

OPINION 6
TAIWANESE CONUNDRUM
FOR MAINLAND CHINA**MONEY 10**
EMERGED STRONGER, SAYS ADANI ON
ANNIVERSARY OF HINDENBURG REPORT**SPORT 12**
SPINNERS PUT INDIA IN
STRONG POSITION

LUCKNOW, FRIDAY JANUARY 26, 2024; PAGES 12 ₹3



Modi Fulcrum of BJP Manifesto

INSPIRES FIRST TIME VOTERS

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Head of the Lok Sabha elections in April-May this year, BJP president JP Nadda officially launched the party's 2024 election campaign, releasing a video featuring a theme song dedicated to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The theme song in Hindi, "Sapne Nahi Haqeeqat Bunte Hai, Tabhi Toh Sab Modi Ko Chunte Hai" (Not dreams, but (we) weave reality, that's why everyone chooses Modi), highlights how Modi delivered on his promises and fulfilled people's dreams after they elected him at a time when the country was in a "bad shape".

The campaign song was released by Nadda at an event where Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed young voters virtually.

In a virtual interaction with millions of first-time voters from across 5,800 locations in the country, Prime Minister Narendra Modi invited the nation's youth on Thursday to contribute to the Bharatiya Janata Party's manifesto for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. He urged them to share their thoughts on the NaMo app. The Prime Minister expressed his anticipation of meeting some of the contributors soon. Additionally, he provided a link to the website narendramodi.in, where individuals can share their inputs for the BJP's manifesto. He also



called upon the connected youth through social media not only to vote but also to assist people whose names were not on the voters' list in getting them included.

"I invite the youth of India to contribute to the BJP manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Share your thoughts on the NaMo App. I look forward to meeting some of the contributors myself in the future," said PM Modi.

His social media post about the BJP manifesto came on the occasion of National Voters' Day, during which he also urged those who have not yet registered themselves as voters to do so.

The song, presented as a 2-minute and 13-second video, expresses the ruling party's

confidence and emphasises that Modi is all set to become the Prime Minister for the third consecutive term. It features a photo of Modi performing dandavat pranam in front of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya.

The video highlights the government's achievements in various sectors and the launch of schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, Har Ghar Nal Scheme, Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, and the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) that were introduced in the last 10 years of the Modi regime.

Continued on Page 8



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and others during the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony of various developmental projects in Bulandshahr on Thursday PTI

Gifts Bulandshahr with dream projects

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
BULANDSHAHR/NEW DELHI

After inaugurating and laying the foundation stone for development projects worth over Rs 19,100 crore in Bulandshahr ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted on Thursday that he merely heralds the call for development, while it is the people who sound the poll bugle for him. Touching upon the completion of the praan pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya, the Prime Minister emphasised the priority of 'Rashtra Pratishtha', urging its elevation to new heights. "We must strengthen the path

from Dev to Desh and Ram to Rashtra," PM Modi declared during a massive rally in Bulandshahr, western Uttar Pradesh. He said that the time had come to elevate 'Rashtra Pratishtha' to greater heights, aiming to transform India into a developed nation by 2047. Modi also mentioned the late BJP leader and former UP CM, Kalyan Singh, saying that he would have been pleased to witness the development in Ayodhya. "This region gave us Kalyan Singh, who devoted his life to 'Ram Kaaj' and 'Rashtra Kaaj'," Modi remarked in Bulandshahr.

Continued on Page 8

Highways on a high under Gadkari

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■
NEW DELHI

The Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) is poised to transition to a Quality-Cum-Cost-based selection system for bidding on various road construction and related projects, replacing the age-old L-1 least-cost selection process. This shift aims to enhance the quality of the undertaken works.

Nitin Gadkari, the Union Minister of Road Transport and



Highways (MoRTH), said, "The Ministry of Roads will soon adopt a qualitative tendering

process instead of the least-cost bidding process to promote quality and road safety in various projects. Qualitative tendering will facilitate the incorporation of safer road features in designs, considering the behaviour of road users."

Gadkari lamented the fact that there have been several instances where officers in the ministry have omitted safety features in highway projects to reduce costs, ostensibly in the pursuit of financial viability.

Continued on Page 8



French President Emmanuel Macron during his visit to the Amber Fort in Jaipur

PTI

Gyanvapi built atop temple, Hindu side lawyer cites ASI survey report

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a significant development that could reshape the controversy surrounding the Gyanvapi mosque, Hindu advocates are asserting that the recent survey report of the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) indicates the mosque in Varanasi was constructed atop a Hindu temple.

Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, representing the Hindu side, highlighted the ASI's findings, revealing that the survey suggests the presence of a substantial Hindu temple structure within the Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi.

Welcoming the revelation with enthusiasm, the Hindu side celebrated the discovery as the long-awaited revelation of 'Baba's abode', signaling a



potential breakthrough in the ongoing legal dispute.

Jain emphasises that the survey report unequivocally establishes the mosque's construction after the demolition of a pre-existing Hindu temple, urging authorities to grant Hindus access to worship at the sacred site.

Expounding on the ASI's findings, Jain highlighted approximately 32 points indicating the original structure of the Hindu temple, with the western side of the mosque believed to have been part of the temple's wall.

The ASI's comprehensive report, incorporating ground penetrating radar (GPR) sur-

Kannada and other languages.

These revelations emerged following a Varanasi court's ruling mandating the disclosure of the ASI survey report to both Hindu and Muslim parties involved in the dispute.

The ASI conducted a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi premises last year to investigate whether the mosque was constructed atop a pre-existing Hindu temple structure.

The journey to uncover the truth behind the Gyanvapi complex has been fraught with legal complexities, with the survey process initially ordered by the district court subsequently facing legal hurdles in the High Court and the Supreme Court.


Following extensive legal deliberations, the survey resumed on August 4, 2023, culminating in the submission of the report to the court on December 18.

Since then, the Hindu side has persistently advocated for the public release of the report, underscoring the importance of transparency and accountability in resolving the contentious issue.

vey, raises intriguing questions about the historical layers at the site, hinting that the current structure may have been erected atop an earlier edifice.

Moreover, the ASI report suggests that the mosque underwent modifications, with pillars and plaster repurposed from the original Hindu temple, albeit with minor alterations.

Jain referenced the report, noting instances where pillars were slightly modified, and efforts were made to erase carvings on them. Additionally, he highlighted the discovery of inscriptions belonging to the ancient Hindu temple, scripted in Devanagari, Telugu,




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Chill persists as fog reduces visibility

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Dense fog enveloped the city on Thursday morning,

reducing the visibility to zero and increasing the chill quotient. However, the fog dissipated after a while giving way to a pleasant sunshine.

The Met department has forecast foggy conditions for the next two days. Senior scientist Mohammed Danish said the fog was expected.

"Dense fog had already been forecast. This is because of moisture in the air and the cold northwesterly winds blowing," he said. On Thursday, Lucknow recorded the minimum at 4.6 degree Celsius.

The coldest in the state was Kanpur with a minimum temperature of 3 degree Celsius. The forecast for the state is fog and cold day conditions.



OBITUARY

OBITUARY



NB SUB INGAILE
PRAVIN KUMAR SURESH
14 JUN 1981 - 30 NOV 2023

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NB SUB INGAILE PRAVIN KUMAR SURESH WHILE SERVING WITH COMD HOSP (CC) LUCKNOW.

FROM: LT GEN V SABID SYED AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

OBITUARY

OBITUARY



HAVILDAR MANOJ KUMAR
02 JUL 1982-07 DEC 2023

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF HAVILDAR MANOJ KUMAR WHILE SERVING WITH MH DEVALI.

FROM: LT GEN V SABID SYED AND ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS

OBITUARY

OBITUARY



NB SUB DEEPAK SIROHI
21 NOV 1986 - 22 NOV 2023

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NB SUB DEEPAK SIROHI WHILE SERVING WITH COMD HOSP (SC) PUNE

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NAIK CHANDAN KUMAR PANDEY
20 AUG 1989 - 10 JAN 2024

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF NAIK CHANDAN KUMAR PANDEY WHILE SERVING WITH 314 FD HOSP

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HAVILDAR SANDEEP KUMAR
04 AUG 1988-21 NOV 2023

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF HAVILDAR SANDEEP KUMAR WHILE SERVING WITH MDC AMRITSAR.

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HAVILDAR JASWANT SINGH RAJPOOT
30 JUL 1989-24 NOV 2023

ALL RANKS OF ARMY MEDICAL CORPS SOLEMNLY PRAY TO THE ALMIGHTY TO BESTOW PEACE TO THE DEPARTED SOUL AND GRANT STRENGTH TO THE BEREAVED FAMILY TO BEAR THE GREAT LOSS OF HAVILDAR JASWANT SINGH RAJPOOT WHILE SERVING WITH 4016 FD HOSP.

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Take pledge for 100 per cent voting during polls: CM Yogi

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, extended greetings to the citizens of Uttar Pradesh on National Voters' Day and appealed to everyone to pledge 100 per cent voting during elections. Taking to the social media, he emphasised the importance of voting, describing it not just as a democratic right of a citizen but also their duty.

Chief Minister Yogi wrote on his official 'X' handle: "Heartfelt congratulations to all respected voters and residents on National Voters' Day, and congratulations to all the young individuals who have become voters for the first time. Voting is not only our duty, but also our right. Let's take a pledge for 100 per cent voting to make our democracy more participatory and robust."

Taking forward the appeal made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the new voters on social media on this occasion, Chief Minister Yogi urged all eligible voters to join the 'New Voters Conference'. He wrote, "Voting is our democratic right. I earnestly appeal to all new voters to join this important conference in large numbers, listen to the thoughts of the prime minister, and contribute your invaluable input in strengthening democracy. Jai Hind."



Traders under the banner of Uttar Pradesh Adarsh Vyapar Mandal taking part in Voters' Day programme in Lucknow

Pioneer

While addressing the 'New Voters' Conference' on Thursday, Prime Minister Modi encouraged the youth to register to become voters and exercise their democratic rights.

Meanwhile, National Voters' Day was celebrated with enthusiasm on Thursday in a programme organised by the Lucknow district administration at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan. Chief Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra was the chief guest at the programme.

Speaking on the occasion, Lucknow District Magistrate Surya Pal Gangwar said that every year January 25 was celebrated as the National Voters' Day and its motto this year was 'Vote jaisa kuchh nahi, vote zaroor dalenge hum'.

He said everyone who was a potential voter should get his name added to the voters' list and all those who were a part of the voters' list should step out and vote.

"This is our constitutional right as well as our responsibility. It is important for strengthening democracy. In

Lucknow, last time only 60 per cent voting took place which means that 40 per cent of the people did not exercise their franchise. We have 40 lakh voters in Lucknow district and if 40 per cent do not participate in the voting, it means that 16 lakh voters have not participated in the voting process," he said.

National National Voters' Day was also celebrated in RDSO. A pledge was administered by Director General Ajay Kumar Rana to all the officers and employees in the administrative building.

LDA budget: No money allocated for JPNICC, 37 other projects

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Vice-Chairman of Lucknow Development Authority Indramani Tripathi on Thursday presented the annual budget of Rs 2,476 crore for the year 2024-2025. It was passed at a special meeting attended by senior officials and engineers.

However, no money was allocated to the Jai Prakash Narayan International Convention Centre (JPNICC) in Gomti Nagar and 37 other projects. The LDA administration and state government have released more than Rs 120 crore in the last eight years, but the project is still incomplete.

The VC said that the budget was advanced as the model code of conduct was likely to be in force by March.

A sum of Rs 23 crore has been allocated for the farmers of

Mohan road hi-tech township as their land was acquired by the LDA administration for the project. The amount will be released by April this year.

A sum of Rs 518 crore has been allocated for development and upgradation of the basic amenities in residential colonies, while Rs 110 crore have been set aside to acquire land on the outskirts. It was under gram samaj but later transferred to LDA. A sum of Rs 110 crore has been proposed as compensation to the farmers of the proposed IT City on Sultanpur road. The VC said they expect Rs 200 crore to come from the disposal of those houses and residential plots which were lying unsold in different places of the city. He added that Rs 300 crore were expected to come from unsold shops and commercial estates.

Meanwhile, the LDA has identified four properties worth Rs 110 crore in the city that belong to mania. LDA Vice Chairman Indramani Tripathi has referred the issue to the special cell of police for verification. The properties are located in the prime places.

It is learnt that one such property, worth Rs 35 crore, is located in Hazratganj and belongs to enemy property. It was grabbed by a mafia from eastern UP about 50 years ago. Another such property is a building in Lalbagh that was grabbed by a muscle-man by producing fake documents.

Besides, a mafia has forcibly taken possession of a disputed land in Charbagh that was meant for social community. A don having political connections has also reportedly grabbed a 4-bigha disputed land on the outskirts of the city.

Shilp Mela: Artisans say ODOP has made big difference to them

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Artisans at the Shilp Mela organised under UP Diwas celebrations at Awadh Shilp Gram are of the view that ODOP has made a big difference to them.

Ayush Kumar from Chitrakoot, who is selling wooden toys from his district, said it's the fourth generation in his family into the trade.

"Since the time ODOP was implemented, people have become aware of our product. People buy our products to show their children the kinds of toys they used to play with when they were kids," he said.

He added that the white wood toys which they manufacture include some new innovations such as xylophones, teethers and cars.

"We have come up with several new designs to attract the customers. Our products cost anywhere between Rs 40 and Rs 550 and are becoming popular amongst the buyers," he said.

Amanuddin Ansari from Varanasi said that with ODOP, they are getting a

chance to showcase their products at various exhibitions. "We are also getting a lot of online orders from across the country," he pointed out.

Mukesh Kumar from Bahraich, who is selling wheat stem crafted pictures, said it's the 15th exhibition which he is attending. Mukesh has also crafted a Ram temple.

"After ODOP, the demand for the product has increased and we were attending a number of exhibitions to showcase our product," he said.

"It is a challenging job to first cut the stems into fine pieces and then stick them on the canvas with glue," he added.

Salman, who is selling leatherware products from Agra, has a range including small purses to large handbags and also laptop bags.

Mohammed Sadiq from Bhadohi, which is famous for its carpets, said they have got a market after ODOP.

"It has increased awareness amongst people about our product. We make cotton, silk and woolen carpets with utmost dexterity. Our weavers

are known for this craft and if you compare our carpets with the synthetic ones, you will know the difference since our product has a lasting value," he said.

Mohammed Naeem Ansari from Etah, who is selling temple bells, hangings and ghungroos made in brass, said ODOP has firmly established their product.

"The uniqueness of the temple bells that are crafted at Jalesar in Etah is their specific sound. Our district gifted a huge bell to the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. After ODOP, everyone knows that Etah is a place from where one can buy bells and ghungroos," he said. He added that the products which they are selling cost anywhere between Rs 100 and Rs 1,500. He said that with ODOP, they get a free stall and money to move to their destination.

Mahipal Singh from Bijinor, who is selling wooden combs, said that ODOP has brought food to his family. "We have a market and we get exhibitions to showcase our product," he said, adding this product costs Rs 250.

CITYBRIEFS

VILLA SWAGATAM

Villa Swagatam, a platform dedicated to fostering cultural exchanges between French and Indian artists, designers and writers, has successfully positioned itself as a catalyst for creative dialogues. Drawing inspiration from iconic figures such as SH Raza, Rabindranath Tagore, Jean-Claude Carrière and Ariane Mnouchkine, the organisation has embarked on a mission to strengthen the ties between France and India in literature, performing arts, and arts

and craft. In its inaugural year, Villa Swagatam's residency programme is unfolding exclusively in India, spanning 16 locations known for their expertise in various Indian art forms, including embroidery, puppetry, dance, and illustrated books. One ongoing programme is the residency at the Kalhath Institute in Lucknow, where French Moroccan multidisciplinary visionary Yassine Babilzoui, renowned for his neo-expressionist approach to painting and drawing, has been making waves.

BLANKETS DISTRIBUTED

Blankets were distributed to the needy in Latifpur village on Wednesday in celebration of the Ayodhya temple opening. A function was organised by former village head Shweta Singh. NHA advisor Yagyawan Singh announced that Latifpur village will be soon connected with a four-lane road. National convener of Pradhan Sangh Dr Akhilesh Singh said that Latifpur village had the largest panchayat building in the country.

Class X student immolates self

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A 17-year-old Class X student, said to be an online gaming addict, allegedly set himself ablaze after he failed to return the money he had borrowed from his friends for a bet in Banthra police station area. The incident took place on Monday and he was admitted to Civil hospital where he succumbed on Wednesday evening.

"We were informed about the incident on Thursday after the death of the student. The deceased was identified as Shiva Kashyap and his family took the body to their village in Hardoi. Further information is being collected to take action," the police said. As per reports, Shiva had received 60-70% burns. "Shiva's father Brijesh Kashyap works as a security guard and the family, including his wife, two daughters, live in Banthra. Shiva was preparing for board exams," the police said. Reports said he had lost Rs 10,000 in a betting game.

It also surfaced that on Sunday, Shiva was beaten up by his father. However, neighbours told the police that the mobile phone of a relative had gone missing and Shiva was a suspect, due to which he was beaten up by his father.

Meanwhile, a man was killed and several others were injured after a bus carrying passengers of Bihar collided with a trailer truck near toll plaza on Purvanchal Expressway under Gosainganj police station due to poor visibility caused by fog on Thursday. The deceased was identified as Surendra Singh (48), who was a resident of Chakania Damodarpur in East Champaran, Bihar. He was the

helper of the bus, which was damaged in the mishap. SHO, Gosainganj, Dinesh Chandra Mishra said. The accident occurred around 8 am.

TWO ARRESTED FOR CHAIN/PURSE-SNATCHING

Police on Thursday claimed to have arrested two men for their involvement in chain/purse-snatching cases. The accused, said to be menial workers, forayed into the crime world for a luxurious lifestyle. Identified as Shivam Singh (27) and Jitendra Pal (42), the accused were arrested by a team of Ghazipur police.

"Shivam Singh worked in a private firm and Jitendra Pal ran a sweetmeat kiosk in Lucknow. However, as they wanted to live their lives king size, they took to chain/purse for fast bucks," Deputy Commissioner of Police, North, Qasim Abidi told mediapersons. He said the accused met in jail and later formed a gang. Shivam was named in two cases in Gomti Nagar and Ghazipur, and Jitendra in three cases; two in Alambagh, and one in Indiranagar.

On January 18, a chain-snatching case from an elderly woman, Priti Srivastava, was reported in Ghazipur (Indiranagar) area after which a case was registered. A police was formed and the duo were arrested on Thursday. "A gold chain and a bike without registration plate were also recovered from their possession," the DCP said. The accused told the police that the bike belongs to Shivam and he was still paying EMIs. However, as his income was low, he took to crime.

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People will once again support Modi govt: CM

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In anticipation of the upcoming general elections, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has expressed confidence that the people, standing firmly with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will once again reaffirm their support for the Modi government, potentially securing a third consecutive term for him with an even larger majority than in 2014 and 2019.

Welcoming Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bulandshahr for the inauguration of various development projects, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath expressed gratitude for the dedication and laying of foundation of over 46 projects worth Rs 20,700 crore across several districts, including Baghpat, Ghaziabad, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Hapur, Bulandshahr and Meerut.

The chief minister lauded the prime minister's visit amid inclement weather conditions, describing it as "an inspiring call for unity and continued commitment to building a developed India without stopping, breaking and bending".

Chief Minister Yogi also honoured the prime minister by presenting a statue of Lord Ram and a ceramic tray depicting excavated images of Ram Mandir made in Khurja under the One District, One Product scheme. Acknowledging the historical significance of Prime Minister Modi's first visit to Bulandshahr after the grand inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, Chief Minister Yogi extended a warm welcome to him on behalf of



the people of Uttar Pradesh.

He credited the rapid progress of Uttar Pradesh to Prime Minister Modi's leadership, expressing admiration for the creation of a new India under his guidance.

Highlighting the challenges that had been overcome, such as the lack of medical colleges and the conversion of meter gauge to broad gauge, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasised the inauguration of the fourth railway line and the opening of a section of the freight corridor. He underscored that development projects, ranging from housing schemes to infrastructure, are benefiting all without discrimination in the new India.

Commending two recent

decisions by Prime Minister Modi – Rooftop Solar Scheme and posthumously awarding Bharat Ratna to former chief minister Karpoori Thakur for his leadership in social justice – Chief Minister Yogi expressed deep gratitude. He emphasised the significance of these decisions in aligning with the historic events and milestones achieved in the region.

The event was attended by dignitaries, including Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, Bharatiya Janata Party state president Chaudhary Bhupendra Singh, Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, Union Minister General (Dr) VK Singh, and various other BJP leaders and prominent citizens.

All set for R-Day celebrations

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Close on the heels of the consecration of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, the Yogi Adityanath government will celebrate the second Republic Day of Amrit Kaal on a grand note on January 26 in Uttar Pradesh.

In line with the chief minister's vision, the national festival will be celebrated with traditional simplicity, but in an attractive manner in the entire state.

On the orders of Chief Minister Yogi, Chief Secretary Durga Shanker Mishra has directed all district magistrates of the state to form a consultative committee in view of the event. The committee includes representatives of freedom fighters, martyrs' families, various social organisations, political parties, government departments, educational institutions and district soldier welfare offices. They will outline the cultural programmes to be organized during the Republic Day celebrations.

This is the second Republic Day during the Amrit Kaal of Independence, and keeping this in mind, various events will be organised across the state.

As per the directions of the chief secretary, the flag hoisting process will be completed at government buildings at 8:30 in the morning and at educational institutions at 10 am.

On this occasion, emphasis will be laid on the spirit of national unity, integrity, secularism and communal harmony. Along with the collective singing of the national anthem, homage will be paid to the sacrifices of freedom fighters and martyrs, and their families will also be honoured.

Additionally, to promote



Vidhan Bhawan in all its glory on the eve of Republic Day

Pioneer

national awareness, dramas will be staged, discussions will be held and essay writing contests will be organised.

