



CITY 3
VARANASI AMONG 13 UP
SEATS GO TO POLLS TODAY

OPINION 6
INDIA AND BANGLADESH:
A TALE OF TWO BOOKS

WORLD 10
TRUMP FIRST EX-PREZ
CONVICTED OF FELONY

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Torrid summer kills 71, mostly in Bihar

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

Severe heatwave sweeping Northwest and Central India is increasingly becoming a public health crisis in India with around 71 people succumbing to heat-related illness especially sunstroke since March 1 till date even as Uttarakhand and Jammu region reported forest fires adding complexity to the ongoing situation on Friday. The reports of deaths and illness cases due to heatwaves continue to surface every day. Tragically, on Friday, as several pockets of Northwest and Central India turned into a baking pan with temperatures soaring as high as 45 degrees Celsius, it proved fatal particularly to the polling personnel. The Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority (JKDMA) which is mobilising resources, including drones, to combat the fires has issued an extreme forest fire risk warning for the coming week as temperatures soar and the dry conditions persist. Fourteen people, including 10 polling personnel lost their lives to heatwave in the last 24 hours in Bihar alone, while four persons succumbed to sunstroke in Jharkhand. In the eastern State 1,326 people were hospitalised due to the health risks posed by the intense heatwave. Uttar Pradesh's authorities also reported the death of 13 poll

13 poll personnel in Mirzapur among dead



Smoke rises from a forest fire in Uttarakashi district

File Photo: PTI

personnel in poll-bound Mirzapur district following fever, high BP. However, Principal of Maa Vindhayavasi Autonomous State Medical College Raj Bahadur Kamal said the exact reason is yet to be ascertained. The deceased include seven Home Guard jawans, three sanitation workers, one clerk posted at the Chief Medical Officer's office, one chakbandi adhikaari (consolidation officer), and one peon in the Home Guard

team, according to PTI reports. Meanwhile, the situation in Uttarakhand too is alarming as it has started battling another series of forest fires after a brief lull, affecting over 1,300 hectares and causing significant environmental damage. Since November 2023, there have been 1,167 forest fire incidents in the State, claiming six lives and injuring five people, as per the officials. On Thursday, at least 24

people died of suspected heatstroke in India's eastern States of Bihar and Odisha, and the heatwave in the region is expected to continue until Saturday, authorities said. Delhi, which recorded a temperature of 45.4 degrees Celsius on Friday afternoon, reported its first heat-related death this week and is also facing an acute water shortage. Experts, however, cautioned that death and heat-related illness data might represent

only a fraction of the actual impact, highlighting the severe health consequences of humid heat in Northwest and Central regions. As the intense heatwave wreaks havoc in Bihar, where temperatures soared to 47.1 degrees Celsius in Buxar, the State Government has shut down schools and educational institutions until June 8 and has initiated ex-gratia payments to the families of the deceased. **Continued on Page 8**

Remal aftermath wreaks havoc in Assam, Manipur

PNS ■ IMPHAL/NEW DELHI

About four lakh people have been affected in the northeastern States of Assam and Manipur, which have been hit by heavy rain and thunderstorms triggered by Cyclone Remal in the last few days. A total of 1,88,143 people have been affected by floods in Manipur following incessant rainfall in the aftermath of Cyclone Remal, a State Minister said on Thursday. It has also damaged at least 24,265 houses in the last few days, he said. The Central Water Commission said six rivers in Assam and Manipur, including Brahmaputra, and Barak, are experiencing severe flooding, putting numerous districts in the region at risk. Altogether 18,103 people have been evacuated and 56 relief camps were set up, Manipur Minister for Water Resources and Relief & Disaster Management Awangbou Newmai said. Around 401 hectares of crop have been affected, too, he said. Relief materials have been distributed to Imphal East, Imphal West, Bishupur, Noney, Churanbanpur, Senapati and Kakching, the Minister said. **Continued on Page 8**



Residents fill water from a tanker amid water crisis at the Vivekanand Camp in Chanakyapuri area of New Delhi on Friday

Delhi moves SC for more water from neighbours

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid acute shortage of water in the national Capital, the Arvind Kejriwal-led AAP Government approached the Supreme Court on Friday, seeking its intervention to direct neighbouring States, including Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, to immediately release the additional raw water provided by the Himachal Pradesh to Delhi through the Wazirabad Barrage, to enable urgent mitigation and resolution of the ongoing water and sanitation crisis here. The plea, filed by Delhi's Water Minister Atishi, has made the Centre, BJP-governed Haryana and Congress-ruled Himachal Pradesh parties to the petition and said access to water is essential for survival and one of the basic human rights. **Continued on Page 8**

The move comes as Delhi grapples with a severe water crisis, which has affected millions of residents. The BJP lambasted the Kejriwal Government, terming it mismanagement and an artificial water crisis created by the Kejriwal Government while Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made an appeal to the BJP-led Governments in Haryana and Uttar Pradesh to provide water relief to Delhi amidst the ongoing heatwave. Highlighting the severe water demand caused by the relentless heat, Kejriwal called for a united effort, urging political collaboration over conflict while criticising the Delhi government, Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva said water crisis in Delhi is a result of mismanagement of Kejriwal. **Continued on Page 8**

One last battle today for taking the crown

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Voting across the 57 parliamentary constituencies in seven States and Union Territory of Chandigarh in the seventh and last round of the Lok Sabha elections will be held on Saturday including Varanasi, from where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is seeking a third consecutive term. Saturday's voting will mark the end to the marathon polling process that began on April 19 and has already covered 486 Lok Sabha seats in 28 States and Union Territories. The Assemblies of Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim also went to polls. Counting of votes will be taken up on June 4. The Election Commission also called upon voters to turn out in large numbers and vote with responsibility and pride. According to the poll body, over 10.06 crore eligible voters, including nearly 5.24 crore men, 4.82 crore women and 3,574 third gender electors are eligible to vote in this phase. Polling for the remaining 42 Assembly constituencies of Odisha and bypolls to six Assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh will also

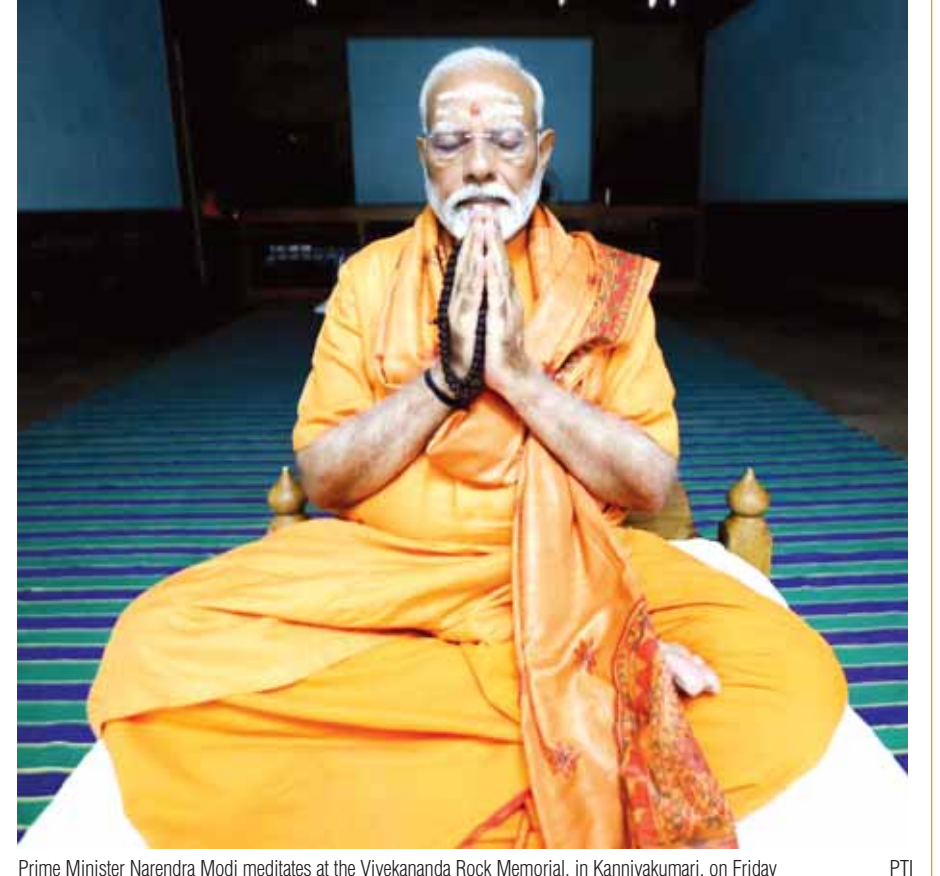
STARS IN FRAY		
CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATE	PARTY
Varanasi	Narendra Modi	BJP
	Ajay Rai	Congress
Gorakhpur	Ravi Kishan	BJP
	Kajal Nishad	SP
Hamirpur	Anurag Thakur	BJP
	Satpal Singh Raizada	Congress
Mandi	Kangana Ranaut	BJP
	Vikramaditya Singh	Congress
Pataliputra	Ram Kripal Yadav	BJP
	Misa Bhatti	RJD
Patna	Ravi Shankar Prasad	BJP
	Anshul Avijit	Congress
Ghaziपुर	Paras Nath Rai	BJP
	Aizal Ansari	SP
Jalandhar	Charanjit Singh Channi	Congress
	Pawan Kumar Tin	AAP
Bhatinda	Parampal Kaur Sidhu	BJP
	Jeet Mohinder Singh Sidhu	Congress
Godda	Harsimrat Kaur Badal	Shiromani Akali Dal
	Nishikant Dubey	BJP
Diamond Harbour	Pradeep Yadav	Congress
	Abhijit Das	BJP
	Abhishek Banerjee	TMC

take place simultaneously. The 75-day campaigning for the seven-phased Lok Sabha elections — the longest in Indian election history after the 1951-52 polls — ended on a combative note with the ruling BJP-

claiming that the BJP is anti-farmer, anti-youth and will change and scrap the Constitution if they win the elections. The BJP based their campaign on 'Modi ki Guarantees' and the Prime

Minister's personality, the Congress was betting on 'Nyay Patra' that talked about five 'nyays' and 25 guarantees targeting youth, farmers, workers and women. The Congress and its alliance campaign centred around "saving" the Constitution and the country's democracy while claiming that the BJP's '400 paar' target was meant to get the mandate for rewriting the Constitution and end the quota regime. Modi and the BJP countered the Opposition onslaught with the Prime Minister first seeking to link the Congress manifesto with the pre-partition Muslim League, redistribution of wealth. In the second phase of election, Modi sought to target Congress saying it was going to snatch 'mangalsutra' of women, to claim that Congress is going to redistribute wealth to Muslims. For Rahul Gandhi, a copy of the Constitution, which he displayed at rallies, was a constant companion, while Mallikarjun Kharge warned people that if Modi is reelected, then there will be no more elections. Opposition leaders claimed that their campaign had a resonance, especially among Dalits, tribals and OBCs. **Continued on Page 8**

TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meditates at the Vivekananda Rock Memorial, in Kanniyakumari, on Friday

LONG ARM OF THE LAW

Women cops 'greet' Prajwal upon return

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ BENGALURU/NEW DELHI

Suspended JD(S) MP SPrajwal Revanna, facing sexual abuse allegations, was arrested on Friday upon his return from Germany, a month after he left the country in the wake of explicit videos of his alleged actions doing the rounds in Karnataka's Hassan. In a clear messaging by the SIT probing the allegations, a team of women police personnel 'welcomed' Prajwal upon his arrival here, as they were deputed to execute a warrant and take him to the CID office for interrogation. After evading summons and staying out of the country for a little over a month, the 33-year-old grandson of JD(S) supremo and former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda landed at Bengaluru past midnight from Germany's Munich, only to be arrested by the Special Investigation Team (SIT) minutes later and whisked away for questioning. **Continued on Page 8**



Denied court relief, Kejriwal is 'proud of going to jail'

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

With only two days left for his interim bail to end, AAP convener and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal on Friday said he will surrender before the police at Tihar Jail on Sunday. The AAP chief said he feels "proud" that he is going to jail to "save the country from dictatorship". "I will surrender the day after tomorrow. I will leave my house at around 3:00 pm to surrender. It is possible that this time they will torture me more, but I will not bow down", Kejriwal said. AAP convener is currently out on interim bail, claiming his body has lately shown symptoms of a serious disease. In an emotional video message to the people of Delhi on Friday, Kejriwal, who is supposed to surrender at Tihar Jail on Sunday, June 2, asserted that the work being done in Delhi by his Government will not stop. **Continued on Page 8**



Air India fliers gasp for air, literally!

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

Amid the severe heatwave in Delhi, an Air India flight to San Francisco from the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport was delayed for over 24 hours due to multiple reasons after passengers were allegedly made to board the flight and sit without any air conditioning, causing several fliers to faint. This was the second incident in less than a week when an Air India flight suffered an inordinate delay while passengers were made to wait without proper assistance. Taking note of the incident, the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) issued a show cause notice to Air India for inordinate delay of at least two international flights and failure to take due care of passengers. The DGCA mentioned about the inordinate delay of two international flights — AI



183 from Delhi to San Francisco on May 30 and AI 179 from Mumbai to San Francisco on May 24. Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia took cognisance of the flight delays and inconvenience caused to passengers, following which the DGCA issued the show cause notice. AI 183, which was to depart from Delhi at 1530 IST on

May 30, was rescheduled after a 24 hours delay on May 31. There were around 200 passengers onboard the Boeing 777 aircraft that was to operate flight AI 183. Several passengers fainted inside the aircraft, passengers claimed on social media. Visuals posted by many other passengers show people including children sitting on the floor. They appear exhausted. One passenger shared their experience, saying, "People were made to board the plane and sit without AC. Then I was deplaned and not allowed to enter the terminal because immigration was done." While sharing the ordeal on social media platform X, journalist Shweta Punj claimed that the passengers were made to board the AI183 New Delhi- San Francisco Air India flight and sit without air-conditioning. The airline deplaned the passengers after some fliers fainted on the flight at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport. "If there is a privatisation story that has failed it is @airindia @DGCAIndia AI 183 flight has been delayed for over 8 hours, passengers were made to board the plane without air conditioning, and then deplaned after some people fainted in the flight.

This is inhuman @JM_Scindia," she said. However, the airline responded to the passenger, regretting the inconvenience and said it's working to provide necessary assistance to the passengers. "Dear Punj, we truly regret to note the disruptions. Please be rest assured that our team is actively working to address the delay and appreciate your ongoing support and understanding. We are also alerting our team to provide necessary assistance to the passengers," Air India said. Another user, Abhishek Sharma (@39Abhishek) urged the airline for swift action and drew its attention to let his parents and "numerous other parents" stranded at the boarding area to go home. However, the airline official claimed that passengers were offered the options of full refund, complimentary rescheduling and hotel accommodation. **Continued on Page 8**

Sweltering heat takes 3 lives in UP as temperatures soar

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Parts of Uttar Pradesh continue to swelter as temperatures soared above 45 degrees Celsius in many areas across the state. The severe heatwave has reportedly led to the deaths of over two dozen people, though officials have confirmed only three deaths.

In Varanasi, the impact of the heatwave was starkly evident at the Manikarnika Ghat, where an unprecedented number of over 400 bodies were cremated in a single day. Typically, the ghat handles 175 to 200 cremations daily. Meanwhile, the Met department has forecast heatwave conditions on Saturday after which it will abate.

Met Office Director Manish Ranalkar said that the heatwave conditions would prevail in isolated places of eastern and western Uttar Pradesh. He said on Friday, heatwave conditions prevailed in Prayagraj, Lucknow, Jhansi, Sultanpur, Fursatganj in Uttar Pradesh.

Lucknow recorded a maximum temperature of 45.8 degrees Celsius, Prayagraj 46.8 degrees Celsius, Sultanpur 46.2, Jhansi 47.6, Kanpur 48.2 and Fursatganj 46.4 degree Celsius.



People offer sherbat to commuters during a hot summer day, in Moradabad on Friday PTI

According to a PTI report from Kausambi and Shahjahanpur, five people, including two minors, were killed in separate incidents caused by the adverse weather conditions in UP in the last 24 hours, police said. According to police, three people were killed in Shahjahanpur after a temporary shed fell on them due to strong winds, while two people allegedly died due to heat stroke.

In Shahjahanpur, three people identified as Suraj (9), Manish (15) and Indresh (37) were standing under a temporary shed that collapsed on them due to strong winds on Friday, Superintendent of Police Ashok Kumar Meena said.

While Manish was killed on the spot, Suraj and Indresh succumbed to their injuries in hospital. The bodies were sent for post-mortem, Meena said. In a separate incident, in Kausambi, two people including an elderly woman, died allegedly of health complications caused by a heat stroke on Thursday, at the district hospital. Chief Medical Officer Sushendra Kumar on Friday said, "Ram Milan (35) and Sarika Bano (70) of different areas of the district were on Thursday admitted at the district hospital with complaints of symptoms resembling that of heat stroke."

