal' in American politics. But if the latest unhinged remark of Trump is anything to go by, it is the 'constitutional propriety' itself that seems to be the problem with



DESPITE HIS CONSISTENTLY AMORAL HISTORY, TRUMP LEADS THE REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES BY A HUGE MARGIN, AND THAT SAYS SOMETHING ABOUT THE 'NEW NORMAL' IN AMERICAN POLITICS

the electorate who at least, unthinkingly prefer the unconstitutional language of illiberality, authoritarianism, and intolerance. Besides talking about the dangerous "bedlam" in case he is denied a shot at elections, he shamelessly spoke about wanting to be, "a dictator for one day" to shut illegal crossings at the US-Mexico border and boost energy projects. Implicit in his invocation of dictatorship was the subliminal suggestion, that firstly he is drawn to unconstitutional solutions i.e., dictatorship, and that the strong-arm methods were the only way to resolve pressing issues. It is also suggestive of his whimsical wish to change the constitution if he had his way. Just days earlier Biden had posted a sage warning, "Whether democracy is still America's sacred cause is what the 2024 election is all about". Yet Biden tellingly trails behind Trump, as if the Americans have tired of the democratic, constitutional, and inclusive ways, and now seemingly prefer a no-holds-barred approach of Trump, despite his unprecedented and unabashed derelictions. Biden has been unable to connect the defence of democracy to the day-to-day concerns of the American electorate. Even the cold fact that the

Democrat dispensation has been able to deliver better results on the most pressing issues for Americans i.e., inflation, health care, jobs, immigration, climate issues etc., - all these hard statistics count for nothing in the face of naked hate, divide and 'revenge'/retribution' (as repeatedly called out by Trump). Hate is a more potent currency than the language of civility or unity, which is increasingly, wrongly and often fatally, perceived to be a sign of weakness and indecisiveness. The dangerous sign is that Trump's promises and portents don't share a basic belief in constitutional and participative democracy, and that is exactly what enthralled and galvanises his electoral appeal. It isn't about partisan positions as Trump is building his cult and rules. It is as fellow Republican and President George Bush warned about the Trump era, "A malign force seems at work in our common life that turns every disagreement into an argument, and every argument into a clash of cultures. So much of our politics has become a naked appeal to anger, fear and resentment." (The writer, a military veteran, is a former Lt Governor of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Puducherry. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TOURISM IN LAKSHADWEEP

Sir — If there is one travel destination everyone talked about last week, it's Lakshadweep. After PM Modi's now-famous photos on the archipelago and the subsequent diplomatic fracas with the Maldives, the union territory suddenly made it to everyone's must-visit bucket list. While increasing tourist footfall will benefit the region financially, we couldn't help but worry about what hordes of tourists would mean for its fragile ecology. Environmentalists, locals, and government officials would have to assess the implications of this newfound popularity.

For all those who think traveling to Lakshadweep is as easy as buying a flight ticket, we have the complete lowdown in our thorough guide on the permits required, how long it takes to get them, travel and stay options, and more. But if it's a beach holiday that you are looking for, India has plenty of other options. From white sand beaches to off-beat destinations to the prettiest islands and that includes Marina Beach of Chennai. It is time to maintain beaches all around India to provide the best environment and ambience.

C K Subramaniam | Chennai

REVISITING SWAMI JI'S CALL

Sir — National Sample Survey and Global Hunger Index depict alarming child wasting and stunting in India. Swami Vivekananda's words echo on misplaced priorities, criticizing temple politics and extravagant space missions. He emphasized the great sin of neglecting the masses, attributing it to India's downfall. Vivekananda urged a focus on mass education, nourishment, and care, emphasizing the need to uplift the underprivileged. His call to work for the well-being of the masses remains pertinent for India's regeneration.

What Swami Vivekananda said long ago about poor people paying for our education is still relevant today as India

Alarming rise in alcohol consumption



Alarming rise in alcohol consumption among youngsters, including teenagers, poses serious risks. Studies emphasize the unsafe nature of alcohol consumption under 18, contributing to increased road rage and violence. Whisky, especially detrimental to teenage brains, can lead to memory issues and poor academic performance. A survey reveals a concerning 57 million Indians grappling with alcohol addiction, with a rising percentage among the youth. Peer pressure and curiosity drive many

teenagers to start drinking, leading to addiction. The impact on brain function, causing unconsciousness, raises accident and road rage risks. Legal consequences, including imprisonment, further highlight the urgency of addressing this issue.

Parents should also investigate if their children are involved in this. To make their children stop drinking, they should also cease drinking if they partake. If they do not drink, they should send their children to a counselor. Banning alcohol is not a solution because, due to human psychology, individuals tend to do things they are told not to do. In India, in the past 12 months, state governments earned 1.75 trillion from the sale of alcohol. Banning can also have a negative effect on the economy. The government should instruct alcohol sellers not to sell to youngsters. Banning is not a solution; resistance is!

Krishna Kararia | Delhi

relies more on indirect taxes. A poor person has to spend almost all his money to buy essential items and goods and thus has to pay moderate to high GST in the process. The fact of the matter is the poor pay more taxes than the rich in proportion to their respective incomes.

Sujit De | Kolkata

INDIAN ARMY DAY

Sir — On January 15, 1949, KM Cariappa became the first Indian Army Commander-in-Chief post-independence, succeeding British Commander Francis Butcher. Born in 1899 in Karnataka's Coorg district, Cariappa led the army in the 1947 Pakistan war and retired in 1953. The day is commemorated with army drills in New Delhi, honoring soldiers with medals. The Indian Army, established in 1776, is the world's largest, including the Assam Rifles, the largest paramilitary force, founded in 1835. Army Day pays tribute to India's rich

military history. The Indian Naval Academy in Ezhimala, Kerala, is Asia's largest. The Indian Army houses a unique cavalry regiment, one of only three globally. The Intelligence Department, established in 1941, gathers classified information. India boasts 53 army camps and 9 bases. Post-independence, the army engaged in conflicts, including Kashmir, the 1962 Sino-Indian War, and wars with Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, leading to Bangladesh's independence. The 1971 war witnessed a remarkable victory, forcing Pakistan's significant surrender. The Kargil War unfolded in 1999. The Indian Army, known for building the world's highest bridge in 1982, actively contributes to global peacekeeping under UNO mandates, safeguarding the country's borders ceaselessly, 24/7.


Shantaram Wagh | Pune

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

CONTRASTS IN GLOBAL ROAD ETIQUETTE

A touch of empathy on the road can enhance the quality of life in cities



SANJAY CHANDRA


It might have been around 1965. One afternoon, returning from the market in Aligarh in my father's jeep, we stopped at a red signal. One car, driven at a very high speed, coming from right to left, jumped the signal. He hit a cyclist, and another man crossing the road on the left side, and possibly a few others as well. I can still remember those who had fallen. But the driver did not stop. This left such an impression on my tender 6-year-old mind, that I fear crossing even a traffic signal that is green for me unless I have fully ascertained that no vehicle is moving in any other direction. Over the years, as I have roamed the globe quite extensively, I have noticed an inherent disregard for traffic rules in the Indian subcontinent, where everyone on the road assumes that only they have the right of way. People in other parts of the world are not so callous. One time we were travelling back from a project site to Addis Ababa in Ethiopia, a drive of more than 500 kilometres. I must have dozed off and woke up with a start when I heard a loud thud. Our vehicle had hit an old man at some speed. As per the sequence narrated to me by colleagues travelling with me, the old man was at fault.



My Indian mind was scared, and as the road was deserted, I am ashamed to recall that I, and probably a few of those sitting in the rear, implored the driver to rush from the spot. Reluctantly he tried to move when out of nowhere the nearby villagers rushed in. Local policemen took us to the village police station for our safety. We requested to be permitted to leave as we had to catch a flight. The local policemen eventually decided to let us go, but with the stipulation that one of them would accompany us to Addis; the driver would then have to return to the village next morning with the policeman for the law to take its course. The local driver was persistent that he should be arrested as he had committed an accident. Another time, I travelled to Switzerland. One early morning we were picked up by our host around six. On a deserted junction, our host cum driver stopped at a red traffic signal even though no vehicles were visible in any direction. We stood there till the light turned green. I have seen vehicles waiting patiently on the crowded Sukhumvit in Bangkok, and even in other cities elsewhere, if even a single pedestrian has stepped onto the zebra to cross the road. No driver would honk impatiently instigating the driver in the front to run over the hapless pedestrian. To me these instances across the globe have been revealing, as I continue to see law being broken with impunity by even the very powerful on our roads. Just a little empathy towards others is what is needed in this fast-paced life! (The writer is an engineer and author of three books and a creative writing coach; views are personal)

The pragmatic approach to counter international terrorism

The idea that a person labelled as a terrorist by one may be considered a freedom fighter by another, needs to be discarded



SUDHIR HINDWAN

The recent events in the Red Sea, involving the targeting of an Israeli ship by Iran-backed Houthi groups, followed by retaliatory actions from Israel, along with airstrikes by the UK and US on Houthi locations in Yemen, have heightened tensions in the region. The support extended by Hamas and Hezbollah to the Houthi group raises concerns about the potential for a significant terrorist threat. Previous Israeli strikes, resulting in the death of IRGC General Sayyed Razi Mousavi and Hamas Deputy Leader Saleh-al-Arouri, added to the delicate situation. Abdul-Malik al-Houthi's efforts to garner support have led to a substantial

increase in the frequency of attacks. Additionally, the double blasts in Karman, Southern Iran, on January 3, 2024, resulting in over 85 casualties and 290 injuries, have further escalated the volatile situation. The violence is spreading to Lebanon and Syria, with incidents like the use of Sana, the capital of Yemen, for planting explosive

Conservation strategies to protect big cat stripes

The primary threat to India's tiger population is the illegal trade in its body parts; international demand for tiger skin and bones never dries up

The tale of tigers highlights the impact of human activities on wildlife bringing out the urgent need for effective conservation strategies to protect these magnificent creatures and their habitats. The surge in the human population and its impact on all entities, living and nonliving, has led geologists to characterize the current epoch as the Anthropocene. As we navigate through it, we bear the responsibility to ensure that the tiger's roar continues to resonate in our forests. This is especially significant as our country shelters around 3,167 tigers, which is more than 75% of the global tiger population. The Status of Tigers Report released in 2023 by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) shows a 6.7% increase in tiger population over 2018 figures. This promising news, unfortunately, is tinged with concern. The Wildlife Protection Society of India (WPSI) reported a worrying increase in tiger deaths, from 143 in 2022 to 206 in 2023. Disturbingly, the figures for tiger mortality and poaching (including seizures), have also risen from 104 and 39 in 2022 to 150 and 56 in 2023, respectively. The authorities need to be concerned also because as per the NTCA report, the figure of 6.7 percent for 2018-2023 is a significant drop from the 33 percent increase between 2014-2018. Further, there is a decrease in tiger populations in the Western Ghats and the Northeastern hills & Brahmaputra plains from 981 and 219 in 2018 to 824 and 194 in 2023. The primary threat to India's tiger population is the illegal trade in tiger bones, coveted for their use in traditional oriental medicine, and the international trade in tiger skin and body parts. However, it's vital not to let the issue of illegal trade overshadow the grassroots issues contributing to the rise in tiger deaths and slowing population growth. The long-term survival of tigers is influenced by the changing dynamics between humans and these majestic creatures. A global study on large carnivore attacks from 1950 to 2019, analyzing 5,440 incidents, highlights escalating conflicts in areas where human activities overlap with carnivore habitats. This complicates conservation efforts, especially in regions with frequent human attacks. Diverse geographical landscapes present different scenarios due to increasing human populations encroaching into shrinking tiger ranges, co-expansion of human and tiger populations, and areas where they were previously extirpated and are now making a return. The overarching challenge in all these areas is the development of effective systems that promote coexistence between humans and the potentially threatening species. Foresters have an onerous task here! Tiger conservation success largely depends on local communities' attitudes towards cohabitation with them. The incidence of carnivore attacks is intricately tied to the socioeconomic context, with recreational activities in affluent areas and livelihood pursuits in low-income remote regions posing distinct risks. The interplay of socioeconomic and ecological factors shapes a complex dynamic that influences human-tiger interactions. Similarly, deforestation, urbanization, infrastructure development, mining, and farmland expansion are causing habitat fragmentation and encroachment, disrupting tiger habitats and increasing human-tiger encounters which cannot be attributed solely to the tigers. Incidents