After the flag hoisting, cultural programmes, including police parade, will be organised. Besides, the celebrations will include sports competitions, wrestling and cycle races etc. A route march of NCC cadets and Scouts and Guides will also be held.

On the Republic Day, events will also be organised with the aim of creating awareness about the 'Panch Pran' of developed India. The programmes will also focus on informing the public about government schemes aimed at the overall development of the state and its people. Besides, the youth will be made aware of the Mera Yuva

Bharat app and encouraged to connect with it.

Public awareness will also be raised about the Yogi government's policy of zero tolerance towards crime and corruption as well as efforts being made for good governance, security and development.

TALLEST NATIONAL FLAG TO BE UNFURLED TODAY

The tallest national flag of the state capital Lucknow will be unfurled by Governor Anandiben Patel on the 75th anniversary of Republic Day in the lawns of Raj Bhavan complex. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, Deputy CMs Keshav Prasad Maurya & Brajesh Pathak and other dignitaries will be present on the occasion. The flag will be 246-feet high.

12 killed in road mishap

Lucknow (PNS): In a tragic incident early Thursday morning, a dozen people going to take a holy dip on the occasion of Paush Purnima, died after their auto was hit by a speeding tanker near Sugusugi village under Alhaganj police station in Jalalabad-Farrukhabad National Highway in Shahjahanpur.

The deceased included three women, a child and eight men of Dham Gada village under Madnapur police station of Shahjahanpur. They were going to Panchal ghat in Farrukhabad to take a holy dip in the Ganga. The SHO of Alhaganj police station and senior officers reached the spot. DM Umesh Pratap Singh, Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar Meena and Bharatiya

Janata Party MLA from Jalalabad, Hari Prakash Verma, reached the spot.

SP Ashok Kumar Meena said that the incident was very tragic. "A dozen people traveling in the auto have died. The incident is being investigated," he said. Those who died in the accident included be Lalaram and his brother Puttu Ram of Dham Gada village in Madnapur area, Siyaram and his brother Suresh, Anantram and his brother Basant along with Lankush, Maniram, Pothiram, Rama Devi and two others. CM Yogi Adityanath expressed grief over the accident and expressed his condolences to the bereaved families. He asked the officials to meet the families of the deceased and express their condolences.

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DGP (L&O) Prashant Kumar awarded President Medal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW

Couple of days after providing a safe and secure security system at Ayodhya during the Ram Temple consecration, Uttar Pradesh Director General of Police (Law & Order) Prashant Kumar has been conferred with the President's Medal for gallantry on Republic Day (Friday) for his bravery in the encounter of a dreaded criminal when he was ADG (Meerut). While the award is also bestowed on the then SSP Meerut Mrs Manzil Saini for her bravery, the 2024 President's gallantry medal will be Prashant Kumar's fourth of the total of 109 various national and state level commendable and exemplary services as police officer. Prashant has also received cash awards twice by the State government.

Born and brought up in Bihar, the 1990 batch IPS of UP cadre, Prashant Kumar holds the distinction of being awarded the gallantry medal for three consecutive years (2020, 2021 and 2022 and now in 2024).

"Indeed it's a proud moment for me, my family and above all my department led by the State Government in extending full cooperation and giving me a free hand to work as a uniformed man in service of the people. Wish I continue to meet the expectations of people in providing a safe and secure atmosphere in the State and now particularly in Ayodhya where millions of



devotees will turn for darshan of Lord Ram. Jai Hind," Prashant told *The Pioneer* when sought his remarks on yet another award for distinguished services.

As ADG, Prashant Kumar was conferred with the President's Police Medal for meritorious services in 2007 and President's Medal for distinguished services in 2014. He, along with nine other policemen, received a reward of Rs 3 lakh each as Chief Minister's Appreciation on January 7, 2022 for bravery in the encounter of dreaded brigand Uday Bhan Yadav alias Gauri Yadav on October 30, 2021. Uday Bhan carried a reward of Rs 5.5 lakh on his head. Prashant Kumar's role for a successful grand ceremony at Ayodhya early this week which handled a host of who's who of the country led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, UP CM Yogi Adityanath and more than 10 lakh visitors in a span of three days has been lauded at various levels as the event was incident free.

Integrated development of wildlife habitats in UP

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Aiming to protect wildlife and provide habitats for wild animals in the state, the Yogi Adityanath government is implementing the Central government's Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats scheme in Uttar Pradesh. To protect the wildlife in protected wildlife sanctuaries and other forest areas in the state, the government has made arrangements to keep the process of integrated development of wildlife habitats smooth. In this regard, the state government has allocated Rs 4.85 crore to the Environment, Forests and Climate Change department for the implementation of the plan, after obtaining financial and administrative approval.

All construction activities under this project will be completed following the rule book of the Uttar Pradesh government, while all designated tasks will be carried out under the supervision of the principal chief forest conservator. The principal chief forest conservator will also ensure that there are no quality-related complaints in the construction activities. The Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats umbrella scheme of the Central government includes the Project Tiger (CSS-PT), Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-DWH) and Elephant Project (CSS-PE) Centrally-sponsored schemes. This scheme is being imple-

mented in the tiger reserves and protected forest areas of Uttar Pradesh.

In addition, the activities included in this scheme involve employee development and capacity building, wildlife research and assessment, anti-poaching activities, wildlife veterinary care, addressing human-wildlife conflict, and promoting environmental tourism. Additionally, financial assistance is provided to states for the relocation of communities from protected areas to other areas. The three compo-

nents of this scheme include supporting protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves and community reserves), conservation of wildlife outside protected areas, and a reintroduction programme to save critically endangered species and habitats. In Uttar Pradesh, the state government is not only implementing the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats scheme but also several other schemes aimed at effectively preventing human-wildlife conflict.

Hindalco RenuSagar reaffirms its commitment towards Environmental protection, Sustainable business & enrich lives as our group purpose :-

- Hindalco ranks as the world's most sustainable aluminum company in Dow Jones sustainability indices for 3rd consecutive year 2020 to 2022.
- Fly ash disposed to cement companies, Brick plants & road projects.
- Eco-friendly Coal transportation thru belt pipe conveyor & aerial ropeway system.
- Hindalco focus on ESG. Water neutrality and rain water harvesting initiatives.
- Adequate green belt developed & maintained with enriched flora and fauna.
- AQI is being maintained by water sprinkling & running sweeping machine on roads.
- Community health, drinking water & check dam constructions works in adopted villages.
- CAAQMS, CEMS systems installed for ambient, stack & effluents. SUP free plant.
- Brick Plant manufactures ash bricks of good quality & bricks available for sale.

With Yogi's initiative, devotees have easy darshan of Ram Lalla

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

With the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla at the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple, Ayodhya is witnessing a surge in visitors. The temple, now open to the general public, is witnessing a continuous flow of devotees from morning to evening for whom seamless darshan of Ram Lalla is being facilitated by the authorities.

On the third day after the consecration ceremony, Ram Path continued to witness an unbroken queue of devotees, but unlike the initial day, there was no commotion on Thursday. Since the temple's inauguration, the efforts of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to ensure convenience of Ram devotees are beginning to yield positive results. Under the supervision of a high-level committee constituted by the chief

minister, the administration and police forces are engaged in enhancing the system.

The situation has notably improved due to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's direct involvement at Ground Zero. Following discussions with the administration and the temple trust, his instructions led to over five lakh devotees having easy darshan of Ram Lalla on Tuesday and approximately 2.5 lakh on Wednesday. On Thursday, the devotees encountered no issues in the darshan.

Post the Pran Pratishtha ceremony, a significant number of Ram devotees from across the country are arriving in Ayodhya for darshan of Ram Lalla. In the first two days alone, around eight lakh devotees had the privilege of having darshan. These devotees are now gradually returning to their respective destinations. Concurrently, in

line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's directives, the district administration and police forces are actively organising the departure of the returning devotees in an orderly manner. Furthermore, new devotees arriving in Ayodhya Dham are also being provided easy darshan.

The committee, constituted on the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, is overseeing the arrangements for the smooth darshan of Ram Lalla and the overall management of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex. This committee, led by Uttar Pradesh Transport Minister Dayashankar Singh, includes key officials such as the chief secretary, DGP, additional chief secretary to the chief minister, and the principal secretary of the Urban Development department.

75th आज़ादी का अमृत महोत्सव

75वें गणतंत्र दिवस की शुभकामनाएं

विद्युत उत्पादन तथा समाज कल्याण कार्यों में पूर्ण भागीदारी के साथ राष्ट्र के लिए समर्पित

एनटीपीसी को "ग्रेट प्लेस टू वर्क" के विजेता के रूप में घोषित किया गया है। दृष्टिकोण और विकास के लिए हमेशा पहल करने वाला एनटीपीसी भारत में सबसे पसंदीदा नियोक्ताओं में से एक है।

रिन्यूएबल ऊर्जा के क्षेत्र में एनटीपीसी के बढ़ते कदम

Campaign launched to ensure higher voting percentage

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

On the occasion of 14th National Voters' Day, various programmes were organised at Namo Ghat here on Thursday in which Divisional Commissioner (DC) Kaushal Raj Sharma was present as the chief guest. In the programme, a campaign was started with the slogan 'Vote jaisa kuch nahin, vote zaroor daalenge hum' to increase voter participation and vote percentage in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Speaking at the programme, the DC congratulated all on the day and inspired everyone to make voters aware. He said that Lok Sabha elections are to be held in the next few months, it is the responsibility of all of us to elect a good candidate and for that we will have to vote enthusiastically. He encouraged the young voters. An oath was administered by the DC to maintain the dignity of the democratic traditions of the country and to exercise franchise while keeping intact the dignity of free, fair and peaceful elections. He also congratulated all the organisers for



DC KR Sharma inaugurating the National Voters Day programme at Namo Ghat in Varanasi on Thursday.

organising good programmes. Speaking on the occasion, District Magistrate/ District Election Officer S Rajalingam expressed his gratitude to the DC and explained the preparations of the administration in preparing the voter list and how the voter list also has a big contribution in clean voting. He asked everyone to download the Voter App for complete voting information and

motivated all organisations to increase the number of young voters so that their current figure of one and a half per cent can be increased to 3-4 per cent. In the end, he congratulated the entire team for such a wonderful presentation. Chief Development Officer (CDO) Himanshu Nagpal welcomed the guests by offering them to wear caps and motivated the participants to increase

the voting percentage from 60 per cent to 85 per cent in the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Earlier after lighting the lamp, a balloon was released by the guests to establish peace. A presentation was given by Systematic Voter's Education and Electoral Participation (SVEEP) Varanasi by singing 'Hum Vote Daalenge Sarkar Banayenge'. The guests were welcomed in a parade by the NCC children of Cutting Memorial School. Various cultural programmes were presented by the students of Kasturba Vidyalaya. The team of Disha Creation presented a street play 'Aao Voting Karein'. Various cultural programmes were also presented by transgender groups in the programme. The programme included boat race, street play, flagging off of mobile van and voter awareness audio/video 'Main Bharat Hoon'. In the end, a signature campaign was started by the guests to increase voting. The DC and DM also distributed certificates among new and senior voters and flagged off voter awareness mobile van.

'NVD reminds citizens of their duty towards nation'



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

On the occasion of National Voters' Day (NVD), Mahila Mahavidyalaya, Kidwai Nagar, organised a programme on Thursday. All girl students were present during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's direct interaction with new voters across the country through virtual mode at 11 am. The programme was inaugurated by the BJP MP Satyadev Pachauri along with legislator Mahesh Trivedi and DM Vishakh G Iyer.

Principal Prof Anju Chaudhary while welcoming the guests said the celebration of NVD every year reminds all the citizens of India of their duty towards the nation. It is necessary for every citizen of India to participate in the voting process. She administered oath to students on Voters' Day.

Lakhs of devotees take holy dip

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

Over 12 lakh devotees took a holy dip in the Sangam, the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati on Paus Purnima snan by 6 pm here on Thursday. The kalpavasis have also camped here in the mela area to perform month-long kalpavas. It will conclude after a month with the Maghi Purnima Snan.

Not only from India, devotees from abroad also come here for kalpavas. Devotees live the life of an ascetic here during their kalpavas. It is believed that by doing kalpavas regularly one becomes able to find solutions to all difficulties in life. In view of the huge crowd on the second bathing festival of Magh Mela, the bathing ghats have been increased from 8 to 12.

DIG Rajiv Narain Mishra



said extensive security arrangements were made. The NDRE, SDRF and water police are continuously monitoring the mela area. Monitoring was being done through CCTVs. Along with the police and PAC, paramilitary forces and ATS commandos also monitored the Sangam bank. Magh Mela Adhikari Dayanand Prasad said over 12 lakh devotees took the holy dip in the Sangam by 6 pm. However, the sequence of their arrival at the ghats continued till late

evening. Chairperson of the Prayagraj Chapter of the Indian Council of astrological sciences, Dr Geeta Mishra, said the last date of Shukla Paksha in Paus month is known as Paus Purnima.

On the day of Pausa Purnima, fasting, bathing in Ganga and charity have special significance. During their stay, kalpvasis take part in religious discourses, give alms, eat only once a day and performing ritual baths daily to attain salvation.

NVD: NCR GM administers oath

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

The National Voters' Day (NVD) oath programme was organised on Thursday at Sangam Bhawan in the General Manager's office, North Central Railway (NCR) headquarters here.

On the occasion General



Manager (GM), NCR, Ravinder Goyal, administered the oath on NVD to all heads of departments, officers and employees present.

The NVD oath programme organised on the occasion was based on the theme "Nothing like Voting, I Vote for sure".

Stage set for R-Day celebrations

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

UP Minister of Tourism and Culture and District Incharge Jaiver Singh will participate as the chief guest in the 75th Republic Day celebration to be organised at the Police Lines grounds on Republic Day on Friday at 9.30 am. Thereafter at 11 am he will depart for Lucknow by road. The police personnel will present an attractive parade and the function will also be attend-

ed by senior police officers. Besides, DC Kaushal Raj Sharma will unfurl the national flag in his office while DM S Rajalingam at the Collectorate, CDO Himanshu Nagpal at Vikas Bhawan and other senior officers at their respective offices. Meanwhile, on the eve of Republic Day, the offices, stations and other places have been decorated with attractive lighting arrangements. In BHU, the Republic Day will be celebrated with enthusiasm. The national flag will be unfurled in the university and various programmes will be organised. The Republic Day celebration programmes will start with the flag unfurling by V-C Prof Sudhir Kumar Jain at 8.45 am in the Malviya Bhawan premises.

PROGRAMME: The Student Wellbeing Initiative Committee of the Institute of Management Studies, Banaras Hindu University (IM-BHU) organised a grand celebration on the eve of the 75th Republic Day here on Thursday.

BJP workers in Varanasi listen to Modi's address

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The workers of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) listened to Prime Minister Narendra Modi at new voters' conferences at 14 places in five assembly segments of his parliamentary constituency here on Thursday. The conferences were organised by the youth wing of the party, Bharatiya Janata Yuva Morcha (BJYM) on the National Voters' Day. In his address through virtual medium, Modi said that the next 25 years are very important and it is the responsibility of the youth to transform India into a developed India by 2047.

Though it was planned to organise the conferences at 20 places in this PM's constituency, they were held at 14 places in which regional BJP president Dilip Patel was present as the chief guest at Rama Garden

located in Bhullanpur area under Rohania assembly constituency while UP Minister of State (independent charge) for Stamp and Court Fee, Registration Ravindra Jaiswal in Bageshwari Mandal of City North assembly, state BJP secretary Shankar Giri in Dhupchandi Mandal, City South MLA and former Minister Dr Neelkanth Tiwari in Deendayal Mandal of City South assembly, MLA Saurabh Srivastava in Mahamana Mandal of Varanasi Cantt assembly, and city party chief Vidyasagar Rai in Cantt Mandal as the chief guest. Similarly, regional media in-charge Navratna Rath, Santosh Solapurkar, Naveen Kapoor, Jagdish Tripathi, Rahul Singh, Abhishek Mishra, Alok Srivastava city BJYM president Rajat Jaiswal etc were prominently present in the city area conferences.

Jail supdt to be felicitated

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Jail Superintendent, Kanpur District Jail, Dr BD Pandey will be felicitated with the Platinum Medal (IG Commendation Disc) on Republic Day.

Besides, Head Jail Warder Dinesh Kumar Tewari will be felicitated with the gold medal while Head Jail Warder Vivek Tewari, Woman Head Jail Warder Anjali Yadav and Jail Warder Sandeep Kumar Singh will be honoured with the silver medal.

Dr Pandey had also been felicitated with the President's Medal in 2021 during his posting in Meerut Jail as the Jail Superintendent. He will be awarded the Platinum Medal for installing the display board to facilitate the meeting of inmates with their kin, starting the radio station in the jail and providing job to inmates.

IFFCO MD inspects nano urea plant

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

IFFCO Managing Director Dr Uday Shanker Awasthi along with his wife Rekha Awasthi performed puja as per the rituals at the Ram Temple located in the IFFCO campus. They then inaugurated the newly-constructed shopping complex located in Ghyanganagar.

The MD visited the plant in which he inspected nano plant, urea-1, urea-2, ammonia-1, ammonia-2 control room, bagging plant, power plant, DM plant, Fire and Safety department and gave necessary instructions to the officers. The MD held a meeting with the unit head, all JGMs and HODs in which he took information about development works taking place in the plant. The office-bearers of IFFCO Employees' Union and IFFCO Officers' Association also held a meeting with the MD.

Senior Executive Director



(Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia, General Managers Sanjay Vaish and MD Mishra, JGMs respectively Anita Mishra, AP Rajendran, PK Singh, Sanjay Bhandari, PK Patel, Ratnesh Kumar, Arvendra Kumar and SK Singh, HOD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar,

IFFCO Officers' Association president Anurag Tiwari and General Secretary Swayam Prakash, IFFCO Employees' Union president Pankaj Pandey, general secretary Vinay Yadav, PRO Sonu Tiwari and other officers and employees were present.

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Lovers commit suicide

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A love-sick couple committed suicide in Farrukhabad late on Wednesday night. On Thursday morning the boy was found hanging while the girl was lying unconscious on the floor of a room after allegedly consuming a poisonous substance. On getting information the police and forensic team rushed to the spot and carried out investigation. Raghunath Singh of

Chursai of Jahanganj police area is a farmer. Around 5 pm on Wednesday his nephew Akhilesh (19) of Achhrauda under Merapur police station, reached his place and after dinner the family members went to sleep. Around 4.30 am on Thursday when Raghunath woke up he called his daughter. On failing to get any response he went to the room and found her and Akhilesh missing. When Raghunath opened the door of a room outside, he found Akhilesh hanging and Roshni lying unconscious on the floor. He raised an alarm and informed Akhilesh's father Vijay Singh on phone. Thereafter Vijay along with wife Ishwari Devi, sons Shivam and Mohit, rushed to the spot. Station House Officer (SHO) Yogendra Solanki, Rajputana outpost incharge Achhelal along with force reached there and carried out investigation. The police sent the bodies for an autopsy. Later, forensic team also reached the spot and collected evidence.

As the smell of some poisonous substance was coming from the girl it was apprehended that she died of consuming it. A love affair came to the fore as the cause of the incident.

Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar
Tender Notice Reference No. GNDU/Gen/01/2024
The Department of G.N.D.U. Amritsar invites online bids for the following:
Sr.No. 1
Item: Allotment of Canteens/shops
Quantity: 23
Closing date & time :15/02/2024 at 5:00 p.m.
For details log onto www.eproc.Punjab.gov.in
Note: Any corrigendum(s) to the Tender Notice shall be published on the above website only.
Superintendent (General)
Guru Nanak Dev University
Amritsar
NA/12/21562/2023/31762
Dated CHD :- 1/25/2024

IFFCO establishes presence across globe

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

In the year 1967, 57 Indian cooperative societies came together and formed the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO). IFFCO ranks first in the world in the cooperative sector. IFFCO is directly connected to five crore farmers through 35,000 cooperative societies across the country. Over the past 57 years IFFCO has been committed to this cause by providing world-class soil nutrients and services to Indian farmers, empowering them at every step.

IFFCO contributes about 32 per cent (pc) of phosphoric and 21 pc of nitrogenous fertiliser demand of the country. According to the World Cooperative Monitor Report, IFFCO ranks first among the top 300 cooperative societies in the world. IFFCO has established its presence across the globe with joint ventures in Oman, Jordan, Senegal and Dubai. Apart from fertilisers, IFFCO has diversified into sectors like general insurance, rural mobile telephones, SEZs, international trade, food processing and e-market.

IFFCO has worked towards the objective of doubling the income of farmers by reducing farming input costs. Additionally, IFFCO is dedicated to supporting the nationwide cooperative movement and the prime minister's goal of "Sahkar Se Samridhhi". IFFCO has developed the world's first nano fertiliser, nano urea liquid which is a major step towards sustainable agriculture. Technological innovations such as nano urea liquid and nano DAP are shaping the future of the agri-food sector by reducing environmental and human health issues as well as reducing farming input costs, leading to significant gains in food security and productivity which will prove to be a milestone.

In line with the prime minister's NaMo Drone Didi scheme, IFFCO is providing drone training with the help of Cordet. Drones will have been a game changer for modern

agriculture. This technology will help farmers increase productivity, reduce input costs and increase income.

The Pulpur unit has produced about 18.5 lakh MT of urea at the lowest specific energy ever in the current financial year 2023-24. Till date Pulpur unit of IFFCO has produced more than 500.0 lakh MT of urea fertiliser and 76.6 lakh 500 ml bottles (equivalent to 3.45 lakh MT).

The IFFCO Pulpur unit has successfully organised the 11th Inter Unit Cultural Festival (IUCF) 2023. Pulpur unit was declared the winner of IUCF, 2023. The IFFCO Pulpur unit has won prestigious awards from various institutions every year in the field of production, energy conservation, environmental conservation and safety. Following awards have been received till date in the year 2023-24: 'Excellent Energy Efficient Unit' and 'Energy Efficient Unit' by Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) for Pulpur-II and Pulpur-I respectively, the winner of '21st Greentech Safety Award 2023' for outstanding achievements in safe-

ty excellence by Greentech Foundation, the winner of 23rd Annual Greentech Environment Award 2023 by Greentech Foundation and the Gold Award for OHS Management from Grow Care India.