"The duo succumbed within half an hour of admission while being attended by the doctors. Prima facie it appears that the death was caused by complications associated with heat stroke," the CMO said. "Heatwave conditions are prevailing because the sky is clear without any cloud and westerly winds from Rajasthan are blowing. Apart from this, the easterly winds are increasing humidity and the combination of high temperature and humidity is increasing the discomfort level," he said. Medical professionals have issued advisories, urging residents to stay indoors and venture out only when necessary. The streets bore a deserted look during the afternoon as the sun blazed in its full intensity. Authorities are also advising the public to stay hydrated and take precautions to avoid heat stroke during this period of

extreme temperatures. Meanwhile, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said here on Friday that with the state witnessing severe heatwave conditions, adequate arrangements should be made at every level for the safety of common people, livestock and wildlife. He said that a daily bulletin of weather forecasts should be issued from the level of the relief commissioner's office. "There should not be unnecessary power cuts anywhere be it a village or a city and if required arrangements should be made to buy additional electricity. Problems like burning of transformers and tripping should be resolved without delay," he said. Giving strict instructions that officials should attend phone calls, the chief minister said that there should not be any dispute anywhere. "If such incidents happen then senior officers should immediately reach the spot themselves," he said.

The chief minister gave instructions that drinking water kiosks should be opened at public places in all municipal bodies and rural areas. "There should be arrangements of drinking water at various places in the markets and main roads. Operating a drinking water kiosk at public places is a noble deed; water and shade should be arranged at public places for cattle, dogs etc. Make the general public aware to keep water and grains in small pots for birds," he said. Chief Minister Yogi said that the cooperation of social and religious organisations should also be taken in this work. "Water should be sprinkled on the roads regularly. Water supply should be ensured through tankers in areas most affected by water shortage so that there is no shortage of drinking water anywhere. Drinking water supply in cities should be done as per the prescribed roster, all hand pumps should be kept functional, rural pipe drinking water schemes should be operated smoothly," he said. The chief minister said that there was a need to pay special attention to cleanliness. "Special attention should be given to all religious places like Ayodhya, Kashi, Mathura and others. In view of Bada Mangal, ensure cleanliness, traffic and other arrangements in Lucknow," he told the officials.

Chief Minister Yogi said that it was also necessary to take care of the safety of livestock and wildlife amid the scorching heat. "Heatwave action plans should be effectively implemented in all zoological parks and sanctuaries. There should be adequate arrangements to keep livestock safe in the event of heatwave with proper arrangement of green fodder and water for livestock in cow shelters. The process of vaccination of animals should be continued till before the rains," he said. He said that the general public should be made aware of the symptoms of heatwave and its prevention.



(Top) A female rhinoceros 'Gauri' being given glucose on a hot summer day, in Kanpur and (Below) a man covers his head with a scarf amid heatwave PTI



(Top) A female rhinoceros 'Gauri' being given glucose on a hot summer day, in Kanpur and (Below) a man covers his head with a scarf amid heatwave PTI



NOTICE

Army no 14679964F HMT SHAIK MOULALI, local address-803 FWC EME, C/O 56 Apo.new cantt, prayagraj, U.P. permanent add- 5-86/1, chinamatlapudi, pedamatlapudi, guntur A.P, pin-522314. Declares that my daughter and her mother name is wrongly written as BABY SHAIK SHABEENA SHABANAM and SHAIK MUSKAN in my service records. Correct name SHAIK SHABEENA SHABANAM and SHAIK ASHABEE respectively need to correct my service records.

NOTICE

Name and date of birth of my minor daughter have wrongly been mentioned as Manika and 01.01.2006. Her correct name and date of birth be read as Pragati and 18.02.2007 (Aadhaar card no. 841583989198). Krishna Kumar R/o Mohalla Imlibara, Tehsil - District Mahoba, U.P.

NOTICE

SHAIK ASHABEE W/O Army No. 14679964F HMT SHAIK MOULALI, Local Address-803 FWC EME, C/o 56 APO, New Cantt, Prayagraj, Permanent Add-5-86/1, Chinamatlapudi, Pedamatlapudi, Guntur, A.P. PIN - 522314 declares that my DOB wrongly written as 03.01.1991 in my husband service records. Correct DOB- 03.01.1990 need to correct in my husband service records.

सूचना

मैंने अपना नाम Mohammad IRASAD से बदलकर Mohd IRSHAD पुत्र Shareef Ahmad निवासी 132/430-A, बाबुपुरा कापुर नगर कर लिया है, भविष्य में इसी नाम से जाना जाए.

NOTICE

NOTICE IT IS for general information that I, Sanya Shweta Ahmad W/o Faizan Ahmad, R/o Sultan Villa, B-116, Sector-C, Mahanagar, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh-226006 hereby declare that my name has been spelt wrongly as Sanya Shweta Ahmad in my younger daughter Shireen Sheikh's (presently aged 18 years) ICSE class 10 and ISC class 12 Marksheet, Pass Certificates & other Educational Documents and School Records. The correct spelling of my name is Sanya Shweta Ahmad, which may be amended accordingly.

सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि न्यू लीलामनी हॉस्पिटल अपने भर्ती मरीजों की 31 मार्च 2014 से पहले की सभी (भर्ती की इलाज की फाइलों) को नष्ट कर रहा है यदि किसी भी व्यक्ति को कोई भी कागजात की जरूरत हो तो 21 दिन के अन्दर लिखित रूप से मांग ले। न्यू लीलामनी हॉस्पिटल सिलिल लाइन्स, कानपुर-208001 सम्पर्क करें डा. एम. के. सरावगी

Power dept remains on toes rectifying power outages

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

THE POWER DEPARTMENT REMAINED ON TOES ON FRIDAY, RECTIFYING POWER OUTAGES WITH SPEED AND SPREADING AWARENESS AMONGST THE CITY DENIZENS REGARDING POWER PILFERAGE. An official from the Power department said that as per the instructions of LESA central zone chief engineer, night patrolling was done during peak hours of TB Hospital feeder under Radhagram sub-centre by executive engineer of Thakurganj. She said further that during a separate patrolling at the peak hours under Raj Bhavan electricity urban distribution section, an emergency shutdown was taken on the spot and rectification made within five minutes. The official informed that the power transformers were inspected by the executive engineer of Electricity Distribution Section, Bakshi Ka Talab at 33/11 sub-centre, integral power house and the load running on

the feeder was monitored in the control room and at the same time, the employees present at the sub-centre were directed to do continuous feeder patrolling and to resolve consumer complaints immediately. "Night patrolling was also done in the Aishbagh division. Consumers were made aware not to pilfer electricity," the official said. Meanwhile, the underground fault of Gunge Nawab park's 11 kV feeder was also removed and the load was taken from Aminabad park feeder. She said that the 11 kV Gandhi Nagar feeder emanating from 33/11 kV Vikas Nagar sub-station under EUDD-Rahimnagar was in breakdown from 2:00 am till 6:00 am due to a cable being cut by a national highway contractor. "The supply was restored at 6:00 AM. Around 900 consumers were affected but things have been restored to normal" Meanwhile, the official informed that the MVVNL director (technical) visited the

Rajajipuram old sub-station. New transformer installation and testing work is under process there. She said that directions were also given that vehicles for changing damaged transformers should be kept in the workshop and at a place near the workshop. She said that instructions were given to the sub-stations where the problem of overloading was present or the problem of overloading arose due to any local fault, to share not only the detailed schedule of the feeders concerned with 1912, but also to inform the local people about it through WhatsApp. In case of breakdown, before the repair, the local people should also be informed from time to time about the activities being done, she said. Meanwhile, in Lakhimpur Kheri district, strong winds on Thursday night uprooted electricity poles that affected the electricity supply for hours. The electricity was restored after over four hours.

Congress accuses BJP of step-motherly treatment towards Bhojpuri

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

Uttar Pradesh Congress on Friday accused the Bharatiya Janata Party of giving step-motherly treatment to regional languages, alleging that the party candidate from Varanasi parliamentary constituency, Ajay Rai's advertisement under the pressure of the ruling party as it was in Bhojpuri language. Addressing a press conference here on Friday evening, former minister and chairman of the Uttar Pradesh Congress media department, Dr CP Rai said that since INDIA bloc candidate from Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency, Ajay Rai's appeal in favour of the people was in Bhojpuri language, permission to publish it as an advertisement was not approved at the behest of the BJP government. "This is a grave insult to the Bhojpuri language, region and Bhojpuri people," he said. Rai said that on one hand the prime minister called himself the son of Maa Ganga but on the other, he had hatred for the

Bhojpuri regional language. He claimed that due to the deeds of Narendra Modi, he had turned the religious city of Varanasi into a tourist city where now money was taken even for darshan. "No new university or medical college has been built, no factory has been built which could have given employment to the people. The name of Diesel Locomotive Works built by first prime minister of the country Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was changed and used as guest house for his (Modi's) stay," Rai said, adding that not only the Ganga but also the culture of Varanasi had been polluted by the ruling party. Rai said that the election in Varanasi had become local versus Gujarat. He further said that the way the people of this country and state had given their love and support to the INDIA bloc in the Lok Sabha elections 2024, they were confident that on June 4, the INDIA bloc government would be formed in the country and the game of the Bharatiya Janata Party was now going to end.

Denied mobile phone, woman gives electric shock to her husband

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

In a shocking incident reported from Mainpuri, a woman allegedly gave electric shocks to her husband for denying her the use of a mobile phone. Reports said that the husband had taken away her mobile phone because she spent too much time on it. According to the police, the 33-year-old woman first sedated her husband and then tied him to a bed. She then beat him up badly and gave him electric shocks. The couple's 14-year-old son tried to intervene and save his father. However, he was unsuccessful in his attempt and he also got thrashed. Currently the husband, identified as Pradeep Singh, is admitted to a hospital in Saifai and is undergoing treatment. He has filed a police complaint against his wife, Baby Yadav, whom he married in 2007. The woman is from Auraiya and is the daughter of Diwan Singh. Pradeep Singh, in his complaint, said that his wife used to talk to someone on the mobile phone every day. He

Bank officer found dead in hotel room

PNS ■ LUCKNOW

A probationary officer of a bank died under mysterious circumstances in Ghazipur police station area on Friday. According to police, the bank officer, identified as Naveen Kumar (31) of Ambala in Haryana, along with his friend had come to Lucknow for training at Canara Bank and had checked into room number 210 of a hotel in the area on May 26 and was found dead in the room. The police said the deceased's friends, who had checked into other rooms at the hotel, told them that Naveen had been suffering from cervical disease and he had health related complications the previous night. "His friends took him to Sushma Hospital where he was given medicine and later he returned to his room. His friends left for their rooms to rest. In the morning on Friday, Naveen did not wake up and hotel staff went to enquire about him, only to find him dead," the police said while quoting the hotel staff. The police said the door of the

room was found bolted from inside and the hotel staff broke open the doors and found Naveen lying dead on the bed. "The body bore no marks of injuries. We have sent the body for autopsy and the family of the deceased has been informed of the incident," the police said.

SUICIDE

A recently married woman was found hanging at her house in Thakurganj police station area on Thursday night. Police said the woman ended her life at her house in Thakurganj and cited personal issue as a reason behind the suicide. The paternal family of the woman apprehended foul play and demanded a probe into the case. The body was sent for autopsy and an investigation is underway. As per reports, the woman, identified as Shivi Gupta, was married to Ravi Gupta of Dhaniya Mahri Pul locality three months back. On Thursday night she was found hanging from the ceiling with a dupatta tied around her neck. Her husband and other members of the family brought the body down from the noose and

rushed her to a hospital where she was pronounced dead. Ashiyana called a locksmith and asked her to prepare a key for the almira at her house. It was alleged that the man stole the money and the ornaments while making the keys. She gave a description of the man and the police are hunting for him.

THEFT

An unidentified locksmith stole ornaments and Rs 20,000 in cash from a house in Ashiyana. Reports said the house owner, Mamta Sonkar, of Sector H in

Take precautions to prevent fire accidents: CM

Lucknow (PNS): UP CM Yogi Adityanath has issued directives to implement special precautions to prevent fire accidents during the summer season. He has instructed the Fire department to ensure that fire stations in all districts operate 24/7 to respond promptly and effectively to fire emergencies. He also directed all DMs to ensure that rations and other essential supplies are immediately provided to those affected by fire.

Singh, adding that their teenage son tried to him but he too was assaulted by the woman. The Kishni police have registered the complaint and booked the woman who is currently absconding. She has been booked under sections 307 (attempt to murder), 328 (causing hurt by means of poison, etc, with intent to commit an offence) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of the Indian Penal Code. The police have launched a hunt to track and arrest her at the earliest. Meanwhile, three people of the same family died and several were injured after a speeding, uncontrolled trailer truck hit vehicles standing at the railway crossing in Kamarouli police station area of Amethi, police said. The incident occurred on Thursday evening. More than half a dozen vehicles were damaged in the accident. Upon receiving the information, the police reached the spot and took the injured to the hospital. According to the police, the deceased belonged to the same family and live near Para Bazaar in

Group commander inspects 5 UP Air Squadron NCC annual training camp

Lucknow (PNS): The 10-day Annual Training Camp (ATC)-212 organised by 5 UP Air Squadron NCC Lucknow is ongoing from May 24 in the premises of La Martiniere College, Lucknow under the leadership of Camp Commandant Wing Commander

Praveen Tiwari. The training session started with yoga and range firing. The training camp was inspected by Brigadier Neeraj Punetha, Group Commander, Lucknow Group Headquarters on May 30, the seventh day of the training camp.

On arrival at the camp, Brigadier Punetha was given a Guard of Honour by the cadets. Thereafter, Camp Commandant, Wing Commander Praveen Tiwari informed Brigadier Punetha regarding the training at the camp.

During this visit, Brigadier Punetha also took stock of the aeromodelling training being given to the cadets in the camp premises. In his address to the cadets, he stressed on incorporating leadership quality in one's life.

महाप्राशासक एवं शासकीय न्यासी उत्तर प्रदेश, इलाहाबाद

सूचना तृतीय श्रेणी के तीन पद व चतुर्थ श्रेणी के दो पद रिक्त हैं। तृतीय श्रेणी के पदों में एक पद आयुलिपिक मैट्रिक्स लेवल-5 (25200-81000) का एवं कनिष्ठ सहायक के दो पद पर मैट्रिक्स लेवल-3 (21700-69100) चतुर्थ श्रेणी के दो पदों पर मैट्रिक्स लेवल-1 (18000-56900) रिक्त पदों पर आवेदन करने की अंतिम तिथि 07-06-2024 एवं लिखित परीक्षा एवं साक्षात्कार की तिथि 10-06-2024 को सुबह 11 बजे होगी। शैक्षणिक योग्यता इन्टरमीडिएट आयु, लिपिक के पद हेतु शार्ट हेण्ड एवं कम्प्यूटर टाइपिंग ट्राइपल सी की डिप्लोमा एवं लिपिक पद हेतु कम्प्यूटर टाइपिंग एवं ट्राइपल सी की डिप्लोमा का होना अनिवार्य है। आयु सीमा 18-32 वर्ष एवं एससी/एसटी/ओ एवं ओबीसी/ओ 5 वर्ष की आयु सीमा में चूह है।

आज्ञा से (मिथिलेश कुमार तिवारी) महाप्राशासक एवं शासकीय न्यासी उत्तर प्रदेश इलाहाबाद

BARODA U.P. BANK (SANIGAWAN Branch)

Address: Near Anna Chauraha, Sanigawan Road, Kanpur Nagar PUBLIC NOTICE Hereby this is to inform that under named borrower has not repaid principal and interest thereon of the loan. Therefore the loan became NPA on below dated. A notice under section 13(2) of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and was issued at last known address, which was returned undelivered. Therefore we again inform to under named borrower/ guarantor by this public notice to repay the loan amount due including interest and other expenses as mentioned in this notice within 60 days from the date of publication of this notice, otherwise the bank will be free to invoke section 13(4) of the above Act and the bank will take action u/section (B) of 13 of the act, in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets, that after publication of public auction/involving quotation/tender/private treaty your right to redeem the secured assets will not be available. Name and Address of Borrower/guarantor and Security agreement with brief description of securities/NPA date & outstanding amount as per Demand Notice Borrower: Mrs. Jyoti Singh w/o Jitendra Singh, R/o: House no. 146 A, Nauraiya Kheda, Dada Nagar, Udyog Nagar, Kanpur Nagar. Guarantor: Mr. Jitendra Singh s/o Ram Chandra Singh R/o: House no.-146 A, Nauraiya Kheda, Dada Nagar, Kanpur Nagar. Account number: 5729060000170 NPA date:-14.05.2024 Demand Notice Date: 21.05.2024 Description of mortgaged property: Part and parcel of property situated at Residential Flat No. C-11/13 on 3rd Floor Aravali Sulabh Avas Type -3, Shahabadi Nagar, Phase No. 4A, Panki Ganaganagar, Kanpur Nagar in the name of Mrs. Jyoti Singh. Area: 12.30 sq. meter. Undivided Land Share Demarcation of the Said Property Bounded-on or towards the East: Flat No. C-11/14, on or towards the West: 7.50 Mr. Road, on or towards the North: Block No. C-10, on or towards the South: Flat No. C-11/16. Q/s Amount as per Demand Notice: Rs. 4,48,120.74 (as on 14.05.2024)+ Intt. + other charges Date: 31.05.2024 Authorised Officer, Baroda U.P. Bank

PM Modi's Varanasi among 13 LS seats go to polls today in UP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Thirteen Lok Sabha constituencies of Uttar Pradesh, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Varanasi, will go to polls in the last and seventh phase of the general elections on Saturday. Polling in the state, which sends 80 members to the Lower House of Parliament, was held in all seven phases of the election.