OF THE INCIDENCES OF CARNIVORE ATTACKS IS INTRICATELY TIED TO THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT, WITH RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES IN AFFLUENT AREAS AND LIVELIHOOD PURSUITS IN LOW-INCOME REMOTE REGIONS POSING DISTINCT RISKS


of tiger attacks, however, significantly impact public sentiment and require careful and sensitive handling. Of late, escalating encroachments, triggered by unchecked regularization and illegally recognised forest rights under the Forest Rights Act 2006 (FRA) in the country are bringing larger human populations into closer contact with wildlife. In Protected Areas, tiger reserves were intended to be set up adhering to scientific and objective standards. Critical Tiger Habitats (CTHs) were intended to counteract the irreversible damage to wildlife from human activities. Critical Wildlife Habitats (CWHs) could be created under FRA by modifying forest rights in cases where the co-existence of wildlife and forest dwellers is not possible. While many tiger reserves and CTHs have come into existence under the Wildlife Act, no CWHs appear to have been created under FRA. Rather, there are several tiger reserves wherein ineligible forest rights have been recognized under FRA. It is important to realize that close coexistence triggers anthropogenic changes in both human and wild species' behaviours and results in conflicts that dominate people's lives. Traditional methods of prevention and coexistence are fast diminishing and people are becoming less tolerant while sharing landscapes with tigers. While it is important to use the available legal instruments for conserving tigers and their habitat, preventive measures like expanding protected areas including interstate and trans-border tiger reserves, creating corridors, prioritizing relocation of human communities, improving and restoring habitats, enhancing habitat connectivity, and increasing natural prey availability, are all vital components of a comprehensive strategy to contain tigers within their habitat and prevent potential conflicts and deaths. Decisions favouring habitat heterogeneity, such as mosaic of natural and anthropogenic landscapes cou-

pled with the loss of natural prey do emerge as major drivers behind tiger deaths. The predatory attempts of tigers struggling to survive foster a perception that they are adversaries and need to be eliminated. The arrest of villagers and seizure of a cache of 158 unlicensed single-barrel muzzle loader guns as well as pistols, handguns, long-barrel air guns, gunpowder, handmade bombs and an arms-making unit on the boundary of Simlipal Tiger Reserve in Odisha highlights such perception. In lower-income and rural areas, the majority of attacks occur during work or livelihood activities, such as farming, livestock grazing, fishing, and gathering forest products. Inadequate victim rescue and hospitalization facilities reduce the survival chances of human victims further enhances animosity and triggers poaching. With suburbanization, the carnivores may inadvertently approach houses or parks, drawn even by stray animals and anthropogenic food sources. Lack of prey base makes them food conditioned with alteration in their behaviour. Improper garbage management lack of appreciation of risks and inappropriate human behaviours also contribute to attacks on urban peripheries. With such self-created risk levels, people look towards the forest department to keep them safe from 'their' wildlife! Development of safe behaviour patterns requires dissemination of knowledge about defensive reactions by a tigress with offspring, involuntary sudden encounters, food-related attacks (e.g., when a predator is surprised while defending a carcass), predatory or unprovoked attacks, attacks by wounded or trapped animals, avoidance of provocation, or chasing of wild animals etc. Further, the information that the attacks commonly target children, squatting individuals, and solitary beings including animals can also reduce potential conflicts and help manage human-tiger coexistence across diverse conditions.

The information that deterrence is more challenging in the case of predatory attacks as compared to defensive reactions and that predatory attacks primarily focus on the weakest and smallest individuals is also important for foresters. Notably, research reveals that tiger attacks in the Sundarbans mangrove area (Bay of Bengal) were mostly predatory, while leopard attacks in the Kashmir region exhibited a similar pattern. In contrast, tiger attacks and leopard attacks in other areas of India were predominantly defensive. Such intriguing variations highlight the nuanced dynamics of human-wildlife interactions across different regions and should guide forestry professionals to find practical and sustainable solutions. Foresters today face the challenge of unravelling the roots and complexities surrounding tiger deaths and finding solutions, changing people's mindsets, and ultimately ensuring tiger conservation. Negative attitudes toward tigers built because of anthropogenic biases often intensify and flare up after attacks, emphasizing the importance of proactive measures. With limited resources at their disposal and multiple institutions influencing the relationship between humans and tigers, advocacy, as well as coordination, must also become essential traits of foresters. A professional approach that avoids hasty generalisation underscores the urgent need to carry out research that covers ecological and social contexts along with consideration of external threats posed by poaching as well as the internal challenges within the country's conservation framework. As we stand at this critical juncture, it's important to follow the philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam'. Yes, our planet belongs to all species! (The writers are former principal chief conservators of forests, UP and Maharashtra, views are personal)



BKP SINHA



ARVIND JHA



both domestic and international, continues to thrive. To address the West Asia issue, collaborative efforts among nations are crucial. A robust international mechanism for dealing with transnational terrorism must be in place. Media plays a significant role, as irrespon-

sible and exaggerated coverage can fuel terrorism and reduce moral opposition to counter-terrorism measures. Failure to diagnose and address terrorism early can have severe consequences for nations. The strategies of imposing arms and economic sanctions on so-called rogue nations have been counterproductive, garnering international sympathy for these nations. While a permanent solution remains distant, a mature understanding of terrorism by powerful nations is essential. Effective preparedness programs at the government level are necessary. Understanding the motivations of individuals involved in terrorism, along with a well-thought-out approach

to dealing with incidents and their consequences, is vital. Good intelligence, police work, and collaboration with individuals and groups can significantly contribute to improving security. A high-level intelligence network is crucial to anticipate and counter threats, especially with the increasing nexus between drug smugglers and terrorists. The concept of one man's terrorist being another man's freedom fighter must be discarded. Local cooperation with law enforcement, even at personal costs, is essential. Prompt and strict decisions by nations are necessary for psychological control of terrorists. In a changing environment,

security apparatuses and police must diversify activities, bringing together technical and professional expertise. The focus should be on anticipating security needs through specialized courses. Addressing the roots of terrorism and creating general awareness, along with public support against terrorist acts, are essential steps. However, the government's attempt to delegate judgment to police and armed forces must be balanced to avoid diluting benefits and impeding peace and negotiation. (The wrtier is recipient of Bharat Gaurav and Rastriya Gaurav Award is a professor and an expert of strategic affairs, views are personal)

IMD instrumental in protecting lives, advancing climate research: Modi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday commended the India Meteorological Department (IMD) for its exceptional services to the nation, saying it has been instrumental in safeguarding lives and advancing climate research. "Today we mark 150 years of the India Meteorological Department's exceptional service to our nation. From pioneering weather forecasting to advancing climate research, IMD has been instrumental in safeguarding lives and enhancing our understanding of the environment," the prime minister posted on X. The IMD kick-started its 150th anniversary celebrations on Monday with the launch of the 'Panchayat Mausam Seva' that aims to take weather forecasts to every farmer in every village. It also rolled out the National Framework for Climate



Services to mainstream climate information in every sector and activity.

Launching the portals, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said the IMD's impact transcended mere weather forecasts and has emerged as a safety net, protecting national interests and shielding citizens from the wrath of nature. Dhankhar said there was a time when rainfall forecasts issued by the weather office proved to be incorrect, due to lack of scientific progress, but now the pre-

dictions were precise, "down to seconds".

He said the IMD's impact transcended mere weather forecasts and has emerged as a safety net, protecting national interests and shielding citizens from the wrath of nature.

"From agriculture and healthcare to aviation and energy, its influence is omnipresent, touching the lives of every single citizen - from farmers tilling the land to jawans guarding our borders," Dhankhar said.

The vice president also

launched a mobile app of the IMD -- 'Mausam' -- that integrates all services offered by the weather office and unveiled new initiatives such as the Panchayat Mausam Seva, Decision Support System and the National Framework for Climate Services. The function was attended by Earth Sciences Minister Kiren Rijiju, Earth Sciences Secretary M Ravichandran, IMD Director General Mrutyunjay Mohapatra, former secretaries of the ministry and former directors general of IMD.

Union minister Kiren Rijiju said India aims to detect and predict all small-scale severe weather events through the augmentation of its weather observation network and the procurement of more powerful computing systems. Rijiju emphasised that weather and climate impacts are more pronounced than ever, and India strives to become a more climate-resilient country.

He said that although the

IMD's forecast accuracy has improved by 40 per cent in the last five years compared to the preceding five years, challenges persist in predicting small-scale severe weather events such as cloudbursts.

To address this challenge, Rijiju highlighted the importance of augmenting the network of doppler radars and automatic weather stations. The procurement of high-power computing systems will enable the IMD to run higher-resolution models, enhancing the ability to detect and predict all small-scale events in the future, he said.

"Everything depends on observations. The more observation capacity we have, the better our forecasting capacity," the minister added. The meteorological department has already installed 10 doppler radars in the western Himalayan region and plans to establish 11 radars in the eastern Himalayan region, Rijiju shared.

Murmu visits Modi Gallery at PM Sangrahalaya

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Newly curated Narendra Modi Gallery at the Pradhanmantri Sangrahalaya which will be opened to the public from Tuesday i.e. January 16, 2024 already had a first visitor on Monday, the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, saw the displays there with deep interest.

Later, the President shared her experience at the venue on a social platform X saying, "My visit to the Prime Ministers' Sangrahalaya was a pleasant and illuminating experience.

"The galleries dedicated to the past Prime Ministers of India not only rekindled many memories but also offered new ways to engage with our past. As the first visitor of the gallery devoted to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I was glad to see his contributions to the various spheres of nation-building coherently showcased in one place. The use of advanced technology makes the content all the more engaging."

During her visit of nearly one-and-a-half hours, the



President also saw the Constitution Gallery in the old building as well as various sections such as Sushashan, Paryavaran, Vikas, Antarrashtriya Sadbhaava, Vigyanodaya, Sanskritik Dharohar, and Suraksha, Jan Bhagidari. She was particularly impressed by immersive and interactive displays. She also visited the experiential zone Anubhuti. President expressed her appreciation for the Sangrahalaya by writing, "I am convinced that every Indian citizen who comes here and sees the various galleries of the Sangrahalaya will feel proud" in the visitor book, according to a statement here.

The new building

Sangrahalaya has the Freedom and Unity Gallery, which shows films on Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, before proceeding to the galleries of various Prime Ministers.

"The President saw with interest the Badminton racket and charkha, and the passbook of Lal Bahadur Shastri. She also saw with deep interest the letters of Jayaprakash Narayan and his jail diary.

She saw the recreation of Pokharan 2 nuclear tests, the display on Golden Quadrilateral, and the Kargil War film. The President also saw with deep interest the display of the Indo-US Civil nuclear deal," said the statement.

India has seen significant reduction in poverty in last one decade: Niti Aayog

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

India has experienced a significant reduction in its poverty in the last one decade with 24.82 crore people exiting multidimensional poverty line between 2013-14 to 2022-23, a report by government's think tank NITI Aayog said on Monday.

The Paper by Prof Ramesh Chand, Member, NITI Aayog which was released in presence of BVR Subrahmanyam, CEO NITI Aayog, said India has registered a significant decline in multidimensional poverty from 29.17 per cent in 2013-14 to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23 i.e. a reduction of 17.89 percentage points. Uttar Pradesh registered the largest decline in the number of poor with 5.94 crore people escaping multidimensional poverty during the last nine years followed by Bihar at 3.77 crore, Madhya Pradesh at 2.30 crore and Rajasthan at 1.87 crore.

The paper also shows that the pace of decline in poverty headcount ratio using the exponential method was much faster between 2015-16 to 2019-21 (10.66 per cent annual rate of decline) compared to period 2005-06 to 2015-16 (7.69 per cent annual rate of decline). All 12 indicators of MPI have recorded significant improvement during the entire study period. To assess the poverty levels in the year 2013-14 against the current scenario (i.e. for the year 2022-23), projected estimates have been used due to data limitations for these specific periods.

Significant initiatives covering all dimensions of poverty have led to 24.82 crore indi-



viduals escaping multidimensional poverty in the last 9 years. As a result, India is likely to achieve its SDG target of halving multidimensional poverty well before 2030. The Government's persistent dedication and resolute commitment to enhancing the lives of the most vulnerable and deprived have been instrumental in this accomplishment, said the report.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is a globally recognized comprehensive measure that captures poverty in multiple dimensions beyond monetary aspects. MPI's global methodology is based on robust Alkire and Foster (AF) method that identifies people as poor based on universally acknowledged metrics designed to assess acute poverty, providing a complementary perspective to conventional monetary poverty measures.

The report attributed the decline in poverty to initiatives like Poshan Abhiyan and Anemia Mukh Bharat which have significantly enhanced access to healthcare facilities, leading to a substantial decrease in deprivation. Operating one of the world's largest food security programs, the Targeted

Public Distribution System under the National Food Security Act covers 81.35 crore beneficiaries, providing food grains to rural and urban populations.

Recent decisions, such as extending free food grain distribution under Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana for another five years, exemplify Government's commitment. Various programs addressing maternal health, clean cooking fuel distribution through Ujjwala Yojana, improved electricity coverage via Saubhagya, and transformative campaigns like Swachh Bharat Mission and Jal Jeevan Mission have collectively elevated living conditions and overall well-being of people. Additionally, flagship programs like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana and PM Awas Yojana have played pivotal roles in financial inclusion and providing safe housing for the underprivileged.

While the performance of States varies, some States which were traditionally having high poverty have made remarkable progress in helping people escape poverty, thus reducing inter-state disparities in multidimensional poverty.

Annual deaths from fungal diseases spike to 3.75 million, reveals study

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Indicating a disturbing rise in deaths from fungal diseases worldwide, a global study using data from 80 countries including India has said that the annual total of mortalities from such ailment is now estimated at 3.75 million, a figure that doubles previous estimates, and outnumbers deaths from malaria six-fold and from tuberculosis three-fold.