CORDET manufactures liquid bio-fertilisers which are sold throughout the country. In an effort to assist farmers in the area, Cordet purchases neem seeds from them and then produces neem oil for IFFCO to use in the manufacturing of neem-coated Urea.

IFFCO has over the years demonstrated its commitment towards socially responsible practices. IFFCO Pulpur unit is running various community development programmes through Integrated Rural Development Program (IRDP), Mahila Chetna Club and Om Kalyan Samiti running Kendriya Vidyalaya/welfare programmes in nearby villages and schools. These programmes include installation of sanitation facilities, hand pumps, solar lights, distribution of blankets/shawls, organising free health camps, distribution of school uniforms, construction of classrooms, etc.

Labourer found hanging from tree

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A labourer of Panchamkheda village under Hasanganj police station area of Unnao was found hanging from a tree under mysterious circumstances on Thursday morning. On getting information the police rushed to the spot and sent the body for autopsy. His kin could not tell the cause of the incident. Bablu (32) of Panchamkheda village was a labourer. His kin informed that Bablu had returned from Lucknow on Wednesday and after dinner had again gone out at 10 pm. When he did not

return home till late night, they searched for him in the village. On Thursday morning villagers found him hanging from a tree on the outskirts of the village and informed the kin and the police. His kin further said that Bablu was sick for the past several months. Inspector Rajeshwar Tripathi said that kin suspected financial hardship as the cause of incident. On receipt of autopsy report, the exact cause of the death will be ascertained, he said.

Meanwhile an elderly woman succumbed to burns during treatment at the UHM hospital on Thursday.

Bandhan Bank
Regional Office: Netaji Marg, Nr. Mithakhali Six Roads, Ellisbridge, Ahmedabad-6. Phone: + 91-79-26421671-75
PHYSICAL POSSESSION NOTICE
NOTICE is hereby given under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in the exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002, the Authorized Officer issued demand notice to the borrower(s) on the date mentioned against the account stated hereinafter calling upon them to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of said notice. The borrower(s), having failed to repay the amount notice is hereby given to the public in general and particular to the borrower(s) that the undersigned has taken physical possession of the property described herein below in exercise of the powers conferred on him under section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said Rules on the date mentioned against the loan account. The borrower(s) in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealing with the property will be subject to the charge of the Bank for the amounts, interest, costs and charges thereon. The borrowers'/mortgagors' attention is invited to the provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured asset.

Name of borrower(s) & Loan Account No.	Description of the property mortgaged (Secured Asset)	Date of Demand Notice	Date of Physical Possession Notice	Outstanding Amt. as on Date of Demand Notice
Mr. Yagyesha Kumar Mrs. Mithalesh Kumari 20007670000223	All that part and parcel of the immovable property situated at Plot No.01 on Gata No.186 Minji. Vill Valipur Khurdwa, Par Tehsil Gauriganj Amethi, Dist: Rae Bareilly, Taluka: Rae Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh-229001 and bounded by: North: Plot of Ram Kripal, East: Khet Kamla Devi, West: Gauriganj to Ateha Road, South: Plot of Namita Srivastava	20.10.2023	20.01.2024	Rs.30,76,921.03 (as on 30.09.2023)
Mr. Sachin Kumar Srivastav Mrs. Namita Srivastav Mrs. Arti Srivastav 20007670000171	All that part and parcel of the immovable property situated at Plot No.02 Gata No.186 Km1, Village-Valipur Khurdwa Pargana & Tehsil-Gauriganj, Dist-Amethi, Uttar Pradesh with construction there on admeasuring area 104 sq.mtr and bounded by: North: Plot of Mithilesh, East: Plot of Kamla Devi, West: Road (Gauriganj to Senthal), South: House of Suresh Singh	21.09.2023	20.01.2024	Rs.30,78,290/-

Place: Amethi
Date: 26/01/2024
Authorised Officer
Bandhan Bank Limited

Republic Day celebrations to showcase democratic values

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

President Droupadi Murmu will lead India in celebrating the 75th Republic Day with an imposing display of its rising military might and rich cultural heritage during a 90-minute parade at the majestic Kartavya Path on Friday.

The grand celebrations, with an overarching theme of projecting the nation's women power and democratic values, will be graced by French President Emmanuel Macron as the chief guest.

The armed forces will display an array of home-grown weaponry and military equipment such as missiles, drone jammers, surveillance systems, vehicle-mounted mortars and BMP-II infantry combat vehicles at the parade.

For the first time, an all-women tri-services contingent will be part of the country's biggest ceremonial event.

In another historic first, Lieutenants Deepti Rana and Priyanka

Sevda, who are among 10 women officers commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery for the first time last year, will lead the Swathi weapon locating radar and Pinaka rocket system at the parade.

The parade will be heralded by over 100 women artistes playing Indian musical instruments such as Sankh, Naadswaram, Nagada for the first time instead of the traditional military bands.

Around 15 women pilots will also enthral the audience during the Indian Air Force's fly-past, representing 'Nari Shakti' (women power). The contingents of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF) will also consist of only women personnel.

The Republic Day parade will commence at 10:30 am and will run for a duration of around 90 minutes.

The ceremony will start with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the National War Memorial, where he will lead the nation in paying solemn tributes to the fallen heroes by laying a wreath.



Minutes later, President Murmu and her French counterpart Macron will arrive in the 'traditional buggy', a practice that is making a comeback after a gap of 40 years, the defence ministry said.

The national flag will be unfurled followed by the national anthem with a booming 21-gun salute to be given with indigenous gun system 105-mm Indian Field Guns.

Four Mi-17 IV helicopters of 105 Helicopter Unit will shower flower petals on the audience present at Kartavya Path. This will be followed by 'Aavaahan', a band performance by over 100 women artistes playing various types of percussion instruments.

The parade will then commence with President Murmu taking the salute.

The parade will be commanded by Lieutenant General Bhavnish Kumar, General Officer Commanding, Delhi Area.

The Kartavya Path will be witness to a march past by a combined band and marching contingent of the French Armed Forces.

A 30-member band contingent will be headed by Captain Khourda and will be followed by a 90-member marching contingent from France. Six Indians will be part of the French marching contingent.

One multi-role tanker transport aircraft and two Rafale fighter jets of the French Air and Space Force will fly above the contingents while they march past the saluting dais.

The first Indian Army contingent leading the Mechanised Column will be of 61 Cavalry to be led by Major Yashdeep Ahlawat. Raised in 1953, the 61 Cavalry is the only serving active Horsed Cavalry Regiment in the world. It will be followed by 11 Mechanised Columns, 12 marching contingents, and a fly past by

Advanced Light Helicopters of Army Aviation Corps.

Tank T-90 Bhishma, NAG missile system, infantry combat vehicle, all-terrain vehicle, weapon locating radar system 'Swathi', drone jammer system, and medium range surface-to-air missile will be among the key displays by the mechanised columns.

The Indian Air Force (IAF) contingent will comprise 144 airmen and four officers, and it will be led by Squadron Leader Rashmi Thakur.

Squadron Leaders Sumita Yadav, Pratiti Ahluwalia and Flight Lieutenant Kirti Rohil will march past as supernumerary officers behind the contingent commander.

The celebrations will end with the flypast by 46 aircraft of the Indian Air Force.

The IAF fleet will include 29 fighter jets, seven transport aircraft, nine helicopters and one heritage plane. All these aircraft will operate from six different bases.

Fifteen women pilots, including six from the fighter streams, will oper-

ate various IAF platforms during the fly-past.

For the first time, indigenously-built Tejas aircraft will fly in a formation of four aircraft.

There was a previous occasion of one Tejas jet being part of the Republic Day parade.

But for the first time the aircraft will fly in a formation.

Over 260 women personnel from CRPF, BSF and SSB will exhibit the country's 'Nari Shakti' by carrying out daredevil stunts during the motorcycle display.

A total of 16 tableaux from states and Union territories and nine from central ministries and departments will roll down the Kartavya Path during the parade.

The states and Union territories are: Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Manipur, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Ladakh, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Meghalaya, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana.

26 tableaux to showcase women empowerment on Kartavya Path

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

From women's roles in socio-economic activities to contribution of women scientists, 26 tableaux are set to roll down the Kartavya Path highlighting "women empowerment" this Republic Day.

The Centre has already announced that the 75th Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path will be women-centric with 'Viksit Bharat' and 'Bharat - Loktantra ki Matruka' to be the main themes.

Highlighting women's crucial roles in socio-economic activities, the Manipur tableau will feature women working with delicate fibres of lotus stems and making yarns using traditional 'charkhas'. The front side of the tableau will feature a woman collecting lotus stems from Manipur's Loktak lake. Women riding on boats and collecting lotus stems will be displayed on the sides of the tableau.

A replica of 'Ima Keithel' - a unique all-women market - has been made behind the Manipur tableau. The market is several centuries old and is run entirely by women.

The tableau from the north-eastern state will also feature popular fabrics innovated by Manipuri women. The process of making lotus silk was innovated by Bijayshanti Tongbram, India's first lotus silk maker.

Besides displaying critical systems and technologies, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is set to portray the significant contribution of its women scientists in core areas of defence research.

From an anti-satellite missile



to a third generation anti-tank guided missile and light combat aircraft Tejas, women's involvement in DRDO will be prominently highlighted in their tableau. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will showcase one of its biggest feats, Chandrayaan-3, at its landing site Shiv Shakti point on the Moon.

The tableau of Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways will display the development of India's maritime sector - from rise in the number of women seafarers to development of lighthouse and cruise tourism.

The Madhya Pradesh tableau, on the other hand, will showcase the state's achievement of women's integration directly into the development process through its welfare schemes.

Highlighting the self-reliant and progressive women of Madhya Pradesh, the tableau will focus on the active participation of women in the areas from modern service sector to small-scale industries and traditional domains.

The tableau will have Madhya Pradesh's first woman fighter pilot, Avani Chaturvedi, of

Indian Air Force (IAF), who will be seen standing beside a fighter plane model. It will also feature women artists painting on pots, the Badal Mahal gate of Chanderi and the weavers of globally renowned Chanderi, Maheshwari and Bagh print sarees.

While Odisha's tableau will display women's involvement in handicrafts and handloom sectors, Chhattisgarh's tableau will reflect female dominance in the tribal communities of Bastar.

A tableau on Dhorodo village in Kutch, which recently made it to the list of 54 best tourism villages, will be showcased in the Republic Day parade in New Delhi, the Gujarat government said on Monday.

An official release said, "Dhorodo: Global Identity of Gujarat's Border Tourism" will be the theme of the tableau to be showcased during the parade on the Kartavyapath on the 75th Republic Day celebrations on January 26."

Dhorodo, which the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) included on the list of 'best tourism villages of 2023', will

take centre stage in showcasing "the unique blend of tradition, tourism and technology that defines the essence of a developed India", the release said.

The Tamil Nadu tableau will showcase the polling process implemented during 10th century Chola era, by displaying leaf ballots in pots.

Rajasthan's tableau will be a demonstration of the development of women's handicraft industries along with the festive culture of the state. The tableau will portray the famous 'Ghoomar' dance of Rajasthan, depicted through a mannequin of a dancer. It will also have a beautiful statue of Meera Bai, who is considered to be a symbol of devotion and power.

The tableau will also display a glimpse of the rich handicraft traditions, including bandhej, bagru print and applique work.

Haryana's tableau will display empowerment of women in their state through the government programme 'Mera parivar - Meri pehchan'.

The tableau will feature Haryanvi women holding digital devices to symbolise how the Digital India initiative enabled them to access government schemes with just one click.

The Chhattisgarh tableau will reflect female dominance in the tribal communities of Bastar. It has been decorated with bell metals and terracotta artefact to display their traditions.

The tableau of Andhra Pradesh this year is on the subject of transforming school education and making the students globally competitive. The Ladakh tableau will showcase Indian women's ice hockey team which comprised Ladakhi women.

Panchayati Raj representatives, yoga teachers, farmers among special invitees

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Several elected representatives from the Panchayati Raj Institutions, a battery of yoga teachers and farmers and members of Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) as well as their families will be among the government's special invitees expected to attend the 75th Republic Day Parade Celebrations 2024 in the national capital.

Ahead of the general elections slated next few months, the Ministries such as Panchayati Raj, Ayush and Agriculture have taken initiative to ensure that representation of their sector is at the Kartavya Path on the D-Day.

Union Ayush Ministry in a statement said that yoga teachers/instructors from various states of India will witness the Republic Day parade as special invitees. "The Government has invited 291 yoga teachers and instructors along with their family members for their remarkable contribution in providing primary health care through Yoga at grassroots level across the nation."

"These instructors/teachers are engaged in the primary health care/wellness sector through AHWCs (Ayush Health and Wellness Centres) working under flagship scheme of National Ayush Mission of Ministry of Ayush."

After the Republic Day event all the special invitees will also interact with Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Ayush Minister at his residence.

These special invitees will visit different historical places of importance in Delhi.

Similarly, about 500 guests, including elected representatives of Panchayati Raj Institutions from across the country and their spouses, have been invited. The selected participants are from those panchayats which have received the National Panchayat Awards in the previous years, or their panchayats have done remarkable work, said an official from the Panchayati Raj Ministry.

"The objective is to provide an opportunity to the panchayat representatives to take part in the national festival, in line with the government's vision of 'Jan Bhagidari'. This initiative holds immense significance as it reinforces the democratic ethos by recognising and involving panchayat representatives in the national celebration," said the official.

After attending the Parade, they will meet Rural Development and Panchayati Raj Minister Giriraj Singh at his residence. Minister of State for Rural Development Faggan Singh Kulaste and Minister of State for Panchayati Raj Kapil Moreshwar Patil will also be present at the interaction.

Shettar returns to BJP, quits Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Former Karnataka chief minister Jagdish Shettar, who had quit the BJP to join the Congress ahead of the state assembly polls last year, rejoined his old party on Thursday. Shettar cited his long association with the BJP and said many of his well-wishers wanted him to join back the party.

The Lingayat leader joined the party in the presence of former Karnataka chief minister B S Yediyurappa, Union ministers Bhupendra Yadav and Rajeev Chandrasekhar, Karnataka BJP president B Y Vijayendra and its media head Anil Baluni. Party sources said Shettar had met Home Minister Amit Shah and its national president J P Nadda as he was persuaded to rejoin the saffron organisation which he had quit in a huff after being denied a ticket to contest the assembly polls.

Shettar also praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership, saying India has been strengthened under him.



The 68-year-old Shettar, a staunch RSS man and a senior BJP leader, switched to the Congress after he was denied a ticket during the 2023 assembly election. The Congress has, however, made him a MLC, a position he has now quit to join the BJP. When he left the BJP in April 2023, he said he was humiliated by the senior leaders of the BJP and that his decision to quit the saffron party was final. "How the BJP leaders treated me in the last few days is nothing but

a humiliation. I was ill-treated by the party members which forced me to announce my resignation. Some leaders in the state are misusing the BJP system," Shettar said at that time.

Shettar has contested the 2023 Karnataka Assembly Elections as a Congress candidate from Hubli-Dharwad-Central. Shettar suffered defeat. He was beaten by the BJP's Mahesh Tenginakai by over 34,000 votes, after which he blamed "money power and pressure tactics".

Shettar, a six-time MLA, served as the Karnataka Chief Minister for 10 months between 2012 and 2013. He began his political career in the 1980s and held various positions within the BJP, including state president and leader of the opposition in the Karnataka Legislative Assembly.

The 67-year-old Lingayat strongman held various ministerial positions in the Karnataka government, including the portfolio of Rural Development and Panchayat Raj.



Government ready to discuss all issues in Parliament as per rules, says Meghwal

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Ahead of Parliament's Budget session, Union minister Arjun Ram Meghwal on Thursday said the government was ready to discuss all issues as per rules. The Budget session of Parliament, the last of the present Lok Sabha before parliamentary elections are announced, begins on January 31 and will conclude on February 9.

Responding to a question on the opposition's allegation that the government was not allowing it to raise issues in the House, the minister of state for Parliamentary Affairs said, "We are ready to discuss every issue that the speaker of the Lok Sabha and the chairman of the Rajya Sabha decide under the rules."

"We have always done this. We appeal (to the opposition) to give notices to the speaker and the chairman and if they accept, then we are ready for discussion," Meghwal told PTI-Video.

Asked about his expectations from the session, he said it will be a short session.

The President will address the joint sitting of the two Houses. The Interim Budget will be presented on February 1. There will be a debate on the motion of thanks on the President's address followed by a discussion on the Interim Budget, he said.

"I think everyone should participate in this discussion," he added. Responding to a question on the opposition raking up the issue of suspension of nearly 150 MPs from both the Houses, Meghwal, who also heads the law ministry, said all parties had agreed with the speaker on not bringing placards in the House.

Despite the assurance, they displayed placards and disrupted proceedings. "The Lok Sabha speaker warned them but they persisted. They didn't even listen to the speaker. The speaker had to take action then. The Rajya Sabha chairman also took similar action," he said.

'Risk of death drops 2 per cent with every additional year of education'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Risk of death drops by two per cent with every additional year of education or simply put those who completed six years of primary school had a lower risk of death by an average of 13 per cent, according to the largest study of its kind published in The Lancet Public Health.

The decline in death risk is regardless of age, sex, location, and social and demographic backgrounds, according to the researchers.

They found that after graduating from secondary school,

the risk of dying was cut by nearly 25 per cent, and 18 years of education lowered the risk by 34 per cent. Researchers also compared the effects of education to other risk factors such as eating a healthy diet, smoking, and drinking too much alcohol, and they found the health outcome to be similar.

For example, the benefit of 18 years of education can be compared to that of eating the ideal amount of vegetables, as opposed to not eating vegetables at all. Not going to school at all is as bad for you as drinking five or more alcoholic drinks per day or smoking ten

cigarettes a day for 10 years. "Education is important in its own right, not just for its benefits on health, but now being able to quantify the magnitude of this benefit is a significant development," said Dr. Terje Andreas Eikemo, head of Centre for Global Health Inequalities Research (CHAIN) at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU).

While the benefits of education are greatest for young people, those older than 50 and even 70 years still benefit from the protective effects of education. Researchers found no significant difference in the

effects of education between countries that have reached different stages of development. This means that more years of education is just as effective in rich countries as in poor countries.

The study identified data from 59 countries and included over 10,000 data points collected from over 600 published articles. Most of the studies reviewed for this study were from high-income settings, highlighting the need for more research in low- and middle-income countries, particularly from sub-Saharan and north Africa where data is scarce.

NHRC to extend probe after Indore orphanage torture report

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Taking suo motu cognizance of reports that the children were being subjected to torture at an orphanage in Indore, Madhya Pradesh and the police has registered an FIR in the matter, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has decided to extend its enquiry beyond the specific case and look into the status of minor inmates in other branches of the same organization

located in different states.

The move aims to probe into the potential widespread nature of the issue and ensure the well-being and rights of children in various facilities associated with the orphanage. The Indore police had registered an FIR on the basis of the complaint registered by the State Children Welfare Committee.

Reportedly, apart from Indore, the orphanage has its branches in Jodhpur, Surat, Kolkata and Bengaluru under four states of Rajasthan,

Gujarat, West Bengal and Karnataka. Accordingly, the NHRC has issued notices to the Chief Secretaries and the Directors General of Police of the States of Rajasthan, Gujarat, West Bengal and Karnataka seeking an action taken report in the matter after conducting an enquiry/inspection of the branches of the orphanage mentioned in the reports.

The authorities have been asked to submit a report in this regard within the next four weeks. The Commission, in its

statement issued here said that, "if the contents of the news report, if true, amounts to serious violation of human rights of the inmates at the orphanage. It has noted that taking lawful action, an FIR has been registered by the police at Indore, but the matter has inter-state ramification. Therefore, an enquiry/inspection of the other branches of the orphanage, situated outside Indore is also necessary." As per the NHRC, it found that the media report had quoted the District Collector of Indore saying that the CWC team has found violations of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act and they have sealed the hostel and shifted the children to government facilities.

BJP demands apology from Lalu daughter for insulting Bihar CM

PTI ■ PATNA

The Bihar BJP on Thursday accused RJD supremo Lalu Pasad's Singapore-based daughter Rohini Acharya of insulting Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and demanded a public apology from her.

Acharya had used derogatory language against Kumar, also the ruling JD(U) president, in several posts on X, which were deleted later, Bihar BJP leader Nikhil Anand claimed.

Sharing a screenshot of the purported deleted posts, Anand said, "These are like an arrow released from the bow."

The BJP leader said if Acharya regrets having used words like 'badtameez' (ill-mannered) against the chief minister in the post, she should publicly express regret and apologise.

A section of the media claimed that Acharya had reacted to Kumar's statement against dynastic politics at a JD(U) rally commemorating former state chief minister and socialist icon Karpooori Thakur's birth anniversary on Wednesday. Thakur was conferred with the Bharat Ratna posthumously earlier this week.

While addressing the rally here, Kumar criticised



dynastic politics, stating that JD(U) followed the path shown by the late leader by not promoting anyone from the family in the party ranks.

A section of the media claimed that his statement was indirectly aimed at the RJD, an ally of the JD(U) in Bihar's Mahagathbandhan government in which sons of Prasad are ministers.

Prasad's younger son and heir apparent Tejashwi Yadav is the Deputy chief minister of the Bihar government, while his elder son Tej Pratap Yadav is a minister in the state cabinet. The RJD president's eldest daughter Misa Bharti is a Rajya Sabha member.

Responding to Kumar's comments on dynastic politics, Acharya attacked the chief minister in posts on X but she deleted them later, according to BJP leader Anand.

To each their own

Two major players in INDIA bloc plan to go it alone in LS polls. Where does it leave the Oppn grouping?