UP's Chief Electoral Officer Navdeep Rinwa said here on Friday that the bypoll for the Duddhi (ST) assembly constituency in Sonbhadra district will also be held on Saturday. Six candidates are contesting from the seat that fell vacant after Bharatiya Janata Party MLA Ram Dular's disqualification following his conviction in a rape case. The Lok Sabha seats where polling will take place in the seventh phase on Saturday are Maharajganj, Gorakhpur, Kushinagar, Deoria, Bangsagan (SC), Ghosi, Salempur, Ballia, Ghazipur, Chandauli, Varanasi, Mirzapur and Robertsganj (SC), spread across 11 districts. Of the 144 candidates in this phase of the polls, 134 are men and 10 women candidates. They will be elected by 2,50,56,877 eligible voters, including 1,33,10,897 men, 1,17,44,922 women and 1,058 transgender people. Voting will be held from 7 am to 6 pm. However, the polling time in two assembly segments of Robertsganj (ST) Lok Sabha constituency will be from 7 am to 4 pm. The two segments are Robertsganj and Duddhi. Campaigning for the 13 seats in UP ended on Thursday evening. The polling parties left for their respective centres on Friday.



Polling officials carrying the Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) and other election material leave from a distribution centre for their respective polling booths on the eve of the seventh and last phase of the Lok Sabha elections in Varanasi on Friday. PTI

UP is seeing a direct contest between the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance and the INDIA bloc members Samajwadi Party and Congress. Besides Prime Minister Modi, who is seeking a third term from Varanasi, there are 144 candidates in the fray in 13 constituencies. Among the prominent Lok Sabha seats are Varanasi, Gorakhpur, which has been represented by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Aditya Nath five times, Chandauli, Maharajganj and Mirzapur from where Union ministers Mahendra Nath Pandey, Pankaj Chaudhary and Anupriya Patel are contesting, respectively, Ghazipur, from where late Mukhtar Ansari's brother Afzal Ansari is in the fray and Ballia from where former prime minister Chandrashekhar's son Neeraj Shekhar is contesting.

Prime Minister Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh were among the star campaigners for the NDA. The INDIA bloc saw Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and his wife Dimple Yadav canvassing for candidates of the alliance, with roadshows in Varanasi and Gorakhpur. While Gandhi contested the polls from Rae Bareilly in the fifth phase on May 20, Akhilesh Yadav was fielded by the SP in Kannauj that went to polls in the fourth phase on May 13 and Dimple Yadav from Mainpuri where voting was held in the third phase on May 7. During campaigning, the BJP alleged that the INDIA bloc would bring in Muslim reservation and

put the "Babri lock" on Ayodhya's Ram temple, if voted to power. The opposition alliance urged people not to vote for the BJP to "save" the Constitution and democracy. BJP's key allies NISHAD Party and Om Prakash Rajbhar's Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party have candidates in this phase. NDA ally Anupriya Patel of Apna Dal (Sonelal) is seeking re-election. Bahujan Samaj Party led by Mayawati has also fielded candidates, including in Varanasi and Gorakhpur. Rinwa said carrying mobile phones or wireless sets inside a polling booth was prohibited on the day of polling. In view of the heat, an adequate quantity of ORS and medical kits will be kept at polling stations along with arrangements for cold water and proper shade, he added.

All parties keep fingers crossed in UP as 'seats phasi padi hain'

BISWAJEET BANERJEE ■ LUCKNOW

As the election juggernaut reaches its final phase, a common refrain has gripped the people of Uttar Pradesh: 'Seats phasi padi hain' (there is a close contest on all seats). The stiff competition in all constituencies has cast a cloud of uncertainty over the outcome of the critical elections. With its 80 parliamentary seats, Uttar Pradesh holds significant importance for all political parties vying for power in the Lok Sabha. The inability to gauge a clear path forward has raised pressing questions about the direction this election is heading. Senior journalist Sunita Aron describes the political scenario in UP as very confusing. "You ask anyone, and they say 'seats phasi padi hain'. They even offer plausible explanations about caste equations, candidate profiles, and growing disenchantment among voters to prove their point," she said. Barring a few seats like Varanasi, Lucknow, Rae Bareilly, Kannauj and Mainpuri, people are predicting close contests in other constituencies. Even traditionally safe seats for the Bharatiya Janata Party, such as Allahabad and Kanpur, are now considered uncertain. Another senior journalist, Hemant Tiwari, notes, "The inability to predict a clear winner has raised questions about the elections' direction. The primary reason for this confusion is the polling percentage. As of the sixth phase, voter turnout is slightly lower than that in the 2019 elections, raising questions about the poll outcome. Even the voters are silent." The subdued atmosphere extends beyond the voters. There is a notable lack of enthusiasm among both the

electorate and political parties. Campaigns have been unusually dull, with muted rallies and lackluster speeches failing to ignite the usual fervour. "In UP, the ruling BJP failed to change candidates. People are fed up with seeing the same faces for ten years, so they were reluctant to take part in the campaign," said a BJP leader. This voter fatigue has contributed to the dampened enthusiasm. In January, the consecration of Ram Lalla was expected to pave the way for an easy BJP victory. Opinion polls predicted a one-sided victory for the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. However, the political landscape took an unexpected turn as the elections progressed. The alliance between Akhilesh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and the Congress, led by Rahul Gandhi in UP, has posed a formidable challenge to the BJP, energising their base and drawing significant support. "What changed the election matrix was the way the opposition INDIA bloc shifted the campaign focus on caste lines. Unlike previous elections, this

one was not centered around communal lines. The BJP's attempts to frame the contest as a Hindu-Muslim issue have not resonated with the electorate," said political analyst Rajesh N Bajpayee. "Instead, the discourse has shifted towards caste dynamics, with leaders focusing on caste, the Constitution, and reservations rather than religious rhetoric," he added. There is another side to the story. There is no perceptible anti-incumbency against the Narendra Modi government. Voters seem disenchanted with issues like unemployment, inflation and other local concerns, but by and large, they are not angry with the government. Prime Minister Narendra Modi remains a popular figure and a mass leader. His appeal continues to draw crowds, but it appears insufficient to inject the campaign with the vigour seen in previous elections. The polling percentage until the sixth phase stands at approximately 59 per cent, slightly lower than the 60.12 per cent recorded in the cor-

responding phases of the 2019 elections. This drop in voter turnout suggests a level of disengagement not previously seen. Political analysts suggest that the subdued enthusiasm could result from multiple factors, including voter fatigue, dissatisfaction with long-standing candidates, and a campaign strategy that failed to ignite passions. The final phase of voting will be crucial in determining whether this trend continues or if there is a late surge in voter participation. Senior journalist Manoj Bhadra quips, "During each election, one could feel such confusion. But there is no confusion in the minds of the voters. They vote to elect a strong government. This has happened in many past elections and will happen in this one too." As the election enters its final stretch, all eyes will be on the voter turnout and the final tally, which will ultimately reveal whether the "seats phasi padi hain" sentiment translates into a decisive outcome or further deepens the political uncertainty.

Modi, Yogi spearheaded NDA election campaign in UP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath led the election campaign in Uttar Pradesh by holding rallies and roadshows across the state. Prime Minister Modi campaigned for 58 Lok Sabha candidates through 32 rallies across UP and held roadshows in five cities, including Varanasi. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath addressed 205 public meetings and roadshows nationwide, with 159 of them in Uttar Pradesh alone. Bharatiya Janata Party president Nadra held nine rallies in UP while Union Home Minister Amit Shah held 38 rallies and roadshows in the state. The election notification was issued on March 16, and the BJP leaders immediately began their campaigns. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath kicked-off the party's campaign with a conference in Mathura, followed by Prime Minister Modi's first rally in Meerut on March 31. Despite the intense summer heat, all prominent BJP leaders, including the prime minister, vigorously campaigned in UP over the past two and a half months. During the campaign, Prime Minister Modi engaged with the public not only through rallies but also via roadshows, and interacted with BJP workers through the



NaMo App, and Nari Vandan conferences. Similarly, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath participated in public meetings, roadshows, and various conferences, including 13 'prabuddhajan' (intellectuals), women's

lawyers' and worker conferences. Yogi addressed 16 joint rallies with Prime Minister Modi and participated in five roadshows with him. Prime Minister Modi held his last rallies in Mirzapur, Ghazipur and Bangsagan on May 26, while Chief Minister Yogi conducted his final roadshow in Gorakhpur on Wednesday. On the last day of campaigning, Modi campaigned in Punjab, while Yogi campaigned in Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. Throughout the campaign, Prime Minister Modi and Chief Minister Yogi held joint rallies in various constituencies including Saharanpur, Pilibhit, Meerut, Amroha, Aligarh, Agra, Etawah, Barabanki, Mohanlalganj, Basti, Dumariyaganj, Sant Kabir Nagar, Ghazipur, Lalganj, Mirzapur and Robertsganj. The two leaders also held roadshows together in Ghaziabad, Bareilly, Kanpur, Ayodhya and Varanasi. Over the past two and a half months, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath held 205 public meetings nationwide, with 159 in Uttar Pradesh alone. His demand extended beyond the state, as he held 46 rallies across 16 states, including Delhi, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Jammu and Kashmir, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Chandigarh.

CM urges voters to cast their ballots

Lucknow (PNS): On the eve of the final phase of polling for Lok Sabha elections 2024 to be held on Saturday, CM Yogi Adityanath urged all voters to turn out in large numbers. Emphasising the importance of their participation, Yogi stated that their invaluable vote will be the foundation of a bright future for the next generation. "Today marks the seventh phase of the Lok Sabha elections. I urge all esteemed voters to cast their ballots to build a self-reliant and developed India and to realise the vision of 'Ram Rajya'. Your single vote will lay the groundwork for a prosperous future for the coming generations. Therefore, 'Pehle matdaan, fir jalpaan', he said.

Yogi campaigned tirelessly for Modi, Rajnath and others

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ LUCKNOW

With the slogan 'Abki Baar 400 Paar, 80 Banega Iska Adhaar', Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath significantly contributed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's potential third term in office. The state is set to send a strong contingent of parliamentarians to Delhi, with the chief minister putting in considerable effort to ensure their success. He has campaigned extensively, urging voters to re-elect Prime Minister Modi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, along with 12 other Central ministers from Uttar Pradesh. He also supported four state ministers in their bid to secure seats in the Lok Sabha, ensuring a smooth path for their transition to Delhi. Apart from this, Chief Minister Yogi also held rallies, roadshows and public meetings for Rajya Sabha MPs, eight MLAs of BJP and allied parties and

three legislative council members. The 2024 Lok Sabha elections have eight MLAs from Uttar Pradesh contesting the polls under the National Democratic Alliance banner. Chief Minister Yogi has held numerous rallies in support of these candidates. Minister in Yogi government and Mainpuri MLA Jaiveer Singh is contesting from Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat, while minister and Khair MLA Anoop Pradhan Valmiki has been fielded from Hathras Lok Sabha constituency. Other NDA candidates include Phulpur MLA Praveen Patel from Phulpur Lok Sabha seat, Ghaziabad MLA Atul Garg from Ghaziabad, NISHAD Party MLA Vinod Kumar Bind from Bhadohi, Nehtaur MLA Om Kumar from Nagina, Meerapur MLA Chandan Chauhan (RLD) from Bijnor and Chhanbey MLA Rinko Kol (Apna Dal-S) from

Robertsganj. Four ministers of the Yogi government are also contesting the Lok Sabha elections. Of these, Jitin Prasada has been fielded from Pilibhit, Jaiveer Singh from Mainpuri, Anoop Pradhan from Hathras and Dinesh Pratap Singh from Rae Bareilly. Notably, Jaiveer Singh and Anoop Pradhan are members of the UP Legislative Assembly, while Dinesh Pratap Singh and Jitin Prasada are members of the UP Legislative Council. Apart from these two, the Bharatiya Janata Party has fielded MLC Saket Mishra as its candidate from the Shravasti Lok Sabha constituency. On the other hand, Rajya Sabha member Neeraj Shekhar has been fielded as BJP candidate from the Ballia Lok Sabha seat this time. Voting will take place in Ballia in the seventh phase. As the head of UP, Chief Minister Yogi has campaigned tirelessly for these candidates.

The BJP has fielded Prime Minister Narendra Modi from Varanasi and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh from Lucknow. Chief Minister Yogi organised several rallies, conferences and public meetings to support these leaders. Other Central ministers in the fray from Uttar Pradesh include Smriti Irani from Amethi, Bhanu Pratap Singh Verma from Jalaun, Professor SP Singh Baghel from Agra, Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary from Maharajganj, Dr Mahendra Niranjan Jyoti from Fatehpur. The chief minister has played a crucial role in their campaigns, organising public meetings and rallies for them across the state.

यूनियन बैंक Union Bank of India

Branch Office: 7/135, Mandakini Plaza, Swaroop Nagar, Kanpur
Regional Office: 117/HI-1/240, Pandu Nagar, Kanpur
Head Office: 239, Vidhan Bhawan Marg, Nariman Point Mumbai

POSSESSION NOTICE (For Immovable Properties) Branch: Swaroop Nagar, Kanpur

Whereas The undersigned being the authorized officer of Union Bank of India, under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13 (12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice calling upon borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors of account to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being of dues with contractual rate of interest within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower/guarantor having failed to repay the amount in full, notice is hereby given to the borrower/guarantor and public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him u/s. 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said rules. The borrower/guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with property and any dealing with the property will subject to the charge of Union Bank of India, for an Amount and Interest thereon.

We also wish to draw kind attention of all concerned towards section 13(8) of the Act in respect of time available to redeem the secured assets.