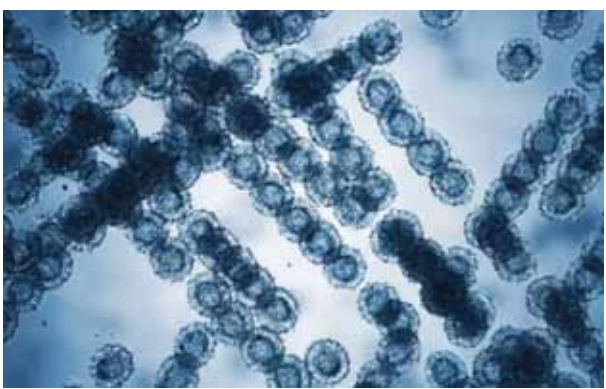
Fungal diseases can be particularly problematic in individuals with weakened immune systems, such as those with HIV/AIDS, cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy, and organ transplant recipients. There are about 12 million species of fungi thriving in marine, freshwater, desert, forests and almost all other ecosystems on the earth. Of these, a fraction cause infections in humans.

The research, published in the journal Lancet Infectious Diseases, calculated an annual total at about 6.55 million acute cases.

The work is the result of a collaboration of over 300 professionals across the world who contributed to published estimates for their country and individual fungal diseases.

Previous estimates were imprecise as many fungal diseases exacerbate an existing disorder, itself often severe, such as leukaemia or AIDS, said David Denning, a professor of infectious disease at The University of Manchester, UK.

However, according to the



study, of the deaths linked to fungal disease, around 68 per cent or 2.55 million were likely to have been directly caused by it. Around 1.2 million deaths (32 per cent) had other underlying disease, with fungal disease contributing.

"This work is the first global comprehensive annual incidence estimate of fungal disease, yet many gaps and uncertainties remain," said Denning.

Around a third of 3.23 million chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) deaths worldwide are linked to infection with the fungus Aspergillus, the researcher explained.

Though pulmonary tuberculosis was classified as the cause of death in 1.2 million people in 2019, as many as 340,000 (3.4 lakh) of these could actually be fungal disease deaths, the researchers said.

Of the estimated 311,594 (3.1 lakh) leukaemia deaths globally in 2020, 14,000 (4.5 per cent) could be attributable to aspergillosis, and some to other fungal infections, they said.

Lung and bronchus cancer

annual deaths stand at 1.8 million, with the new estimate indicating that aspergillosis is implicated in 49,000 deaths (2.7 per cent) of them.

Candida -- another type of fungal infection -- is a serious problem in intensive care, complex surgical patients, diabetes, cancer and renal failure, as well as premature babies.

The researchers estimate that about 1.57 million people suffer from Candida bloodstream infection or invasive candidiasis with 9,95,000 (9.9 lakh) deaths (63.6 per cent), each year.

"Our prior estimates of annual mortality were 1.5 to 2 million, yet we now find the probable number dying with or of a fungal infection is double this at about 3.75 million," Denning added.

Fungal diseases, also known as mycoses, can affect various parts of the body and can range from mild to severe, depending on the individual's immune system and the specific type of fungus involved. Common fungal infections include candidiasis, aspergillosis, cryptococcosis, and others.

First in human trials for deadly Nipah vaccine launched in UK

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

Scientists at the University of Oxford in the UK have launched first-in-human vaccine trials for the deadly Nipah virus which impacts many Asian countries, including India. The trials of the ChAdOx1 NipahB vaccine will consist of 51 people aged 18 to 55, which will be led by the Oxford Vaccine Group.

Nipah virus is a zoonotic virus that can be transmitted from animals to humans. It can cause severe respiratory illness and encephalitis, with outbreaks reported in several Asian countries, including India. Developing a vaccine for Nipah virus is crucial due to its potential for causing deadly outbreaks.

Outbreaks have occurred in countries in Asia, including Singapore, Malaysia, Bangladesh and India, with a recent one in Kerala in September last year, they said. Nipah virus is carried by fruit bats and may also be transmitted by contact with infected animals (such as pigs) or from person-to-person via close contact, according to the researchers.

The virus, which is recognised by the World Health Organization as a priority disease requiring urgent research, belongs to the same family of paramyxoviruses as more well-known pathogens like measles, they said.

Despite the first outbreaks of Nipah virus occurring 25 years ago in Malaysia and Singapore, there are currently no approved vaccines or

treatments.

"Nipah virus was first identified in 1998, and yet 25 years on the global health community still has no approved vaccines or treatments for this devastating disease," said the trial's Principal Investigator, Brian Angus, from the University of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Medicine.

"Due to the high mortality rate and the nature of Nipah virus transmission, the disease is identified as a priority pandemic pathogen. This vaccine trial is an important milestone in identifying a solution that could prevent local outbreaks occurring, while also helping the world prepare for a future global pandemic," Angus said.

In-Kyu Yoon, acting executive director of vaccine research & development at CEPI, funders of the trial, said Nipah has epidemic potential, with its fruit bat hosts found in areas home to over two billion people.

"This trial is a step forward in efforts to build a suite of tools to protect against this killer virus. Knowledge gained could also inform development of other Paramyxovirus countermeasures," Yoon said.

The vaccine uses the ChAdOx1 platform, the same viral vector vaccine platform that was used for the Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, the researchers said.

The project will run over the next 18 months, with further trials expected to follow in a Nipah-affected country, they added.

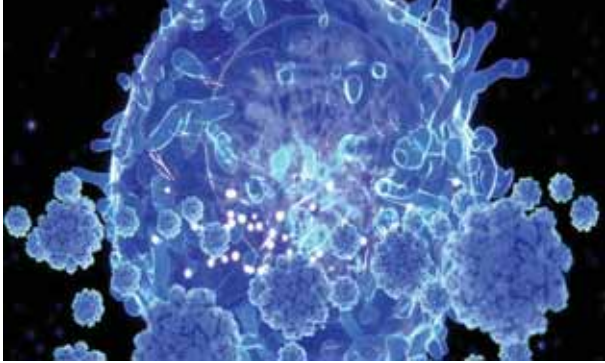
US scientists find immune cell that can eliminate cancer, Covid-19

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

In a groundbreaking discovery, researchers from City of Hope, California has given a ray of hope to cancer patients as they found that a type of immune cell in the human body known to be important for allergy and other immune responses that can also attack and eliminate cancer and fight viruses like SARS-Cov-2, that causes Covid-19 infection.

Since these cells which are called human type-2 innate lymphoid cells (ILC2s), can be expanded outside of the body and applied in larger numbers to overpower a tumour's defences and eliminate malignant cells in the future could be manufactured, preserved by freezing, and then administered to patients.

"In the future, these cells could be manufactured, preserved by freezing, and then administered to patients. Unlike T cell-based therapies like CAR T-cells, which necessitate using the patient's own cells due to their specific characteristics, ILC2s might be sourced from healthy donors, presenting a dis-



tinct potential therapeutic approach as an allogeneic and 'off-the-shelf' product," Yu added.

The cells were tested in mouse models with cancer, according to the preclinical research published in the journal Cell.

"We have identified human ILC2 cells as a new member of the cell family capable of directly killing all types of cancers, including blood cancers and solid tumours," said Jianhua Yu, Professor in the Department of Hematology & Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation at City of Hope, California, US.

In a previous research

focussed on mouse cells, ILC2s had not consistently shown promise when tested for their cancer-killing abilities. However, in the new study, researchers found "that human ILC2s function as direct cancer killers while their mouse counterparts do not," said Michael Caligiuri, Professor in the Department of Hematology & Hematopoietic Cell Transplantation at City of Hope.

To test human ILC2s, Yu and the team first isolated the cells from a blood sample. Then, they developed a novel platform that in four weeks can expand ILC2s harvested from the body 2,000-fold. They next injected these externally expanded ILC2s into

mice engrafted with human acute myeloid leukaemia (AML) or solid tumours, including pancreatic cancer, lung cancer and glioblastoma. The results showed that this ILC2 population could kill these tumours via a previously unknown cancer-killing mechanism.

"One convincing and direct piece of evidence appeared when we placed one ILC2 and one tumour cell directly together and found that the tumour cell died, but the ILC2 cell survived," Yu said. "This proves that the ILC2s directly killed the cancer cell in the absence of any other cell."

ILC2s are rare in the body, Caligiuri said, found in highest numbers in the lungs, gut and skin. Yu noted that the ILC2s do not need to come from the cancer patient's own cells, meaning that there may be the possibility of harvesting and freezing ILC2s from healthy donors for ILC2 treatment options in the future.

"We aim to really expand the applications of these findings, potentially beyond cancer treatments," Yu said, noting that "ILC2s may even work against viruses, such as COVID-19".

Modi, Putin discuss ties



PNS ■ NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday had a "good conversation" with Russian President Vladimir Putin as they discussed various positive developments in the two countries' "special and privileged strategic partnership".

In a post on X, Modi said he and Putin also agreed to chalk out a road map for future initiatives. "Had a good conversation with President Putin. We discussed various positive developments in our Special & Privileged Strategic Partnership and agreed to chalk out a roadmap for future initiatives. We also had a useful exchange of views on various regional and global issues, including Russia's Presidency of the BRICS," the prime minister

Robotic assisted myomectomy performed on US based patient successfully

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

A US-based 32-year-old patient diagnosed with two large fibroids within her uterine muscle was successfully treated at an Indian hospital recently in the NCR region through robotic-assisted myomectomy, showcasing the reach of robot-assisted arms in the body parts where human hands cannot reach.

The patient has been married for four years and had sought medical attention due to heavy and painful menstrual periods and her inability to conceive. A medical examination revealed the presence of two fibroid, measuring 5 cm and 10 cm in size, causing her distressing symptoms and infertility issues, said Dr. Anjana Singh, Director & HOD, Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Fortis Hospital Noida.

Explaining about the functioning of the robot-assisted myomectomy, the doctor said that the sophisticated gadget helps the surgeon put tools and a tiny camera through

small incisions on the lower belly.

"This gives the surgeon a better view of the area which moves the tools using a robotic controller. The advanced dexterity of the robotic arms allows meticulous fibroid removal while preserving the integrity of the uterus," she said, adding that the use of robotic technology decreases postoperative pain, ensuring a more comfortable healing process.

The patient was under the follow-up of the doctors for over three weeks after the surgery, after which she flew back to the USA in the last week of December.

The doctors also said that any delay in surgery would have caused the fibroid to grow, worsening her symptoms and requiring a more complicated surgery thereafter.

"The benefits of this cutting-edge procedure were manifold. Firstly, the patient experienced a significant reduction in her heavy and painful menstrual periods, leading to a substantial improvement in her quality of

life. Additionally, the removal of the fibroids eliminated the pressure on her uterine lining and cavity, increasing her chances of conceiving naturally.

The reduced recovery time meant that she could resume her daily activities relatively quickly, added Dr. Anjana Singh.

The case also highlights the growing demand of Indian medical tourism among foreigners. "As in this patient's case not only were the waiting times for surgery unreasonably long, but the associated costs were also exorbitant. This led her to explore alternative options. In India, she got medical relieve at a low-cost budget," said an official from Fortis Noida.

According to reports, India's medical tourism has grown rapidly in recent years, with an increase in foreign tourists from 183,000 in 2020 to 304,000 in 2021.

It is expected that the medical tourism market is likely to grow at a CAGR of more than 20% between 2023 and 2027 to more than USD 35 billion from current USD 6 billion.

Tendulkar becomes latest victim of deepfake video

T N RAGHUNATHA ■
MUMBAI

Trashing a deepfake video that showed him endorsing a new app and narrating how it had helped his daughter Sara earn easy money, Sachin Tendulkar on Monday dubbed the video as “fake”, said it reflected “rampant misuse of technology” and called for swift action to stop spread of misinformation.

Taking to “X” (former Twitter), Tendulkar tore into a deepfake video featuring endorsing the gaming app “Skyward Aviator Quest” that has been making rounds on various social media platforms, termed it as “fake” and asked the agencies concerned to act swiftly against the imposters creating and spreading such “fake” content.

An apparent AI creation, the fake video — which Tendulkar made mince meat of — carried a voice that is strikingly similar to that of the master blaster. In the video, the legendary cricketer is shown purportedly saying, “These days everyone is talking about my daughter playing Skyward



Aviator Quest and earning as much as Rs 1,80,000 every day, Sometimes I wonder how easy it has become to make big money. It is interesting to know that this application comes free. Any I-phone owner can download this App”.

Calling the video as “fake”, Tendulkar wrote on his “X” handle: “These videos are fake. It is disturbing to see rampant misuse of technology. Request everyone to report videos, ads & apps like these in large numbers”

Lamenting that lack of alertness and responsiveness on the part of the social media platforms to deal with complaints

against this kind of “fake” videos, the cricketer called for “swift action to stop spread of misinformation and deepfakes.

“Social Media platforms need to be alert and responsive to complaints. Swift action from their end is crucial to stopping the spread of misinformation and deepfakes,” Tendulkar wrote, as he tagged Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar and Maharashtra Cyber Crime.