Despite the constituents' best efforts to paper over their differences and present a united facade, the worst apprehensions about the INDIA bloc are coming true. Its seat-sharing formula is just not taking shape. The much-hyped bloc, an alliance of 28 Opposition parties aiming to counter the BJP's dominance, seems to be unravelling. Recent announcements by key constituents indicate a shift in strategy, with prominent leaders opting for independent paths in the Lok Sabha elections. West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's rejection of sharing seats with the Congress and AAP's decision to go it alone in Punjab are enough to upset the bloc's apple cart even before it could start its electoral journey. Mamata, the TMC chief and a key architect of the INDIA bloc, has signalled a fracture in the purported unity. She has emphasised the need for regional parties to assert themselves and prioritise State-centric issues over national alliances. This stance has added an element of unpredictability



to the bloc's future, as it challenges the idea of a united front against the BJP. As if Mamata's stance were not enough, AAP has also decided to go it solo. In Punjab, the party has declared its intent to contest the elections independently. It comes as a major blow to the INDIA bloc: In retaliation, the Congress could go it alone in Delhi and Haryana, effectively making it a three-cornered contest in Delhi, Punjab and Haryana.

The challenge for the INDIA bloc now lies in reconciling the divergent aspirations of its constituent parties and finding common ground to build a cohesive narrative on. It is, however, essential to acknowledge

that the dynamics of Indian politics are fluid and alliances can evolve swiftly. The INDIA bloc could potentially reassess its strategy and work towards a more unified front as the general elections approach. The posturing by the TMC and AAP should make the INDIA bloc leaders go back to the basics and rework their strategy. It may find renewed purpose in addressing shared concerns while respecting the autonomy of individual parties. The success of the INDIA bloc at the hustings hinges on its ability to navigate internal differences. The bloc's initial promise lay in consolidating regional strength; for this, it must overcome fissures and present a coherent vision for governance at the national level. It needs to convince voters that a coalition of regional parties can provide stable and effective leadership, addressing both local and national concerns. Its success will depend on its capability to forge a common agenda, communicate it effectively to the electorate and demonstrate a united front against the ruling party. While the bloc's future appears uncertain at the moment, political landscapes are known for rapid transformations. The road to general elections will test the resilience and adaptability of the INDIA bloc, determining whether it can emerge as a potent force capable of shaping the national narrative and challenging the status quo.

PICTALK



Devotees take part in a religious procession to celebrate Thaipusam festival, in Chennai

PTI

Managing diversity in small and remote teams

Small companies managing multi-location teams thrive through clear communication, inclusivity and technological leverage

In the modern era of remote work and globalisation, small companies are increasingly embracing multi-location teams to tap into diverse talent pools and expand their reach. Effectively managing teams spread across different locations presents unique challenges and opportunities. Small companies can mitigate these challenges by exploring strategies that help to successfully navigate the complexities of managing multi-location teams. First and foremost, since technology has made remote working possible, it should be further leveraged for seamless communication. It is the cornerstone of managing multi-location teams. Small companies should invest in reliable communication tools that facilitate seamless collaboration. Platforms like video conferencing, project management software, and instant messaging can bridge the geographical gap. Having established a connection with the team, it is vital to ascertain clear communication protocols that are essential to avoid misunderstandings and ensure everyone stays informed. Establish guide-



lines for virtual meetings, project updates, and team communication channels. Consistency in communication practices helps maintain a sense of unity among team members, regardless of their physical locations. While written communication is valuable, face-to-face interactions build stronger connections. It is beyond doubt that distance can create a sense of isolation, making team building crucial for multi-location teams. It is therefore important to include virtual team-building activities, such as online games, virtual happy hours, or collaborative projects. These initiatives promote camaraderie and create a positive team culture. In a long-distance, multi-location work environment, clarity is the king. Clearly defining roles and responsibilities for each team member to avoid confusion and ensure accountability is a must. Small

companies should establish a transparent framework that outlines expectations and deliverables. This clarity minimizes the risk of duplication of efforts and promotes efficiency within the multi-location team. Utilizing the requisite project management tools play a pivotal role in coordinating tasks and projects across different locations. Small companies can benefit from using tools that enable real-time collaboration, document sharing, and task tracking. These tools enhance productivity and streamline workflows within the multi-location team. In addition, inclusivity is vital for the success of multi-location teams. Small companies should actively cultivate a culture that values diverse perspectives and contributions. Provide opportunities for skill-building, training, and career advancement for all team members, regardless of their location. This investment enhances individual capabilities. Another important aspect that helps to manage a small multi-location team is regular check-ins and feedback sessions to assess the well-being and

progress of each team member. Small companies should create an open and supportive environment where team members feel comfortable sharing concerns or ideas. Constructive feedback sessions help in addressing challenges and fostering continuous improvement. To enhance transparency in the multi-location teams, a centralized knowledge repository accessible to all team members is a vital requirement. This repository can contain important documents, project updates, and resources, ensuring that everyone has access to the information they need. This type of centralised hub enhances transparency and minimises the risk of information silos within the multi-location team. Last but not least, being a multi-location team, embrace and celebrate the diversity within the multi-location team. Small Companies should promote cultural awareness, acknowledging the unique backgrounds, customs, and perspectives of team members. *(The writer is assistant professor at Amity University; views are personal)*



HIMA BINDU KOTA

Taiwanese conundrum for mainland China

The best bet for the Chinese is to seek organic support for 'reunification' with the main land from the Taiwanese themselves. A coercive posture and rough language would not help

Contrary to Chinese assertions, insistences, and sensitivities to what it unilaterally calls 'Chinese Taiwan' or 'Taiwan, China', the Republic of China (ROC) or Taiwan has its own functional democracy, constitution and approximately 3,00,000 combatants protecting its territorial sovereignty. With mainland China claiming to represent One-China as the legitimate power, the battle of wits tilted in favour of mainland China in 1971, when the United Nations switched diplomatic recognition onto mainland China. Since then, mainland China has flexed its patent admixture of financial, military, industrial and diplomatic power to bludgeon support in its favour. Today, the fast-receding number of countries that recognize Taiwan has fallen to a meagre 12 countries. Even this list includes relatively 'lightweight' nations like St Vincent and the Grenadines, Eswatini and Tuvalu, St Kitts and Nevis, St Lucia, Palau, Nauru, Holy See, Marshall Islands etc. Chinese President Xi Jinping has repeatedly warned against "Taiwanese independence separatism" and promised that Taiwan would "surely be unified". Xi's rhetoric is deeply suggestive and intimidatory. However, audio-visuals of choreographed brinkmanship aside, such a belligerent move would be anything but a cakewalk in terms of consequences for the Chinese. Practically, Chinese sabre-rattling is part of deliberately postured nationalism that is vital to buttress the legitimacy of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) regime, as the main lever of legitimacy i.e., socio-economic upliftment of the Chinese, is now under extreme stress. In the absence of economic prosperity, muscle-flexing against Taiwan distracts and galvanises the Chinese masses. The disproportionate Chinese military strength to Taiwan's militaristic preparedness on paper notwithstanding, the near-certain international reactions of sanctions and embargoes onto the Chinese if they were to attack Taiwan, would break the proverbial camel's back, in terms of fur-



ther economic sufferings for the Chinese masses. It could lead to unsustainable economic regression and societal discontent. It is a price that Xi Jinping simply cannot afford, especially as the economic upside of a forcible integration, would pale in comparison to the downsides of a plausible invasion. Besides, Taiwan is extremely well-fortified with missiles, early warning systems, precision-strike weapons, underwater mines, and other counter-attack capabilities that could inflict significant damage on any invasion attempt, irrespective of the ultimate result. In any case, the Chinese would have to mount a significant fleet and accompanying wherewithal which could easily alert of an impending invasion – a discreet and sudden Chinese attack, is next to impossible. Even the fact that a potential Chinese invasion would involve breaking through large urban squallors and cities, it would entail deadly urban warfare that has tested the skills of even hardened Israelis and Russians in recent times, let alone the untested Chinese PLA soldier. Urban warfare and associated 'costs' could lead to the undoing of any residual support the Chinese may have amongst the Taiwanese. The famed Taiwanese 'porcupine'



XI JINPING HAS REPEATEDLY WARNED AGAINST 'TAIWANESE INDEPENDENCE SEPARATISM' AND PROMISED THAT TAIWAN WOULD 'SURELY BE UNIFIED'. XI'S RHETORIC IS DEEPLY SUGGESTIVE AND INTIMIDATORY

strategy is predicated on making a heavily laden Chinese invasion fleet face a prickly proposition and based on defensive survivability. The fact that such an invasion could draw the committed US forces would have its own resultant algorithms. So realistically the best bet for the Chinese is for organic support for 'reunification' with the mainland Chinese, by the Taiwanese themselves. This is not an unfathomable situation, given the existence of 'pro' China and 'anti' China sentiment amongst Taiwanese political parties. While the recent Taiwanese Presidential elections have brought back the decidedly 'anti-China' forces of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) with 40.05% of the popular vote (third successive victory), the fact that the other two parties have varied shades of 'pro-China' anchorage i.e., Kuomintang (KMT) and Taiwan's People Party (TPP), garnered 33.49% and 26.46% respectively, shows faultlines. It could be credibly argued that while the Taiwanese were aligned with DPP's nationalistic stand, there must have been anti-incumbency on local issues like low wages, unaffordable housing etc., that led to significant support for KMT and TPP. However, the competitive race

of identities in Taiwan has led to a steady assertion of locals identifying themselves as just 'Taiwanese' as opposed to 'Both Taiwanese and Chinese' or plain 'Chinese'. Yet, post the electoral results the Chinese foreign ministry reiterated, "Whatever changes take place in Taiwan, the basic fact that there is only one China", clearly signalling the continuation of stalemate and tensions. If the Chinese were to overdo the further sanctioning against provisions of an existing free trade agreement with Taiwan (or even suspend it altogether), it would lead to painful hardships for the Taiwanese, but also to further anti-Chinese sentiment that clearly cannot be countered by military superiority or plausible invasions. The best bet for the Chinese is to have the local Taiwanese perceive more socio-economic merit in 'unification' as opposed to 'independence', a battle that puts Beijing on the backfoot given stories coming out of Hong Kong or Tibet. So, the Chinese battle-rattle-tattle for crossing the straits in a purported invasion will continue, however, the costs to walk the talk will remain prohibitive. *(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

FIR AGAINST RAHUL GANDHI

Sir — The under-pressure Assam police on Tuesday registered an FIR against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi and other leaders for "wanton acts of violence" on Tuesday, Frustrated Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. The Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyay Jatra is currently in Assam and the alleged acts of violence took place while the party supporters and leaders allegedly clashed with police personnel in their bid to enter Guwahati. Four police personnel were injured in the scuffle, Guwahati Police Commissioner Diganta Bora said. Under fear, Sarma had earlier in the day instructed the Director General of Police G P Singh to register a case against Rahul Gandhi for provoking the crowd to break the barricades. Gandhi said the chief minister directing the DGP to file a case against him shows "that they have fear in their hearts... They are afraid as the people of Assam are standing up as 'Tufan' and 'Andhi' (storm) against them". The barricades were erected along a highway to prevent Congress leaders and supporters taking part in the Yatra from entering the main thoroughfares of Guwahati, the largest city of the north-eastern state. As Congress supporters removed the barricades, a scuffle with the police personnel ensued leading to injuries suffered by state Congress president Bhupen Borah and leader of the opposition in the state assembly Debabrata Saikia. Gandhi alleged that while BJP president J P Nadda was allowed to take the same route earlier, Congress was not permitted.

Bhagwan Thadani | Mumbai

CONTRIBUTION OF NETAJI

Sir — The country can always remember the contribution of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose to the freedom movement. His slogan 'Give me blood, I will give you freedom' sparked a new revolution in the country. The army 'Azad Hind Fauj' formed by him forced the British to leave India. The British had first handed over the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the Azad

Yemen crisis



The US and Britain are carrying out joint air strikes on the positions of Iran-backed Houthis separatists active in Yemen, in retaliation for blocking and attacking fleets in the Red Sea. Not only this, America has once again declared Houthis as a terrorist group. But instead of solving the area's problems, they are becoming more complicated day by day. First of all, poor countries like Yemen, where today every area has fallen into the hands of fighters. The group of Arab countries, which includes Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, tried to control all the forces

opposing each other by entering that country but failed. Now an in-depth investigation has revealed that the UAE, while fighting there, has carried out many targeted killings with the help of money. American mercenaries were given a contract by the Emirati government to kill members of a specific group. Most of those killed by these mercenaries were members of 'Islah', the Yemeni branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. It is a popular international Sunni Islamist movement that no one has ever classified as a terrorist organization but is banned in many Arab countries. They are included in the United Arab Emirates where its political activism and support for elections is seen by the country's royal family as a threat to their rule. Had gone to Yemen to restore peace but started killing Islah members. This should be investigated by the United Nations. The dark deeds of the UAE should be exposed.

Jang Bahadur Singh | Jamshedpur

Hind Fauj and Netaji hoisted the tricolour there on 30 December 1943. Netaji had become synonymous with courage, bravery and patriotism. Netaji's death remains a mystery. The present Central Government has expressed gratitude to Netaji by celebrating his birthday as Parakram Diwas (23 January), making public all the files related to him and installing the statue of Netaji at India Gate. Netaji's life will always continue to inspire patriotism among the youth.

N Mateeni | Pune

BHARAT RATNA FOR THE JAN NAYAK

Sir — The centre has posthumously fulfilled a long-standing demand by announcing the Bharat Ratna award for the Former Chief Minister of Bihar, Karpooi Thakur, a dedicated leader committed to uplifting the poor and marginalized. As a notable figure in Bihar politics, Thakur's lasting impact on India's socio-political landscape is evident, offering hope and positivity to Dalits and backward classes. Hailing from

a backward class and affectionately known as the 'Jannayak' or people's hero, Thakur embodied the ideals of Subhas Chandra Bose and Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. His commitment to breaking caste boundaries was represented during his 28-day fast unto death in support of Telco labourers, showcasing his dedication to social justice and workers' rights. As Bihar's Education Minister, Thakur promoted Hindi, removed English as a compulsory subject, and became the first Chief Minister to enforce total alcohol prohibition, addressing crucial social issues and challenging established norms. His legacy is evident in the transformed India where individuals from backward classes now hold prominent positions. Karpooi Thakur's Bharat Ratna is not merely an award; it's a recognition of his unwavering pursuit of justice and equality, shaping a more inclusive and equitable India.

Preeti yuktika | Bhubaneswar

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

FIRST COLUMN

INDIA'S COMPLEX GLOBAL CHALLENGES IN 2024

India navigates global complexities amid elections and geopolitical uncertainties



KUMARDEEP BANERJEE

Even as the world gathered to witness once in a lifetime event in the historic dusty small temple town of Ayodhya EAM Jaishankar was speaking about the changing concepts of multilateralism and international relations in the realigning world order in Kampala and Lagos, Nigeria. India's strategic focus on being the leading voice of the global south, at a time when major democracies including India, are going to face the elections and two wars are showing little signs of ebbing, have made the path a tad more difficult. During its G20 presidency last year, India achieved a horizontal consensus, successfully obtaining a joint communique despite stark differences between Russia and the US. Impressively, India also brought the African Union, a pivotal constituent of the Global South, into the dialogue. However, the conflict in West Asia, teetering on the brink of genocide, is now extending from the Gaza Strip to the Red Sea. Pakistan and Iran, two major Islamic nations, engaged in reciprocal surgical strikes, each claiming to eliminate terrorist bases. Iran's influence on certain terror groups obstructs crucial maritime routes in the Red Sea, resulting in increased shipping costs. Recently, External Affairs Minister Jaishankar visited Iran to discuss the imperative of secure maritime routes. Nevertheless, the broader Gaza Strip conflict and its potential impact on the upcoming US elections seem unlikely to subside. India has adeptly cultivated a strong bilateral and bipartisan relationship with the US over the past decade, despite occasional disputes on trade and human rights. It is evident that India views the US as a crucial ally in countering the military expansion of China, safeguarding security, and promoting fair practices in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond. During the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) conference, the External Affairs




Minister (EAM) reiterated India's call for a multipolar world and the reform of global institutions, including the UN. India's longstanding demand for a permanent seat at the UN Security Council has faced opposition from China. Notably, tech billionaire Elon Musk has backed India's bid for a permanent seat. In the past decade, India has advocated for a multipolar world order, emphasizing each powerful nation's distinct sphere of influence. The Ukraine conflict has reignited tensions between Russia and Western powers, while bipartisan support in the US for containing China persists under President Biden. The upcoming 2024 election, where Republican Trump may challenge Biden, could elevate immigration issues and super nationalism, potentially shifting American international influence away from multilateralism. The current Indian government, led by Prime Minister Modi, is perceived to have a positive rapport with Trump, should he return to power. However, potential challenges may arise regarding India's key concerns, as emphasized by the External Affairs Minister during the NAM summit. These concerns include establishing regional economic hubs, resilient supply chains, predictable mobility, and trusted data flows. People-centric policies, sustainable lifestyles, digital public infrastructure, food, energy, and health security, women-led development, prioritized connectivity with respect for sovereignty, and adequate resourcing for climate action and SDG realization are highlighted as crucial aspects. If Trump returns to the White House in 2024, India's global climate change initiatives may lose US support. Immigration challenges, exemplified by a large influx of Indian citizens at US borders, could escalate. India's upcoming elections face the daunting task of convincing voters, particularly in border states, that China has not encroached on Indian territories. The year 2024 poses significant challenges for international relations. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

NEP: Multidisciplinary approach in higher education

NEP is fostering inclusivity and merit-based research to address security challenges and encouraging multidisciplinary practices


Nelson Mandela once commented, "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." Over the past few years, there has been a notable shift in the landscape of education, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping individuals physically, intellectually, and morally. Education is seen as a liberating force, breaking the chains of darkness and bigotry. Recently, there has been a concerted effort to integrate real-life experiments of democracy, environmental awareness, globalization, and governance into the framework of the new education system. The intellectual establishment plays a crucial role in providing theoretical rationale and



SUDHIR HINDWAN

strategies for educational advancements. It is imperative to explore how innovations in higher education can drive positive changes, instill confidence among the masses, and disseminate the latest global research and developments in education. This discourse aims to delve into the multifaceted aspects of the evolving higher education system, emphasizing the need for inclusivity and growth.

Is the Government's debt sustainable?



UTTAM GUPTA

The Government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. This will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans



Recently, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has forecast that India's general government debt - it comprises the debts of the Centre and states - will overshoot 100 per cent of the GDP (gross domestic product) by the financial year (FY) 2027-28. Responding to this, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) clarified that this wasn't under a 'baseline scenario' - a jargon to describe normal economic conditions. It added the IMF was referring to a 'worst-case scenario' wherein a global shock would equally affect all countries. Is the government's debt sustainable? The government's debt is linked with how it manages its total expenditure vis-à-vis its total receipts or fiscal deficit (FD) which is excess of the former over the latter. The expenditure and receipts are broadly of two types viz. revenue and capital. Revenue expenditure (RE) is essentially consumption expenditure which does not result in the creation of assets. It includes expenses for the normal running of government departments and various services, interest charges on debt incurred by the government, subsidies and so on. Capital expenditure (CE) includes the money that the government spends on long-term assets such as property, plant, and equipment. Revenue Receipts (RR) are receipts that neither create any liability nor lead to any reduction in the assets of the government. These comprise tax and non-tax receipts, duties and fines, and interest and dividends receipts on government investments and assets. Capital receipts (CR) are those receipts that either create liabilities or reduce the asset value of the government. These are loans raised by the government to fund long-term developmental needs. Ideally, RR should fully pay for the RE implying that revenue deficit (RD) - the difference between RR and RE - should be zero. The government should take recourse to borrowings only for the creation of long-term assets. Spending in this manner will help generate income streams that can help in servicing the loans thereby making such debt sustainable. In reality, RR have consistently fallen

short of RE leading to a revenue deficit which meant that the government was borrowing merely to finance consumption expenditure. Besides, even the loans taken for financing CE were not productively used. The result was an increase in debt to an unsustainable level. As a result, even in 2003-04 when the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act (2003) was passed by the then Vajpayee-led NDA - government, interest payments accounted for one-third of the RE. Under the FRBM Act (2003), the Vajpayee government promised the elimination of RD by the year 2008. It also committed to reducing FD to 3 per cent of the GDP. Against these pledges, during 2008-09, RD was 4.7 per cent whereas, FD was 6.2 per cent. In his budget speech for 2016-17, the then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley announced the intent of the Modi government to review the FRBM Act (2003) with a view to making the FD target more flexible. For this, he had set up a committee under Dr N K Singh. The committee recommended a "glide path" for the next six years, i.e., from 2017-18 to 2022-23. It recommended an FD target of 2.5 per cent, RD of 0.8 per cent, a combined Centre-state debt ceiling of 60 per cent, and a central debt ceiling of 40 per cent for the terminal year, i.e., 2022-23. Further, it fixed 3 per cent FD to be achieved during 2018-19. The committee also allowed the Union Government to breach the target - by up to 0.5 per cent - in the case of "far-reaching structural reforms with unanticipated fiscal implications." In the amendment to the FRBM Act in the Finance Bill 2018-19, even while retaining the "escape clause" to cover unanticipated events, the government adopted the glide path of achieving a 3 per cent