Sl. No.	Name and Address of Borrower/Guarantor & Description of Mortgage Property and O/S Amount as per Demand Notice/Demand & Possession Notice Date
1.	Borrower : Shri Dharmraj Singh S/o Late Keshav Singh, R/o : House No. 20/6, Sewa Gram Colony, Dada Nagar, Kanpur Nagar. Guarantor : Shri Sundar Lal Yadav, R/o : House No. 1520/1550, EWS, Ratanpur Panki, Kanpur. Demand Notice Date: 01-03-2024 • Date of Constructive Possession: 30.05.2024 Property : Residential Plot No. 121, Block-F, Vyapar Nagar/Ispat Nagar, Ratanpur Colony, Kanpur Nagar. Owner of Property : Shri Dharmraj Singh S/o Late Keshav Singh, Area : 97.50 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : Plot No. 120, South : Plot No. 122, East : Plot No. 136, West : 24 Mtr. Wide Road. O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 1,13,424.22 + Intt. + Others Charges
2.	Borrower : Shri Mool Chandra S/o Shri Chhajju, R/o : EWS 253, Block No. 1, Sanjay Nagar Colony Near Kaili Mandir, Machhariya Road, Naubasta, Kanpur. Guarantor : Shri Mahendra Kumar, R/o : 49-F, Railway Colony Fazalganj, Kanpur & Also at Village Bharwara, Post Tanda, Distt. Kaushambi and Also at 737-A, Loco Railway Colony, Kanpur. Demand Notice Date: 01-03-2024 • Date of Constructive Possession: 30.05.2024 Property : House No. EWS 253, Block-H, Bhoodhpur Machhariya, Distt. Kanpur Nagar. Owner of Property : Shri Mool Chandra S/o Shri Chhajju, Area : 37.97 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : 7.50 Mtr. Road, South : House No. 192, East : House No. 254, West : House No. 252. O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 2,59,254.85 + Intt. + Others Charges
3.	Borrower : Shri Ved Prakash S/o Shri Ayodhya Prasad, R/o : House No. B-268, Rajeev Nagar, Yashoda Nagar, Kanpur Nagar. Demand Notice Date: 31-07-2023 • Date of Constructive Possession: 30.05.2024 Property : Residential Plot No. 56, Scheme No. 1 at Part of Arazi No. 499, Situated at Mauza, Gangapur, Pargana & Distt. Kanpur. Owner of Property : Shri Ved Prakash S/o Shri Ayodhya Prasad, Area : 83.61 Sq. Mtr., Bounded -North : Plot No. 55, South : Plot No. 57, East : 20 Ft. Road, West : Plot No. 68. O/s Amount as per Demand Notice : Rs. 4,69,155.81 + Intt. + Others Charges

Date : 31-05-2024 Place : Kanpur Authorised Officer, Union Bank of India

लखनऊ विकास प्राधिकरण
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सार्वजनिक सूचना

सर्वसाधारण को सूचित किया जाता है कि प्राधिकरण की आवासीय/व्यवसायिक/रेस्ट/नजूल/इम्प्लूमेंट-ट्रस्ट योजनाओं के निम्नलिखित आवेदकों द्वारा उनके नाम के सामने अंकित सम्पत्ति का हस्तान्तरण/नामान्तरण किये जाने हेतु प्राधिकरण में प्रार्थना-पत्र प्रस्तुत किया गया है :-

क्र. सं.	मूल आवंटिका नाम	खूण्ड/भवन/प्लैट संख्या	योजना का नाम व सेक्टर/खण्ड	मूल आवंटिका दिनांक	उत्तराधिकारी के पक्ष में अनापत्तिकर्ताओं के नाम	मूल आवंटिका सं (मुक्त) से (मुक्त) का संख्या
1.	श्रीमती सुनीता रानी पत्नी श्री महेश लाल	खूण्ड सं-0 एन-1-8	सेक्टर-एन-1 आशियाना कानपुर रोड योजना	22.03.2015	1. श्री महेश लाल, 2. श्रीमती ईशा रानी, 3. श्री सत्यम राजपूत, 4. श्री गौरव राजपूत	पति, पुत्री, पुत्र
2.	श्री मानुप्रकाश मौर्या व श्रीमती उमा मौर्या	खूण्ड सं-0 1/70, से-1	गोमती नगर विस्तार योजना	श्रीमती उमा मौर्या की मृत्यु दिनांक-23.02.2020 हुई है।	—	पुत्र
3.	स्व0 श्रीमती देव प्रमा	सम्पत्ति संख्या- L-4/72, से-एम	अलीगंज योजना	दिनांक 09.12.2022	1-श्री वीरेंद्र शर्मा, 2-श्री शिवनाथ श्रीवास्तव-पुत्र, 3-श्री सोमनाथ श्रीवास्तव-पुत्र	पति, पुत्र
4.	मो0 वाहिद	भवन सं-0-एल-4/197, विनय खण्ड	गोमती नगर योजना	10.01.2021	1. श्रीमती सरजहाँ खातून, 2. मो0 रियाज, 3. मो0 इम्तिआज, श्रीमती परवीन जहाँ	पत्नी, पुत्र, पुत्र (अश्रित माता)
5.	स्व0 श्री विजय शंकर	खूण्ड सं-0 ई-2/84	विनय खण्ड, गोमती नगर योजना	25.05.2023	श्रीमती विनीता देवी श्री अनिल कुमार गुप्ता श्री अमित कुमार, श्री सत्यम गुप्ता, श्री अंकित गुप्ता	पत्नी, पुत्र, पुत्र (अश्रित माता)

उपर्युक्त नामान्तरण के आवेदन के सम्बन्ध में यदि किसी भी व्यक्ति को कोई आपत्ति हो तो वह साक्ष्य सहित प्रकाशन तिथि से 30 दिनों के अन्दर अधोहस्ताक्षरकर्ता के कार्यालय में प्राप्त करा दे। निर्धारित तिथि तक कोई आपत्ति प्राप्त न होने पर प्राधिकरण अनिलेखों में कॉलम-6 पर लिखित व्यक्ति का नाम दर्ज कर लिया जायेगा तथा उसके बाद किसी आपत्ति पर विचार नहीं किया जायेगा।

सचिव

बैंक ऑफ इंडिया Bank of India

Zonal Office: "Star House" Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow-226010, Ph.: 0522-2724512

POSSESSION NOTICE

Whereas, The undersigned being the Authorised Officer of the Bank of India under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest, Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13 (2) read the Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, had issued a Demand Notice, calling borrower to repay the amount within 60 days from the date of receipt of same. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property/ies described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section 13(4) of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement Rules, 2002 on the dates mentioned hereunder. The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property/ies and any dealings with the property/ies will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India for mentioned amount and interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

S. No.	Name & Address of the Borrower & Guarantor	Description of Immovable property mortgaged / Owner of the property	Amount o/s as mentioned in the Notice u/s 13(2) Date of Demand & Possession Notice
Branch: Aminabad			
1	Borrower : Mr. Sarad Tiwari s/o Shiv Shankar Tiwari, Add- 3/630, Ruchi Khand-1, Lucknow- 226010 Guarantor : Mr. Sushil Kumar Tiwari, Add- 3/630, Ruchi Khand-1, Lucknow- 226010	Land and Building situated at EWS Hosue No. 104, Vidyawati Devi Nagar Ward, Sector- M, Ashiyana, Kanpur Road Yojna, Lucknow Mortgagor by: Mr. Sharad Tiwari s/o Mr. Shiv Shankar Tiwari Area: 30.22 sqmt Boundaries: East : House No 103, West : -House no 105, North : -Village Locality, South : - 3 mtr wide road.	₹ 13,52,302.00 + interest & other charges Demand Notice dt. 05.06.2021 Possession Notice dt. 26.05.2024

Date : 01.06.2024, Place : Lucknow Authorised Officer, Bank of India

Stage set for polling in Varanasi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Stage is set for peaceful polling in all the five assembly segments of Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency and two of Chandauli parliamentary seat in the district here on Saturday, the seventh and last phase of polling. After the end of the voting, the EVMs will be sealed at Paharia Mandi where counting will be held on June 4. Despite scorching heat the polling personnel after collecting the EVMs and other polling materials from different venues left for their polling centres/booths. The security personnel and other officials also left for their allotted centres through various vehicles.

In the high-profile Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate, supported by National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, seeking a third consecutive win is facing a challenge from six more candidates, including Congress candidate, supported by INDIA bloc, Ajay Rai and Athar Jamal



Polling staff on Friday collecting EVMs and other materials before leaving for their assigned centres/booths in Varanasi Lok Sabha constituency

Lari of Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP). In Chandauli parliamentary seat, union minister Dr Mahendra Nath Pandey is also seeking his third consecutive win. His main contest is against Samajwadi Party (SP) candidate, supported by INDIA bloc, Virendra Singh where the BSP candidate is Satendra Kumar Maurya. On the polling day, various dignitaries will vote at the polling stations of their respective areas. UP

Minister Anil Rajbhar will cast his vote at Nagepur polling centre while UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ravindra Jaiswal at booth number 287 of Government Girls Inter College, UP Minister of State (Independent Charge) Dayashankar Mishra 'Dayalu' at booth number 146 of Harishchandra Degree College, Chairperson of Zila Panchayat Poonam Maurya at booth number 267 of Kadipur, Mayor

Ashok Tiwari at booth number 31 of Cantt, former minister and MLA of City South Dr Neelkanth Tiwari at booth number 198 Kanya Prathamik Vidyalaya Sankuldhara, MLA Cantt Saurabh Srivastava at the polling station of Composite School Mahmooganj, MLC Hansraj Vishwakarma at booth number 185 of Kanchanpur and MLC Dharmendra Rai at the polling station of Nav Rachna. Besides,

Congress candidate from Varanasi Ajay Rai will cast his vote at Basant Public School, Ramakant Nagar (Pichash Mochan). Moreover, Padma Vibhushan Pt Chhannulal Mishra will cast his vote at Municipal Corporation polling station, Padma Shri Rajeshwar Acharya at Composite School Bheulpur (near Lolark Kund) polling station, Padma Shri Pt Shivnath Rameshwari Goyal English School Ramapura polling station, Padma Shri S Supkar at Girls Primary School Dhoochandri polling station, Padma Shri Rajnikant Dwivedi at Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies, Mavaiya (Sarnath) polling station and Padma Shri Dr Saroj Choodamani at Banaras Hindu University's Faculty of Arts. Apart from this, Divisional Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma will vote at JP Mehta Inter College polling station, Commissioner of Police Mohit Agarwal at Cantonment Board polling station and District Magistrate S Rajlingam at the polling booth of Cantonment Board Model Primary School.

About 27 cr consume tobacco in India: Prof Chaturvedi

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Former dean of Faculty of Dental Sciences (FDS), Institute of Medical Sciences, Banaras Hindu University (IMS-BHU), convener of anti-tobacco campaign 'Save the World' and president of Indian Dental Association (IDA), UP State, Prof TP Chaturvedi said that at present around 27 crore people are consuming tobacco in India and the average age of a person starting to consume tobacco in the country is 18.7 years as per global adult tobacco survey. Expressing his views on 'World No Tobacco Day' here on Friday, he said the aim of day is to raise awareness about harmful effects of consumption of tobacco and the theme of the year declared by WHO is 'Protecting children from tobacco industry interference'.

He said tobacco use is the main preventable cause of death and it can be used as smoking (cigarettes, cigars, pipe tobacco, bidi etc) and smokeless form (chewing tobacco). "In India, almost 50 per cent users use chewing tobacco followed by smoking and/or dual use of tobacco", Prof Chaturvedi said, adding that people who drink and smoke are at higher risk of certain types of cancer, particularly those of the mouth and throat. "Alcohol and tobacco cause approximately 80 per cent of cases of cancer of the mouth and throat in men and about 65 per cent in women. "Varied range of contextual factors like social, environ-

mental, psychological and the genetic are linked to tobacco use. "Non-communicable diseases contribute to more than 50 per cent disability adjusted life years in India and tobacco contributes to 7.4 per cent of it. Tobacco causes 13 per cent male deaths and five per cent female deaths in India. It adversely affects the health of females. It will be one of the causative factors for abortion, low birth weight of child, death of infants, cancer of uterus, congenital problems of child etc", he said.

According to him, tobacco reduces the effects of certain medicine in the body, sports power of athletes, smell power, respiratory capacity etc.

"Tobacco related killing is more than AIDS, TB in the world. Ninety per cent of lung cancer, head and neck cancer is caused by smoking/tobacco. Tobacco causes memory loss, oral diseases, hypertension, heart attack problems, lung diseases, blindness, gastric problems, hair fall and greying, more aging of person, blood diseases and other problems too", Prof Chaturvedi said, adding that 27 per cent of all cancers in India are attributable to tobacco use and among adults (age 15+), 28.6 per cent of the population currently uses tobacco products (men 42.4 per cent; women 14.2 per cent). Highlighting the effects of smoking on the health, he said that in 6.5 second a smoker loses life. "Smoking causes cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes and chronic obstructive pulmonary

disease (COPD), which includes emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Smoking also increases risk for tuberculosis, certain eye diseases and problems of the immune system, including rheumatoid arthritis. Smoking also is a causative factor for dental problems, oral cancer (lip cancer, cheek cancer, and tongue cancer), throat cancer, prostate cancer, brain cancer etc. Tobacco users or smoking persons have low immunity which makes them more prone for infection", Prof Chaturvedi said.

Highlighting the effects of chewing tobacco (smokeless form of tobacco) on health, he said smokeless tobacco is a known cause of cancer. "In addition, the nicotine in smokeless tobacco may increase the risk for sudden death from a condition where the heart does not beat properly (ventricular arrhythmias). 21.4 per cent of adults use smokeless tobacco (men 29.6 per cent; women 12.8 per cent). The common forms consumed by men are khaini and gutka whereas females use betel quid with tobacco followed by oral application of tobacco and khaini", he said, adding that smoking produces 840 million tonnes of carbon dioxide and it is a serious threat to the environment also.

According to him, firm determination is key factors to quit tobacco. Yoga can be helpful for breaking tobacco habits. By the advice of a doctor nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) might be useful.

Man dies under mysterious circumstances

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A middle-aged man died under mysterious circumstances in Maharajpur police area. His decomposed body was recovered from a room of his house on Friday morning. On getting information the police rushed to spot and carried out a probe in the matter. The deceased was identified as

Kaloo Singh Senger of Purwamir village. His kin alleged his killing. According to reports, Kaloo Singh (52) lived with his mother Bitti Devi (80). About 10 years ago his wife had died due to prolonged illness. The villagers informed that Kaloo Singh, son of late Ram Bahadur Singh Senger, had a son Pradip and daughter Kallo who were mar-

ried. Pradip is in a private job in Ahmedabad. On Friday, Pradip's wife along with brother reached Purwamir and found her father-in-law Kaloo Singh dead under mysterious circumstances in his room. She and her brother alleged the killing of Kaloo Singh. Pradip had also left for Kanpur from Ahmedabad. Maharajpur Inspector Surendra Singh said

the body had been sent for autopsy. It was informed that Kaloo Singh was addicted to liquor. He had slept in the room drunk on Wednesday night. The kin alleged the killing of Kaloo Singh. Probe was on in the matter. On the basis of complaint and autopsy report, further action will be initiated in the matter, he said. Meanwhile two elderly sis-

ters were found dead on the top floor of a bungalow in the Kakadeo police station area on Friday morning. The other family members living on the ground and first floor of the bungalow were unaware of the incident which came to light when a vegetable vendor went up to deliver vegetables to them. On getting information the police and forensic team rushed to the spot.

Farewell ceremony held

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ PRAYAGRAJ

A grand farewell ceremony was organised by IFFCO Officers' Association in honour of retired officers Sushil Kumar Srivastava, DGM Urea and Rameshwar Mishra, Manager Store from IFFCO Phulpur unit here on Friday. The retiring officers recalled their old memories related to IFFCO and told about their journey so far. Senior Executive Director (Unit Head) Sanjay Kudesia in his message wished them a healthy, happy and long life. The programme was conducted by SK Awasthi. During it GMs respectively Sanjay Vaish, AP Rajendran, JGMs respectively Sanjay Bhandari, Arvendra Kumar, A.K. Gupta, HOD Human Resources Shambhu Shekhar, IFFCO Officers' Association President Anurag Tiwari, General Secretary Swayam Prakash and all the office-bearers of IFFCO Officers Association were present.

FELICITATED: Postmaster General Krishna Kumar Yadav felicitated Abhishek Srivastava, Senior Superintendent Prayagraj Division for opening of maximum savings bank accounts, excellence in Postal Life Insurance, Speed Post revenue, parcel revenue, postal operation and business in the office

of Prayagraj region here on Friday. Along with the divisions, officials doing excellent work at the Sub-Division level were also felicitated by the postmaster general. These include Assistant Superintendent Central Sub-Division Prayagraj Arijit Soni for Postal Life Insurance, Assistant Superintendent West Mirzapur Pankaj Srivastava for Post Office Savings Bank Account, Sub-Divisional Inspector Lalganj Mirzapur Brahm Dev Pandey and Sub-Divisional Inspector Bharwari Prayagraj Rakesh Kumar Yadav for opening of IPPB premium accounts and Sub-Divisional Inspector North Prayagraj Manish Kumar for Rural Postal Life Insurance. Marketing Executive Rajnish Srivastava, Development Officer PLI Pawan Kumar Maurya and Direct Agents Roshan Lal Swarnkar and Sejal Gupta were also felicitated. On the occasion various Divisional Superintendents along with Assistant Director Masoom Raza Rusdi, Rajesh Srivastava, Senior Postmaster Tanveer Ahmed, Deputy Superintendent Pramila Yadav, Assistant Superintendent Dharmendra Kumar, Rajesh Sharma, Inspector of Posts Akhand Pratap Goswami, Harsh Sharma etc were present.

Competitions organised

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Painting and essay competitions were organised under Mission LiFE (environmental awareness) at Banaras railway station on Friday. Under the guidance of Divisional Railway Manager (DRM) Vineet Kumar Srivastava and Senior Divisional Mechanical Engineer (SDME) Apoorv Swarnkar, various programmes are being organised at various stations of Varanasi Division of North Eastern Railway (NER) these days prior to World Environment Day.

The title of both the contest was 'Measures for Climate Change and Environmental Protection'. Children of Composite School Barni and Primary School Khargapur participated enthusiastically in them. The children took out a rally related to environmental protection in the station premises and made the passengers as well as other people aware. Chief health inspectors Dr D Narayan and Shri Kamlesh Singh, Deputy Chief Station Superintendent (Commercial) Sarvesh Pandey, Station Superintendent Vivek Singh and others were present. Besides, under Mission LiFE, a tree plantation programme was organised by Chief Health Inspector Raju Yadav on platform numbers 2 and 3 of Varanasi City railway station. Painting and essay competitions were organised at Ballia station. The children of the local school participated enthusiastically in it. The passengers were also made aware to save the environment by giving them saplings for environmental protection at Ghazipur City station while at Bhatni railway station, passengers were made aware by running a campaign for 'No Plastic Use'.