Significantly enough, this is not for the first time that the Tendulkars have fallen victim to deepfakes. In the third week of November last year, Sara

Tendulkar had taken to Instagram to call out fake Twitter accounts spreading misinformation using her name.

Sara, who has 5.9 million followers on Instagram, had expressed serious concern over the social media activity being done by accounts impersonating her. “Social media is a wonderful space for all of us to share our joys, sorrows and daily activities. However, it is disconcerting to see the misuse of technology as it takes away from the truth and authenticity of the internet. I have come across some deepfake photos of me which are far from reality,” Sara wrote in a detailed statement.

Maintaining that she does not have an account on “X”, Sara wrote: “A few accounts on X (formerly Twitter) have obviously been created with an intent to impersonate me and mislead people. I do not have an account on X, and I hope X looks into such accounts and suspends them.”

“Entertainment should never come at the expense of the truth. Let’s encourage communication that’s based in trust and reality,” she added.

Sandeskhali case: Court rebukes Bengal Police

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
KOLKATA

The Calcutta High Court on Monday rebuked the Bengal Police for carrying out a sloppy investigation in the Sandeshkhali case where a raiding team of the Enforcement Directorate was attacked by the supporters of local TMC leader and strongman Shahjehan Sheikh. The ED was raiding the house of Shahjehan in connection with the Rs 10,000 crore ration scam that has seen Bengal minister Jyotipriya Mallick going to jail.

Dealing a judicial rap on the Police knuckles the Bench of Justice Joy Sengupta asked why they had managed to arrest only four persons in the past 10 days when hundreds of people were seen carrying out the attack giving serious injuries to the ED officials besides damaging their vehicles.

The Judge also asked as to how the Police were not able to nab the main accused Shahjehan who had managed

to file a petition from his ‘undisclosed’ location before the High Court with a pleading of being heard.

The Court asked the police to produce the case diary o the next date of hearing.

The Police have earlier told the court that Shahjehan was absconding whereas many local party men and villagers were telling the media that he was very much in his village and contrary to reports that he might have slipped into Bangladesh was conducting his party affairs from his house.

Meanwhile, the ED officials on Monday conducted fresh raids in four locations in Kolkata. The raids were conducted in money transferring offices allegedly owned by another TMC leader from Bongaon Shankar Adhya who is now in police custody. ED has been quizzing Adhya to know his alleged role in transferring thousands of crores of rupees belonging to the top TMC leadership to Bangladesh, Dubai, Baharin and other countries.

Congress finalises candidates in Kerala for Lok Sabha poll

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

Congress-led United Democratic Front in Kerala has almost finalised the list of candidates for the 20 constituencies in the State for the Lok Sabha polls scheduled for March-April 2024. Most of the sitting UDF MPs from the State would be renominated barring a couple of persons whose performance during the last five years was anything but satisfactory.

K Sudhakaran, KPCC president who represents the Kannur constituency is likely to move out from the race due to an ailment for which he is undergoing treatment. He is likely to be nominated as Rajya Sabha candidate to help him to stay out of the din and hectic journeys associated with campaigning.

Kannur is likely to get a young and new candidate and it could be Dr Shama Muhammed, the young dental surgeon who is also the national spokesperson of the party. Rahul Gandhi has been impressed by her performance

in articulating party views as well as in countering the charges made by the BJP. Since K Sudhakaran, KPCC chief who is the sitting member from Kannur is not in the best of health, Dr Muhammed is likely to be fielded as the candidate from Kannur,” said a senior party leader in the State.

Kasaragod, the northern most constituency in Kerala, represented by Rajmohan Unnithan will also see a change of candidate. “The Muslim League has demanded three seats instead of the two seats which has been allocated to the party in the previous hustings. Since the constituency has a considerable Muslim population, the Congress is likely to offer Kasaragod to Muslim League,” said the leader who does not want his name to be quoted.

There is widespread resentment against the style of functioning of Unnithan who scrapped through with a thin majority of 40,000 in the last election, said a veteran socio-cultural organisation.

AAP to hold Sundar Kand recitals across Delhi

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

In an apparent attempt to counter the BJP’s focus on the consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya and cleanliness drive at temples, the AAP has announced its plan to hold “Sundar Kand” recital programmes across Delhi on Tuesdays.

The consecration ceremony at the Ram temple in Ayodhya will be held on January 22 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be present there.

AAP national convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said he will join a “Sundar Kand” recital event along with his wife in the Rohini area and invited people to attend such programmes to be held near their homes.

“Sundar Kand” is one of the chapters in the Ramayana devoted to Lord Hanuman.

“The Aam Aadmi Party is tomorrow organising Sundar Kand recitals at many places in Delhi for the peace, happiness and progress of all. I will along with my wife join the devotees at a temple in Rohini for the Sundar Kand recital at 3 PM. You all are invited to attend the recitals near your homes as per your convenience,” Kejriwal posted on X.

AAP leader and Delhi minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said, “Sundar Kand’ recitation programme will be held in all Assembly constituencies and municipal wards on the first Tuesday of every month.

Party MLAs, councillors and office bearers will take part in the programmes that will held at over 2,600 places in the city.”

He invited the people of Delhi to participate in the programme enthusiastically.

Kand

Kejriwal addresses NCC cadets at camp

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said on Monday the National Cadet Corps with its motto of ‘Unity and Discipline’ has been instrumental in strengthening the patriotic and secular values which are enshrined in the Indian Constitution.

Addressing a gathering at an event hosted at the ongoing NCC Republic Day Camp at the Delhi Cantonment, he also asserted that the Corps extends them a great opportunity to imbibe qualities of discipline, spirit of adventure, and service to the nation.

Delhi LG gives nod for notifying 147 acres in Rani Khera for industry

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena has given his nod for notifying 147 acres of land in northwest Delhi’s Rani Khera locality for developing it as an industrial area, Raj Niwas officials said on Monday.

The land was transferred to the Delhi State Industrial and Infrastructure Development Corporation (DSIIDC) from the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in 2007.

The DSIIDC had plans to develop the multi-level manufacturing hub but due to the stay imposed by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on December 14, 2017, the project got stuck until the Supreme Court vacated the NGT order on July 31, 2023.

After the legal hurdles were cleared, the Delhi government’s Industries department sought Saxena’s approval on January 3 for notifying Rani Khera for development as an industrial area by the DSIIDC under the provision of Sub-section (k) of Section 2 of the Delhi Industrial Development Operation and Maintenance (DIDOM) Act, 2010, in terms of the Master Plan of Delhi 2021.

The Lieutenant Governor’s nod for notifying 147 acres of land in Rani Khera Industrial area comes three months after he gave similar approval for specifying 55.20 acres of land at Baprola Industrial area in September 2023 and 920 acres of land at Kanjhawala Industrial area in May 2023.

PM Modi embraces welfare...

From Page 5

Those who were always ignored earlier have not only been reached out by him but also worshipped, he said. During the event, Modi interacted with some beneficiaries of PM-JANMAN as they highlighted the positive changes in their lives after they availed various Government schemes to get access to cooking gas connections, electricity, piped water, and housing.

“It is the endeavour of our Government that no one is left out of its welfare schemes,” he said. The first instalment of ₹540 crore was released to beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Gramin under PM-JANMAN, which was launched for the socio-economic welfare of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) on November 15 on the occasion of Janjatiya Gaurav Diwas.

PM-JANMAN, with a budget of approximately ₹24,000 crore, focuses on 11 critical interventions through nine Ministries and is aimed at improving socio-economic conditions of PVTGs by saturating PVTG households and habitations with basic facilities such as safe housing, clean drinking water, and sanitation. It also seeks to provide improved access to education, health and nutrition, electricity, road and telecom connectivity, and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Modi said the biggest beneficiaries of his Government’s ‘Aspirational Districts Programme’ to boost development in relatively backward districts are Scheduled Tribes. “Today the tribal society is seeing and understanding how our government is working for their culture and dignity,” he said.

Amitabh...

From Page 5

Speaking on the investment, Bachchan was reported to have said, “I am looking forward to embarking on this economic journey with The House of Abhinandan Lodha for The Sarayu in Ayodhya, a city that holds a special place in my heart.” The economic implications of Bachchan’s involvement in The Sarayu are notable, given the broader context of Ayodhya’s infrastructure and economic development since the landmark Supreme Court verdict in 2019. Abhinandan Lodha, Chairman of HoABL, hailed Bachchan as the “first citizen” of The Sarayu, underscoring the potential economic impact of his association with the project. “His investment signifies not only confidence in the city’s economic potential but also a deep appreciation for its spiritual heritage,” Lodha reportedly said.

Indian economy...

From Page 5

Various associations are providing their members with 5 or 11 lamps,” he added. More than 500 LED lights and sound systems will be installed, and drummers will play traditional instruments at over 300 locations. Additionally, around 100 Shri Ram processions will be held in markets, featuring banners and traditional attire, where women will participate in traditional attire with Shri Ram kalash on their heads. Delhi will also witness numerous cultural programs, with folk dancers and singers coming from Vrindavan and Jaipur for performances in many markets.

INDIA Bloc...

From Page 5

“If the Lok Sabha elections are held as free and fair as the 2007 Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections when there were no irregularities or rigging in EVMs, then our party will bring better results by contesting the polls alone,” she said.

Giving the reason for not siding with any party or alliance in the upcoming elections, Mayawati said, “Our party is contesting alone because its leadership is in the hands of a Dalit against whom the casteist mentality of most of the parties has not changed yet.”

“Many parties want to contest elections in alliance

with the BSP... But it is very important for us to look after the interest of our party,” she said.

However, the BSP chief said the support can be extended after the elections if there is proper participation, but this support will not be given for free.

She said all the Opposition parties want to keep the BSP away from power by uniting and adopting various tactics. The former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister also said she has received an invitation for the January 22 consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, but a decision on attending it has not been taken yet because of certain party programmes.

According to West Bengal Congress sources, the PCC leaders through Congress observer GA Mir communicated to the AICC

that either the party should consider going it alone in the State --- “which would be better organisationally” — or consider an alliance with the Left Front.

“An alliance with the TMC will not only be counterproductive but suicidal,” a senior PCC leader said. Mir, who was recently in Kolkata — to discuss the preparations of Rahul Gandhi’s Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which is likely to pass through some parts of this State too — had met senior PCC leaders like Adhir Chowdhury.

While the Left Front has already said there is no question of allying with the TMC, what seems to have jolted the INDIA Bloc further in Bengal is the TMC’s unwillingness to part with more than two seats in the State.

Ram Nagari to be...

From Page 5

“To minimise inconvenience for devotees attending the programme and those arriving afterward, comprehensive arrangements are being implemented,” Kumar added. Over 10,000 strategically placed CCTV cameras will enable thorough surveillance across Ayodhya, emphasising the commitment to security during this momentous occasion.

Kumar highlighted the use of state-of-the-art equipment in the security plan, emphasizing its effectiveness in supporting

law enforcement efforts. The security measures have been meticulously devised, taking into consideration both the consecration ceremony and the expected influx of devotees.

“In ensuring the safety and well-being of all attendees, the security team aims to create an environment where devotees can participate in the Pran Pratishtha program without facing any inconveniences,” he said.

This heightened state of security aligns with the ongoing Shri Ram Charan Paduka Yatra, a significant pilgrimage that began in Chitrakoot on Makar

Sankranti (January 15) and is scheduled to reach Ayodhya on January 19. The yatra involves sacred rituals, including the collection of water from the pond at Bharatpuk and the worship of Paduka. As participants traverse through Prayagraj, Shringverpur, Pratapgarrh, and Sultanpur, cultural programmes and overnight stays in various districts are planned.

In a monumental development for the grand Shri Ram temple in Ayodhya, a 2100 kg Ashtadhatu bell is poised to be installed. Crafted over four years in Jalesar, Etah,

this imposing bell stands at an impressive six feet in height and five feet in width. Expected to be the largest bell within the temple complex, it not only contributes to architectural splendor but also resonates with a captivating sound that is anticipated to echo far and wide. The construction of this bell, a symbol of spiritual significance, incurred a cost of approximately Rs 25 lakh. After undergoing hours of darshan and worship, the bell commenced its journey to Ayodhya on January 8, adding another layer of sanctity to the sacred city.

Seven days rituals...

From Page 5

He said the statue crafted by Karnataka’s Arun Yogiraj would be placed on the pedestal of the sanctum sanctorum. “The statue, weighing between 150 and 200 kilogram, depicts the divine figure of Ramlala standing with a bow and arrow, exuding a regal and Vishnu-incarnation aura. Ramlala will be seated on a lotus flower in the sanctum sanctorum, with an estimated height of about 8 feet, including the lotus,” he said.

Rai clarified that owing to the preparations, the darshan of Ramlala would not be held from January 20 to 21.

The ceremonies were to feature the anointing of Ramlala with water from all the rivers of India, along with gifts from Ram’s in-laws’ house in Nepal and maternal grandfather’s house in Chhattisgarh. Musical instruments from across the country were to be played

during the puja, showcasing the rich cultural diversity of India.