FD by 2020-21 instead of 2018-19, which was mooted by the committee. Further, it set the debt limit at 40 per cent for the Centre to be reached by 2024-25 instead of the mandated 2022-23. The relaxation in the glide path may be seen in the backdrop of the government missing the FD target for 2017-18 by 0.3 per cent and seeing no hope of achieving 3 per cent during 2018-19, as recommended by the committee. In the Budget for 2020-21, the finance minister (FM) Nirmala Sitharaman had already invoked the escape clause of the FRBM (Amendment) Act to alter the FD targets for 2019-20 from 3.3 percent as provided in the Budget to 3.8 percent in the revised estimate and for 2020-21, from 3 percent - as per the glide path required under the Act - to 3.5 percent. Seen in relation to the target set by the N K Singh Committee or even to the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the performance of the government had been off the mark. For instance, during 2018-19, the FD was 3.7 per cent against the 3 per cent required as per the Singh Committee. If deferred subsidy payments (DSPs) are also included (in those years, substantial amounts of major subsidy bills, viz., food, fertilizers, and fuel, were kept pending), the FD would be 5.7%. Likewise, for 2019-20, including DSPs, the FD would be 5.1 per cent. Due to Corona pandemic, the year 2020-21 saw plunging revenue and ballooning expenditure. As a result, the FD zoomed to 9.1 per cent against BE of 3.5 per cent. Being an exceptional year, a comparison with the glide path may not be apt. In the following year, even as the pandemic waned and the economy rebounded, in her budget speech for 2021-22, Sitharaman fixed the FD target at 6.9 per cent saying her

goal was to achieve 4.5 per cent by the year 2025-26. The actual FD for 2021-22 was lower at 6.7 percent. For 2022-23, she set the target at 6.4 per cent describing this as 'advancing on the road to fiscal consolidation'. The actual was precisely at 6.4 per cent. For 2023-24, she kept the target at 5.9 per cent. It is likely that even this would be achieved. From the above, the finance ministry exudes confidence that the Centre is 'on track to achieve its stated fiscal consolidation target' of reducing FD to 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. This is misleading. To reset the fiscal trajectory making it substantially relaxed and then claim that fiscal numbers are well on track looks amusing. Let us not forget that even as per the FRBM (Amendment) Act, the Centre should have achieved 3 per cent in 2020-21. Against this, the actual FD during 2021-22 and 2022-23 was more than two times whereas during the current year, it is expected to be nearly twice this level. The RD at 4.1 per cent during 2022-23 and 3 per cent during 2023-24 (expected) is 4 to 5 times the 0.8 per cent level as recommended by the NK Singh Committee. The debt to GDP ratio of the Centre is around 60 per cent against the 40 per cent mandated as per the amended Act. As per the FRBM Act (2003), the FD was to have come down to 3 per cent by 2008. Against this, we are talking of 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. As per the Act, RD was to become 'Zero' by 2008. During 2023-24, it is stuck with 3 per cent. It shows how much the Centre has lagged behind in managing its fiscal situation. True, but for Modi's efforts in boosting tax revenue, the situation would have been much worse. Nonetheless, a lot more needs to be done especially by slashing RE. *(The writer is a policy analyst; views are personal)*

The strength of any higher education system lies in creating internal dynamism to ensure inclusive growth. Even a well-designed system is influenced by the individuals who make a difference. Human and financial relations are intricate matters that require constant monitoring by competent authorities. In India, universities are encouraged to improve their performance by transitioning towards a more merit-based, peer-reviewed research approach, aligning with the goal of establishing a highly efficient and inclusive educational apparatus. The New Education Policy (NEP) has provided a framework to analyze and address multidimensional issues in the education sector, offering opportunities for students from diverse backgrounds. These guidelines aim to meet the key demands of higher education while maintaining a synergy between various stakeholders. The constant monitoring of the education sector by authorities is crucial for growth, especially in changing circumstances. Acknowledging the gravity of challenges faced by higher education, it is essential to address concerns related to competition, comparison, and personal greed, which may lead to manipulation and shortcuts. The right to freedom of expression in democratic societies has been debated extensively, and recent developments in the academic world present new challenges and competition. The efforts by the University Grants Commission (UGC) have introduced fair practices and policies consistent with present circumstances. Reforms in the examination system are aimed at ensuring that only talent prevails, fostering an environment that supports academic excellence. The NEP's emphasis on exploring domestic underpinnings, gender sensitization, and addressing the concerns of marginalized communities through Special Education Zones is commendable. Provisions such as Multidisciplinary Education and Research Universities (MERUs), the National Research Foundation, the National Educational Technology Forum, and the Indian Institutes of Translation and Interpretation create an environment for students to excel globally. These initiatives also highlight the importance of social responsibility. The NEP encourages a new approach that provides a clear path for students interested in Security Studies, offering opportunities to learn new techniques. The provisions under NEP ensure the collaborative creation of ideas, providing insights into even the most complex issues. At various educational levels, the NEP's approach involves mentors fully engaging in new techniques and developing challenging strategies to meet the needs of all students. To enhance students' standards, there is an imperative need for self-academic orientation and excellence, fostering problem-solving and inquiry-based learning activities. Introducing a new syllabus can provide a deeper insight into strategic and security-related affairs, offering a roadmap for foolproof encountering strategies. This approach addresses issues such as the rise of terrorism, its causes, and the funding nexus between organised crime and terrorism. The NEP's vision is to make India competitive in the field of Strategic education, attracting aspiring academicians and students. By providing multidisciplinary fervour, students will have wider exposure and opportunities for comparative studies, enriching analytical and theoretical rationale for crisis management in India. As India faces myriad security challenges, there is an urgent need to address these issues on the international stage. The NEP's input will undoubtedly make each discipline richer in content and varied in ideas, providing a holistic educational experience. Even science students will be exposed to the nuances of international, national, socio-political, and economic issues through multidisciplinary practices. The ingenious display of this government's approach demonstrates a pure genius that promises to reshape the educational landscape. *(The writer is a recipient of the Bharat Gaurav award and is a professor and expert on strategic affairs)*

New era of peace has begun in Jammu and Kashmir: Shah

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

Dedicating a fleet of e-buses to the people of Jammu, Union Home Minister Amit Shah claimed on Thursday that a new era of peace has begun in Jammu and Kashmir. This is marked by a sharp decline in incidents of terrorist violence and civilian killings after the abrogation of Article 370. Shah mentioned that the Narendra Modi government is also rigorously cracking down on terror financing, sealing and freezing the assets of terrorists. Additionally, several terrorist organizations have been outlawed to intensify the crackdown on them.

During the event conducted via video conferencing, Shah handed over appointment letters to Jammu and Kashmir Administrative Service (JKAS) officers and compassionate appointees. In his address, the Union Home Minister credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for transforming Jammu and Kashmir, once "known for terrorism," into a burgeoning tourism hub.



"I want to inform you that there has been a 66 percent reduction in terrorism-related incidents. There has been an 81 percent decline in civilian killings and a 48 percent decrease in security forces' casualties after the scrapping of Article 370," he announced to the gathering.

"This indicates that a new era of happiness, peace, and normalcy has begun in

Jammu and Kashmir," he added. Sharing related statistics, Shah mentioned that 2,654 organised stone-pelting incidents occurred in Jammu and Kashmir in 2000, but no such incidents took place in 2023. "As many as 132 organised shutdowns occurred in 2010, but there were none in 2023. A total of 112 civilians lost their lives in stone pelting in 2010, but no

civilian lives were lost in stone pelting in 2023. Additionally, a total of 6,235 civilians were injured during that period (2010)," he added.

The minister highlighted that terror financing has also been curbed in Jammu and Kashmir. "Properties are being sealed and attached, and many terrorist organisations have been banned to curb their activities," he said.

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Emphasising the investment potential, Amit Shah mentioned that Jammu and Kashmir received investments worth Rs 297 crore in 2019-20, which increased to Rs 2,153 crore in 2022-23. "Nearly 6,000 crore of investments are in the pipeline. This demonstrates progress," he added. Jammu and Kashmir's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) has increased from Rs 1 lakh crore in 2014-15 to Rs 2,27,927 crore in 2022-23.

Shah further appealed to the youth of Jammu and Kashmir to enroll themselves as voters and become part of the democratic setup of the country. "The youth of Jammu and Kashmir, who carry computers in their hands instead of stones, are connected and contributing to the progress of Jammu and Kashmir. Over 7 lakh youths have taken part in sports, and this is significant," he said. Shah mentioned that 173 projects have been completed under the Smart City Mission, and homes for 1,45,000 people have been allocated within a very short period from 2019 to 2024.

TMC: Adhir hurdle in Opp alliance

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

The Trinamool Congress has said that Adhir Chowdhury, the president of the Bengal Pradesh Congress, has diminished the chances of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance in Bengal. A day after Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee ruled out any electoral alliance with the Congress, accusing it of not only ignoring her at the instance of the CPI(M), senior TMC leader Derek O'Brien said on Thursday that, apart from the BJP, against which the INDIA alliance had been formed, Adhir Chowdhury was the person who undermined the anti-saffron coalition in the state.

In an apparent reference to Chowdhury's previous remarks that the Congress was not dependent on the TMC, O'Brien said the AICC member was "speaking the language of the BJP," reiterating, "The three reasons for the alliance not working in Bengal are Adhir Chowdhury, Adhir Chowdhury, and Adhir Chowdhury."

Not only did O'Brien, the TMC spokesperson, express this sentiment, but Kunal Ghosh, another TMC spokesperson, also stated, "The



main disrupter of the INDIA Alliance in Bengal is Adhir Chowdhury, who has been dancing to the tunes of the Left, which itself has zero seats in Bengal. We are relieved and happy because now we will be able to tell the secular voters to choose either between TMC and the Congress-Left, who are zero in Bengal. Zero and zero make for zero only. Adhir Chowdhury is batting for the BJP. Tomorrow, the people of Bengal will not spare him."

While Chowdhury had previously called Banerjee an "opportunistic personality who herself cannot remember when she spoke the truth last time," one of his close confidants and former Bengal Minister Manoj Chakrabarty added an appellation for the Chief Minister, calling her a "dalal" or agent of the BJP in INDIA who

was "leaking messages to the BJP" to save her and her family's skin.

Another senior PCC leader, Soumya Aich, also attacked Banerjee for "literally decimating" the Congress "not through elections but by engineering defections in our party using the police and her goons." Another PCC leader, Kaustav Bagchi, said, "Joining hands with the TMC will be hara-kiri in Bengal, as the revival will be lost. The Congress votes will then go to the Left and even the BJP."

Against this backdrop, a majority of the PCC leadership, with a few exceptions like Malda South MP AH Khan Chowdhury, were inclined towards an alliance with the Left, which had recently experienced a significant revival by winning about 21 per cent of the votes, just behind the BJP, in the rural elections last year.

However, the State Congress demanded at least 6-8 seats if an alliance were to be imposed on the State party.

They sought Darjeeling, Raiganj, Malda North, Malda South, Murshidabad, Jangipur, Behrampur, Basirhat, and Purulia. The TMC, on the other hand, was not willing to concede Malda South and Behrampur, presently held by Khan Chowdhury and Adhir.

Kerala Governor delivers knockout punch in Assembly

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

The CPI(M)-led Kerala Government found itself in an embarrassing situation as Governor Mohammed Arif Khan concluded his address to the Legislative Assembly on Thursday, the opening day of this year's session. The Governor, after his customary salutations to the House, read out the concluding line of the policy statement and promptly left the House, all within a span of one minute.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan (also known as Karana Bhoothan) stood bewildered and perplexed as the Governor exited the House, leaving both the shocked treasury and Opposition benches agast. This is the first incident of its kind reported from anywhere in the country.

There is nothing surprising in this development. The policy statement given to the Governor by the Government for reading out in the House is complete nonsense. The State Government has blamed the Centre for all its omissions and commissions, leading the Governor to skip the entire speech. However, according to PC George, a seven-time legislator and former chief whip of the Kerala Government, the Governor has done nothing wrong, as this incident was waiting to happen.

He said what is interesting is the speeches to be delivered by the Congress during the discussion on thanking the policy statement.

"The Congress and the CPI(M) are constituents of the INDI Alliance, and Kerala



is the only State where they are not together. If the Congress is sincere, its legislators should expose the failures of the government. We saw a woman assistant public prosecutor committing suicide in Kollam earlier this week due to the harassment meted out to her by the CPI(M) leaders. A physically challenged person committed suicide in Wayanad because the State government failed to provide the monthly pension due to him, while the octogenarian Mariyamma, another pensioner, has been going around the state with a begging bowl soliciting financial help from good Samaritans, as the CPI(M) government has failed to reimburse her dues for more than a year," said George.

The 63-page-long speech, intended to be read out by the Governor, was full of eloquence on Pinarayi Vijayan and a scathing attack on the Centre. While highlighting NITI-Ayog's praise for the 'unprecedented' progress made by the State in the Human Development

Index, the Keralaeyam Global Show, and the Nava Kerala Sadass, which ended in a fiasco, the speech blamed the Centre for every setback suffered by Kerala, pointed out the veteran lawmaker.

VD Satheshan, leader of the Opposition, blamed the CPI(M) and the BJP for the Governor's actions.

"He humiliated the people of Kerala," alleged Satheshan.

"Although the Governor skipped the entire speech, the fact that he came to the House and greeted the members is an indication that the speech has been delivered by him. "This is a fallout of what the CPI(M) has been doing to the Governor for quite some time now. The Governor has done his best to avoid all kinds of controversies and has depended on consensus. However, politicians in the State, including the BJP, have been trying to humiliate and disgrace him. Kerala does not deserve a gentleman like Arif Mohammed Khan as its Governor," said a source close to the Governor.

High alert in JK for Republic Day

MOHIT KANDHARI ■ JAMMU

The entire security grid in Jammu and Kashmir has been kept on a state of high alert in the run up to the Republic Day celebrations in the wake of the prevailing security situation in the region.

The security forces are relying on drone cameras to conduct aerial reconnaissance of all the main venues of the Republic Day functions and other vital

installations. Special security checkpoints have been activated along the border areas to maintain a tight vigil on the movement of suspected persons in the area. The joint teams of security forces have been kept on high alert and frequently conduct area domination patrols in their areas of jurisdiction.

The security in and around the vital security installations has been beefed up as per the standard protocol to prevent entry of any miscreant and anti-

national element.

Referring to the security arrangements, Director General of Jammu and Kashmir Police, R R Swain on Thursday asserted that all security measures are in place. Meetings have been conducted at various levels, including discussions with the army, CAPF led by CRPF, and other intelligence agencies to ensure peaceful conduct of the Republic day functions across the Union territory.

FROM PAGE 1

MODI FULCRUM OF BJP MANIFESTO

It also showcases the inauguration of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22, along with Modi's interactions with global leaders and India making history by achieving a soft landing on the Moon.

The campaign song states that India's situation was deplorable, and then the country chose Namo as the PM. "Namo kept his promise, and the dream of a developed country did not merely remain a dream. Namo chose the right paths and wove reality, not a dream. That is why everyone chooses Modi," the lyrics continue.

"He considers Bharat his mother, and the countrymen as God. He chooses work before fame. That's why everyone, every country, listens to him. Indian women emerged as leaders while corrupt people are scared... he remained close to the ground but reached the sky (a reference to Chandrayaan)" the campaign song says.

The video ends with a photo of PM Modi lying prostrate in front of the Ram Lalla idol following the praan pratishtha on January 22 in Ayodhya's Ram Temple. Additionally, a foot-tapping mass song, along with digital hoardings, display banners, digital films, and TVCs, are planned for release in the coming days.

The "Tabhi Toh Sab Modi Ko Chunte Hai" campaign, as described by Nadda, has organically emerged from the sentiments of the people, aligning with mass sentiment and complementing the ongoing national fervour linked with the "Modi Ki Guarantee" movement.

At the launch event, which coincided with the first-time voters' conclave (Nav Matdata Sammelan), a music video was released, highlighting how Prime Minister Modi has transformed the dreams and aspirations of millions of Indians into reality. The BJP believes that this campaign slogan is not merely a sentiment experienced by a few but also resonates with the masses across the country. Addressing party workers, Nadda urged them to connect with the people's sentiment and spread awareness about the campaign throughout the nation.

He highlighted Prime Minister Modi's track record of turning dreams into reality and delivering on promises that span generations. "PM Modi turns dreams into reality, guaranteeing delivery on promises and dreams spanning the previous generation, the present generation, or the future generation of Amrit Peedhi. Dreams spanning years, decades, or even dreams going back 500 years have been delivered by PM Modi," said Nadda during the launch.

In 2019, before the general elections, the party had released its slogan, "Phir ek baar Modi sarkar" (Modi government, once again).

It was released by then Finance Minister Arun Jaitley. At that time, the BJP had focused on the Modi government's achievements, including

national security measures and various schemes.

GIFTS BULANDSHAHR WITH DREAM PROJECTS

"In Ayodhya, I declared that 'pran pratishtha' has been completed, and now it is time to elevate 'rashtra pratishtha' to new heights," he added.

Regarding 'Modi ki guarantee,' aimed at achieving the saturation of welfare schemes, the prime minister emphasised, "What our government promises, it delivers. Our efforts are focused on ensuring that the benefits of government schemes reach all intended recipients. Modi is providing a guarantee of saturation, a guarantee of one hundred percent (saturation of schemes)." "When the government reaches all beneficiaries, there is no room for discrimination or corruption," he asserted.

Shedding light on the public welfare schemes implemented over the past 10 years to empower small farmers and women, the Prime Minister highlighted the construction of millions of pucca houses, toilets, tapped water connections, and the provision of pension facilities for farmers and laborers. He also mentioned the PM Crop Insurance Scheme, through which over Rs 1.5 lakh crores have been disbursed to farmers in case of crop failure, as well as the free ration scheme and Ayushman Bharat scheme.

"The government is committed to ensuring that no beneficiary is deprived of these schemes. To achieve this, Modi Ki Guarantee vehicles are reaching every village, enrolling lakhs of people, even in Uttar Pradesh," Modi emphasised. "It is my guarantee that every citizen benefits from these government schemes. Today, the nation sees Modi's guarantee as an assurance of fulfilling any promise," the Prime Minister declared. "We are making every effort to ensure that the benefits of government schemes reach every intended recipient. That's why Modi is guaranteeing saturation and emphasising reaching 100 percent of beneficiaries," he added, noting that this approach eliminates any possibility of discrimination or corruption. "This is true secularism and social justice," he concluded, noting that the dreams of farmers, women, the poor, and youth are the same in every society. The Prime Minister also highlighted that due to genuine government efforts, 25 crore people were lifted out of poverty in the last 10 years.

The prime minister expressed his commitment to swiftly reaching all those in need without any discrimination. "For a long time after Independence, slogans like 'Garibi Hatao' were given, and promises of social justice were made, but the reality was that only a few families prospered, and their politics thrived," he said, taking an apparent dig at the Congress. Modi also addressed certain channels that speculated he would use this program to sound the poll bugle.

"Farmer's welfare remains a top priority for the government," Modi emphasised. He highlighted the government's efforts to create a protective shield for farmers, including substantial investments to ensure the availability of low-cost fertilizers. Modi mentioned that a bag of urea, which costs Rs 3,000 outside India, is provided to Indian farmers for less than Rs 300. He also discussed the development of Nano urea, where a small bottle replaces a sack of fertilizers, reducing consumption and saving money. The prime minister informed that the government has transferred Rs 2.75 lakh crores to the bank accounts of farmers under the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi scheme.

"I observed in the media that Modi would sound the election bugle in Bulandshahr. Modi heralds the bugle of development; he sounds the bugle for the welfare of the last person in the queue. Modi neither needed to sound the poll bugle earlier nor does he need to now, and he will not need it in the future," he said. "People do it for him. When others sound the bugle, Modi doesn't need to invest time in it; he dedicates his time to serving the people," the Prime Minister added.

He went on to express that for decades after Independence, development was confined to a few regions, leaving a significant part of the country deprived. Modi added that Uttar Pradesh was neglected for decades after Independence as those in governance behaved like rulers, keeping the people deprived.

"Such individuals viewed the path of dividing society as an easy route to attain power," Modi said, emphasising that it was the BJP's double-engine government that accelerated development in Uttar Pradesh. He added that building a developed India is not possible without the rapid development of Uttar Pradesh.

The prime minister also reiterated that farmers' interests were his government's top priority, and a 'suraksha kavach (protective shield)' was being created around their families. Concluding his address, the Prime Minister said, "For me, you are my family. Your dream is my resolution." He underscored that Modi's wealth remains in the empowerment of the common families of the nation and assured that the campaign to empower everyone, including villages, the poor, youth, women, or farmers, will continue.

Earlier in the day, the prime minister inaugurated a 173-km-long double-line electrified section between New Khurja and New Rewari on the dedicated freight corridor (DFC) by flagging off goods trains from the two stations through a video conference.

He also inaugurated a rail line connecting the Mathura-Palwal section and the Chhipiyana Buzurg-Dadri section. These new lines will enhance rail connectivity from the national capital to southern, western, and eastern India. Modi unveiled multiple road development projects and inaugurated the Tundla-Gawaria pipeline by Indian Oil. This 255-km-

long pipeline project, built at a cost of approximately Rs 700 crore, was completed well ahead of its scheduled time.

The PM further inaugurated the renovated Mathura sewerage scheme, including the construction of a sewage treatment plant at a cost of about Rs 460 crore.

HIGHWAYS ON A HIGH UNDER GADKARI

"Road engineering is the primary factor contributing to the rising number of road accidents in the country. A recent road safety audit of seven roads in the country revealed approximately 57 engineering shortcomings on the Pune-Mumbai expressway alone, and 25-28 per cent engineering defects on other roads. After rectifying the 57 faults on the Pune-Mumbai expressway, the accident rate has almost dropped to zero," said Gadkari during a conference titled "Vision Zero, Targeting Road Safety by 5E's with Innovative Technologies," organised by the International Road Federation (IRF) in collaboration with MORTH as part of the ongoing Road Safety month.

"Road engineering solutions must be carefully considered when preparing Detailed Project Reports (DPR). There are numerous instances where people choose to cross roads, risking their safety and that of others, rather than using foot over bridges (FOBs) constructed on highways. FOBs should be designed to be user-friendly, equipped with escalators or lifts, and provisions for two-wheelers and bicycles to facilitate safe crossing," said Gadkari. MORTH emphasised that promoting a safe transportation system requires a holistic approach, encompassing the engineering of roads and vehicles, enforcement, education, and emergency care.