Six BLW employees retire

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

A total of six employees of Banaras Locomotive Works (BLW) retired in this month. At a function organised at the Hall of Fame in Administrative Building premises here on Friday, the retired employees, including Jaissi Chacko, Prem Kumar, Dinesh Kumar Singh, Ashok Kumar Verma, Radhey Shyam and Anil Kumar Verma were given a farewell by the Principal Chief Personnel Officer (PCPO) Janardan Singh by presenting medals and folders. In his address, he suggested them to invest their accumulated wealth in government institutions only, along with this, he also advised all the retired employees to stay healthy and remain engaged in work related to social welfare and spend most of the time with the family. With the cooperation of the

Accounts and Personnel departments, a lump sum payment was made to the retired employees. The farewell ceremony organised under the aegis of the Personnel department was conducted by Senior Personnel Officer (Headquarters) Raj Kumar Gupta. Divisional Medical Officer Dr Tanmay Anand, Public Relations Officer Rajesh Kumar, Principal of BLW Inter College Ashok Kumar Maheshwari, Joint Secretary of Staff Council Shrikant Yadav, members Amit Kumar, Santosh Kumar Yadav, Manish Kumar Singh, Chief Workshop Welfare Inspector Chandan Pandey, Kamlesh Srivastava etc were mainly present in the programme. Representatives of State Bank of India and Bank of Baroda located in the BLW campus gave gifts and best wishes to the retired employees.

'Tobacco use among youth alarmingly high'

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

Tobacco use remains a significant public health concern, contributing to a myriad of cancers, including those affecting the oral cavity, lungs, liver, stomach, bowel, ovaries, and certain types of leukaemia. Tobacco is responsible for 25 per cent of all cancer deaths worldwide, totalling an estimated 2.5 million deaths annually. Notably, smoking alone accounts for about 85 per cent of all lung cancer deaths, underscoring the urgent need for concerted efforts to curb tobacco use on a global scale. World No Tobacco Day (WNTD) is celebrated globally on May 31st each year, aiming to raise awareness of the dangers of tobacco use and advocate for effective policies to reduce consumption.

In 2024 WNTD will be driven by the theme 'Protecting children from tobacco industry interference', focusing on mobilising international efforts to enact stronger regulations that shield youth from harmful tobacco products and deceptive advertising practices.

While there has been a noticeable decline in global tobacco use from 1.36 billion in 2000 to approximately 1.25 billion users aged 15 and older, the decrease is less substantial than hoped.

Alarmingly, more than one million adults die each year in India due to tobacco use, accounting for 9.5 per cent of overall deaths. India faces a dual burden of tobacco use in the form of smoking and smokeless tobacco, with the prevalence of smoking tobacco use at 10.38 per cent and smokeless tobacco use at 21.38 per cent. These statistics highlight the urgent need for comprehensive measures to address tobacco consumption and its associated health risks. Deceptive advertising practices by the tobacco industry have also exacerbated the problem, targeting vulnerable youth and glamourising tobacco use through misleading marketing campaigns.

The relentless promotion of tobacco products through social media influencers and online platforms has normalised smoking behaviour among adolescents, leading

to a rise in tobacco experimentation and addiction rates among the younger population.

Dr Jitin Yadav, Senior Consultant Surgical Oncologist at Regency Health here emphasised, "Tobacco use among the youth is alarmingly high, directly exposing them to increased cancer risks. This undermines efforts to reduce the number of people who develop cancer and die of it. We owe it to the next generation to protect them from tobacco products and deceptive online advertising and counter the industry's aggressive tactics aimed at renewing the customer base."

On World No Tobacco Day 2024 individuals worldwide are urged to come together in their dedication to protecting the health and well-being of youth. This entails advocating for stronger regulations, promoting tobacco control initiatives and raising awareness about the detrimental effects of tobacco use. Together we can strive towards a future free from the harms of tobacco for generations to come.

BHU SDC conducts training programme

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

The Staff Development Cell (SDC) of Banaras Hindu University (BHU) successfully conducted a one-day training programme on 'Basic Functionalities of MS Excel' recently. The programme aimed to equip approximately 50 non-teaching staff members with essential Microsoft Excel skills. The event was graced by the presence of Prof Sujit Kumar Dubey, Coordinator and RP Mehrotra, Advisor. Assistant Registrar Raj Kumar Soni inaugurated the programme by emphasising the importance of such development programmes initiatives for continuous staff development. He acknowledged the success of previously held sessions and announced the upcoming programmes on public procurement, advanced MS Excel skills and fostering a positive work environment.

He commended the participants for their commitment to upskilling by enrolling in the MS Excel training programme.

In his opening remarks, Soni emphasised the paramount importance of Microsoft Excel as an essential tool that has revolutionised data management, computation and information visualisation. He then introduced the key differences between MS Word and MS Excel, explaining that while MS Word is primarily designed for document creation, writing and formatting, MS Excel excels in tasks like calculations, data management and analysis, data visualisation, automation, data integration and collaboration.

The training session was led by Assistant Professor Abhimanyu Singh Yadav, Department of Statistics, Institute of Science. The programme equipped participants with the knowledge and prac-

tical experience to leverage this powerful tool for enhanced office productivity.

The training session covered a comprehensive range of topics, starting with the fundamentals. Yadav covered the basics of MS Excel, including different tabs and sub-tabs, data export and import functionalities. This thorough foundation ensured that all participants, regardless of prior experience, were well-equipped for deeper learning. Yadav transitioned to the world of MS Excel functions, specifically focusing on mathematical functions. This session provided participants with the tools to perform calculations with accuracy. The programme culminated in a hands-on workshop, allowing participants to apply their newfound knowledge in a practical setting. This interactive approach solidified their understanding and fostered immediate confidence in util-

ising MS Excel for their daily tasks. Participants appreciated Yadav's clear explanations of basic functions and engaging delivery style, with many discovering new, valuable functionalities to boost their work. The training proved highly useful, prompting requests for similar sessions. Feedback highlighted the programme's practicality for tasks like data management and complex calculations. Participants suggested extending future sessions to two-three days for deeper dives into advanced features.

At the programme's conclusion, Soni urged participants to explore and leverage the powerful features of MS Excel in their daily work. He recognised that many participants currently rely on MS Word for calculations. By transitioning to MS Excel, they can significantly enhance their productivity and efficiency in their professional endeavours.

Middle-aged farmer found dead

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ KANPUR

A middle-aged bachelor farmer, living separately from family members, was found dead under mysterious circumstances in Begamkheda village under Sohramau police station area of Unnao on Friday morning. As there were no injury marks on the body of the deceased, police said to initiate further action in the matter on the basis of autopsy report and investigations. Lala Lodhi (45) of Begamkheda, Sahrawa, lived alone in a house in the outskirts of the village. On Friday morning, villagers found him dead and informed the kin. Station Officer (SO) Sohramau KK Dubey said no injury marks were found on the body of the deceased.

15 courses for SWAYAM developed

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ VARANASI

Known for its academic excellence and commitment to fostering a learning environment that promotes intellectual, cultural and professional growth, the Banaras Hindu University (BHU) is continuously striving for dissemination of quality education. Moving forward in this direction, faculty members of the university, hailing from various faculties have developed 15 courses for SWAYAM for the 2024 session. The programmes have been developed in line with the requirements and expectations of the learners. Starting from July 22, these courses offer an excellent opportunity for learners to enhance their knowledge and skills across a diverse range of subjects from the broader areas of management, commerce, science, medicine, social sci-

ences, humanities and philosophy. The courses, which run for a duration of 4 to 12 weeks, are designed to provide a comprehensive and enriching educational experience with a possibility to get BHU certificate after successful completion of course.

Coordinator, BHU SWAYAM, Dr Ashutosh Mohan, said, "With the launch of these courses, the BHU has for the first time made its presence in the online education domain. We invite all interested learners to take advantage of this opportunity to learn from the esteemed faculty of BHU and broaden their academic horizons."

The initiative not only enhances the educational offerings of BHU but also aligns with the broader goals of accessible and quality education for all. IIT Madras and IIT Kanpur are providing the technical

support for the courses, which are funded by the Ministry of Education, Government of India. Launched by the Government of India, SWAYAM is an endeavour to take the best teaching learning resources to all, irrespective of their geographical locations and institutional affiliations.

RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTED: Dr Satish Kumar Singh, Senior Professor, Department of Soil Science and Agricultural Chemistry, BHU, had visited Florence, Italy, to participate in Centenary Celebration Congress of International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS) held recently. He presented his research paper on 'Nickel Nutrition of Crops' which was appreciated by the scientific community. More than 1,500 soil scientists of about 140 countries participated in this mega event.

Lok Sabha Secretariat prepares to welcome members of 18th LS

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Lok Sabha Secretariat is ready to welcome Members of the eighteen Lok Sabha. Several measures have been taken to welcome the members and ensure their seamless registration. Secretary — General, Lok Sabha, Utpal Kumar Singh, conducted an inspection of the preparations today and is monitoring the arrangements on day to day basis. With a view to reducing the paper work and making the registration formalities of Members seamless, the regis-

tration process of the newly elected Members shall be done through an online integrated software application. Members would not be required to sign multiple physical forms with various branches. This would save a substantial amount of time of Members. The integrated software application not only captures bio profile data of MP but also includes solution for issuance of Parliament Identity Card based on Facial and Biometric Capturing and solution for issuance of CGHS card to Members & Spouses. With a view to minimize

complications arising out of the multi-desks approach of the past, all formalities relating to the registration, nominations, transit accommodation and a host of other matters are proposed to be got completed with minimum movement of Members. The Secretariat has made arrangements from 2 p.m. on 04.06.2024 and the process will remain operational from 8 am to 8 pm on 5th to 14th June, 2024 including on Saturdays and Sundays. Earlier, the registration of newly elected Members used to take place in the old Parliament House building

(now Samvidhan Sadan). This time, the Secretariat has made such arrangements in the Parliament House Annexe. As many as 20 digital registration counters with as many computers, 10 each in Banquet Hall and Private Dining Room (PDR), have been set up in the Parliament House Annexe. These counters have been set up for end-to-end registration process. Each counter has been equipped with desktop with double sided screen, printer cum scanner, biometric, and a tab for getting signature. There are separate counters for clicking photographs and

for facial recognition. Additionally, arrangements have also been made for simultaneous opening of SBI bank account, issuing of permanent Identity Card, Central Government Health Scheme Card to the newly elected Members on the spot. While welcoming the Members, the Secretariat will provide each Member with a set of publications relating to the Constitution of India, Rules, Directions and some other useful publications in hard copies. Besides, a few other publications will be provided to Members in soft version.

A waiting area has been provided for family members and guests of the MPs at the Banquet Hall in the Extension to Parliament House Annexe. In case of more number of guests arriving, the spillover will be seated in a nearby Committee Rooms. A total 70 Officers/Officials have been trained to man the registration Counter in shifts. The Liaison Officers (Los) have also been imparted training to make data entry through the Tabs while the MPs are waiting in the designated waiting area (Banquet Hall in EPHA building). The intent is to minimize the

registration time for Hon'ble MPs while they are in Parliament Complex for the purpose of registration. Videos on Foundation stone laying ceremony of Parliament Building, Inauguration of Parliament Building, Multimedia Devices, have been kept ready for playing in Banquet Hall, Committee Room 1 & 2 EPHA for the Members. A team has been assigned the task to keep close tab on Election Commission website on the day of declaration of results and to enter the contact details of successful candidates in near real time.

The team using a software application would be able to check whether the successful candidate is a new MP or re-elected MP. The same information would be shared with Liaison Officers (Los) through software application to make further data entry of their tour programs. The dashboard would be available for the stakeholders to get updated information in near real time. An endeavor has been made to deploy LOs from the same region/language to facilitate members and ensure faster communication.

INDIA Bloc going to get clear mandate on June 4, claims Congress

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Friday said it is due to its positive campaign, the nyay guarantees and giving priority to protecting the Constitution that the INDIA Bloc is going to get a "clear and decisive" mandate on June 4.

Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh, party's media and publicity department head Pawan Khara and AICC social media department head Supriya Shrinat released a compilation of 272 questions the party asked Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the last 72 days titled '72 Days, 272 Questions, 0 Jawab? Bhag Modi Bhaag'. Addressing a press conference along with Khara and Shrinat, Ramesh said the Congress' campaign was positive and result of the Rahul Gandhi-led Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra. He recalled that on January 23 this year in Guwahati, Rahul Gandhi for the first time announced the five nyays - Yuva Nyay, Nari Nyay, Kisaan Nyay, Shramik Nyay and Hissedaari Nyay. In Ranchi on February 5, Gandhi talked about 'hissedari nyay' and the party's guarantees under it, Ramesh said. On February 23 in Ambikapur, Gandhi and Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge announced the guarantees



under 'kisaan nyay'. He pointed out on March 7 in Banswara, Kharge and Gandhi released the 'yuva nyay' guarantees. On March 13 in Dhule, Gandhi announced 'nari nyay', while Kharge announced the 'shramik nyay' guarantees in Bengaluru, he said. Ramesh also recalled that Rahul Gandhi carried the copy of the Constitution to public meetings and stressed the Congress' guarantee to protect social justice, get a caste census done and remove the 50 per cent cap on reservation. "We believe that due to our campaign, 'paach nyay pachchees guarantee' and the priority we gave on protection of the Constitution as stressed by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and



RSS chief Bhagwat pays tributes to Ahilyabai Holkar on birth anniversary

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Friday remembered queen Ahilyabai Holkar on her 300th birth anniversary and said she was an ideal ruler who provided good governance and worked for the welfare of every section of society. In a video statement, Bhagwat said she lived a simple life despite being a queen and cared for the weak and backward. "This year marks the tercentenary of Punyashlok Devi Ahilyabai Holkar," he said and added that the 'Punyashlok' title is given to rulers who free their subjects from all kinds of deprivations and sorrows. "She was widowed. Despite

being a single woman, she did not only manage her big kingdom but also made it bigger and provided good governance," the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) said. She was, in fact, one of the ideal rulers of her time, he said and added that she was a symbol of women's capabilities. Bhagwat said Holkar built industries so that her subjects could get employment. "She built them (industries) so well that Maheshwar's textile industry is still running today. It provides employment to many people," he added. The RSS chief said Holkar cared for the weak and backward sections and had also eased the tax system. "She cared for farmers. Her kingdom was a good kingdom in every way," he said.

"Today we talk about the empowerment of women. Devi Ahilyabai has set before us an ideal example worth emulating. Despite being a queen she lived a simple life," he said. Bhagwat said the work she did was special in many ways. She ran the state efficiently and had friendly relations with all the rulers of that time, he said. She was known for her strategies that prevented attacks on her kingdom. At its Akhil Bharatiya Pratidinhi Sabha held in Nagpur in March, the RSS had announced it would organise programmes to mark the 300th birth anniversary of Holkar. "Throughout this year, efforts will be made everywhere to remember her. This is a matter of great joy. I wish all the best to such an effort," Bhagwat said.

Associate of fugitive gangster detained in US



PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

An alleged associate of fugitive gangster Himanshu Bhau is understood to have been detained by agencies in the United States, officials said on Friday. The agencies are trying to ascertain the identity of the detained man before any move for his return to India is initiated, they added. It is suspected that Sahil Kumar, who allegedly runs an extortion racket with Bhau from abroad and is wanted by the Haryana Police in a number of cases, has been detained by the US authorities, the officials said. Once the identity of the detained man is established, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), as

Interpol India, will coordinate with the US authorities to seek his return, which would be possible after an order from the courts of that country, they said. Kumar is facing an Interpol Red Notice that requests the law-enforcement agencies of all the 196-member countries to detain a fugitive if spotted in their jurisdiction. The information is then passed on to the member country that had sought the issuance of the notice. This process is followed by a move to get the accused extradited or deported after the legal formalities. Kumar allegedly used passports with a fake identity and address to flee India. Cases related to extortion and threats are registered in Haryana against Kumar and Bhau, the officials said.