The Divisional Commissioner of Ayodhya, Gaurav Dayal, revealed that seating arrangements for 7,500 people had been meticulously planned on the temple premises. Special codes would be assigned to distinguish seating for distinguished guests. Rai emphasised the inclusivity of the event, extending an invitation to dignitaries from various fields, highlighting the culmination of a historic journey in the construction of the Ram Mandir.

As the nation eagerly awaited the consecration ceremonies, the cultural and religious landscape of Ayodhya brimmed with anticipation, with devotees and enthusiasts from different corners of the country poised to participate in this momentous occasion.

The seven day schedule of the consecration function:

January 16 : Atonement by the host appointed by the temple trust, Dashavid bath on the banks of river Saryu, Vishnu worship and Godan.

January 17: Procession will visit Ayodhya with the idol of Ramlala, devotees will reach the temple carrying Saryu water in Mangal Kalash.

January 18: Formal rituals will start with Ganesh Ambika Puja, Varun Puja, Matrika Puja, Brahmin Varan, Vastu Puja etc.

January 19: Agni Sthapana, Navagraha Sthapana and Haven.

January 20: After washing the sanctum sanctorum of the temple with the holy water of Saryu, there will be Vaastu Shanti and Annadhivas.

January 21: After a divine bath with 125 urns, Shayadhivas will be done. January 22: After morning worship, the deity of the Ramallah will be consecrated in Mrigashira Nakshatra in the afternoon

Scindia rebuffs...

From Page 5

The DGCA said there should also be appropriate sensitisation of the airline staff at the airports to suitably communicate with and continuously guide and inform the passengers about flight delays, according to a release.

“In view of the prevalent fog season and adverse weather conditions, airlines may cancel, sufficiently in advance, such flights that are anticipated to be delayed or consequentially delayed on account of such conditions beyond a period of 3 hours with a view to obviate congestion at the airport and mitigate passenger inconvenience,” DGCA said. The SOPs have been issued in view of the “fog-induced disruptions and adverse weather conditions at various airports, including Delhi airport, causing delays, cancellations and inconvenience to passengers”, an official release said.

Delhi airport has four runways — RW 09/27, RW

11R/29L, RW 10/28, and RW 11L/29R. One of them is not operational now. The airport is the country’s largest airport and handles around 1,300 flights daily.

As the cold wave worsened on Monday, the mercury plunged four degrees below normal to 3.3 degrees Celsius, four notches below the season’s average, the lowest this season so far, in Delhi, even as dense fog enveloping the Capital reduced visibility to zero at Palam for around two hours and disrupted air traffic as more than 150 flights were delayed.

Four flights were diverted to Jaipur, and one flight to Ahmedabad between 1 am and 5 am. There are also reports of several trains being either delayed or canceled due to low visibility or late running.

Delhi airport has four runways — RW 09/27, RW 11R/29L, RW 10/28, and RW 11L/29R. One of them is not operational now. The airport is the country’s largest airport and

handles around 1,300 flights daily. Data from 5 am to 9 am shows that the CAT-III Runway RWY 11R/29L handled 30 landings and 1 takeoff during the 4-hour period, whereas the non-CAT III Runway RWY 9/27 couldn’t handle any flight movement, and RWY 11L/29R handled 2 Take-offs during the period,’ the civil aviation ministry said in a post on X on Monday. Apart from reduced visibility, the situation got worse because Delhi Airport currently has only one CAT III-equipped runway for operations in low visibility. Runway 28/10 has been closed for scheduled re-carpeting since mid-September.

In Lodhi Road, the minimum temperature dropped to 3.1 degrees Celsius. A foggy and cold morning gave way to a sunny day in the national Capital on Monday, bringing slight relief to Delhiites who woke up to the season’s coldest morning with a minimum temperature of 3.3 degrees Celsius. However, owing to bright sunshine in the afternoon, the mercury reached a high of 19.7 degrees Celsius, normal for this time of the year, the India Meteorological

Department said.

Earlier, in a disturbing incident, a passenger on an IndiGo flight was arrested after he assaulted a pilot when he was making an announcement regarding a delay in takeoff at the IGI airport. The incident came to light after a video went viral on social media showing the passenger running up to the captain of the IndiGo flight and slapping him. The captain was making an announcement regarding delays when the man punched him. The incident happened on a day dense fog majorly impacted operations at the Delhi airport leading to 500 flights being diverted, canceled, or delayed, leaving thousands of passengers waiting for hours. The passenger was deported after the incident and handed over to central security forces. A First Information Report (FIR) was lodged in the matter based on the complaint by the captain of the Delhi-Goa IndiGo flight. The flight took off from Delhi at 6 pm after a delay of more than 10 hours, according to the flight tracking website flightradar24.

In the video, the air hostesses tried to keep the passenger away; he can be heard telling the

pilot: ‘Nahi chalana toh mat chala, bol de (If you don’t want to fly the plane, then don’t).’ To this, one of the flight attendants said, ‘Sir aap aisa nahi kar sakte (sir, you cannot do this).’ As other passengers were shocked and agitated, a man in a blue hoodie can be seen trying to calm the man down at the end of the video. The video was originally shared on an Instagram story by a user Evgenia Belskaia on Sunday night. According to the police, the co-pilot of flight number 6E 2175, between Delhi and Goa, and other security personnel gave a complaint regarding one passenger assaulting and misbehaving with them in the flight.

The Indira Gandhi International Airport (IGI) DCP, also assured to take appropriate legal action against the accused. A case under sections 323 (punishment for voluntarily causing hurt), 341 (punishment for wrongful restraint), and 290 (punishment for creating public nuisance) of the IPC and section 22 of the Aircraft Rules has been registered against the passenger, and investigations are on, another police officer said.

Missile strikes US-owned vessel off Yemen

AP ■ JERUSALEM

A missile fired from Yemen struck a US-owned ship just off the coast of Yemen in the Gulf of Aden, less than a day after Yemen's Houthi rebels fired an anti-ship cruise missile toward an American destroyer in the Red Sea, officials said.

Suspicion immediately fell on the Iranian-backed Houthis, though the rebels did not immediately acknowledge carrying out the assault on the Gibraltar Eagle. It marked the latest attack rolling global shipping amid Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

The Houthis have targeted that crucial corridor linking Asian and Mideast energy and cargo shipments to the Suez Canal onward to Europe over the war, attacks that threaten to widen that conflict into a regional conflagration.

The United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations, which oversees Mideast waters, said Monday's attack happened some 110 miles (177 kilometers) miles southeast of Aden. It said the ship's captain reported that the "port side of vessel hit from

above by a missile."Private security firms Ambrey and Dryad Global told The Associated Press that the vessel was the Eagle Gibraltar, a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier.

The ship is owned by Eagle Bulk, a Stamford, Connecticut-based firm traded on the New York Stock Exchange. The firm did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Satellite-tracking data analysed by the AP showed the Eagle Gibraltar had been bound for the Suez Canal, but rapidly turned around at the time of the attack.

The US Navy's Mideast-based 5th Fleet did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Yemen's Houthi rebels did not acknowledge any attack, though they have fired missiles previously in that area. Sunday's attack toward the American warship also marked the first US-acknowledged fire by the Houthis since America and allied nations began strikes Friday on the rebels following weeks of assaults on shipping in the Red Sea. It wasn't presently clear whether the US would retaliate for the latest attacks,

though President Joe Biden has said he "will not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary".

The Houthi fire on Sunday went in the direction of the USS Laboon, an Arleigh Burke-class destroyer operating in the southern reaches of the Red Sea, the US military's Central Command said in a statement.

The Houthis did not immediately acknowledge that attack either. The missile came from near Hodeida, a Red Sea port city long held by the Houthis, the US said.

"An anti-ship cruise missile was fired from Iranian-backed Houthi militant areas of Yemen toward USS Laboon," Central Command said. "There were no injuries or damage reported."The first day of US-led strikes Friday hit 28 locations and struck more than 60 targets with cruise missiles and bombs launched by fighter jets, warships and a submarine. Sites hit included weapon depots, radars and command centres, including in remote mountain areas, the US has said.

Sunak to face UK lawmakers

AP ■ LONDON

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was due to face Parliament Monday to explain why the UK joined the US in striking Houthi targets in Yemen — and why British lawmakers did not get a say on the military action. Four Royal Air Force Typhoon jets took part in last week's US-led strikes on sites used by the Iran-backed rebels, who have been attacking commercial ships in the Red Sea. The US says Friday's strikes hit Houthi weapons depots, radar facilities and command centres.

The Houthis say they have targeted ships linked to Israel in response to the war in Gaza. But they have frequently attacked vessels with no clear links to Israel, imperiling shipping in a key route for global trade. US forces carried out another strike Saturday on a Houthi radar site. British Defence Secretary Grant Shapps said Monday that Friday's strikes had been



intended "as a single action" rather than part of a campaign, but did not rule out UK participation in further military strikes. "We will now monitor very carefully to see what (the Houthis) do next, how they respond and we will see from there," he said.

Keir Starmer, leader of Britain's main opposition Labour Party, said he supported last week's strikes but expects more openness from the government in future.

"If the government is proposing further action, then it should say so and set out the case, and we're going to have to consider that on a case-by-case basis on the merits," he said.

The smaller opposition Liberal Democrats accused the government of "riding roughshod over a democratic convention" that Parliament should get a vote on military action. "For Rishi Sunak to attempt to ignore elected representatives is disgraceful," Liberal Democrat defense spokesman Richard Foord said.

Sunak's government is facing mounting demands on Britain's ever-shrinking military in an increasingly volatile world. Hours after the strikes on the Houthis, Sunak was in Kyiv, where he announced a further 2.5 billion pounds (\$3.2 billion) in military aid to Ukraine and signed a long-term security agreement with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

Arevalo sworn in as Guatemala's Prez

AP ■ GUATEMALA CITY

Bernardo Arevalo was sworn in as Guatemala's president on Monday minutes after midnight despite months of efforts to derail his inauguration, including foot-dragging and rising tensions right up until the transfer of power. Arevalo arrives in the presidency after winning August's elections by a comfortable margin. But nothing has been straightforward since, with Attorney General Consuelo Porras and the establishment forces observers say she represents throwing one legal challenge after another at Arevalo and his party.

Despite hundreds of Arevalo's supporters pressuring lawmakers to follow the constitution, even clashing with riot police outside the congress building on Sunday, the inauguration process dragged for hours into the night before he took the oath of office just past midnight.

A progressive academic-turned-politician and son of a Guatemalan president credited with implementing key social reforms in the mid-20th century, Arevalo takes office with expectations of confronting Guatemala's entrenched corruption. But it will not be easy.

He has little support in congress and Porras' term as the country's top law enforcement official extends to 2026, though Arevalo has said one of his first orders of business will be to request her resignation.

Supporters had been waiting hours for a festive inauguration celebration in Guatemala City's emblematic Plaza de la Constitucion and were fed up with yet another delay, sweeping police roughly out of their way before gathering outside congress demanding legislators stop delaying and name the delegation that must attend the ceremony.

"If they don't swear him in, we, the people, will swear him in," said one of the demonstrators, Dina Juc, the mayor of the indigenous village of Utatlan Solola. The inauguration was thus tinged by legal wrangling and tensions, just like almost every day since Arevalo's resounding August 20 elec-



tion victory. Congress, which was supposed to attend the inauguration as a special session of the legislature, engaged in bitter infighting over who to recognise as part of the congressional delegation, as members yelled at each other.

The leadership commission tasked with doing that was packed with old-guard opponents of Arevalo, and the delay was seen as a tactic to draw out the inauguration and weaken Arevalo.

"The commission is taking too long to review (legislators') credentials, and they are demanding requirements that aren't even in the law," said Román Castellanos, a congressman from Arevalo's Seed Movement.

Arevalo wrote in his social media accounts that "they are trying to damage democracy with illegalities, inconsequential details and abuses of power."

Samantha Power, administrator of the US Agency for International Development, representing the Biden administration at the inauguration, said via X: "There is no question that Bernardo Arevalo is the President of Guatemala. We call on all sides to remain calm — and for the Guatemalan Congress to uphold the will of the people. The world is watching."

Luis Almagro, secretary general of the Organization of American States, said in the name of the foreign delegations attending the inauguration that the congress must transfer power to Arevalo and respect the will of the people expressed in the elections.

'Gaza needs more aid'

Rafah (Gaza Strip) (AP): Gaza urgently needs more aid or its desperate population will suffer widespread famine and disease, the heads of three major UN agencies warned Monday, as authorities in the enclave reported that the death toll in the Israel-Hamas war had surpassed 24,000.

While the UN agency chiefs did not directly point a finger at Israel, they said aid delivery is hobbled by the opening of too few border crossings, a slow vetting process for trucks and goods going into Gaza, and continuing fighting throughout the territory — all of which Israel plays a deciding factor in.

Israel's war against Hamas in Gaza, sparked by the militant group's Oct 7 attack on southern Israel, has prompted unprecedented destruction in the tiny coastal enclave and triggered a humanitarian catastrophe that has displaced most of Gaza's 2.3 million population and pushed more than a quarter into starvation, according to the UN.