"These 5Es are recognised worldwide as pillars of success in promoting road safety. The effective implementation of the 5E's in road safety leads to increased awareness, the development of safer road infrastructure, better compliance with traffic laws, the promotion of responsible behavior, and the continual refinement of safety measures. The ultimate outcome is a significant reduction in road accidents, injuries, and fatalities, creating a safer and more secure road environment for everyone," said KK Kapila, president emeritus of the International Road Federation (IRF), a Geneva-based global road safety organisation working towards better and safer roads worldwide, while speaking at the conference.

"To reduce fatal road accidents worldwide, the concept of forgiving roads is gaining popularity, aiming for zero fatalities. The 5E's of a safe road system include Engineering of Roads, Engineering of Vehicles and Policy Corrections, Education, Enforcement, and Emergency care, which should be simultaneously implemented on all roads," added Kapila.

BRO to fence major portion of India, Myanmar border, says top official

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) will fence a major portion of the strategic India-Myanmar border, and a 10-km stretch in Manipur has already been covered, a senior official said. The Ministry of Home Affairs has identified around 1,700 km of fencing that needs to be done, BRO's Additional Director General (East) PKH Singh said.

The organisation has already finished fencing 10 km along the border in Manipur's Moreh, which was handed over to the Assam Rifles, Singh told PTI in an interview. Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently said the Centre has decided that the India-Myanmar border will be protected by barbed fencing like the India-Bangladesh border, and the government was rethinking the free movement agreement with Myanmar.

Four Indian states - Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland,

Manipur and Mizoram - share a 1,643-km border with Myanmar. Singh said the next 80-km stretch in Manipur has also been identified and the detailed project report (DPR) submitted to the ministry.

Fencing the remaining 250 km, along with its approach roads, is in the planning stage with the DPR under preparation. "The fencing of the India-Myanmar border is an important project for the BRO, which is now coming up in Moreh. The area around this border has been unfenced since long, and there was a need to check the activities around it," the ADG said.

Singh said the BRO has a long-term roll-out plan of nearly Rs 30,000 crore in the northeast over the next five years, and out of this, almost two-thirds is focused in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

The organisation was earlier involved in fencing the India-Bangladesh border along with the BSF, he said.

"We are currently executing projects covering a wide canvas of disparate infrastructure development, ranging from connecting far-flung remote areas to building strategic roads for the armed forces, encompassing bridges, tunnels, protection works for landslide zones, airfields, helipads and jetties," he said.

Besides the northeastern states, the BRO East is also involved in developing infrastructural facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. "In the archipelago, we are at present focusing on the Campbell Bay area where a 40-km stretch at Indira Point was washed away during a tsunami. We are in an advanced planning stage for a runway extension and construction of jetties along with accommodation facilities in the area," Singh said.

The BRO has received a lot of requests from CAPFs, the navy and coast guard in the area for various works stretching around 1,600 km, he said.

Washington and Baghdad plan to hold talks soon

AP ■ WASHINGTON

The United States and Iraq expect to begin formal talks soon to wind down the mission of a US-led military coalition formed to fight the Islamic State group in Iraq, both governments said on Thursday.

The US has had a continuous presence in Iraq since its 2003 invasion. Although all US combat forces left in 2011, thousands of troops returned in 2014 to help the government of Iraq defeat IS. In the years since, the presence of US forces, who have remained there to conduct counter-IS missions and training, has been a lightning rod for an increasingly influential faction of Iran-aligned militias and politicians in the country.

In a statement, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said the discussions will take place as part of a higher military commission that was agreed upon last summer — before the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7 rocked the region — and will discuss the “transition to an enduring bilateral security partnership between Iraq and the United States.”

Iraq’s foreign ministry in a statement said Baghdad aims to “formulate a specific and clear timetable that specifies the duration of the presence of international coalition advisors in Iraq” and to “initiate the gradual and deliberate reduction of its advisors on Iraqi soil,” eventually leading to the end of the coalition mission and a “move to comprehensive bilateral political and economic relations with the coalition countries.”

It added that Iraq is committed to ensuring the “safety of the international coalition’s advisors during the negotiation period in all parts of the country” and to “maintaining stability and preventing escalation.”

Iraqi officials have periodically called for a withdrawal of coalition forces for years, particularly in the wake of a US airstrike in January 2020 that killed Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani and Iraqi militia

leader Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis outside the Baghdad airport.

The issue has surfaced again since Israel launched its major counteroffensive in Gaza following the October 7 Hamas-led attack in southern Israel.

Since mid-October, a group of Iran-backed militias calling itself the Islamic Resistance in Iraq have launched regular attacks on US forces in Iraq and Syria, which the group said are in retaliation for Washington’s support for Israel in the war in Gaza.

Those estimated 2,500 US troops and the bases they serve on have drawn more than 150 missile and drone attacks fired by the militias. Scores of US personnel have received minor injuries including traumatic brain injuries during the attacks.

The US has struck militia targets in return, including some linked to the Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of mainly Shiite, Iran-backed paramilitary groups that is officially under the control of the Iraqi military although in practice it largely operates on its own. Iraqi officials have complained that the US strikes are a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.

Speaking at the World Economic Forum in Davos earlier this month, Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said that there is no longer justification for the coalition’s presence in Iraq and that the Iraqi army is capable of tracking and fighting the remaining IS cells in the country. “We are a sovereign country, and therefore it is only natural that we moved towards this position,” he said. “This is a request from the people, and this is a democratic country.”

An Iraqi government official who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to journalists about the matter said that Iraq had sent a written request for the withdrawal of the coalition forces to the White House in November 2023.

Czech lawmakers reject int’l women’s rights treaty

Prague(AP): Czech lawmakers have voted against ratifying an international treaty on women’s rights. Only 34 of the 71 Senators present in the upper house of the Czech Parliament late Wednesday voted in favour of the treaty known as the Istanbul Convention. The result was two votes short of the majority needed to pass. After the vote, the lower house of Parliament will likely not deal with the treaty and the Czech Republic will be among those countries that have signed the document but not ratified it.

The Council of Europe adopted the document in 2011 in a bid to deter violence against women throughout Europe. The Czech Republic, also known as Czechia, signed it in 2016.

The vote reflected a split between conservative and liberal lawmakers.

Conservatives have argued the document challenges traditional roles for men and women in society and that its ratification in other countries didn’t help reduce violence against women there.

Despite 2 losses, Haley tries to claim victory in Republican presidential race

AP ■ NORTH CHARLESTON

Despite losing both Iowa and New Hampshire to Donald Trump, Nikki Haley is nevertheless trying to frame those losses as a victory and vowing to head off a “coronation” of Trump as the 2024 Republican nominee. The path through the next states to vote, however, may not be any easier.

“We were thrilled,” Haley said during a rally before hundreds of sign-waving fans on Wednesday night in North Charleston, South Carolina, casting her second-place New Hampshire finish as a win given how little support her campaign had in its early days.

“We got out there, and we did our thing and we said what we had to say, and then Donald Trump got out there and just threw a temper tantrum,” Haley added, referencing Trump’s primary night remarks in which the former president repeatedly insulted her in a speech far angrier than his remarks after his Iowa victory. Haley did perform better in

Tuesday’s New Hampshire primary than she had in the Iowa caucuses a week earlier, where she finished third, well behind Trump and only slightly down from Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, who has since shuttered his campaign.

But Haley had been banking on a stalwart showing in New Hampshire, a state where her attempt to appeal to independents and more moderate-leaning Republicans appeared to take root. Trump still won by double-digits on Tuesday night, leaving some to wonder whether she would keep going.

Haley has affirmed that she will do just that, speaking virtually to Republican voters in the U.S. Virgin Islands — which hold their caucuses Feb. 8 — before flying from New Hampshire to South Carolina.

The Wednesday night event served two purposes for Haley. It was a welcome-home gathering for the South Carolina resident and an opener for her campaign in the first-in-the-South GOP voting state, which has historically been influential in determining the

party’s nominee. Since 1980, only one winner of South Carolina’s Republican balloting has lost the nomination.

Since his 2016 primary win there helped cement Trump’s dominance in that year’s race, South Carolina has stayed loyal to him. For the 2024 campaign, he boasts endorsements from all but one of the state’s U.S. House Republicans, as well as the governor, lieutenant governor and both US senators.

“Trump is in a commanding position in South Carolina,” one of those senators, Lindsey Graham, said Wednesday at the U.S. Capitol, commending Haley’s effort but forecasting her loss in their home state. “I think for all practical purposes, the primary is over.”

Outside Haley’s rally, several dozen Trump supporters waved flags and made their presence known, albeit from a marked-off zone away from the ballroom entrance. Ahead of New Hampshire’s vote, the super PAC supporting Haley’s candidacy was quick to point

out that President Joe Biden, the Democrat she hopes to face in the general election, hadn’t been successful in the first several contests of his 2020 bid, but ultimately won the nomination. That comparison, however, doesn’t take into account the fact that Black voters propelled Biden’s ultimate victory once he reached the South, a factor not expected to weigh heavily in the GOP primary.

Nonetheless, during a call with reporters on Wednesday, Mark Harris, chief strategist for that super PAC, SFA Inc., insisted that Haley “has a path” to the GOP nomination, regardless of Trump’s two early wins. Casting South Carolina as the campaign’s next “battle-ground” of the Trump-Haley direct matchup — Nevada’s GOP caucuses are Feb. 8, but Trump has already claimed victory there since Haley isn’t participating — Harris noted that its open primary means that any Democrats who opt not to participate in their party’s Feb. 3 contest can choose to support Haley in the Feb. 24 vote.

‘Shooting of US-Palestinian teenager was unprovoked’

Ash-Sharqia (West Bank) (AP): The fatal shooting of an American-Palestinian teen driving a pickup truck in the West Bank was unprovoked, the sole passenger told The Associated Press, describing apparent Israeli fire hitting the back of the vehicle before it overturned several times on a dirt road.

At least 10 bullets struck the truck, which was seen by The Associated Press after Israeli investigators examined it. Most hit the back windshield and truck bed, supporting 16-year-old Mohammed Salameh’s account of the incident that killed his friend, Tawfic Abdel Jabbar, 17, a Louisiana native.

In an initial statement, Israeli police said Friday’s shooting targeted people “purportedly engaged in rock-throwing activities along Highway 60,” a main West Bank thoroughfare. Police didn’t identify who fired the shots.

4 Indians die in mass drowning

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Four Indians, including three women, on a family day out were killed when they drowned at an unpatrolled beach in Australia in the worst tragedy in the state of Victoria in almost 20 years, officials said on Thursday.

The incident took place on Wednesday at Phillip Island, Victoria and a close relative, who was devastated on Thursday, confirmed the names of the victims to the Australian media.

The four were identified as Jagjeet Singh Anand, a 23-year-old man; students Suhani Anand and Kirti Bedi, both 20-year-old women; and Reema Sondhi, a 43-year-old Indian national who was visiting her family in Australia.

The three younger victims lived in Clyde.

Anand, a Melbourne-based nurse, was a permanent resident in Australia. Bedi and Suhani were on student visas.



Sondhi, who was from Punjab, arrived in Australia two weeks ago for a holiday. All four are believed to be related, news.com.au website reported.

The victims were part of a group of about 10 people who had been enjoying a day out at the beach, the report added.

Victoria Police Eastern Region Assistant Commissioner Karen Nyholm said the victims entered the water near Forrest Caves — close to Cape Woolamai on the Bass Strait side of the Phillip Island’s south-eastern peninsula — on Wednesday afternoon.

Off-duty lifeguards surfing nearby rushed to their aid after the group got into difficulty, pulling three people from the water unresponsive.

Life Saving Victoria commander Kane Treloar said lifeguards from Cape Woolamai were called at about 3.40 pm on Wednesday and a rescue boat retrieved the fourth person. All required CPR. Three of the victims were pronounced dead at the scene while one of the 20-year-old women was resuscitated and flown to The Alfred. She died in hospital, police said on Thursday morning.

The Indian High Commission in Canberra on Thursday posted on X, the tragic drowning.

“Heartbreaking tragedy in Australia: 4 Indians lost their lives in a drowning incident at Phillip Island, Victoria. Deepest condolences to the families of the victims.

@cgimelbourne team is in touch with friends of the

deceased for all necessary assistance @MEAIndia @DrSjaishankar,” the High Commission posted.

On Thursday, Treloar said it was the worst drowning incident the state had seen in decades.

“We all worked tirelessly to help those people,” Ambulance Victoria manager Paul James said. “It’s tragic... only a week ago we had three other separate drownings here in Gippsland.”

Life-Saving Victoria operations general manager Liam Krige said 19 people had drowned in Victoria since December 1 — two more than during the same period last summer.

“Behind each one of these drownings there is a family; there’s a brother, there’s a sister, there’s a mother, there’s a daughter,” he said at a press conference at Forrest Caves car park on Thursday.

“It is extremely tragic and our heartfelt condolences do go out to those victims.”

Myanmar court orders auction of home where Suu Kyi spent house arrest

Bangkok(AP): A court in military-controlled Myanmar on Thursday ordered the family home of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi, where she spent 15 years under house arrest, put on auction in March following a bitter decades-long legal dispute between her and her brother. The decision by a district court in Yangon, the country’s largest city, came nearly 1 1/2 years after the Supreme Court upheld a special appeal lodged by Suu Kyi’s estranged older brother, Aung San Oo, granting him half ownership of the family property that the siblings inherited in Yangon.

A legal official familiar with the case, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to release information, said the district court decided to auction the property on March

20 with a floor price of 315 billion Myanmar kyats (about \$90 million).

He said the auction will be held in front of the historic property. The 1.923-acre (0.78-hectare) family property on Inye Lake with a two-story colonial-style building was given by the government to Suu Kyi’s mother, Khin Kyi, after her husband, independence hero Gen Aung San, was assassinated in July 1947. Khin Kyi died in December 1988, shortly after the failure of a mass uprising against military rule in which Suu Kyi took a leadership role as a co-founder of the National League for Democracy party. Suu Kyi was detained in 1989 ahead of a 1990 election. Her party easily won the polls but was not allowed to take power when the army annulled the results.

China accuses US of ‘abusing’ int’l law by sailing in SCS

AP ■ BEIJING

China accused the US of abusing international law with its military maneuvers in the western Pacific, one day after an American naval destroyer sailed through the politically sensitive Taiwan Strait. While China welcomes military-to-military communication with the United States, Defence Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian said Thursday that US warplane and warship activity “on China’s doorstep” is the root cause of the problems between the two military powers.

“The United States side should stop abusing international law, cease all dangerous and provocative behaviour, and strictly restrain the activities of front-line troops, which is the fundamental way to avoid accidents at sea and in the air,” he said at a monthly briefing. The

USS John Finn sailed Wednesday though the 160-km (100-mile)-wide waterway that separates China from Taiwan, a self-governing island that China claims as its own territory. China agreed to resume military contacts with the US at a meeting last November between Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping in California. In part, the argument for doing so was to be able to manage an unintentional collision or other incident that could happen as both sides hold drills and patrol the waters in regional hotspots including the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

The US defends its actions as in line with international laws that guarantee freedom of navigation. “No member of the international community should be intimidated or coerced into giving up their rights and freedoms,” the US Navy’s 7th Fleet said in a news

release on the John Finn’s transit of the Strait. “The United States military flies, sails and operates anywhere international law allows.”

China’s rise has given it the ability to project military power into the western Pacific, which brings it into conflict with the United States, long the dominant military power in the region. The American military activity is aimed in part at deterring China from launching any attack on Taiwan or using its strength to enforce its territorial claims in disputes with smaller neighbours such as the Philippines.

Chinese and Philippine ships clashed last year as disputes over shoals and other outcroppings in the South China Sea flared. China has blamed US support, such as recent joint patrols with the Philippines, for emboldening the latter.

Poland’s pro-EU govt, oppn disagree on whether pardoned lawmakers can stay on

AP ■ WARSAW

The fate of two Polish opposition politicians became the focus on Thursday of a running feud between the country’s new pro-European Union government and conservative opposition as the sides disagreed whether they can remain lawmakers. The weeks-old government of Prime Minister Donald Tusk has moved to reverse policies of his predecessors that were deemed harmful and led to clashes with the EU, especially in the judiciary.

However, the previously ruling right-wing Law and Justice party, frustrated over its loss in the October parliamentary elections, has been protesting the moves.

As the lower house of parliament, or Sejm, convened on Thursday, officials and experts were divided on whether two



Poland’s President Andrzej Duda, center, poses with former deputy interior minister Maciej Wasik, left, and former interior minister Mariusz Kaminski, right, in Warsaw, Poland on Tuesday. AP

senior Law and Justice lawmakers, who served in the previous government, can attend the proceedings. Parliament Speaker Szymon Holownia had stripped them of their mandates after they were convicted in December of abuse of

power.

They were released from prison on Tuesday, after President Andrzej Duda pardoned them and after spending two weeks behind bars.

Law and Justice and their ally Duda insist the two — for-

mer Interior Minister Mariusz Kaminski and his former deputy, Maciej Wasik — may continue to sit in the Sejm. The two were not present at the session start on Thursday.

Experts say the dispute exposes the extent to which Law and Justice had bent Poland’s legal system to serve its own political interests during its eight years in power that ended in December.

Tusk recently criticized Law and Justice, saying it puts its political goals above the law.

“We are facing the need to reconstruct the legal order in a way that will put an end to the constant and glaring conflicts of interpretation,” Tusk told a new conference this week.

Kaminski and Wasik were convicted of abuse of power and forging documents for actions taken in 2007, when they served in an earlier Law and Justice-led government.

S Korean lawmaker attacked

Seoul (AP): South Korean police say a governing party lawmaker is being treated at a Seoul hospital after being attacked by an unidentified man who struck her head with a rock-like object. A police official in Seoul’s Angjujeong district said a suspect was arrested at the scene after the attack on Thursday on lawmaker Bae Hyunjin in southern Seoul.

The severity of Bae’s injury wasn’t immediately clear. The police official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorised to talk to the media, said Bae was conscious as she was being taken to the hospital. South Korean media reported that her condition wasn’t life threatening, citing her aides. Calls to Bae’s office weren’t immediately answered. The attack comes weeks after a man stabbed South Korean opposition lawmaker Lee Jae-myung.

Greece students protest plans to introduce private universities

AP ■ ATHENS

Several thousand university students and supporters took part in a protest in central Athens Thursday to oppose plans by Greece’s conservative government to allow privately run universities. The protesters, chanting “Students, United, Will Win,” filed past the main Athens University building and statues of the ancient Greek philosophers Plato and Socrates as they marched through central Athens and riot police took up positions in nearby side streets. Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis’ centre-right government is pushing through several key pieces of legislation early in the new year, taking advantage of a landslide reelection in 2023, and a huge lead in



opinion polls. It argues the measure would stop thousands of Greeks going abroad each year to study, and would keep vital skills in the country.

But opponents say it would undermine public universities, which are already facing funding difficulties.

The government has faced a series of protests by various professional groups in recent weeks, triggered by the legislative reforms and the cost of living crisis. In central Greece Thursday, farmers used tractors to block sections of a highway, demanding additional financial support from the government to reduce production costs. Farmers’ groups told The Associated Press that they were holding meetings Thursday to consider further action

Alabama set to execute inmate with nitrogen gas

Montgomery (US) (AP): Alabama, unless blocked by the US Supreme Court, will attempt to put an inmate to death with nitrogen gas on Thursday night, a never before used execution method that the state claims will be humane but critics call cruel and experimental. Kenneth Eugene Smith, a 58-year-old convicted killer whose 2022 lethal injection was called off at the last minute because authorities couldn’t connect an IV line, is scheduled to be executed at a south Alabama prison.

Alabama plans to put an industrial-type respirator mask over Smith’s face and replace his breathing air with pure nitrogen gas, causing him to die from lack of oxygen. The execution will be the first attempt to use a new execution method since the 1982 introduction of lethal injection, now the most common execution method in the United States. “It’s an experiment,” said the Rev Jeff Hood,

Smith’s spiritual advisor and a death penalty opponent. Smith’s attorneys on Thursday asked the US Supreme Court to halt the execution to review claims that the new method violates the constitutional ban on cruel and unusual punishment and deserves more legal scrutiny before it is used on a person.

“There is little research regarding death by nitrogen hypoxia.

When the State is considering using a novel form of execution that has never been attempted anywhere, the public has an interest in ensuring the State has researched the method adequately and established procedures to minimize the pain and suffering of the condemned person,” Smith’s attorneys wrote.

Justices on Wednesday rejected Smith’s argument that it would be unconstitutional to make another attempt to execute him after the failed lethal injection. Smith is one of two men

convicted in the 1988 murder-for-hire slaying of Elizabeth Sennett. Prosecutors said he and the other man were each paid \$1,000 to kill Sennett on behalf of her pastor husband, who was deeply in debt and wanted to collect on insurance.

Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall said Wednesday night that he believes the courts will allow the execution to proceed. My office stands ready to carry on the fight for Liz Sennett. Two courts have now rejected Smith’s claims. I remain confident that the Supreme Court will come down on the side of justice, and that Smith’s execution will be carried out,” Marshall said.

Alabama plans to strap Smith to a gurney in the execution chamber — the same chamber where he was strapped down for several hours during the lethal injection attempt — and place a “full facepiece supplied air respirator” over his face.

After he is given a chance to make a final statement, the warden, from another room, will activate the nitrogen gas. The nitrogen will be administered through the mask for at least 15 minutes or “five minutes following a flatline indication on the EKG, whichever is longer,” according to the state protocol. The execution is scheduled to begin at 6 pm local time but could be delayed until because of legal action or preparation. The state has until 6 am Friday to carry out the execution.

Some states are looking for new ways to execute inmates because the drugs used in lethal injections, the most common execution method in the United States, are increasingly difficult to find.

Three states — Alabama, Mississippi and Oklahoma — have authorised nitrogen hypoxia as an execution method, but no state has attempted to use the untested method until now.

We have emerged stronger, says Adani on anniversary of Hindenburg report

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

A year after a damning report by a US short seller ripped through his apples-to-airport conglomerate, billionaire Gautam Adani on Thursday said the “trials and tribulations” of the past year have made the Adani group stronger as it continued on growth path, improving asset base and launching key projects, including the Dharavi redevelopment.