LS polls 2024: Political rivals mock each other via medley of barbs

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

'Vish guru', 'anubhavi chor', 'do shehzade'. As Election 2024 hurtles towards result day in a medley of 'mangalsutra, mujra, mutton, machli' and other barbs, these may sound like character names from Hindi comedies of yore. Instead, these are the mocking, sometimes vicious monikers given by political rivals to each other. Here is a sampler from the just concluded Lok Sabha campaign that got progressively more heated, quite like the summer sun scorching large swathes of India, with leaders from across the spectrum using political speak to sharpen their verbal knives with epithets, sarcasm and more: ■ 'Puppet king' of tempo billionaires: Rahul attacks Modi Congress leader Rahul Gandhi called Prime Minister Narendra Modi a 'puppet king' of 'tempo billionaires' over his remarks on the Congress receiving 'cash loaded in tempos' from 'Adani and Ambani'. ■ 'Do shehzade': Modi's jibe at Rahul, Akhilesh 'Do shehzade' (two princes) have come together for the politics of appeasement Modi said at a poll rally in Uttar Pradesh. He didn't take any names but it was an apparent attack on Congress' Rahul Gandhi and SP president Akhilesh Yadav,

■ Modi the 'vish guru' Congress leader Jairam Ramesh lashed out at Modi over his speeches at election rallies, saying the language he used suggests he is not a 'vishwa guru' but a 'vish guru'. 'Vishwa guru' refers to a world leader. 'Vish' means poison. ■ 'Mandi me bhav': Supriya Shrinat targets Kangana Ranaut Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinat posted a picture of actor Kangana Ranaut, the BJP's candidate from Mandi in Himachal Pradesh and captioned it "Mandi me bhav kya chal raha hai". The post faced massive backlash for being derogatory, prompting Shrinat to remove it from all her social media accounts. ■ Modi sva-ghoshit bhagwan' Rahul Gandhi mocked Modi over his not "born biologically" remark by saying an ordinary person would have been taken to a psychiatrist had he/she uttered the statement. His colleague Jairam Ramesh went on to dub the prime minister 'sva-ghoshit bhagwan' (self-declared god) while attacking the BJP over the Agnipath scheme. ■ Modi's 'anubhavi chor' barb at Arvind Kejriwal In a veiled dig at the Delhi chief minister during a TV interview, Modi said an 'anubhavi chor' knows how to clear his tracks. This was in response to a question on the absence of a cash trail

in the alleged liquor policy scam in Delhi. ■ INDIA bloc performing 'mujra' for its vote bank Modi accused the INDIA bloc of "enslavement" and performing 'mujra' for the Muslim vote bank and vowed to thwart alleged attempts to rob Dalits and backward classes of reservations by the opposition grouping. ■ The four Ms, 'mujra, mangalsutra, machhli, mutton' A video of RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav eating fish and Rahul Gandhi and Lalu Prasad consuming mutton allegedly during the month of Sawan was splashed in a big way by the BJP. Modi said opposition parties were displaying their Mughal mindset and teasing the majority community by sharing the videos to consolidate their vote banks. He also accused the INDIA bloc of performing 'mujra' for the Muslim vote bank. At a rally in Rajasthan, the prime minister claimed the Congress' election manifesto promises to snatch away Hindu women's 'mangalsutra' and redistribute it to 'infiltrators' and 'those who have more children' - alluding to Muslims. The issue was seized by opposition leaders, including Congress chief Kharge and RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, slamming Modi for the remarks.



■ Modi's 'buffalo' jibe against Congress At an election rally in Gujarat, Modi attacked the Congress over the issue of inheritance tax, saying if someone has two buffaloes, the opposition party will take away one if it wins the Lok Sabha polls. Hitting back at the PM, Lalu Prasad of the RJD - a constituent of the INDIA bloc - said Modi will be given a camel. ■ 'Jhoothon ka sardar' Modi Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge, speaking in Haryana, sought the BJP's response on its promise of two crore jobs each year, Rs 15 lakh in every-one's bank account, and doubling of farmers' income. He then called the

PM 'jhoothon ka sardar' or the king of liars. ■ 'Amul babies' Rahul and Priyanka Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma labelled Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi 'Amul babies', saying people in the state would rather see "tigers and rhinos in Kaziranga" than watch the siblings at their election campaign events. ■ Bhagwant Mann 'kazagi CM' Addressing a rally in Punjab, Modi called AAP leader and Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann a 'kazagi CM' — chief minister only on paper. ■ 'Bada pappu', 'chhotu pappu': Kangana Ranaut mocks Rahul Gandhi, Vikramaditya Singh

The actor referred to Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Vikramaditya Singh, who is also her rival in Mandi, as 'bada pappu' and 'chhotu pappu'. She also called the Congress "a disease" and "termite" left by Britishers. ■ INDIA bloc 'congregation of scamsters' Modi said at Bihar rally that the INDIA bloc was a "congregation of scamsters" and its leaders stood for corruption, appeasement politics and a "perverted anti-Sanatani mindset". ■ 'Job-eater' BJP West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee dubbed the BJP "job-eater" after the Calcutta High Court scrapped the recruitment of nearly 26,000 teachers in the state. Banerjee accused the BJP of "conspiring" to stall the TMC government's decision. ■ Congress: 'mureed' of Pakistan Modi called the Congress a 'mureed' (disciple) of Pakistan and said Islamabad was rooting for Rahul Gandhi as India's next PM. ■ 'Samapt party' and 'kaun Congress' — Rajnath's dig at SP-Congress Addressing a rally in Uttar Pradesh, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said the SP and the Congress will be known as 'Samapt Party' and 'Kaun Congress' after the results are announced. ■ 'Shehzada' insulted maharajas: PM

At a public meeting in Karnataka, Modi accused 'shehzada' Rahul Gandhi of insulting India's rajahs and maharajas but remaining silent on atrocities committed by the nawabs, nizams, sultans, and badshahs for the sake of appeasement politics. ■ 'Low-level citizen' Rahul Gandhi PV Anwar, an independent MLA supported by the ruling Left Democratic Front (LDF) government in Kerala, stirred a controversy after he called Rahul Gandhi a "low-level citizen" and suggested he should undergo a "DNA test". ■ 'Tribal-hater' Modi Arvind Kejriwal alleged at a Jharkhand rally that "PM Modi hates tribals" as he had put the country's "tallest tribal leader", former CM Hemant Soren, behind bars. ■ 'Completely immature' Rahul Gandhi Miffed by Rahul Gandhi's remarks wondering why Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan was not jailed by the BJP government at the Centre, unlike two other CMs of opposition-ruled states, the veteran Marxist called the Congress leader 'completely immature'. He also said Rahul Gandhi "should not go back to his old name" — referring to former CM V S Achuthanandan's remarks a decade ago calling the Congress leader an 'Amul Baby'.

Centre asks States to be vigilant about unusual bird deaths

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Centre has asked all States to be vigilant for any unusual deaths amongst the domestic birds and poultry, and share the information with the Animal Husbandry Department immediately so that public health action can be initiated as per the national action plan for Avian influenza. A joint advisory issued on May 25 by the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) and Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying stated that in 2024, four states -- Andhra Pradesh (Nellore), Maharashtra (Nagpur), Kerala (Alappuzha, Kottayam, and Pathanamthitta districts), and Jharkhand (Ranchi) -- have already reported outbreaks of Avian influenza in poultry.



"Given that Avian Influenza (H5N1) infection is highly pathogenic and has the potential to be transmitted to humans, it is imperative to take all necessary measures to minimize and prevent the spread of this infection," the joint advisory said. The Avian Influenza virus (bird flu virus) is normally maintained in circulation in nature among mainly migratory birds and is known to cause outbreaks among domesticated poultry birds probably due to spill over events when migratory birds come in con-

tact with poultry, it said. The H5N1 is the main Avian influenza virus that has caused multiple outbreaks among poultry globally. Both types of viruses (HPAI and LPAI) may occasionally affect other mammalian species, including humans. Human infections are primarily acquired through direct contact with infected poultry or contaminated environments, the joint advisory said. Although there have been sporadic reports in humans and outbreaks among domestic and wild birds, since March 2024, there is a global concern over Avian influenza outbreaks in cattle from multiple states in the US that have resulted in one reported human case of H5N1, the joint advisory stated. Avian influenza outbreaks from India in poultry have been reported since 2006 and have

been jointly investigated by the Animal Husbandry and Health Departments (IDSP, NCDC). The states and Union Territories have been advised to orient all the health care workers/private practitioners on case definitions, signs and symptoms of Avian influenza. The states have been asked to enhance information, education and communication tools among the general public regarding preventive measures such as minimizing the handling of dead or sick birds with bare hands and without adequate respiratory protection and following food safety measures while consuming products of animal origin. Besides, they have been asked to be prepared for all preventive measures like stockpiling of an adequate number of antiviral drugs (Oseltamivir), PPE, masks etc.

CWC paints troubling picture of India's water reservoir capacity

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Amid sweltering heat, the Central Water Commission (CWC) on Friday painted a troubling picture of India's water reservoirs, indicating a significant decline in water levels in India's 150 main reservoirs plummeting to concerning depths. Currently, these reservoirs stand at a mere 23 per cent capacity, a staggering 77 per cent decrease from last year's levels at this time. The total live storage available is reported at 41,705 billion cubic meters, a significant drop from the previous year's 53,832 BCM and below the normal storage level of 44,511

BCM. The situation is particularly dire in regions like the heat-stricken northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan, where reservoir levels have plummeted to 30 per cent of total capacity, down from 38 per cent last year. These parts of the country are witnessing severe heat wave conditions with some pockets even crossing 45 degrees Celsius. Similarly, in the eastern region, comprising states like Assam, Jharkhand, and Bihar, reservoirs are at a mere 28 per cent of capacity, compared to 25 per cent last year. The western region, including Gujarat and Maharashtra, has seen a decrease to 24 per cent of capacity, while the south-

ern region, encompassing Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu, is experiencing a severe shortage at just 14 per cent of capacity, significantly lower than both last year's 24 per cent and the normal storage of 19 per cent. Despite some reservoirs maintaining near-normal levels, deficiencies are reported in others. Basins such as Ganga, Indus, Brahmaputra, and Narmada have better-than-normal storage levels. However, deficiencies are noted in basins like Krishna, east flowing rivers between Pennar and Kanyakumari, and the Cauvery basin. Highly deficient storage is observed in the east flowing rivers between Mahanadi and Pennar basins.



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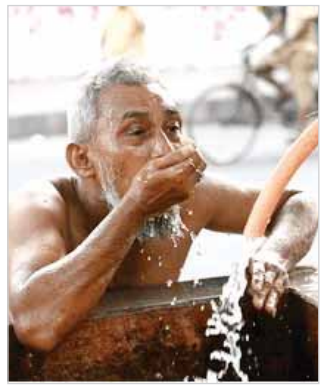
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PAPER WITH PASSION

High and dry

The Delhi Govt is out to fine people wasting water. But is it doing enough at its own end?

Summers in Delhi are particularly harsh due to the combination of extremely high temperatures, hovering around 50 degrees Celsius, and frequent heatwaves that exacerbate the already intense heat. Compounding these problems is the deficiency in civic services, which leaves the residents high and dry. The city's urban heat island effect, where concrete retains and radiates heat, makes the environment significantly hotter. The rural areas in the hinterland, particularly those towards the west, bear the brunt of hot westerlies coming in from the Rajasthan desert. During this season, water shortage becomes a critical issue as demand peaks while supply dwindles, making it difficult for the residents to stay hydrated. Additionally, the high demand for electricity to run air conditioners, coolers and fans often overwhelms the power grid, resulting in frequent power cuts, thus increasing health risks. Summer also brings poor air quality due to dust storms and increased vehicular emissions which, when combined with the



heat, can lead to respiratory problems and other health issues. There are several reasons for Delhi's woes. Though nothing much can be done about the fire raining from the skies, the management of resources such as electricity and water can be done in a better manner. Every year, the Delhi Government blames Haryana for not releasing its share of water, but no one wants to find a long-term solution. Besides, many parts of Delhi, especially East Delhi, lack sufficient green spaces, which are essential for providing shade and cooling the environment. It is a sad commentary on Delhi Government that more than 22 per cent water bodies of Delhi have been stolen.

Earlier records suggest that Delhi had over 1,000 water bodies which served as buffers and provided water and coolness. To address this issue, the Delhi Government has announced a fine of Rs 2,000 on those found guilty of wasting water. So, in a way, the city Government is putting the onus for water scarcity only on its people. Home to over 20 million people, Delhi is experiencing unprecedented water shortages. The rising temperatures have led to increased water consumption, putting immense pressure on the already strained water supply system. Residents are facing erratic water supplies, with many neighbourhoods receiving water only a few hours each day. The fine targets a range of activities considered wasteful, including washing cars with hosepipes, watering gardens excessively and leaving taps open. While the intention is commendable, several factors question its practicality and effectiveness. How will the Government find the culprits and who will define water wastage? Besides, the Government is being harsh on people who are already braving the heat despite electricity and water scarcity. Instead, the Government could have issued a warning for wasting water and arranged for water tankers in areas badly hit by water scarcity. For now, only the weather gods can save the Capital.

PICTALK



Children of a school offer prayers during a 'havan' for relief from the heatwave, in Jammu

India and Bangladesh: A tale of two books



HIRANMAY KARLEKAR

Two recently published books provide in-depth examinations of pivotal South Asian political landscapes

I have just finished a book pertaining to election-related data in India and another to Bangladesh and its ties with this country. Chambers Book on Indian Election: Facts (Hachette, India) authored by Kingshuk Chatterjee and Surbek Biswas, an academic and a senior journalist respectively, goes beyond statistics. Figures are integrated into a narrative that encompasses the country's political and electoral journey since the time of the British Raj and the elections held during it. Post-Independence, it dwells on the functioning of institutions like the Parliament, State legislatures and the judiciary, placing figures in context of an unfolding account of electoral battles, their results and the underlying political currents running throughout the country. It is a heaven-sent for not only scribes but political party functionaries, activists, poll-forecasters, to name a few, who scramble for data with the advent of elections, and, of course, scholars and researchers, hunting for information at all times for doctoral theses or other projects. Interspersed with the narrative are interesting pieces of not generally remembered information, such as Gian Singh Rarewala being the first non-Congress chief minister of any state in India. He became chief minister of Patiala and East Punjab States Union (PEPSU) at the head of a United Front Government on April 22, 1952. It is a book worth keeping on the shelf.

Transformation, Emergence of Bangladesh and Evolution of India-Bangladesh Ties (Knowledge World and Indian Council of World Affairs), is by a distinguished former officer of the Indian Foreign Service, Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty. It traverses a long time-span from the pre-historic period to the present. While providing an illuminating account of the historical circumstances shaping Bangladesh's emergence and cultural, religious, social and political ethos, the narrative contains several avoidable errors. For example, Chakravarty says that Siraj-U-Doula (the last independent nawab of Bengal) was tortured and brutally killed in prison by



Mir Madan, Mir Jafar's son. Siraj was killed on July 2, 1757, under orders from Mir Miran, Mir Jafar's son. Mir Madan fought loyally for Siraj in the battle of Palashi and died in combat.

Again, Chakravarty writes, "The Hindu College in Calcutta came up in 1817 CE and the Serampore College in 1819 CE. The Serampore missionaries also introduced Bengali periodicals and newspapers like 'Deek Darshan' and 'Samachar Darpan', which were vehicles for campaigning against 'Sati'. The Bengali 'Bhadralok' class was created with such activities."

The emergence of the Bhadralok was a much more complex phenomenon. In Elite Conflict in a Plural Society: Twentieth Century Bengal, J.H. Broomfield has described the Bhadralok as "A socially privileged and consciously superior group, economically dependent on landed rents and professional and clerical employment." The factors contributing most to their rise were the Permanent Settlement (1793), which created a class of zamindars and rentiers, the spread of English education, the expansion of British administration which created opportunities for Indians in the bureaucracy and the establishment of a judicial system, networks of medical administration and engi-



ITS STUMBLES NOTWITHSTANDING, THE BOOK PROVIDES MUCH USEFUL INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS INTO THE EMERGENCE OF BANGLADESH AND THE EVOLUTION OF INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS WITH THEIR STORMY AND SUNNY INTERLUDES

neering services, which led to the rise of the professions. All this deserves mention because Muslim Bhadralok, emerging in the wake of their Hindu predecessors, played an important role in Bangladesh's liberation struggle and its post-independence politics. While the two leading political parties, Awami League (AL) and Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), are led by Sheikh Hasina and Begum Khaleda Zia, both Bhadramahilas (women Bhadralok), the leaders of the organisational layers below them are mainly Muslim Bhadralok.

Its stumbles notwithstanding, the book provides much useful information and insights into the emergence of Bangladesh and the evolution of India-Bangladesh relations with their stormy and sunny interludes. It also provides an exhaustive account of Bangladesh's increasingly contentious internal politics. The book's narrative ends before elections to the country's National Parliament on January 7, 2024, which were boycotted by the BNP and which the AL won securing 224 out of the 300 seats in contest.

Sheikh Hasina, however, has to grapple with the adverse economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ukraine War and the increasing spread

of fundamentalist Islam in Bangladesh. The first has led to discontent against her Government. The second, which threatens the secularism embedded in Bangladesh's constitution, led to the rise of terrorist outfits resorting to violent acts, the most outrageous of which was the attack on the Holy Artisan Bakery, a restaurant in a posh Dhaka neighbourhood, in which 20 persons, including an Indian, were killed, on July 1, 2016. Sheikh Hasina has squelched the terrorist outfits but has to deal with kid gloves organisations like Hefazat-e-Islam preaching fundamentalist Islam.

Her ascent to power for the second time as prime minister in 2009, initiated a continuing friendly chapter in India-Bangladesh relations. Nevertheless, pressures on both countries are many and neither can take things for granted. Chakravarty's narrative is enriched by his ringside view of events both as India's Deputy High Commissioner (1999-2002) and High Commissioner (2007-09) to Bangladesh. His book needs to be read, over and over again, by all those interested in India-Bangladesh ties which, in turn, have an important bearing on South Asian geo-politics.