Civilians have become desperate. Video posted Monday to X by Al Jazeera showed hundreds of people rushing toward what appeared to be an aid truck in what the news outlet said was Gaza City. The Associated Press could not immediately independently verify the video and it was not clear when the video was filmed.

A day after the White House said it was time for Israel to scale back its military offensive, the World Food Programme, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation said new entry routes need to be opened to Gaza, more trucks need to be allowed in each day, and aid workers and those seeking aid need to be allowed to move around safely. "People in Gaza risk dying of hunger just miles from trucks filled with food," said WFP Executive Director Cindy McCain. "Every hour lost puts countless lives at risk." The Health Ministry in Hamas-ruled Gaza said Monday that the bodies of 132 people killed in Israeli strikes were brought to Gaza hospitals over the past day, raising the death toll from the start of the war to 24,100.

China fully backs sovereignty of Maldives: Muizzu

PTI ■ MALE/BEIJING

Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu has praised his country's strategic relationship with China, saying the two countries respect each other and Beijing fully supports the Indian Ocean island's sovereignty. Muizzu's comments came amid an unease in the Maldives' bilateral ties with India after he took office in November last year.

Muizzu, who returned to the Maldives on Saturday after a high-profile state visit to Beijing at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, noted that China has provided assistance to the development of the Maldives since establishing diplomatic relations in 1972. During his just-concluded visit to China, Muizzu, regarded as a pro-China leader, sought to align Maldives closer to Beijing and both countries elevated their ties to a strategic partnership. He also said China's Belt and Road Initiative has taken bilateral relations to a new level. China is not a country that would interfere with the internal affairs of the Maldives, which is why the two countries have a strong relationship, Muizzu was quoted as saying in an interview with China's state-run CGTN

channel.

He added that the Maldives and China respect each other, and China fully supports Maldives' sovereignty. The President expressed his belief that the China-Maldives relations will continue to grow stronger in the future, the official PSM News quoted him as saying in the interview. He also said his Chinese counterpart President Xi puts the interest of citizens first and that China's economy has reached new heights under his leadership.

He added President Xi has assured him that the Chinese government will help the Maldives achieve its goals. President Muizzu said his vision involves strengthening the economy of the Maldives and bringing progress in accordance with the expectations of the people. He also said he wants to transform the Maldives into a country that works in harmony with other developed countries within the framework of his vision. His remarks came amid a row between the Maldives and India over derogatory comments posted by three deputy ministers of the Muizzu government against Prime Minister Narendra Modi leading to a diplomatic row with India. Muizzu suspended the three ministers after their social media post-

ings, which stirred concern in India and calls for a boycott by Indian tourists who ranked highest in numbers followed by Russia. Chinese tourists figured third.

Muizzu has also asked India to withdraw its military personnel from his country by March 15. According to the latest government figures, there are 88 Indian military personnel stationed in the Maldives to help operate a Dornier aircraft and two helicopters provided by India. Speaking to the press on Saturday after returning from China, President Muizzu indirectly attacked India.

Without naming any country, he said, "We may be small, but that doesn't give you the license to bully us." He also announced plans to reduce the country's dependency on India, including securing imports of essential food commodities and medicine and consumables from other countries.

"We aren't in anyone's backyard. We are an independent and sovereign state," he said, addressing the reporters gathered at the Velana International Airport. He said that no country has the right to exert influence over the domestic affairs of a country, regardless of its size. He vowed that he would not allow any external influence on the domestic affairs of the Maldives. Male is also

reviewing more than 100 bilateral agreements with New Delhi signed by the previous government here. Meanwhile, the government of Maldives has issued a statement, firmly backing China on the of Taiwan.

China views Taiwan as a rebel province that must be reunified with the mainland, even by force. The victory of Lai Ching-te in Saturday's presidential election is considered a setback for China's efforts to bring Taiwan under its control. His Democratic Progressive Party advocates maintaining the status quo on the issue of reunification.

"The Maldives is firmly committed to the one-China principle, which remains the bedrock of the Maldives relations with China," the foreign ministry said in a press release. The Maldives opposes "any statement or action that undermines China's sovereignty and territorial integrity, opposes all "Taiwan independence" separatist activities, and will not develop any form of official relations with Taiwan," according to the statement. It added that the Maldives opposes "external interference in China's internal affairs under any pretext and supports all efforts made by China to achieve national reunification."

Ramaswamy ruled out as ex-US prez running mate

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump's top adviser has ruled out Vivek Ramaswamy as the ex-US president's running mate after the Republican frontrunner publicly criticised the Indian-American presidential candidate ahead of the Iowa caucus. The Iowa caucuses, which begin on Monday, formally kick off the beginning of the long process by which the Republicans and Democrats choose their nominees for the presidential election on November 5.

Trump's top adviser, Jason Miller, told the New York Post that voters could "probably" rule out 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur Ramaswamy as the ex-president's running mate. "Pretty safe to say it won't be Vivek," Miller was quoted as saying in the report. On Saturday, Trump, 77, lashed out at Ramaswamy, who is



most closely aligned with him in the race for the Republican nomination, accusing him of "deceitful campaign tricks".

The former president's criticism stemmed from shirts that Ramaswamy's campaign is handing out that say "Save Trump, Vote Vivek" on them. Ramaswamy posted a photo with a group of young men wearing them after their event in Rock Rapids, Iowa, on Saturday, which caught the former president's attention.

"Vivek started his cam-

paign as a great supporter, 'the best President in generations,' etc. Unfortunately, now all he does is disguise his support in the form of deceitful campaign tricks," Trump wrote on Truth Social on Saturday. "Very shy, but a vote for Vivek is a vote for the 'other side' — don't get duped by this. Vote for 'TRUMP, don't waste your vote! Vivek is not MAGA," he added.

The criticism marks the first time Trump and his team have made direct, public attacks against Ramaswamy. Until now, Trump has largely avoided criticising Ramaswamy due to his strong praise and defence of the former president. However, the criticisms come as voters will start making their voices heard in the first-in-the-nation caucuses on Monday and as Ramaswamy has started to become more direct in laying out the case for why he is the Trump alternative, ABC News said.

Trump's grip on Republican politics is put to test in Iowa

AP ■ DES MOINES

Voting is set to begin on Monday night in icy Iowa as former President Donald Trump eyes a victory that would send a resounding message that neither life-threatening cold nor life-changing legal trouble can slow his march toward the Republican Party's 2024 nomination.

The Iowa caucuses, which are the opening contest in the months-long Republican presidential primary process, begin at 8 p.m. EST. Caucus participants will gather inside more than 1,500 schools, churches and community centres to debate their options, in some cases for hours, before casting secret ballots.

While Trump projects confidence, his onetime chief rival, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, is fighting for his political survival



in a make-or-break race for second place. Former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley, the only woman in the race, stands in DeSantis' way. The two have competed aggressively in recent weeks to emerge as the clear alternative to the former president, who has alienated many Americans and could end up being a convicted felon by year's end. "I absolutely love a lot of the things (Trump) did, but his personality is just kind

of getting in his way," said Hans Rudin, a 49-year-old community college adviser from Council Bluffs, Iowa. He said he supported Trump in the past two elections, but will caucus for DeSantis on Monday.

Polls suggest Trump enters the day with a massive lead in Iowa as Haley and DeSantis duel for a distant second. Entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and former Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson are also on the ballot, as is former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, who suspended his campaign last week.

With the coldest temperatures in caucus history expected and dangerous travel conditions in virtually every corner of the rural state, the campaigns are bracing for a low-turnout contest that will test the strength of their support and their organisational muscle.

Canada may put cap on number of international students

Ottawa (PTI): Canada is looking at the possibility of putting a cap on the number of international students to help reduce the surge in demand for housing and fix the system that has gone out of control, Immigration Minister Marc Miller has said, a move that is likely to affect Indian students.

The remarks by Miller came on Sunday as the federal government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau faced criticism for welcoming an increasing number of immigrants — both permanent and temporary residents — while the country faces an acute housing shortage. In an interview with CTV News, Miller said the federal government will need to have talks with provincial governments "to make sure that the provinces that have not been doing their jobs actually rein in those numbers on a pure volume basis." "That volume is disconcerting," Miller said, in reference to the number of international students in Canada. "It's really a system that has gotten out of control." A cap on international students would not be a "one-size-fits-all solution" to housing shortages across Canada, Miller noted.

But he did not reveal the size of the reduction the government is planning on making. India was the first among the top ten origin countries of study permit holders in 2022 in Canada, with a total of 319,000 students. Meanwhile, new reporting by The Canadian Press news agency — citing internal documents obtained through an access to information request — shows the federal government was warned by public servants two years ago that its ambitious immigration targets could jeopardise housing affordability.

'It's right time' for Israel to scale back Gaza war as fighting hits 100 days'

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The White House said on Sunday that "it's the right time" for Israel to scale back its military offensive in the Gaza Strip, as Israeli leaders again vowed to press ahead with their operation against the territory's ruling Hamas militant group. The comments exposed the growing differences between the close allies on the 100th day of the war. Also Sunday, Israeli warplanes struck targets in Lebanon following a Hezbollah missile attack that killed two Israeli civilians — an older woman and her adult son — in northern Israel. The exchange of fire underscored concerns that the Gaza violence could trigger wider fighting across the



Palestinians displaced by the Israeli bombardment of the northern Gaza Strip play next to the border with Egypt, in Rafah, southern Gaza, Sunday.

from their homes and pushed a quarter of the population into starvation. Speaking on CBS, White House National Security Council spokesman John Kirby said the US has been speaking to Israel "about a transition to low-intensity operations" in Gaza. "We believe it's the right time for that transition. And we're talking to them about doing that," he said on "Face the Nation."

Israel launched the offensive after the Hamas attack killed some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 250 others hostage.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to press ahead until Hamas is destroyed and all of the more than 100 hostages still in captivity are freed.

Arctic freeze continues to blast huge swaths of US with sub-zero temp

AP ■ PORTLAND

A dangerous Arctic blast will continue sweeping across the US on Monday and linger through at least midweek, prolonging a bitter cold that set record-low temperatures in parts of the country and threatens to further disrupt daily life, including an NFL playoff game and the first-in-the-nation presidential nominating contest in Iowa.

The National Weather Service said wind chills are expected to push temperatures 30 degrees below zero from the Northern Rockies to northern Kansas and into Iowa, testing the hardness of caucus-goers willing to brave the deep chill on Monday. "You can't sit home," former President

Donald Trump told supporters Sunday. "If you're sick as a dog, you say, Darling, I gotta make it! Even if you vote and then pass away, it's worth it."

Arctic storms left at least four dead and knocked out electricity to tens of thousands in the Northwest, brought snow to the South and walloped the Northeast with blizzard conditions forcing the postponement of the Pittsburgh Steelers vs Buffalo Bills NFL playoff game hosted in bone-chilling Buffalo, New York.

The game was scheduled to be held Monday after being cancelled Sunday. New York Gov Kathy Hochul, a Buffalo native, posted a video on X, formerly known as Twitter, showing near-whiteout conditions. "Conditions right now in

Orchard Park, where the game would have started moments ago," she wrote early Sunday afternoon. "No visibility and dangerously high winds."

The Bills invited diehard fans to help dig out snow-filled Highmark Stadium, offering \$20 an hour for their labour.

"We made progress shoveling, but not much at all," said Logan Eschrich, a storm chaser who made his way to Buffalo and pitched in.

It remains to be seen if the show will go on Monday afternoon. The weather service expects heavy lake-effect snow to push into upstate New York from Lake Erie, adding to the 1 to 2 feet (30.4 to 60.9 cm) of snow already blanketing the region. Snow fell at a rate of 2 inches (5 cm) per hour.

Sensex closes at record high

Nifty scales 22K, mounts on sharp gain in IT shares

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex closed above the 73,000 level for the first time while broader Nifty scaled the 22,000-point peak on Monday as key stock indices stayed on the record-breaking run powered by a rally in IT shares, Reliance and HDFC Bank.

Rising for the fifth day in a row, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 759.49 points or 1.05 per cent to settle at a lifetime closing high of 73,327.94. During the day, it rallied 833.71 points or 1.14 per cent to hit an all-time intra-day peak of 73,402.16.

The Nifty climbed 202.90 points or 0.93 per cent to settle at a new closing high of 22,097.45. During the day, it zoomed 221 points or 1 per

cent to reach a lifetime intra-day high of 22,115.55.

A strong rally in IT shares Infosys, TCS, Wipro and HCL Tech after better than expected Q3 results helped the indices scale new record high levels. Oil & gas and energy sector shares also boosted the rally.

“The market gained momentum, led by the uptick in the IT index with the growing optimism about increased discretionary spending and strong deal wins. The US bond yield edged lower as market participants bet on the FED easing cycle, which is expected to start in March,” said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

Among the Sensex firms, Wipro jumped over 6 per cent after the IT company’s December quarter earnings



beat estimates.

The other prominent gainers were HCL Technologies, HDFC Bank, Infosys, Tech Mahindra, Bharti Airtel and Reliance Industries.