In a column in a leading newspaper, he said the Adani group raised Rs 40,000 crore of equity — equal to debt repayment for the next two years — through stake sales in some firms, repaid Rs 17,500 crore of margin-linked financing, and trimmed debt.

Sustained focus on operations yielded the highest-ever quarterly profit in the second quarter of current fiscal, he said.

Most of the listed group companies have recouped losses induced by the Hindenburg report. “We remained committed to maintaining our growth momentum. The Group continued its investments, evidenced by our asset base growth to Rs 4.5 lakh crore,” he said.

“This period (of last one year) marked the launch of several key projects, including the world’s largest renewable energy generation site in Khavda (in Gujarat), a new copper smelter, a green hydrogen ecosystem, and the long-awaited redevelopment of Dharavi (slums in Mumbai).”

Adani termed Hindenburg Research’s charge of fraud and stock market manipulation as “lies” and a “compilation” of “old and dead allegations” that his “detractors had been trying to resurrect.”

“Fatuously self-styled as a research report,” Hindenburg

report “was a cunningly crafted set of selective half-truths sourced from disclosed and publicly available information,” he said.

He expected the point-by-point rebuttal of the allegations put by his group to quickly put an end to it but the skinned as much as USD 150 billion in market value of his conglomerates listed companies at the lowest point.

Adani was ranked world’s second richest at the start of 2023 but slipped out of top 20. “The lies against us were corrosive enough to substantially erode the market cap of our portfolio as, typically, capital markets are more emotional than rational,” he said.

“What pained me even more is that thousands of small investors lost their savings,” he said.

Had detractors’ plan fully succeeded, the domino effect could have crippled many critical



infrastructure assets, ranging from seaports and airports to the power supply chain — a catastrophic situation for any country, he said.

“However, thanks to our solid assets, the robustness of our operations and the high quality of our disclosures, the more informed financial community, including lenders and rating agencies, refused to be swayed by the swirling lies and stood solidly with us,” he said.

Though Adani had to scrap a Rs 20,000 crore public issue at his flagship firm, Adani Enterprises.

“We had no precedent path

to handle this situation,” he said, adding that the group focused on transparently outlining the facts and narrating its side of the story to expose the motives of those who attacked it.

This led to a declining influence of negative campaigns against the Group, he said.

“A testament to the change in public perception is the significant growth in our shareholder base, a primary target of the follow-on public offering (in Adani Enterprises Ltd). Over this challenging year, our shareholder base expanded by 43 per cent, reaching nearly 70 lakh.”

On the lessons learnt, Adani, who is now ranked No 14 on the world billionaire list, said in hindsight, the crisis uncovered a fundamental weakness — the group did not pay enough attention to its outreach mechanisms.

“Few outside the infrastructure finance community knew

of the size, scale and quality of what the Adani Group had done or was doing. We had all along naively believed that all our non-financial stakeholders too knew us and the truth about us — that our financials were robust, that our governance was impeccable, that our roadmap to growth was measured, and that we play an important role in building India’s critical infrastructure,” he said. This experience underscored the necessity of engaging effectively with non-financial stakeholders.

“We had failed to proactively counter the twisted narratives of our debt levels and unfounded accusations of political partisanship, resulting in the spread of distorted perceptions.

“The fact is that, for our class of transport and utility companies, we have one of the lowest debt-EBITDA ratios. (For the half year ending September

2023, this was 2.5x). Further, with an infrastructure business footprint in 23 Indian states governed by political parties across the spectrum, we are truly politically agnostic,” he said. He concluded the piece by saying “the trials and tribulations of the past year have taught us valuable lessons, made us stronger and reaffirmed our faith in Indian institutions.”

This “devious attack” on the group and its strong countermeasures will no doubt become a case study, he said, adding that he was sharing his thoughts as similar attacks could happen on other Indian groups as well in future.

“I am under no illusions that this is the end of such attacks. I believe we have emerged even stronger from this experience and even more unwavering in our resolve to continue our humble contribution to the India growth story,” he said.



Industry seeks tax incentives in Budget

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Indian industry, including exporters on Thursday, asked the government to provide tax incentives for research and more funds for marketing activities in the Budget to boost manufacturing and the country’s outbound shipments.

They also urged the government to consider developing a global shipping line in partnership with the private sector.

India’s outward remittance on transport services is increasing with rising exports. “We remitted over USD 80 billion as transport service charge in 2021. As the country moves towards the goal of USD 1 trillion, this will touch USD 200 billion by 2030,” Federation of Indian Export Organisations (FIEO) said, adding that the private sector may be engaged to develop the shipping lines.

This will also reduce arm-twisting by foreign shipping lines, particularly of our MSMEs, the organisation said. For promoting Research and Development (R&D) in the country, weighted tax deduction can be increased to 200 per cent, it said.

“Unfortunately, India’s spending on R&D (less than 1 per cent of GDP) is well below that in major nations such as China (2.43 per cent of GDP), US (3.46 per cent), Korea (4.93 per cent) and Israel (5.56 per cent),” Issar Ahmed President (Officiate) and Vice President FIEO said.

He said aggressive export marketing is required to showcase Indian products and services

to the global customers, and for that more funds are required under the Market Access Initiative (MAI) scheme.

“For aggressive marketing, there is a need for the creation of a corpus... For the scheme,” Ahmed said, adding that the government can consider announcing a scheme on a pilot basis in 50 districts with a corpus of Rs 5,000 crore.

Further, startup firm World of Circular Economy (WOCE) said the sustainability and climate solutions industry is urging the government for crucial support. There is a need of funds and incentives for the industry. “Companies in the sustainability sector, especially SMEs, are facing multiple challenges, including immediate financial burdens and securing necessary resources. Urgent government intervention is needed to overcome these challenges and facilitate the seamless integration of sustainable practices,” WOCE Founder and Director Anup Garg said.

Garg also urged the government to consider providing input tax credit for using green fuel in manufacturing processes; and subsidised loans for investment in green technologies.

Besides, he asked to incentivise carbon-intensive factories for traceability initiatives in the raw material supply chain; allocation of funds for R&D in greener technologies; and direct tax incentives for companies promoting the use of decarbonisation tools and digital technologies for reliable carbon data.

Markets fall dragged by IT stocks, foreign fund outflows

PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark stock indices Sensex and Nifty declined on Thursday due to selling in IT stocks and continuous foreign fund outflows.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined 359.64 points or 0.51 per cent to settle at 70,700.67. During the day, it plunged 741.27 points or 1.04 per cent to 70,319.04.

The Nifty fell by 101.35 points or 0.47 per cent to 21,352.60.

Among Sensex shares, Tech Mahindra fell by over 6 per cent after the company reported a 60 per cent decline in net profit to Rs 510.4 crore in the December quarter. Bharti Airtel, ITC, HCL Technologies, Asian Paints, Wipro, HDFC Bank, Nestle, Tata Steel, Tata Consultancy Services and Maruti were among the other major



gards. NTPC, ICICI Bank, IndusInd Bank, Reliance Industries, JSW Steel, Bajaj Finance, Bajaj Finserv and Mahindra & Mahindra were among the gainers.

In Asian markets, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory.

European markets were trading mostly lower. The US markets ended on a mixed note on Wednesday.

Foreign institutional investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 6,934.93 crore on Wednesday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 1.02 per cent to USD 80.96 a barrel. The BSE benchmark jumped 689.76 points, or 0.98 per cent, to settle at 71,060.31 on Wednesday. The NSE Nifty ended 215.15 points, or 1.01 per cent, higher at 21,453.95.



CBIC notifications need simplification: GTRI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The complex language used in the notifications of the CBIC regarding customs duties needs simplification to help industry in understanding those orders as they carry crucial details, economic think tank GTRI said on Thursday.

The Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) said for this the CBIC (Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs) must use services of communication experts for help in drafting easy to understand notifications containing necessary details.

This will help over a lakh firms importing merchandise exceeding USD 660 billion in 2023 and it will also add to the ease of doing business with zero cost to the government and immense benefit of clarity to the Indian industry, it said.

“Notifying import duties is a critical mandate of CBIC. Firms pay import duties as notified by CBIC, but firms cannot do it on their own as the CBIC notifications use complex language and mostly refer to back notifications unintentionally hiding complete details needed to know the duty or import conditions on a product,” GTRI Co-Founder Ajay Srivastava said.

Using simple language would also enhance transparency in its tariff and other notifications, he added.

Import duties in India vary significantly, ranging from 0-150 per cent.

These duties include compo-

nents like basic customs duty, social welfare cess, Agriculture Infrastructure Development Cess (AIDC), and IGST (Integrated Goods and Services Tax). Citing an example, the GTRI said a company importing tennis shoes would pay 35 per cent basic customs duty, 3.5 per cent social welfare cess, nil AIDC, and 18 per cent IGST.

However, the total duty is not a simple sum of these percentages but is calculated using a specific formula, resulting in a total duty of 63.43 per cent.

“It is impossible for a layman to find out individual duty components for a product and calculate the total duty payable,” Srivastava said.

This complexity poses a challenge, especially for small firms, in determining the correct customs duty for their products, the GTRI said, adding that they have to seek expert help to understand and comply with the various duties, as the information is spread across numerous notifications each year.

Talking about a recent notification regarding some gold items, it said a person needed to look at, at least 11 notifications that amended the oldest notification.

“This roundabout reference makes understanding the update challenging. The notification could have simply stated that the government has imposed an AIDC of 5 per cent on gold or silver findings, avoiding the need for cross-referencing multiple documents,” it added.

Rupee settles 1 paisa higher at 83.11 a dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee rose 1 paisa in a range-bound trade to close at 83.11 (provisional) against the US dollar on Thursday, as the support from weak American currency overseas was negated by rising crude oil prices.

Forex traders said the rupee is trading in a narrow range as muted domestic equities and sustained foreign fund outflows dented investor sentiments.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened at 83.13 against the greenback. The unit oscillated between an intraday low of 83.14 and a high of 83.08 and finally settled at 83.11 (provisional) against the dollar, 1 paisa higher from its previous close.

On Wednesday, the rupee had settled at 83.12 against the US dollar.

The rupee traded on a flat note amid weak domestic markets and rising crude oil prices. Foreign fund outflows also weighed on the domestic currency, said Anuj Choudhary - Research Analyst at Sharekhan by BNP Paribas.

PTI ■ CHENNAI

Public sector Indian Bank is engaged in floating a wholly-owned subsidiary with a capital infusion of Rs 10 crore and it is expected to commence operations in the next financial year, a top official said here on Thursday.

The subsidiary would largely focus on back-office processing, collection, sales and marketing, Indian Bank Managing Director and CEO Shanti Lal Jain said.

“Around a week back, we got the financial approval. It will be a wholly-owned subsidiary. We will be putting Rs 10 crore as capital and we are in the process of recruiting people at

Indian Bank wholly-owned subsidiary to start next fiscal: MD

the top level like CEO, CTO...” he told reporters.

The plan to launch a subsidiary is to focus on sales and marketing, collection and recovery process, he said.

“There are many works that we are doing. Call centre work, already we are in the process of recruiting people. Maybe in the next financial year, it will be in operation. This subsidiary will not be as big as Indian Bank, they will do our work, feet on the street for collection, recovery

like that,” he said responding to a query.

The bank on Wednesday reported a 52 per cent jump in its net profits at Rs 2,119 crore in the October-December 2023 quarter, on the back of improvements in core income and a reduction in bad loans.

The bank earned a net profit of Rs 1,396 crore in the corresponding quarter of last year.

Observing that the digital transactions in the bank have increased to 87 per cent during

the quarter under review, he said, the bank has set a target of witnessing digital transactions to the tune of Rs 75,000 crore digital transactions and as of December 2023, it stood at Rs 52,000 crore.

“We are moving towards the target (of Rs 75,000 crore) digital transactions in the current financial year...” he said. Jain said the lender has also earmarked Rs 200 crore towards upgrading cyber security over the next three years.

Bajaj Auto shares climb over 5 pc; mcap jumps ₹10,915 cr post Q3 earnings

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Shares of Bajaj Auto Ltd on Thursday climbed over 5 per cent after the company reported a 38 per cent jump in consolidated Profit After Tax (PAT) to Rs 2,032.62 crore in the December quarter.

The stock jumped 5.35 per cent to settle at Rs 7,596.85 on the BSE. During the day, it rallied 5.73 per cent to Rs 7,625 — its 52-week high.

Shares of the company on the NSE climbed 5.22 per cent to Rs 7,590. During the day, it

advanced 5.71 per cent to reach a 52-week high of Rs 7,625.15.

The company’s market valuation jumped by Rs 10,915.17 crore to Rs 2,15,127.41 crore.

The company had posted a consolidated PAT of Rs 1,472.7 crore in the year-ago period, Bajaj Auto said in a regulatory filing.

Consolidated total revenue from operations in the third quarter of the ongoing fiscal stood at Rs 12,165.33 crore, up from Rs 9,318.54 crore in the year-ago period, it added.



JSW Steel Q3 profit jumps five-fold

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

JSW Steel Ltd on Thursday reported five-fold rise in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,450 crore for December quarter 2023-24, on the back of strong domestic demand.

The company had logged a net profit of Rs 474 crore in the year-ago period, JSW Steel said in a filing to BSE. Income during the third quarter increased to Rs 42,134 crore from Rs 39,322 crore in the year-ago period. “The strong performance was driven by capacity utilisation rising to 94 per cent during the quarter vs 89 per cent in Q2 FY24 at the Indian operations,” the company said in a statement.

JSW Steel is the flagship business of the diversified, USD 23 billion JSW Group. The group is also into energy, infrastructure, cement, paints, sports, and venture capital.

Gold declines ₹150; silver jumps ₹200

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Gold prices declined Rs 150 to Rs 63,050 per 10 grams in the national capital on Thursday amid a fall in precious metal prices internationally, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had ended at Rs 63,200 per 10 grams in the previous trade. However, silver jumped Rs 200 to Rs 76,200 per kilogram.

“Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at Rs 63,050 per 10 grams, down by Rs 150, taking bearish cues from the overseas market,” Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said. In the global markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,016 per ounce, down by USD 10 from the previous close. However, silver was trading marginally higher at USD 22.78 per ounce.

Recycling reduces burden on natural resources: Joshi

PTI ■ KOLKATA

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Thursday emphasised on the importance of recycling metals for circular economy, saying the process reduces the burden on natural resources, which are “finite”.

The minister for coal and mines made the remarks at the 11th International Material Recycling Conference (IMRC) in Kolkata.

As far as minerals are concerned, their resources (reserves) are finite and recycling metals such as steel and aluminium, reduces the burden on natural



resources for these materials, the minister said in a video address. Recycling is important because it is

sustainable. It plays an important role in consuming the available resources minimising the energy consumption in metal processing. The government wants to make India a hub of circular economy, Joshi said. However, mining is also important, he said, as the sector provides livelihood to crores of people in the country.

The recycling process helps divert the metal scrap from landfills, helps offset carbon emissions and saves energy consumption, Joshi added.

In his address, former NITI Aayog CEO Amitabh Kant termed recycling as “a socio economic opportunity”.

AUSTRALIAN OPEN

Sabalenka beats US Open winner Gauff to reach final

AP ■ MELBOURNE (AUSTRALIA)

Defending champion Aryna Sabalenka avenged a US Open final loss to Coco Gauff and became the first woman since Serena Williams to reach back-to-back finals at the Australian Open on Thursday.

Sabalenka attacked Gauff's serve throughout a 7-6 (2), 6-4 semi-final win.

She will meet Zheng Qinwen or Dayana Yastremska in Saturday's championship decider. Zheng and No. 93-ranked Yastremska were playing their first-ever Grand Slam semi-final.

Sabalenka is on a 13-match roll at Melbourne Park, where she made her Grand Slam breakthrough last year. Williams reached consecutive finals here in 2015, '16 and '17. Gauff went into the semifinals unbeaten in 2024 after winning a title in Auckland, New Zealand.

The 19-year-old American was on a 12-match winning streak in majors and attempting to be the first player since Naomi Osaka in 2020-21 to win the US Open and Australian Open titles back to back.

She'd worked out how to beat Sabalenka in New York last September to win her first major title but didn't have the answers this time against the only player in the final four with semi-final experience in Australia.

The first set contained six ser-



vice breaks, with both players missing opportunities to serve it out.

Sabalenka led 5-2 and missed a set point as Gauff held firm and went on a four-game roll to take a 6-5 lead. Gauff also couldn't serve it out, with Sabalenka's booming returns continuing to cause her trouble.

In the tie-breaker, Sabalenka raced to 5-1. Chants of "Coco, Coco" went up around Rod Laver Arena but they didn't help Gauff.

Almost a half-hour after her first set point, Sabalenka got five more. She clinched on the sec-

ond of those with a big serve out wide. Gauff was able to win points on only three of her 17-second serves in the first set, and that made her push harder and led to double faults.

The second set was tight until Sabalenka got a service break in the ninth game.

She missed her first match point when Gauff saved with a forehand winner to end a 12-shot rally.

An ace down the middle earned a second match point and Sabalenka clinched it after an hour and 42 minutes.

In doubles, 43-year-old

Rohan Bopanna and Matthew Ebden advanced to their second consecutive Grand Slam men's final by beating Zhang Zhizhen and Tomas Machac 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7). Tournament officials said Bopanna and Ebden, at a combined age of 79 years, will become the oldest No. 1 pairing in tennis history after the tournament.

Bopanna and Ebden, ranked second in men's doubles, lost to Rajeev Ram and Joe Salisbury in the US Open final last September. In Saturday's final, they'll play Italian pair Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori.

Bopanna one match away from first Major trophy

PTI ■ MELBOURNE

Rohan Bopanna earned himself one more opportunity to win a Grand Slam title by reaching the Australian Open men's doubles final with Australian partner Matthew Ebden after prevailing in a tense semifinal against Tomas Machac and Zhang Zhizhen here Thursday. The second seeded Indo-Australian pair faced some stiff resistance from their rivals in the third set but eventually the experience of playing Super Tie Breakers helped them nail the finish with a 6-3 3-6 7-6 (10-7) scoreline after two hours and two minutes.

Zhang (WR 54) and Machac (Wr75) are quality singles players, featuring in the top-100 list and their powerful hitting from the baseline did make it a tough contest for the experienced Bopanna and Ebden.

A day after he was assured of becoming the world number one player, Bopanna as usual served well on big points and also manage to pull out the strokes and tricks when they needed the most.

Bopanna has reached the US Open final twice (2013, 2023) but a Major trophy has eluded him in his career. Now at the fag end of his career at the age of 43,

REACHES AUSTRALIAN OPEN FINAL WITH EBDEN



he will have the chance to tick that box on Saturday.

Bopanna and Ebden will face Italian pair of Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori, who beat German team of Yannick Hanfmann and Dominik Koepfer 6-3 3-6 7-6 (5) in the other semifinal.

"On the circuit, we have played lot of Super Tie Breaks, that gets us sharp. They (Machac and Zhang) return extremely well, we had to make sure we serve well and on spots. This partnership (with Ebden) has been good," Bopanna said after the match.

Asked about his success despite the age, Bopanna said, "A lot of stuff goes behind the

scenes. A big team is part of me. I just made sure I stay focussed on what I need to do get to ready, that is mobility and recovery. I do not look to lift heavy, just do yoga. I feel mental strength helps me."

Ebden said winning in front of the home fans is special.

"I could not be happier, winning before the home fans is special. These guys are super dangerous players. The doubles specialist against singles specialist is great (contest). It's good for the fans. We have been working hard together for years. One more match to go," he said.

After splitting the first two sets, the second seeds were in a spot of both in the opening

game, down 0-30 but Bopanna's big serve came into play and he managed to make an important hold. A cross-court passing winner between Zhang and Machac was a treat for eyes.

Bopanna was all over with his fiery volley winners at the net, pulling the rug from the under the feet of their rivals to get the first break of the set. The break and easy holds gave the second seeds a comfortable lead.

Bopanna's sportsman spirit was on display yet again in Grand Slams when he touched net in game seven and himself conceded the point.

Soon, the second seeds were serving for the match but suffered a break to allow little opening to their rivals.

Bopanna hit a backhand long to be 15-30 and then Zhang found a cross court forehand winner to leave the Indian facing two break points.

Bopanna hit his backhand wide on the first to allow the rivals strike back in the match.

Zhang though was down 0-40 in next game to offer three match points to Bopanna and Ebden. They unseeded pair saved all three — one on Bopanna's return error second with serve and third with a crushing forehand winner down the line.

MSLTA ties up with Ferrero academy to promote tennis in Maharashtra

PTI ■ PUNE

The Maharashtra State Lawn Tennis Association (MSLTA) has tied up with former world number one Juan Carlos Ferrero's academy, considered to be one of the best in the sport for the development of the game in the state.

The main objective behind the initiative it is to raise awareness about the Olympic Games in the state. Efforts will be made through this initiative to increase Maharashtra's representation in the quadrennial event and the athletes of the state to reach the podium in other events.

"This is the academy of Ferrero, who is currently coaching Carlos Alcaraz and we are happy to join hands with him," MSLTA chairman Prashant Sutar said in a statement.

MSLTA players selected from the activities will enjoy full sponsorship from Lakshyavedh, Government of Maharashtra and Mahatennis Foundation. This will include tennis training, physio, travelling and fitness coach.

Hemant Bendre, senior coach and member of MSLTA coaching committee said, "We are looking for talent from various districts and taking those talented players in our training scheme."

"Selected players will be brought to Balewadi for a residential camp keeping track of their year-long training and progress," he added.

Further, talented players from Maharashtra will be sent to Spain for advance training at Ferrero's academy.

Ferrero has so far produced world class tennis players like Pablo Carreno, Nicolas Almagro, Guillermo Garcia Lopez. Interestingly, all these players have reached the top fifty in the world ranking. Under this targeted initiative, the Juan Carlos Ferrero Academy will help the MSLTA to develop coaches and physical trainers in the state by imparting modern techniques and knowledge of sports science.