(The author is Consulting Editor, The Pioneer. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

TRAGIC BUS ACCIDENT IN JAMMU

Madam — Apropos the news story "21 killed, 47 injured as bus falls into gorge in Jammu," published on May 30, this is my response. Reading about the tragic bus accident in Jammu, where 21 lives were lost and 47 people were injured, is truly heartbreaking. The accident occurred when a bus carrying pilgrims skidded off the road and plunged into a gorge, highlighting once again the perils of road travel in treacherous terrains. The grief expressed by Jammu and Kashmir's Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha resonates with the deep sorrow felt by all.

The details are chilling: a failed negotiation of a blind curve, an oncoming speeding car and a catastrophic fall of 150 feet into the gorge. The prompt response by the rescue teams and the efforts to provide immediate medical assistance to the injured are commendable, yet the loss remains profound. This incident underscores the urgent need for enhanced road safety measures and stricter regulations to prevent such heartbreaking occurrences in the future. My thoughts and prayers go out to the affected families.

Arjun Desai | Chandigarh

RBI DIVIDEND BOOSTS GDP

Madam — Apropos the news story "Record RBI dividend at 0.6 per cent of GDP may not be sustained Fitch," published on May 28, this is my response. The above alluring cum enticing and burning news from the stable of RBI that the same has declared record-high super-normal dividend growth by the central bank is simply a win-win situation for both duo viz. Apex Bank of India and the Government of India. Furthermore, the same news by the US (United States) credit rating agency cum giant Fitch Ratings Inc. will give a nitro boost to the economic growth GDP (gross domestic product) of our country. Furthermore, the above-mentioned spectacular news is a source of pride for the RBI, a bourse country Government and its citizens.

Delhi's water crisis worsens



Apropos the news story "Mad scramble for water in several areas as Delhi grapples with a severe shortage," published on May 30, this is my response. The water crisis in Delhi has reached alarming levels, with residents in areas like Chanakyapuri struggling to secure necessities. Despite Government measures to curb water use, such as banning potable water

for car washing, the situation remains dire. The sight of people scrambling with empty buckets and climbing atop water tankers underscores the desperation.

Deepak Srivastava and Janki, long-term residents, express frustration over the lack of consistent water supply, blaming political parties for neglecting basic needs in favour of electoral gains. The severe heatwave exacerbates the issue, with temperatures nearing 50 degrees Celsius. The Delhi Government's emergency actions, including inspections at car service centres, offer some hope, but the fundamental problem persists. Videos of the crisis shared on social media highlight the stark reality: in 2024, in India's capital, access to water will remain a daily battle for many. This calls for urgent, sustainable solutions from both local and national authorities.

Vihaan Verma | Jaipur

Additionally, the above awesome cum uber-cool news has become a burning topic among both the masses and classes. Moreover, from now on, after enjoying the windfall dividend of the central bank, the Government of India will keep a close tab on RBI stock. Additionally, after giving oh-so-uber cum oh-so-uber supernormal dividend growth, the RBI will again work day and night to deliver more and more windfall dividends to the Government of India. Additionally, the above news has received a red-carpet welcome from both print media and electronic media.

Harminder | Lucknow

PRAGGNANANDHAA'S TRIUMPH

Madam — Apropos the news story "Norway chess: Praggnanandhaa claims maiden classical win over Carlsen, takes sole lead," published on May 30, this is my response. Reading about Indian Grandmaster R Praggnanandhaa's remarkable victory over world number one Magnus Carlsen in the Classical format is truly thrilling.

This win is particularly significant because it marks the first time Praggnanandhaa has defeated Carlsen in this format, after several previous encounters in faster game versions. At just 18 years old, his achievement underscores his incredible talent and positions him as a leading contender in the Norway chess tournament, ahead of seasoned players like Fabiano Caruana and reigning world champion Ding Liren.

Praggnanandhaa's strategic play, especially using the less-favoured Sicilian Kann opening, demonstrates his deep understanding and innovative approach to the game. Meanwhile, the women's section also showcases the prowess of Praggnanandhaa's sister, R Vaishali, who leads her group. This family of chess prodigies is making significant waves in the chess world, promising an exciting future for Indian chess.

Arnav Patel | Ahmedabad

Economic growth raises sustainability concerns

As Indians embrace a culture of 'wants' over 'needs,' there's a growing urgency to address the unsustainable patterns of consumption

Over time, India has shown remarkable progress in GDP growth rates. It currently ranks fifth surpassing the United Kingdom in 2022 and with its promising performance, is expected to overtake Japan by 2025. Amidst the celebration of becoming the fourth largest economy, a worrisome aspect is the rising consumption level of the huge population and its alarming impact on sustainability. Consumption is the driving force behind prospering economic growth. It has a multiplier effect as investors respond to positive consumption by increasing production and hiring more workers, who in turn, spend more, further boosting economic activity.

Consumerism is dominating the world and India is no exception indeed. The estimates of average Monthly per capita consumer expenditure (MPCE) according to the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2022-23 reveal a 33.5 per cent increase by urban households since 2011-12, reaching ₹3,510, while rural India's MPCE increased by 40.42



per cent to ₹2,008. India's consumption story reminds us of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a psychological theory proposed by Abraham Maslow (1943), wherein there is a transition from psychological needs comprising necessities to security to esteem and self-actualisation needs. A noteworthy phenomenon of this shift from 'needs to wants' is the unlimited nature of the latter and the subsequent and alarming wastage of resources.

High consumption can have alarming repercussions on sustainability and long-term economic and social welfare. Foremost, it leads to resource depletion, which may be non-renewable and therefore irreversible, causing scarcity, higher costs and potential financial instability. Environmental degradation is another externality of excessive consumption which includes pollution, deforestation,

biodiversity loss and waste production. According to the Central Pollution Control Board, 2020-21 Annual Report, the total quantity of Solid waste generated in the country is 160038.9 tonnes per day (TPD), out of which 79956.3 TPD (50 per cent) of waste is treated and 29427.2 (18.4 per cent) TPD is landfilled. 50655.4 TPD which is 31.7 per cent of the total waste generated remains ironically unaccounted for. Besides, high consumption also leads to increasing use of fossil fuels and products with large carbon footprints, significantly contributing to climate change.

Given large income disparities in India, even the benefits of high consumption are not evenly distributed. While some people and regions may experience significant economic growth, others may be left behind, exacerbating further economic inequality. While at one end consumption is essential for economic growth, at the same time it is threatening long-term sustainability. To ensure that high consumption contributes to sustainable eco-

nomical growth, we need to encourage consumption patterns that are environmentally friendly and socially responsible. This can be achieved through rampant education, incentives and regulations.

We need to radically work towards investing in renewable resources to reduce the environmental impact of high consumption. The Government needs to implement policies and regulations that encourage sustainable practices and mitigate the negative impacts of high consumption. This includes environmental regulations, carbon pricing and incentives for green technologies. We also need to develop diverse economic activities that do not solely rely on high consumption levels.

By sensibly managing consumption and prioritizing sustainability, it is possible to achieve economic growth that benefits society while preserving the environment for future generations.

(The author is assistant professor at Sri Guru Gobind Singh College of Commerce, University of Delhi; views are personal)



KAJLEEN KAUR



FIRST COLUMN

WITNESSING THE DIVINE PRESENCE

There are multiple instances where the Supreme manifests itself



AJIT KUMAR BISHNOI

I was watching 'pran pratistha' of Lord Rama's Deity in the new temple constructed at the birthplace of the Lord. As the ceremony progressed, I began to notice subtle changes in the Lord's expression; He was coming alive. I was amazed, but I couldn't fail to notice the change as it happened. My experience was corroborated by the sculptor, who made this idol. He admitted that what he had sculpted was a lot different, meaning that the expression he had given was quite sober. By the way, pran pratistha is a transformative act of bringing the idol to life. This manifestation is nothing amazing. God appears even in person. The following five true life stories will exemplify this. The first one chosen is when Lord Krishna appeared as Draupadi was being attempted to be disrobed in the royal court of Dhritarashtra. Draupadi in desperation prayed for help by chanting — "Krishna, Krishna, Krishna". The Lord appeared and provided endless sarees to save Draupadi from humiliation. The second incident chosen is when Surdasa falls into a ditch, him being blind. He attempted to get out but failed. He called for help, but no one came. The place was deserted. His worshipable Lord knew that His true devotee needed help. He came and saw Surdasa sitting down and singing bhajan completely oblivious of the sorry situation he was in. Lord asked him, "Why are you not trying to get out?" Surdasa replied, "I did and failed. I realised that only you could help me." The Lord gave Surdasa His hand and helped him to come out. There is a famous bhajan when Surdasa implores the Lord not to leave him.



The third incident happened a few years back. A close relative of mine was sitting in a temple near her home deeply engrossed in thought. A babaji appeared in front of her. He spoke to her, "You are greatly troubled by the behaviour of your in-laws. Don't worry. You will suffer a certain disease, he named it, due to the stress caused by it. But it will be cured; will not make you suffer much. Before this relative could react, this person had gone away. That disease did trouble her but came under control soon. This relative is a sincere devotee of God. The fourth example is related to a friend of mine. He is a staunch devotee of God. Over the last few decades, he has made enormous spiritual progress. He is in his late nineties and still going strong. His wife passed away recently after a brief illness. He tried to prevent it by chanting a mantra. He also hoped that she would get an excellent birth next time. As he was overdoing it, God arranged for an aged lady to come to his house. She informed him that his wife would pass away on the fifteenth day. He was shocked. By the time he gathered his wits, she was gone. Was she God Himself or a person chosen by God? The last example is of an American. He had become very rich, but he was neither peaceful nor happy. Intrigued, he had to find the reason. Was material wealth not the solution to all our problems and he had plenty of it? He started visiting various churches but got no satisfactory answer. Disappointed, he decided to come to India - the spiritual capital of the world. Same result here also with bogus gurus trying to manipulate him. Highly frustrated, he was sitting down on a bench on the bank of the Ganges in Haridwar. He was in deep thought when someone tapped him on his shoulder. He opened his eyes and saw a saintly person standing in front of him. He said, "Don't be so sad. Take shelter of God. And the best way is to follow God's instructions as detailed in the bona fide scriptures. Buy a copy of the Bhagavad-Geeta." When he opened his eyes, the saintly person was not to be seen. Can we have similar experiences with God? Yes, we can. God is always quite forthcoming. We just have to qualify for it. How do you do that? It is simpler than what you can imagine. Do spiritual practices, which suit your nature. For example, I do 'darshan' and 'naman', chanting, thanking and praying regularly. Once a certain amount of spiritual credits has been accumulated, God gets active in our lives. (The writer is a spiritual guide; views are personal)

Recycle nutrients to mitigate fertiliser crisis



NANDULA RAGHURAM

Many elements crucial for life on Earth are depleting rapidly due to disrupted biogeochemical cycles caused by human activities

If you think carbon is bad enough, other essential elements that sustain life on Earth are also crossing the planetary boundaries of sustainability, as their natural 'biogeochemical' cycles are broken by human activities. For about ten thousand years before the 'green' revolution, farmers grew crops without fertilisers by combining legume-based crop rotations and livestock farming. Legume crops and some soil microbes fixed atmospheric nitrogen, while livestock manure and urine enriched the soil with nutrients such as compounds of nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), sulfur (S), carbon (C) and even micronutrients. But modern cropping in India shifted away from legume-based crop rotations and relies heavily on NPK fertilisers rather than manures, costing the Indian govt over Rs. 2 lakh crores per year in subsidy.

As livestock farming moved away from crops and intensified as peri-urban dairies, manure and urine mostly find their way to our ground and surface water bodies. The release of untreated dairy or domestic and other wastes has reduced the Sahibi River in New Delhi to a wastewater drain (Nazafgarh drain), which along with the Shahdara drain heavily pollutes the river Yamuna, apart from releasing noxious gases into the air.

The nutrient cycles have thus become cascades causing nutrient pollution, but the good news is that some pollutants are nutrients in the wrong place and can be brought back. Unfortunately, less than 30 per cent of the fertiliser nutrients supplied as fertilizers are harvested as crop yield and the remaining add to the growing pollution. In water bodies, the accumulation of these nutrients supports unwanted algal growth causing eutrophication and death of fish and other useful aquatic and marine species. This destroys the ecosystem and the livelihoods of people who depend on fishing, tourism and other ecosystem services. In our coastal areas, algal eutrophication progressively causes green tides, brown and eventually red tides and even the accumulation of poisonous species. The reversal of these trends can rebuild water economies and support the livelihoods of millions. Nitrogenous compounds from fertilisers, manures, urine and sewage also cause air pollution as ammonia or nitrous oxide. Ammonia contributes heavily to particulate matter pollution (PM2.5 and PM10) by combining with NOx gases (nitrogen dioxide and nitric oxide) emitted from fuel or residue burning for power, transport industry, or waste disposal. Over a million deaths per year are attributed to PM2.5 alone in India, while some attribute up to 7 per cent of all deaths to PM2.5, as India has the largest number of the world's most polluted cities in terms of PM2.5. These figures call for drastic measures to control air pollution in general and PM2.5 in particular, but it needs not only curbing pollution from fuel burning but also restoring the nutrient cycles in agriculture and waste management.

While a fraction of livestock manure is recycled for cropping in India, urine recycling is nearly nonexistent. If we recycled all the 15 kg per animal per day of manure produced by 200 million cattle, its 5 per cent NPK nutrients amount to 1,50,000 metric tons. This is much more than our average daily fertiliser consumption, which is about 1,37,000 metric tons. Add to this about 3 per cent of nutrients lost from 15-20 litres of cattle urine per animal per day totalling



WE ALREADY KNOW THAT AT LEAST HALF OF THE CURRENTLY RECOMMENDED FERTILISER DOSES CAN BE REPLACED WITH FARMYARD MANURE WITHOUT ANY LOSS OF CROP YIELD

1,20,000 metric tons. Technologies and best practices are available from Europe and elsewhere to maximise nutrient retention and recycling from manure and urine. We already know that at least half of the currently recommended fertiliser doses can be replaced with farmyard manure without any loss of crop yield. It not only saves a lakh crores but also reduces the environmental footprint of fertilisers, manures and agriculture itself. Similarly, over 55,000 metric tonnes of nutrients equivalent to 40 per cent of our fertiliser consumption are lost daily from over 150 billion litres of wastewater produced per day in India. This is because of our abysmally low wastewater treatment capacity of about 27 per cent. Most sewage treatment plants (STPs) exist only in the cities and only a few of them work. Fortunately, some metropolitan cities like Delhi and Hyderabad are rapidly expanding their STP capacity to become 100 per cent wastewater treatment capable in a year or two and some other big cities in India are following suit. However, they vary in their efficiency of nutrient removal, which must be addressed immediately to ensure that the purpose of treatment is fully realised and that the treatment plants become resource plants by selling the recovered nutrients. There is a growing emphasis worldwide on preventing the wastage of nutrients and recycling them. The most notable among them is Target 7 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework adopted under the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity at its 15th Conference of Parties in 2022: It seeks to "Reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services considering cumulative effects, including (a) by reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half, including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use". In Europe, where extensive recycling

of livestock manure and urine is already in practice, the new buzzword is the so-called RENURE (recovery of nitrogen from manure) policy of the European Commission (2024). As such proposals are debated to ensure that they contribute to overall sustainability objectives in the European context, it is important to note the policy attention that the recovery and recycling of nutrients has garnered. In the meantime, a Swedish fertiliser company, Ragn-Sells, has patented a process to recover nutrients from wastewater and convert them into industry-grade fertilisers and spun off a company easyming.se to launch it in Europe within a year. If India can set up such units attached to our STPs, they can hugely reduce the economic and environmental costs of earlier fertiliser technologies, generate green jobs.

Delhi alone produces about 3330 Million Litres per Day (MLD) of wastewater, far over the installed and operational treatment capacities of the city's 38 STPs (CPCB, 2021). The Delhi Government has set its target to achieve 100 per cent wastewater treatment by 2025 and increase the reuse of treated wastewater from 12.5 per cent to 60 per cent with the proposed utilisation of 197 MGD, 112 MGD and 10 MGD treated sewage for drinking purposes, irrigation and rejuvenation of water bodies respectively (CPCB, 2021). We conducted some studies on the wastewater nutrients and their recovery/recycling potential in several STPs of the national capital, aided by the University's memorandum of understanding with the Delhi Jal Board.

They were funded by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) under the Global Wastewater Initiative and the Global Partnership on Nutrient Management. Our studies found that the current level of removal of phosphatic nutrients in various STPs of Delhi varies between 35-74 per cent and 14-93 per cent for nitrogenous nutrients. Except for the Akshardham STP, which oper-

ated at the higher end of the range, most of the other STPs we studied were closer to the lower end of the range, indicating the huge scope to improve nutrient recovery. A similar study will be undertaken in Hyderabad soon, in association with agricultural scientists who will also test the crop performance and estimate the amount of commercial fertiliser that can be saved by recycling nutrients recovered from wastewater.