HCL Technologies on Friday reported a 6.2 per cent increase in consolidated net

profit at Rs 4,350 crore, highest ever on a quarterly basis, in the three months ended December 2023 on the back of growth in both services and software businesses.

Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv, Larsen & Toubro, Tata Motors, Tata Steel and Axis Bank were

among the laggards.

IT majors were on the front foot while select heavyweights from banking and energy baskets also aided the uptick, according to Ajit Mishra, SVP - Technical Research, Religare Broking Ltd.

In the broader market, the BSE midcap gauge climbed 0.67 per cent and smallcap index rallied 0.11 per cent.

Among the indices, IT jumped 1.79 per cent, teck climbed 1.79 per cent, oil & gas (1.70 per cent), energy (1.66 per cent), telecommunication (1.41 per cent) and financial services (0.81 per cent).

Commodities and metal were the laggards.

Meanwhile, wholesale inflation inched edged up 0.73 per cent in December from 0.26 per cent in the previous month

mainly due to a sharp rise in food prices. Wholesale inflation was in the negative zone from April to October.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo and Shanghai settled in the green while Hong Kong ended marginally lower. European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended on a muted note on Friday. Global oil benchmark Brent crude declined 0.29 per cent to USD 78.06 a barrel.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 340.05 crore on Friday, according to exchange data.

The BSE benchmark zoomed 847.27 points or 1.18 per cent to settle at 72,568.45 on Friday. The Nifty climbed 247.35 points or 1.14 per cent to settle at 21,894.55.

Gold rises ₹150; silver jumps ₹300



PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices rose Rs 150 to Rs 63,550 per 10 grams in the national capital on Monday amid strong cues in the overseas markets, according to HDFC Securities.

In the previous trade, the precious metal settled at Rs 63,400 per 10 grams.

Silver also jumped Rs 300 to Rs 76,700 per kilogram, while it had closed at Rs 76,400 per kg in the previous close.

“Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 63,550/10 grams, up by Rs 150, tracking positive cues

from overseas markets,” Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, gold and silver were quoting higher at USD 2,055 per ounce and USD 23.20 per ounce, respectively.

Gold prices resumed trading on a positive note, supported by haven demand, due to weak US producer price index (PPI) data and geopolitical tensions in the Middle East which have increased the expectations of interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve at its meeting in March, Gandhi added.

OYO plans 400 properties in spiritual destinations, including Ayodhya, this year

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Hospitality tech platform OYO on Monday said it is planning to launch 400 properties in major spiritual destinations like Ayodhya, Varanasi, Tirupati, and Katra-Vaishno Devi by the end of this year.

The planned expansion in major spiritual hotspots across the country has been fuelled by a surge in domestic travel and rising interest in spiritual tourism, OYO said in a statement.

The hospitality platform has selected various destinations, including Ayodhya, Puri, Shirdi, Varanasi, Amritsar, Tirupati, Haridwar, Katra-Vaishno Devi, and Char Dham route, to launch properties.

There has been a 350 per cent increase in searches for Ayodhya on the OYO platform over the past year, driven by the upcoming opening of the grand Ram Mandir on January



22, 2024, it added.

“Spiritual tourism in India is on the precipice of a monumental surge, poised to be one of the biggest growth drivers of our industry in the coming five years. The opening of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya stands as a testament to this, and witnessing the excitement firsthand as I join in the grand ceremony will be truly humbling,” OYO founder and Group CEO

Ritesh Agarwal said.

Renewed fervour for spiritual journeys extends far beyond Ayodhya, with destinations like Puri, Shirdi, and Varanasi experiencing similar excitement, he added.

“By offering comfortable and affordable accommodation options across these sacred sites, we aim to ensure every spiritual journey finds a welcoming haven, allowing pilgrims to fully immerse

themselves in the transformative power of religion and spirituality,” Agarwal said.

OYO said Ayodhya has consistently held the top position in searches on its app over the past year. On New Year’s Eve, the city witnessed a 70 per cent surge in OYO app users, surpassing popular leisure destinations, such as Goa at 50 per cent and Nainital at 60 per cent.

To cater to the influx of pilgrims in Ayodhya, OYO has launched 50 homestays, offering a total of approximately 1,000 rooms, it said, adding that the properties are strategically situated near key landmarks, providing easy access to prominent religious sites and tourist attractions.

OYO has also partnered with the Ayodhya Development Authority and Uttar Pradesh State Tourism Development Corporation to ensure smooth and timely operations, the statement said.

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Reliance Electrolyser Manufacturing, Jindal India and John Cockerill Greenko Hydrogen Solutions are among the six firms who have emerged as successful bidders for getting incentives to set up facilities to manufacture electrolyzers, a critical component required for green hydrogen production.

The bids came in response to a tender by Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) inviting players for setting up 1.5GW manufacturing capacity for electrolyzers, as per a SECI statement.

Bids for electrolyzers manufacturing were invited on July 7 last year. A SECI statement issued on January 12, 2024, showed that Reliance Electrolyser Manufacturing Ltd has bagged incentives of Rs 444 crore for setting up of 300MW of manufacturing capacities for electrolyzers.



Similarly, John Cockerill Greenko Hydrogen Solutions Private Ltd and Jindal India Ltd have also bagged incentives of Rs 444 crore each for setting up 300 MW manufacturing capacity of electrolyzers each.

Ohmium Operations Pvt Ltd has bagged Rs 202.76 crore incentives for 137 MW, while Advait Infratech Ltd (consortium with Rajesh Power Service Private Ltd) will get incentives of Rs 148 crore for 100 MW. L&T Electrolysers Ltd has

bagged incentives of Rs 93.24 crore for 63MW.

The six firms have bagged total incentives of Rs 1,776 crore for 1200 MW under the ‘Bucket-1: Electrolyser manufacturing capacity based on any stack technology’.

As many as 14 firms’ bids were qualified for the incentives.

The eight firms which are not allocated any capacity under this scheme are Matrix Gas and Renewables in con-

sortium with Gensol Engineering; HHP Seven; ACME Cleantech Solutions; Adani New Industries; Waaree Energies; Avaada Electrolyser; Green H2 Network India and Hild Electric.

Under the ‘Bucket-2: Electrolyser manufacturing capacity based on indigenously developed stack technology’, Homihydrogen and Adani New Industries have emerged as successful bidders.

Homihydrogen will get incentives of Rs 150.22 crore for setting up 101.5 MW of electrolyzers manufacturing capacity, while Adani New Industries bagged Rs 293.78 crore for 198.5 MW.

Under the Bucket-2, seven firms were in the fray. As many as five were not allocated incentives under the scheme, which include Livehy Energy; C Doctor And Company, Pratishna Engineers, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd and Newtrace.

Sebi mulls flexibility for AIF, VCFs to deal with unliquidated investments beyond tenure expiry

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Capital markets regulator Sebi on Monday proposed to provide flexibility to Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs), Venture Capital Funds (VCFs) and their investors to deal with unliquidated investments of their schemes beyond expiry of tenure.

In its consultation paper, the regulator suggested that instead of launching a new liquidation scheme by AIFs, the same scheme itself can be allowed to continue with the unliquidated investments beyond their tenure for a certain period or dissolution period for fully liquidating their unliquidated investments.

Additionally, the regulator proposed extending flexibility of the dissolution process to venture capital funds through migration to the AIF regime.

At present, the option to launch liquidation scheme is available only to those schemes of AIFs which are under ‘Liquidation Period’--the period of one year following the expiry of tenure of the scheme for fully liquidating the scheme and not available to VCFs, irrespective of whether their tenure has expired or not.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) has sought public comments till February 2 on the proposal.

The proposal came after Sebi received representations from participants in the AIF industry highlighting certain tax related issues. They also highlighted that setting up a liquidation scheme and winding up the original AIF scheme is a process involving time, cost, and efforts, which directly or indirectly, would ultimately be paid by investors.

In the consultation paper, the regulator suggested that during the liquidation period of an AIF scheme, if the AIF decides to opt for dissolution period, then AIF should obtain positive consent of 75 per cent of investors by value of their investment in the scheme.

After obtaining the consent, the AIF should arrange bids for



a minimum of 25 per cent of the value of the unliquidated investments.

The bids should be arranged for units representing consolidated value of all unliquidated investments of the scheme’s investment portfolio.

Sebi suggested that investor approval and bid should be obtained by the AIF before the expiry of the Liquidation Period of the scheme.

“Liquidation schemes that have already been launched by AIFs shall be grand-fathered,” Sebi said.

The regulator also suggested one-time flexibility to AIF schemes, whose Liquidation Period has expired or would be expiring within one month from the date of notification in this regard, to deal with unliquidated investment.

Also, it has recommended extending flexibility of the dissolution process to venture capital funds through migration to the AIF regime. It further suggested that such migration should be smooth and cost effective.

Under the VCF Regulations, VCFs are required to liquidate their investments within three months from the expiry of their tenure, whereas AIF Regulations provide AIFs a Liquidation Period of 12 months for the said purpose.

There is no provision in VCF Regulations for extension

of tenure of VCF scheme. Therefore, any VCF operating beyond their tenure specified in the Private Placement Memorandum (PPM) is in violation of the VCF rules.

Accordingly, Sebi suggested a new framework to facilitate VCFs to migrate to AIF Regulations, so that the proposed flexibility of Liquidation Period and the flexibility of dealing with unliquidated investments by opting for dissolution period / process, can be avoided by VCFs.

Under the proposed regulatory framework for migration of VCFs to AIF Regulations, a sub-category should be created under Category I - VCFs called Migrated VCFs. Such VCFs can migrate themselves within 6 months of the date of Sebi’s notification in this regard.

Sebi suggested that certain flexibilities under VCF rules should continue to be available by migrated VCFs and accordingly the migrated VCFs should be exempted from the requirements of minimum investment requirement in AIF, minimum corpus size, maximum number of investors in a scheme, manner of calculation of tenure and audit of terms of PPM.

Moreover, certain benefits of AIF Regulations that are not available under VCF rule should be extended to migrated VCFs.

Rupee rises 6 paise to settle at 82.89 against US dollar

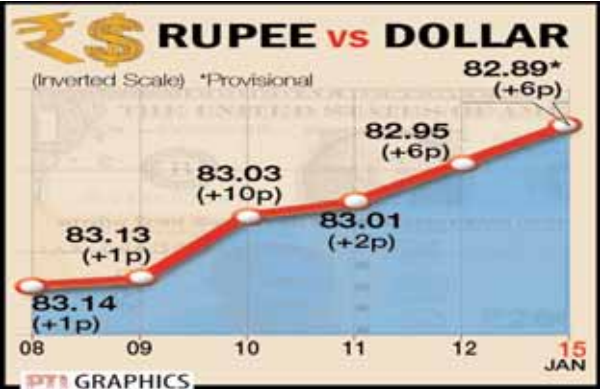
PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee strengthened for the ninth consecutive session to settle with a gain of 6 paise to 82.89 (provisional) against the US dollar on Monday, driven by a rally in the domestic equity markets.

At the interbank foreign exchange, the local currency opened at 82.82 and traded between 82.77 and 82.91 against the greenback during intra-day deals.

The unit finally settled at 82.89 (provisional) against the dollar, registering a gain of 6 paise over its previous close amid a bullish trend in domestic equities, wherein benchmark indices climbed to lifetime highs.

On Friday, the rupee settled with a gain of 6 paise to 82.95 against the US dollar.



In the last nine trading sessions, the local unit added 48 paise since the level of 83.32 against the dollar recorded on January 2.

Meanwhile, WPI rose 0.73 per cent year-on-year in December 2023 against 0.26 per cent in the previous month, but lower than the forecast of 0.9

per cent.

According to official data, the wholesale price index (WPI)-based inflation rose in December at 0.73 per cent mainly due to a sharp rise in food prices.

The WPI inflation was in the negative zone from April to October and had turned posi-

tive in November at 0.26 per cent. “We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on the weak US Dollar and positive global markets. Expectations of fresh inflows from foreign investors may also support the rupee,” said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

However, a surge in global crude oil prices and the escalation of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East may cap sharp gains. Traders may remain cautious ahead of India’s trade balance data. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 82.50 to Rs 83.20, Choudhary added.

The dollar index, which gauges the greenback’s strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.09 per cent higher at 102.49.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, slipped 0.66 per cent to USD 77.77 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex surged 759.49 points, or 1.05 per cent, to settle at a fresh peak of 73,327.94 points. The Nifty also soared 202.90 points, or 0.93 per cent, to a new record of 22,097.45 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the equity market on Friday as they offloaded shares worth Rs 340.05 crore, according to exchange data.

On the domestic macroeconomic front, retail inflation soared to a four-month high of 5.69 per cent in December, while industrial production fell to an eight-month low of 2.4 per cent in November, according to a set of government data released on Friday.

India ranked 35th for leveraging future possibilities

PTI ■ DAVOS

India has been ranked 35th on a global index of countries best placed for leveraging future possibilities while the UK topped the list released here on Monday.

The Future Possibilities Index (FPI), a flagship global future trends study released by Newsweek Vantage and Horizon Group on sidelines of the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting, has Denmark, the US, the Netherlands and Germany in the top five after the UK.