Coaches from all over Maharashtra will be brought to Mhalunge Balewadi for in-house training at the Jesse Ferrero Tennis Academy. Selected coaches will be sent to Spain for further training.

Federer amazed by how much Neeraj has achieved

PTI ■ ZURICH

With their fame, success and weighty legacy sitting lightly on their shoulders, it came as no surprise when Roger Federer and Neeraj Chopra gushed about each other during a recent rendezvous, which was marked by mutual respect, admiration, and stories of triumph and dedication.

Switzerland Tourism set the ball rolling by uniting the 20-time Grand slam winner and the Olympic and world champion from India at Zurich's La Reserve Eden au Lac for a casual and free-flowing conversation. It is not often that one gets to see two dedicated, charming, and passionate sportspersons who have done their respective countries proud with their achievements, occupying the same space.

"I am amazed by how much Neeraj has achieved personally and for his country through his grit and determination."

"It's been great to meet him here in Zurich," said Federer, the global ambassador for Switzerland Tourism.



Federer, known for his longevity and prowess on and off the tennis court, warmly welcomed Chopra who is also Switzerland Tourism's Friendship Ambassador, to his home

country, which was "a dream-come-true-moment" for the 26-year-old Indian.

"It's a dream come true for me to meet Roger Federer here in Zurich."

Xavi trophy hopes at Barcelona shrink after Copa del Rey exit

AP ■ BARCELONA

The chances for Xavi Hernández to salvage Barcelona's season — and likely his own job — are quickly fading.

Barcelona has seen its best two chances of getting a title in this campaign evaporate. Xavi's side exited the Copa del Rey quarterfinals after losing in added time at Athletic Bilbao 4-2 on Wednesday, a loss that came two weeks after Barcelona was dismantled by Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup.

It just has the Spanish league and the Champions League to play for, and both look like long shots.

Barcelona is in third place in La Liga, eight points adrift of leader Girona and seven behind Madrid. While Xavi did lead Barcelona back

into the Champions League knockout rounds for the first time in three years, it is clearly one — or two — notches below the likes of Manchester City, Madrid and other heavyweights.

The 44-year-old Xavi, whose only other coaching experience was in Qatar, has recognized that a season without silverware will likely be too much for even a club great and fan favorite like him to survive despite a contract through to the end of next season. "All the coaches of big clubs depend on winning titles," Xavi said after the loss in Bilbao.

"It is a fact, if we are not playing at a competitive level the normal thing would be for me to go. This is a major club. I am at Barça. Today we fought and worked hard, (but) if you don't win, the coach takes the blame."

Xavi returned to coaching his

boyhood club in November 2021 and successfully led an overhaul of the team — financed by the club mortgaging its future — to win La Liga last season, its first major title since the exit of Lionel Messi.

But Barcelona has been erratic this season, when it was supposed to get younger and fitter, after the departures of veterans Sergio Busquets and Jordi Alba to play with Messi in Miami. Barcelona also lost key midfielder Gavi Pérez and goalkeeper Marc-Andre ter Stegen to injuries, but high-profile reinforcements Ilkay Gundogan and João Félix have yet to make up for their loss.

Fortunately for Xavi, his team returns home to host Villarreal in the league on Saturday. Villarreal is winless in its last four games overall and in 14th place. "We must win on

I have always admired his skill, his spirit of true sportsmanship and his ability to inspire millions around the world. "Today, however, what inspired me the most was his humility and his easy-going charm that made me feel so comfortable in his presence.

"We had a wonderful time exchanging notes about our respective passions and life's experiences on and off the field," said Chopra.

While Federer presented Neeraj with an autographed tennis racquet, Chopra handed the former World No 1 a signed India jersey from the Asian Games.

Chopra - who became India's second individual Olympic gold medalist at the pandemic-affected Tokyo Olympics in 2021 - is hoping to repeat the feat at the Paris Olympics later this year.

Since winning the gold medal at the Tokyo Games, Chopra has scripted more history by claiming a silver and an unprecedented gold medal at the World Athletics Championships. He also retained his Jakarta Asian Games gold medal at Hangzhou last year.



I have not announced retirement: Mary Kom

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Her future is a subject of intense speculation since that final Olympic appearance in Tokyo back in 2021 but celebrated Indian woman boxer M C Mary Kom on Thursday refuted talk of retirement even though she is on the wrong side of the international cut-off age for amateur boxers.

The 41-year-old six-time world champion, who won an Olympic bronze in the 2012 London edition, found herself at the centre of a social media storm after reportedly declaring that due to the 40-year age cap for amateur boxers, she has been forced to retire. In a statement this morning, she declared that she had been misquoted and a formal announcement of retirement is still some time away.

"I haven't announced retirement yet and I have been misquoted. I will personally come in front of media whenever I want to announce it. I have gone through some media reports stating that I have announced retirement and this is not true," the Manipuri flyweight (51kg) category boxer asserted.

She then tried to give context to her earlier comment, insisting that she was merely talking about the international rules and not referring to herself specifically. "I was attending a school event in Dibrugarh (Assam) on 24 January 2024 wherein I was

motivating children and I said 'I still have hunger of achieving in sports but age limit in Olympics doesn't allow me to participate though I can carry on with my sport,' she said. "I am still focusing on my fitness and whenever I will announce retirement I will inform everyone. Please do correct this," she added.

Mary Kom has not been seen in action since her pre-quarter-final loss in the Tokyo Olympics, which was her last appearance at the quadrennial showpiece.

She attempted to appear for the 2022 Commonwealth Games trials but had to pull out on the day of the selection bouts due to a torn ACL (Anterior Cruciate Ligament) for which she underwent a surgery. However, she resumed training after rehabilitation last year and insisted that she has another 3-4 competitive years left in her even though Olympics was now out of bounds for her. Amid her gradual withdrawal, Nikhat Zareen has taken over the 51kg slot, and claimed two back-to-back world titles, the latest one coming last year.

Mary Kom, on the other hand, has been seen in several administrative roles given to her by the Indian Olympic Association. She recently headed an IOA oversight panel which investigated the sexual harassment charges levelled by some top women wrestlers against the then wrestling federation head Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

Avani to lead Indian team at Women Amateur Asia Pacific golf

PTI ■ PATTAYA (THAILAND)

Avani Prashanth, the only Indian ranked inside top-50 amateurs in the world, will lead a six-member contingent from the country at the prestigious Women's Amateur Asia-Pacific (WAAP) championship in Thailand, starting February 1.

The other Indian players are Mannat Brar, Heena Kang, Vidhatri Urs, Keerthana Rajeev Nair and Saanvi Somu.

The WAAP champions receive exemptions into three major championships in 2024 - the AIG Women's Open at St Andrews, the Amundi Evian Championship in France and the Chevron Championship in the United States of America.

The winner will also receive invitations to a few other elite championships such as the Hana

Financial Group Championship, ISPS Handa Women's Australian Open, The 121st Women's Amateur Championship and the Augusta National Women's Amateur.

Avani, ranked 42 in the world, is the winner of the Queen Sirikit Cup individual honours in 2023, and was also fourth at the individuals in 2023 World Amateur Team Championships. She also won a pro event in Europe and finished in Top-10 in numerous professional events on the Ladies European Tour including the Hero Women's Indian Open.

She was also runner-up at the Australian Masters of Amateurs earlier this month in Melbourne.

Her main teen rivals will include Japan's Mamika Shinichi, Filipina Rianne Mikhaela Malixi and New Zealander Eunseo

Choi.

Shinichi (33), Prashanth (42) and Malixi (43) are among the top ranked players in the field.

Randhawa becomes first Indian to win Senior Euro Q-School

Antalya, Jan 25 (PTI) Veteran golfer Jyoti Randhawa became the first Indian to finish on top in the Senior European Tour's Qualifying School and claim full playing rights in the Legends Tour this season. Randhawa finished with a 12-under 276 total and four shots ahead of his nearest rivals. Randhawa, who turned 50 in 2022 and played his first few events on the Senior Tour in Europe in 2023, shot rounds of 71-67-68-70 for 276 at the Gloria Golf Club in Antalya.

Three players France's Lionel Alexandre (72), Simon Griffiths (72) of England and Spaniard



Carlos Balmaseda (72) were tied for second at 280, while Andrew Marshall of England with 75 claimed the fifth and final card on offer.

The final stage of Legends School is often considered tougher than the main event as only five cards are available from the field. The field had 55

players this year and many were past European Tour champions.

"It feels really good," said Randhawa, a three-time (2000, 2006, 2007) Hero Indian Open

winner. "I got a few starts last year but I thought if I come to Q School and get in the top five, I'll get to play the whole year, and here I am. I'm happy that I won and now I can plan my season," he added. Randhawa, a former DP World Tour player, eight-time Asian Tour winner and one-time winner in Japan, was two shots ahead after three rounds and made it four by the end of the fourth round.

Randhawa played and missed the cut at the Senior Open last year, when he had Jeev Milkha Singh, who finished in Top-15, and Arjun Atwal for company.

Jeev played 10 events in 2023 and had Top-10s in four of them and finished 13th on the Merit list to keep his card.

"I'm pretty young for starting out (on the Legends Tour). If I can go in there and win a tour-

namment then that makes everything a lot easier. My aim is to win one and take it from there," Randhawa said.

Randhawa's final round included birdies on the final two holes for a total of 12-under 276. He had started the final day with a two-shot lead and remained in control of the tournament in blustery conditions on the New Course. When Randhawa made another gain on the 10th, it looked like he would coast to victory. However, a double bogey on the 13th and a bogey on the 15th opened the door for France's Lionel Alexandre, Simon Griffiths of England and Spaniard Carlos Balmaseda.

But Randhawa emphatically sealed victory with his two closing birdies, leaving the others to focus on the tight battle for the other four cards.

SPINNERS PUT INDIA IN STRONG POSITION ON DAY ONE

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

After spinners put England batters through a harsh scrutiny, Yashasvi Jaiswal rolled out his own version of 'Bazball' en route to a crushing fifty as India posted 119 for one to take the upper hand on day one of the opening Test here on Thursday.

At close, Jaiswal (76 batting, 70 balls, 9x4, 3x6) and Shubman Gill (14 batting) were at the crease and the hosts are 127 runs in arrears of England's anaemic first innings total of 246, which was built around skipper Ben Stokes' hardheaded 88-ball 70.

India were comfortably placed at 119 for one at stumps after bowling out England for 246 on the opening day of the first Test here on Thursday.

Around Stokes, England batsmen crumbled as the spin trioka of Ravichandran Ashwin (3/68), Ravindra Jadeja (3/88) and Axar Patel (2/33) rudely nudged them back to reality of batting on an Indian pitch that offers barrowful of turn and grip even from day one.

But when the Indian openers came out bat the RGI Stadium,

pitch appeared to have lost its bite and the England tweekers looked like a defanged lot.

Jaiswal wrapped himself with the leader's cape despite the presence of his captain Rohit Sharma (24, 27 balls) at the other end, tearing into England bowlers with gusto.

The gap between runs and balls could give the left-hander's innings a hue of carelessness but it was anything but that.

Jaiswal started his and the team's innings with a clipped boundary to square leg off pacer Mark Wood, but that was just the appetizer as the left-hander offered a harsh welcome to Tom Hartley to international cricket.

The 22-year-old smashed the England left-arm spinner for two sixes in his first over, one over long-on and the other in front of the square.

His twinkling feet and fast hands made it tough for the England spinners to settle into a rhythm against him.

Jaiswal and Rohit added 80 runs in just 12.1 overs to give their side a wonderful launching pad.

It came to an end when Rohit gave a catch to Stokes off left

INDIA 119/1 AFTER BOWLING OUT ENGLAND FOR 246



arm spinner Jack Leach while trying to clear him over the long-on.

But for the rest of the innings, it was a futile toil for the English bowlers as this could be the beginning of a long and tiring tour for them.

To make it even more exasperating for them, they have already exhausted all the three reviews for this innings as well.

However, the whole atmosphere was different when the Indian spinners were operating - the ball bounced, turned and

gripped to leave the English batters an edgy group except a few small passages.

One of them came in the post-lunch session when Joe Root (29, 60 balls) and Jonny Bairstow (37, 58 balls) added 61 runs for the fourth-wicket as

England attempted to stay above the fast-rising water.

Root and Bairstow, generally, relied on sweep and the reverse avatar of that shot occasionally to gather runs. However, Root was culpable of being too pre-meditative and it eventually led

to his downfall.

Jadeja hit a fuller length which resulted in a top-edge off Root's bat that flew to short fine leg where Jasprit Bumrah did not have to strain himself much to complete the catch.

Bairstow too did not last long as Axar delivered a peach from wide of the crease to take out the batter's off-stump.

Ben Foakes has this reputation of being a fine player of spin but on this day only struggle was visible as he departed with a 24-ball four, offering a simple catch to stumper KS Bharat off Axar as England lost five wickets in that session for 107 runs.

It was left to captain Stokes, who employed conventional and non-conventional sweeps to counter spin, to wage a lonely battle in the company of tailenders and even looked solid during his stay in the middle.

But then on dire occasions like the one England encountered here, even a lion-hearted warrior like Stokes could only add a modicum of respectability to the total.

After a sedate beginning, Stokes slipped into his own and played some dazzling shots

before Bumrah disturbed his stumps. His innings contained six fours and three sixes.

In the morning session, England might have day-dreamed of another buccaneering effort after openers Ben Duckett and Zak Crawley made 25 runs in the first four overs which later swelled to 55 in 11.5 overs. But Ashwin underlined his mastery over left-handers for a zillionth time while dismissing Duckett.

The 37-year-old managed to skid one on to beat Duckett's defence to hit his pads as the latter played for non-existent turn.

Umpire Chris Gaffaney did not have to think twice before raising his finger, and even a review could not save Duckett.

The Indian spinners rushed through that creek to dismantle the England innings as India tightened the grip over the proceedings.

BRIEF SCORES:

England 1st innings: 246 all out in 64.3 overs (Ben Stokes 70; Ravindra Jadeja 3/88, R Ashwin 3/68).

India 1st innings: 119/1 in 23 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal batting 76).



Jaiswal has taken to Test cricket like a fish to water: Ashwin

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

Veteran India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin is in awe of Yashasvi Jaiswal's batting in only his fifth Test, saying the youngster has not put a foot wrong in his 76-run knock against England and has taken to the five-day format "like a fish to water".

Jaiswal remained unbeaten after playing 70 balls, hitting nine boundaries and three sixes on the opening day of the first Test. "He (Jaiswal) had a great time in the IPL, had a wonderful start in first-class cricket. I am quite enjoying it. I am seeing Rishabh Pant there. His fearless

cricket is serving him well," Ashwin said after the end of the opening day's play.

"Yashasvi has not put a foot wrong, he has taken to Test cricket like a fish to water," the senior spinner added.

"It was pretty interesting in the first session, maybe there was a bit of moisture. Because of the early moisture, there was enough speed. Then it slowed down. Not enough speed to carry through to the slips," Ashwin said.

"240 was a very very good competitive total. Thought 30-40 runs more than what we would have liked. Someone making a hundred tomorrow will put us in the driver's seat."

Rohit remains optimistic despite decade long ICC Trophy drought

PTI ■ HYDERABAD

India skipper Rohit Sharma firmly believes that their "time will come" to win an elusive ICC trophy, a milestone they have been chasing for the past decade. The recent World Cup 2023 final loss to Australia saw India's quest for an ICC title stretch to 10 years with their last victory dating back to the Champions Trophy in 2013 under the leadership of MS Dhoni.

"The last three years have been great. Except winning the finals of ICC trophies, we have won everything," Rohit said while talking to JioCinema on the sidelines of their opening Test against England here.

"That's one thing we've not been able to accomplish, but I think time will come. All we need to do is stay in a good mindset, not worry too much about the past, because you can't change the past.

"What you can change is what is going to come next, so all of us are quite focussed on that. We are playing our hearts out."

After being runners-up in the T201 World Cup in 2014, the team faced semi-final exits in the 2015 ODI World Cup, the 2016 T20 World Cup, and the 2019 ODI World Cup.

The agony continued with defeats in the finals of the 2017



Champions Trophy along with a semi-final loss in the 2022 T20 World Cup. They also lost the finals of the first two World Test Championship cycles.

NO NUMBER-GAME: Sharma, known for his aggressive style of strokemaking, further spoke about his approach to captaincy.

"I wanted to bring about certain change, players going out there and playing with a lot of freedom. I wanted to take the statistical side of cricket out of this team.

"Numbers are overrated. In India, we do talk a lot about numbers and all of that. I got five hundreds in the 2019 World Cup, but we still lost. The hundreds don't matter.

"I may think about them maybe 20 years later after I retire, but what did we get? I wanted the trophy.

"If you don't win trophies, I don't think those 5-6 hundreds make too much sense. Team sport is all about winning trophies, not about individual accomplishments," he added.

Kohli wins ICC Men ODI Cricketer of the Year Award for fourth time

PTI ■ DUBAI

Indian batting maestro Virat Kohli was on Thursday crowned the ICC men's ODI Cricketer of the Year 2023 for his excellent run in the format last year headlined by a phenomenal outing in the World Cup at home.

This is the fourth such award for Kohli, who was the second most prolific run-scorer in ODIs last year behind compatriot Shubman Gill.

The former India skipper finished the year with 1,377 runs which included six centuries and eight half-centuries.

The year will forever be remembered as the one in which Kohli surpassed the great Sachin Tendulkar's longstanding record of ODI centuries, and the award caps a memorable 12 months for the India batter, who guided the country to the World Cup final, winning the Player of the Tournament prize along the way for scoring a record 765 runs in 11 matches.

This is the seventh individual ICC award won by Kohli during his glittering career, and his fourth in the ODI category after previous wins in 2012, 2017 and 2018.

He also won the Test award in 2018 while the years 2017 and 2018 saw him also win the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for ICC Men's Cricketer of the Year.

Kohli claimed the silverware from a shortlist that included countrymen Gill and Mohammed Shami, plus New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell.

Kohli lost out on the race for the Cricketer of the Year Award to Australian captain Pat Cummins, who won it ahead of compatriot Travis Head and Indian duo Ravindra Jadeja and Kohli.

Cummins won the Sir Garfield Sobers Trophy for men's Cricketer of the Year and England all-rounder Nat Sciver-Brunt bagged her second successive Rachael Heyhoe Flint Trophy for women's Cricketer of the Year.

Australia batter Usman Khawaja was named the men's Test Cricketer of the Year, holding off competition from fellow Australian run-scorer Travis Head, India spinner R Ashwin and England batter Joe Root.

Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu won her maiden women's ODI Cricketer of the Year award, becoming the first female cricketer from the country to win an ICC award.

A landmark year has not only seen Athapaththu clinch the individual award, but also saw her being named captain of both the ICC women's ODI and T20I Teams of the Year, announced earlier in the week.

England umpire Richard Illingworth won the David Shepherd Trophy for Umpire of

the Year for the third time, after previously winning in 2019 and 2022.

Zimbabwe were revealed as the winners of the Spirit of Cricket Award for their sporting conduct immediately following the thrilling victory over West Indies in the men's World Cup Qualifier match in Harare in June.

Cummins received the trophy after a phenomenal year which saw him produce outstanding individual performances while also leading his side to the World Test Championship and World Cup titles.

Cummins is the fifth Australian to win the trophy, following Ricky Ponting (2006 and 2007), Mitchell Johnson (2009 and 2014), Michael Clarke (2013) and Steve Smith (2015).

Cummins grabbed 42 wickets in 11 Tests during the year at an average of 27.50 with a best match haul of 10 for 47 in the Boxing Day Test against Pakistan. These notable contributions came as Australia claimed their maiden World Test Championship mace and retained the Ashes on English soil.

In ODIs, he grabbed 17 wickets in 13 matches at an economy rate of 5.74. His best figures of three for 51 against South Africa in the World Cup semi-final was followed by a crucial spell of two for 34 against India in the blockbuster final in Ahmedabad.

Sarfraz serves reminder with 161 for India A

PTI ■ AHMEDABAD

Barely 48 hours after receiving his umpteenth snub from the selectors, Mumbai's 'run-machine' Sarfraz Khan served a stern reminder to the national selection committee with a majestic 161 that put India A in complete command over England Lions on day two of the second 'unofficial Test' here.

Having bowled out England for 152 on the opening day, India A, starting the day at 150 for no loss, ended on 489 with a massive 337-run first innings lead which will give them a good shot of gunning for an innings victory. While seasoned Abhimanyu Easwaran (58) and left-handed Devdutt Padikkal (105) set the platform with a 162-run opening stand, Sarfraz took full advantage of good batting conditions looting runs off the Lions spinners, who didn't have answers to his repeated onslaught.

Sarfraz, expectedly hurt after being pipped by Rajat Patidar as Virat Kohli's replacement in the two Tests against England, did the best possible thing — let his bat do all the talking. The conditions were feathered at the Narendra Modi Stadium 'Ground A' but no one can take the credit away

from the burly Mumbaier, who gave a masterclass on how to tackle spinners.

All his five sixes came off specialist spinners — three he hit off left-arm spinner Callum Parkinson, all down the ground while a couple of maximums came off off-spinner Oliver Price, one of which was hit into the cow corner.

He took a special liking for Parkinson, who was also hit for nine of his 18 boundaries. He repeatedly used his feet and also played a lot of inside out drives. Sarfraz was also severe on opposition's best bowler Matthew Potts (6/125), the right arm seamer who has already played for England. He was creamed for half dozen boundaries as he repeatedly peppered the cover and extra cover boundary region.

He added 169 for the sixth wicket with Washington Sundar (57) and 96 for the seventh wicket with spinner Saurabh Kumar (77), who was also in rollicking form with the willow, helping himself with 16 fours. The innings would keep Sarfraz firmly in contention for a Test berth as no one knows when someone gets injured as he would certainly be the next in line if Shreyas Iyer fails to get going in the current series.

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