Among large emerging markets, China is placed highest at 19th this year, followed by Brazil at 30th, India (35th) and South Africa (50th). The study compared the factors that will help governments, investors and other private sector stakeholders leverage six global, transformational trends for growth and well-being across 70 countries.

These six global transformational trends are Exabyte

Economy (advanced digital technologies), Wellbeing Economy (health prevention and wellness), Net Zero Economy (reduction of carbon emissions), Circular Economy (recycling and reuse), BioGrowth Economy (food and agriculture innovations), and Experience Economy (consumption of experiences instead of physical goods).

The combined business opportunity of all six trends is estimated at more than USD 44 trillion by 2030, more than 40 per cent of global GDP in 2023, the study said.

The study used data from recognised international organizations as well as a survey of 5,000 business executives conducted for the project by Phronesis Partners.

These opportunities are likely to benefit the Global North more than the Global South in terms of economic growth and broader societal wellbeing and a strong industry base is needed to benefit, the report found.

Told to express freely, say big hitting Jaiswal

PTI ■ INDORE

Picked to replace the usually swashbuckling but currently out of form Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal made quite a statement with his 34-ball 68 against Afghanistan in the second T20I here and the promising youngster said it was all thanks to the "go out and express yourself" brief from the Indian team management.

The 22-year-old's strokeful knock at the top of the order and Shivam Dube's 63 not out off 32 balls, helped India register a six-wicket series-clinching win here on Sunday as the hosts easily chased down the target of 173 with 26 balls to spare.

"I have been told to go and express myself and I was trying to do that," Jaiswal said at the post-match conference on Sunday night.

"I was trying to punish the loose balls, and was focused to give my team a good start...I was trying to bat as deep as I can. I was trying to keep my strike rate good. I wanted to keep batting with a good strike rate," said the 22-year-old opening batter.

Jaiswal, who has played just four Tests and 16 T20Is, said he has tried his best to do well for the team whenever he has got a chance. He had scored a 60 against South Africa in December last year.

"I keep working hard in my practice sessions and on my process. Whenever I get my chance, I try my best and make



sure that I am doing things for the team which is important," he said, trying to give an insight into his thought process.

"I am just trying to show my intent and trying to do well for my team," added Jaiswal who hit five fours and six sixes during his innings last night.

Asked what transpired between him and senior batter Virat Kohli in the middle during a 57-run stand, he said, "It was really nice...Whenever I bat with him, it's an honour.

"Lots of things to learn from him, like we had small chats about where we can hit. We decided that it was easy to hit over long on and mid off and we were trying to do that. The intent was there and the positive vibes were there and we were just trying to hit good shots."

Dube, on his part, said he and Jaiswal had planned to finish off the run chase. Jaiswal was, however, dismissed in the 13th over.

"We both are stroke players. He was batting really well. We had a plan that both will be going, so let's finish the match as soon as possible. There was not any target (to finish), but we've finished on time," said Dube, whose 63 not out was decorated with five fours and four sixes.

"There are many things I have worked on. It's not about skill (only)... Being focused on every ball is important. I am working on my bowling as well," Dube, who claimed one wicket in the series-opener in Mohali, said.



The range I have is god gift: Shivam Dube

PTI ■ INDORE

Bonafide six-hitter Shivam Dube on Monday said his ability to play a wide range of strokes against spinners is 'god's gift' but overcoming issues against express pace and bounce will require plenty of hard work. One of the biggest hitters when the spinners are in operation, Dube blazed away to scintillating fifties in the first two T20 Internationals against Afghanistan, making a fairly good spin attack look pedestrian with his power-hitting.

"It's a pleasure to keep improving my performance as I am going along. The range I have is god's gift and I have also worked a lot on it. I have developed many areas of my game and I am getting the runs on the board," Dube told JioCinema. On way to his unbeaten 63 off 32 balls in the second T20I here on Sunday, Dube smashed four towering sixes and five fours, as India chased down a target of 173 with as many as 26 balls to spare.

Also grabbing the headlines with the willow was the returning Yashasvi Jaiswal, who hammered a 34-ball 68. On how hard it is to think only about the present and not about the forthcoming T20 World Cup, Dube said, "In the past I have thought a lot about the future. But I have realised that I got to focus on the present. I have to focus on how to improve my skills, so that's more important to me. I just try to keep myself grounded and try to focus on what I have to do."

In stark contrast to his penchant to toy with the spinners,

30-year-old Dube has often looked vulnerable against the short deliveries bowled at good pace. He admitted that the standard of fast bowlers in the IPL is much better than in domestic cricket.

On the amount of work that has gone into improving his game against short balls, Dube said, "I have worked a lot on it. When I was playing domestic cricket, I was able to dominate all the bowlers, but when it came to IPL and Indian cricket it was not easy as bowlers were bowling over 140km/hr."

"I worked a lot with side arms, but it is more about the mindset which I worked."

Dube had a poor start for India's white-ball team against Bangladesh more than four years ago. Asked about the methods he has employed that's resulted in a significant improvement, he said, "This credit goes to Chennai Super Kings and Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni) because I always had this game in me."

"They have brought out the best in me. They have always encouraged me and said that they believe in me. Stephen Fleming and Mike Hussey have shown faith in me." Speaking about his mindset as a finisher, the Mumbai all-rounder said, "As a middle-order batsman, my role is to take on spinners and improve the strike rate. But when it is like getting 20-25 runs, I focus on that."

"What I have seen Mahi bhai do for a long time, I am working in that direction. I have to keep myself calm and composed and just focus on one ball at a time.



Prakhar breaks Yuvraj Singh Cooch Behar record with unbeaten 404

PTI ■ SHIVAMOGGA

Karnataka's Prakhar Chaturvedi on Monday broke Yuvraj Singh's 25-year-old record for the highest score in the U-19 Cooch Behar Trophy final with an unbeaten 404 off 636 balls against Mumbai here.

Yuvraj, who went on to become an Indian great, had smashed 358 for Punjab in a game against Bihar back in 1999. India's World Cup winning captain M S Dhoni was part of that Bihar squad.

The highest individual score in India's premier U-19 domestic event is Vijay Zol's 451 not out for Maharashtra against Assam in 2011-12.

Chaturvedi's epic effort included 46 fours and three sixes.

"Karnataka's Prakhar Chaturvedi becomes the first player to score 400 in the final of #CoochBehar Trophy with his splendid 404* knock against Mumbai," posted the BCCI on X.

Chaturvedi's marathon effort helped Karnataka amass 890 for eight in response to Mumbai's 380. The game was drawn with Karnataka taking the first innings lead.

Harshil Dhamani scored 179 in Karnataka's innings. The game was called off once Chaturvedi cross the 400-run mark.

BCCI invites application for one selector

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The BCCI on Monday invited applications to replace one among the five senior national selectors and in all likelihood, former pacer Salil Ankola would be the one on his way out as West Zone is already represented by chairman Ajit Agarkar. The BCCI posted an advertisement on its website listing the same requirements that have been in place for the past couple of years — the incumbent should have played either 7 Tests or 30 first-class matches. Applications will also be considered if the candidate has an experience of 10 ODIs or 20 first-class matches.

The last date of submitting applications is January 25.

The five-man selection committee comprises Agarkar (chairman, Mumbai, West Zone), S Sharath (Tamil Nadu, South Zone), SS Das (Vidarbha, Central Zone), Subroto Banerjee (Bengal, Bihar, East Zone) and Ankola (Mumbai, Maharashtra, West Zone).

"Save Ajit Agarkar, all the four others completed their one-year term on December 31, 2023. They were given one-year contract," a senior BCCI official told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

"Technically, there is no rule that you can't have two selectors from the same zone, (but) the BCCI has always maintained the convention of having one selector from each zone and north zone had no representa-

likely to replace Salil Ankola



tive after Chetan Sharma got sacked," he explained.

After the 2022 T20 World Cup where India could only make the semifinals, the entire

selection panel, including chairman Chetan Sharma, was sacked. But when fresh applications were invited, Chetan returned to the fold to represent

North Zone following an interview by the Cricket Advisory Committee (CAC) headed by Ashok Malhotra along with Jatin Paranjpe, and Sulakshana Naik. He was later sacked for loose talk on selection matters in a sting operation.

"The rest (of the) four, Sharath, Ankola, Banerjee and Das completed five zones. Once Chetan was removed, the BCCI needed a man of stature and once Agarkar was on board, we had two from the same zone.

"But no rule was broken as it was always a convention. The BCCI had given all of them a one-year term, which is extended every year upto a period of four years. Unfortunately, it seems Salil will have to make a move," the source added.

If India prepares pitches which turn a lot, England spinners will also come into game: Nasser

PTI ■ LONDON

Former England captain Nasser Hussain has advised India against preparing turning pitches during their five-Test series, saying doing so will also bring the visiting spinners into the game. The uncapped duo of Tom Hartley and Shoaib Bashir have been named as part of England's quadruple spin attack alongside Jack Leach and Rehan Ahmed.

India have also named four spinners in their squad for the first two Tests, beginning January 25, with Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav returning to action after missing the tour to South Africa. They will be joined by Ravichandran Ashwin and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja. "I think what India should do is ask for good pitches that spin a bit because I think their spinners and batters will then out-bat and out-spin ours," said Hussain on the Sky Sports Cricket podcast.

"If they ask for pitches that spin a lot then it becomes a bit of a lottery

and brings England's spinners into the game. The way Bazball goes about its business, they won't die wondering."

England last won a Test series in India in 2012-13 under the captaincy of Alastair Cook where spin twins Graeme Swann and Monty Panesar starred in the momentous 2-1 triumph.

Hussain also said that Indian fans are waiting to see how their side can put England's Bazball strategy to bed.

"There's been a lot of talk about Indian cricket and there's been a lot of talk about Bazball," said Hussain.

"My sense in the World Cup was that a lot of Indian fans are waiting to see how to put Bazball to bed."



Mulani 10 wicket haul powers Mumbai to consecutive bonus point win

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Left-arm spinner Shams Mulani grabbed a match haul of 10 wickets as Mumbai defeated Andhra by 10 wickets to secure a successive bonus-point victory in the Ranji Trophy here on Monday. Following on, Andhra faced a daunting task in their second innings, and despite some resistance from Shaik Rasheed (66) and Hanuma Vihari (46), Mulani's crafty spin proved too much to handle as the visitors folded for 244 in 73.4 overs, setting an easy target of 34.

Mulani returned with 4/96 in the second innings, securing a match-haul of 10/161, his sixth 10-wicket haul in first-class cricket. Mumbai overhauled the target in 8.4 overs keeping all their wickets intact to secure seven points (six plus one bonus point).

The 41-times champions, who

defeated Bihar by an innings and 51 runs in the opening round, now sit pretty at top of the Group B standings with 14 points from two matches, four points clear of Chhattisgarh who bagged three points against Bihar in Patna. Mumbai had dominated the proceedings from the start, posting a formidable total of 395 in their first innings. Bhupen Lalwani's solid 61, aided by Tanush Kotian (54) and Mohti Avasthi's (53) well-crafted half-centuries, gave them the early advantage. Mulani also contributed with the bat with a patient 38 off 111 balls before he dismantled Andhra's batting line-up with impressive figures of 6/65. Andhra folded for 184 in the first innings as Ajinkya Rahane was quick to enforce follow-on.

BENGAL BAG THREE IN KANPUR: Bengal had to settle



for three points by virtue of first innings lead over Uttar Pradesh after the entire fourth and final day's play at the Green Park Stadium in Kanpur was called off due to bad light. Speedster Mohammad Kaif (4/15 and 3/72) was named the man of the match for bagging an impressive seven wickets in the match while also scoring a fighting unbeaten 45. Earlier, after bowling out UP for just 60 in their first innings, Bengal managed to post 188, which helped them pocket the all-important first innings lead. UP's second essay fightback was steered by skipper Nitish Rana who was unbeaten on 47 with the team's score of 178/4, ahead by 50 runs at close on day three.

The match however could not get underway on the final day because of bad light as Bengal settled for three crucial points.

BRIEF SCORES

IN MUMBAI: Mumbai 395 and 34 for no loss. **Andhra** 184 and following on 244; 73.4 overs (Shaik Rasheed 66; Shams Mulani 4/96, Royston 3/45). Mumbai won by 10 wickets. Points: Mumbai 7, Andhra 0.

IN KANPUR: Uttar Pradesh 60 and 178/4. **Bengal** 188. Match drawn. Points: Bengal 3, UP 1.

IN GUWAHATI: Kerala 419. **Assam** 248; 64.5 overs (Riyan 116; Basil Thampi 5/82, Lalaj Saxena 4/58) and following on 212/3; 54 overs (Rahul Hazarika 107, Rishav 45). Match drawn. Points: Kerala 3, Assam 1.

IN PATNA: Bihar 108 and 226/7; 77 overs (Sraman Nigrodh 60, Babul Kumar 52, Bipin Saurabh 30 not out). **Chhattisgarh** 329/2 declared; 83 overs (Rishabh Tiwari 138, Ashutosh Singh 134). Match drawn. Points: Chhattisgarh 3, Bihar 1.