Such efforts will hugely improve the quality of treated water for various uses and also relieve the water crisis looming over India's metropolitan cities. In Delhi, the nutrient-depleted water is also critical to expediting the rejuvenation of the water bodies of Delhi, as the quality of treated water currently used is not good enough to revive the heavily eutrophicated water bodies.

As for the recycling of nutrients removed from wastewater, currently, there are huge piles of nutrient-rich sludge in the backyard of every working STP. They need to be developed and marketed as alternatives to fertiliser by building necessary market linkages and supply chains as needed.

This is already happening to some extent in Hyderabad but needs to be scaled up further to clear the inventory. An important task is to find ways to pre-process the sludge to minimise the heavy metals, plastics and other undesirables we found coexisting with nutrients in the sludge in Delhi. Overall, on a national scale, if we recover and recycle the 84 per cent of nutrients lost in wastewater for agriculture, up to forty per cent of our national fertiliser consumption can be saved. In economic terms, these savings are equivalent to the entire R&D budget of the Government of India.

(The writer is a Professor and Head of, the Centre for Sustainable Nitrogen and Nutrient Management School of Biotechnology, Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University, New Delhi; views are personal)

Haryana is driving towards progress and prosperity

Haryana is emerging as a beacon of economic prosperity and social development, embodying the vision of 'Viksit Haryana for Viksit Bharat'

Haryana embodies courage and strength. Modi, who has savoured Haryana's spirit, has led with vigour for ten years. Seeing Rafale jets soar in Ambala skies today is a proud moment for all of us. Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently said at the major rallies in Ambala and Sonapat, highlighting the opposition's deceitful intentions and reaffirming the BJP's dedication to Haryana's development. In his second mega rally in Sonapat, Modi shed light on the Congress party's past misdeeds and their desperate attempts to regain power. In another incident earlier this month, Haryana stood on the cusp of an emotional milestone. In a display of unprecedented support and



KIRIT P SOLANKI

enthusiasm, former Chief Minister of Haryana, Manohar Lal Khattar, led a mega rally at Ganaur, Sonapat, endorsing Lok Sabha candidate Mohan Lal Badoli. The event, attended by over 15,000 fervent supporters, marked a significant moment in Haryana's political landscape. Manohar, renowned for his progressive policies and transformative governance, was warmly received by the crowd,

underscoring the deep-rooted admiration and trust he commands among the populace. His rally served as a testament to the enduring popularity of Manohar's leadership and the impactful strides taken by the 'double engine Government' in the State. The Modi-Manohar effect has been instrumental in spearheading numerous initiatives aimed at propelling Haryana towards economic prosperity and social development. Under their stewardship, Haryana has emerged as a magnet for investments and a hub of opportunities, embodying the vision of 'Viksit Haryana for Viksit Bharat'. The rally, infused with patriotic fervour and untiring support, emphasised the staunch resolve of

Haryana's electorate to chart a path towards progress and prosperity. As the political landscape evolves, Manohar's rally stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of visionary leadership and the collective determination to realise a brighter future for Haryana and the nation at large. From bolstering transparency in Government job recruitments to empowering the youth through the Haryana Kausal Rozgar Nigam, the State has witnessed a paradigm shift under the astute leadership of Manohar Lal Khattar. The establishment of all-women police stations, initiatives like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao and a surge in infrastructure projects underscore the Government's untiring commitment to holistic

development. Haryana's rise as an investment destination is nothing short of spectacular, with exports soaring and MSMEs mushrooming across the State. In the textile and apparel sector, Haryana's prowess shines through, with a significant contribution to India's exports. With over 35 per cent of carpets and 20 per cent of garments manufactured in the State, Haryana is cementing its position as a textile powerhouse. The strategic alignment with national initiatives like the PM Gati Shakti Yojana and the establishment of industrial parks exemplify Haryana's proactive approach towards economic prosperity. The State's healthcare infrastructure has received a significant boost, with the establishment

of medical universities and skill development centres catering to the evolving needs of the populace. The number of medical colleges has surged from 6 in 2014 to 15 and the number of MBBS seats has increased from 700 to 2185. Moreover, the number of PG seats in medical colleges has grown from 289 to 1006. The State has further enhanced nutritional outcomes for children, adolescents, pregnant women and lactating mothers through the POSHAN Abhiyan. In agriculture, schemes like PM-KISAN and PM Fasal Bima Yojana have provided a safety net for farmers, ensuring their livelihood security. Today, PM-KISAN has benefited over 20 lakh farmers in

the State with assistance of over Rs. 5,000 crore. Haryana plays a pivotal role in India's journey towards becoming a global nutrition hub. There are ambitious plans that include promoting the State's coarse grains like jowar and millet on the international stage, the implementation of the world's largest warehouse project and the creation of specialised clusters over the next 5 years. Also, there are plans for a revolutionary drone initiative in farming, empowering mothers and sisters with drone pilot training to harness the latest technology in agriculture. Cultural preservation and promotion have been integral to Haryana's development narrative, with initiatives like the PM Vishwakarma Yojana

fostering artisanal traditions and 'Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat' fostering cultural exchange. The State's rich heritage is being showcased through initiatives like the Anubhav Kendra Jyotisar and the development of archaeological sites like Rakhi Garhi. The 'double engine Government' has proven instrumental in leveraging resources for comprehensive growth, be it in agriculture, infrastructure, or education. Prime Minister Modi emphasised, The dawn of a new era, led by visionary leadership and fueled by the aspirations of its people, promises a brighter tomorrow for the State and the nation at large. (The writer is a Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha; views are personal)

Many hurt in bombing by TMC goons in WB

SAUGAR SENGUPTA
BHANGAR/JADAVPUR

A new 'Shahjahan Sheikh' threatened to take control of large swathes of Trinamool Congress dominated parliamentary constituencies hours before the seventh phase of polling even as alleged goons of party strongman and MLA Shaikat Molla spread terror in more than one Assembly segments, including Bhangar area of Jadavpur constituency, that saw massive blood spilling several deaths during last year's panchayat elections.

At least 20 people were injured and many of them had to be hospitalised as TMC goons resorted to night long bombing and attacks on members of Indian Secular Front, sources said. "We have seen armed men moving around the area



threatening voters and polling agents," said a local BJP leader requesting anonymity. "Our polling agents have been

asked not to go to the booths ... same in the case of ISF," he said. CPI(M) Srijan Bhattacharya

reportedly rushed to the area but was refused entry by the police sources said adding Central forces and police that

were rushed to the area had recovered several exploded country made bombs. Meanwhile the Election Commission of India on Friday issued orders restricting movement of Molla sources said adding he had been asked not to venture out of Canning Assembly area where he lives. Reports of TMC motorbike brigades roaming all about Basirhat and Barasat constituencies also came in, sources said the goons were asking people not to step out of their houses. Incidents of violence were also from areas like Ganguly Bagan, Ramgarh and other places, sources said. "We have requested the ECI to take steps but if things do not improve then the people will resist and the authorities will have to take responsibility," CPI(M)'s Meenakshi Mukherjee said.

Karnataka and Kerala at war on black magic and animal sacrifice

KUMAR CHELLAPPAN ■ KOCHI

An inter-State "war" has erupted between Kerala and Karnataka over animal sacrifice and sorcery. Karnataka strongman and deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar said on Friday that animal sacrifice and "black magic" were held in temples in northern Kerala with the intention of bringing down the Congress Government led by D Siddarmaiah. "This is being done against me and the Chief Minister. A 'Shatru Bhairavi Yagya' (fire sacrifice) is being carried out near Raja Rajeshwari Temple in Kannur district in Kerala to eliminate enemies. 'Panchabali' (five sacrificial items) is being offered. A nice red goat, 21 buffaloes, three black sheep and five pigs" Shivakumar told the

media. But the supreme Court by an order has banned the practice of animal practice in 1960s itself. This is the first time in post-independent India a State's top political leader charges another State with such an allegation. The Congress leader also said that he was getting up to date information from people taking part in these rituals. Shivakumar also disclosed that the rituals and sacrifices were being performed by political leaders from Karnataka itself. He showed the sacred thread on his right hand and said that it has been done to ward off the evil effects of these animal sacrifices and black magic. Interestingly, the temple administration council members of Raja Rajeswari Temple denied that the temple premises were being used to conduct

animal sacrifice and sorcery. "Such rituals are never held in any of the temples in Kannur district. Raja Rajeswari Temple, where the presiding deity is Lord Shiva is a Maha Kshethram and reports about such rituals are non-sense," said Akkeeraman Kalidasa Bhattachari, one of the senior priests and president of the Kerala Yoga Kshema Sabha, an organization of various professional priests. Bhattachari said this was an attempt to discredit the Sanatan Dharma. R Bindu, CPI(M) leader and Kerala Minister for higher education, who has no love lost for temples and Hindu deities, told reporters that Shivakumar was bluffing. "There is no iota of truth in Shivakumar's allegations," said Bindu, spouse of CPI(M) polit bureau member Vijayaraghavan.

Mortal remains of 22 pilgrims killed in fatal accident in Jammu to be dispatched today

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE
JAMMU

The mortal remains of the 22 pilgrims killed in the fatal accident near Tungi Morh in the Akhnoor subdivision of Jammu on Thursday will be dispatched to their native places on Saturday after completing necessary medico-legal formalities. Several close relatives of the pilgrims also arrived here in Jammu from Aligarh and Hathras to look after their loved ones admitted to the Government Medical College hospital, Jammu. 72 pilgrims injured in the accident were undergoing treatment in the hospital. Meanwhile, the UT administration on Friday suspended six transport department employees for alleged dereliction of duty. The tragic incident occurred on Thursday when the bus carrying 94 devotees towards the Shiv Khori shrine in Jammu and Kashmir's Reasi district skidded off the Jammu-Poonch highway and



plunged into a 150-foot gorge. The driver lost control of the vehicle while negotiating a blind curve at the Tungi morh in the Chowki Chora area. Transport Department Secretary Niraj Kumar ordered the suspensions and a probe after Principal Secretary of the Home Department Chandraker Bharti chaired a high-level meeting. "Pending enquiry into the conduct and dereliction of duties, officials posted in the Regional Transport Office in

Kathua (Lakhanpur) are placed under suspension with immediate effect and are attached in the office of Transport Commissioner, Jammu," Kumar said in an order. The suspended officials are Ranjeev Bhasin (motor vehicle inspector), Sumit Magotra (junior assistant) and multi-tasking staff (MTS) members Ashwani Kumar, Aman Kumar, Keshav Singh and Rakesh Kumar. An inquiry into the conduct

and performance of the suspended officials will be led by Additional Secretary (Technical) Paramvir Singh, who will submit a report with recommendations within a week, Kumar said. The Jammu district magistrate has already initiated a magisterial inquiry into the incident and the report is expected within seven days. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Thursday announced Rs 2 lakh ex-gratia/relief in favour of the kin of each deceased person and Rs 50,000 for those injured. Expressing shock over the Akhnoor bus accident Modi said, "Anguished by the loss of lives due to a bus mishap in Akhnoor. My thoughts are with those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that the injured recover soon." Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha has also announced an ex-gratia of Rs 5 lakhs in favour of the next of kin of each deceased and Rs 50,000 for those injured in the tragic bus accident in Akhnoor.

Atishi urges Centre to ensure release of water from UP, Haryana to overcome crisis

STAFF REPORTER ■ NEW DELHI

Senior AAP leader and Delhi Water Minister Atishi has urged the BJP led Central Government to ensure a provision for the release of spare water from either Uttar Pradesh or Haryana to address the national capital's "unprecedented water crisis". In a letter to Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat on Thursday, she claimed, "There has been a drastic dip in the water level at the Wazirabad barrage during the last few days as Haryana is not releasing the required quantity in the Yamuna." She added that this has resulted in a massive water crisis in the national capital while highlighting that the temperature in Delhi has touched almost 50 degrees Celsius. "This has further intensified the demand for water, putting additional burden on an already-strained demand-supply chain of potable drinking water in Delhi," she



said. Atishi visited the Wazirabad barrage on Thursday and found that the water level at the pond was 670.3 feet against a normal of 674.50 feet. Mentioning that this reduction has a serious impact on the water production capacity of water treatment plants in Delhi, she said, "I am writing this letter to bring to your kind notice the unprecedented water crisis situation that the national capital of Delhi is facing. As you are aware, Delhi is

heavily dependent on water from the Yamuna river to meet its day-to-day demand." She stated that if adequate water is not released by Haryana, Delhi's water treatment plants will not be able to optimally function. "And if the water treatment plants do not function optimally, then Delhi will not be able to meet its demand-supply gap. This will have a serious and direct implication on the people living in the national capital. I have already written to Hon'ble Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini ji to appraise him of the issue. However, we are yet to receive a response from his office," she said. Highlighting that people from all parts of the country migrate to the national capital in search of a better future, she said, "It is our collective responsibility as a nation to ensure that the people of Delhi get the water they need." Further, she stated, "I am writing to request you to ensure that some provision of

water is made for NCT of Delhi, be it from Haryana or Uttar Pradesh or any other state that may be able to spare water, so that the people of Delhi don't suffer." "The Delhi government and its citizens will be forever grateful to you if you could kindly intervene and help us solve this crisis. It is imperative that the state of Haryana must immediately release Delhi's rightful share of water into the Yamuna river to bring the waters to the normal level of 674.5 feet," she added. Atishi also said the Delhi government is making all possible efforts to encourage people to use water wisely. "A multi-departmental approach is being undertaken to ensure that there is no water wastage. We have formed on-ground teams to take immediate action against those who are found to waste water. However, these standalone steps will not be sufficient to curtail water scarcity in the national capital," Atishi added.

One last battle today for taking the...

From Page 1
Modi notched up a total of 206 public-outreach programmes, including rallies and roadshows, since the EC announced the poll schedule on March 16. The Prime Minister surpassed his nearly-145 public engagements on the stump during the 2019 polls by a big margin. The campaign period this time was 76 days, compared to the 68 days in the polls held five years ago. Congress president Kharge alleged that Modi has mentioned his own name 758 times, spoke about mandir 421 times and mentioned Muslim, Pakistan and minorities 224 times but didn't speak about inflation and unemployment even once in the last fifteen days. On Thursday evening, Modi headed to Kanyakumari where he is meditating till June 1 at the site associated

with Swami Vivekananda. Modi had 206 public outreach programmes, including rallies and roadshows, since the Election Commission announced the Lok Sabha election schedule on March 16. According to EC guidelines, television channels and news outlets will be able to run exit poll data and its results on June 1 after 6.30 pm. Polling is scheduled in all 13 seats of Punjab and four of Himachal Pradesh, 13 constituencies in Uttar Pradesh, nine in West Bengal, eight in Bihar, six in Odisha and three seats in Jharkhand besides Chandigarh. Polling for the remaining 42 Assembly constituencies of Odisha and bypolls to six Assembly seats in Himachal Pradesh will also take place simultaneously.

Remal aftermath wrecks...

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Newmai said three persons have died and nine people suffered injuries, while one is missing due to the floods that hit the state on May 29. Chief Minister N Biren Singh, in a social media post said breach of river embankments occurred at 18 spots of which 17 have been sealed. In view of severe flooding caused by breaches in embankments along river banks, the government on Thursday declared a two-day public holiday for all state offices until May 31 and citizens have been urged to stay indoors unless faced with an emergency, according to an official notification.

Women cops 'greet'...

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The NDA Lok Sabha candidate from Hassan, facing allegations of sexually abusing several women, was arrested after completing the due process, and further legal procedures will follow, Karnataka Home Minister G Parameshwara said. Prajwal's advocate said the former was extending full cooperation to the SIT probe and cautioned against any media trial in the case. During the procedure of executing the arrest warrant, he was flanked by the women police personnel who were led by two IPS officers, Suman D Pennekar and Seema Latkar. He was then taken in a jeep in which only women police were present. They took him to the CID office. The MP was later taken for medical examination under tight

Denied court relief...

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"We are all fighting dictatorship together. If something happens to me to save the country, if I even lose my life, do not be sad," said Kejrival who was arrested in Delhi excise policy case. He assured the Delhiites that all facilities available to them, including 24-hour free electricity, treatment, bus ride for women will continue. "We are all fighting dictatorship together. If something happens to me to save the country, if I even lose my life, then do not be sad," Kejrival said. He said the Supreme Court had given me 21 days to campaign for the elections. "Tomorrow 21 days are getting over and I have to surrender the day after tomorrow. I will go back to Tihar Jail the day after tomorrow. I don't know how many days these people will keep me in jail this time. But my spirits are high. I am proud that I am going to jail to save the country from dictatorship. They tried to break me in many ways, tried to bow me down, tried to silence me. But they did not succeed," he said.

The AAP supremo said when he was in jail they tortured me in many ways. "They stopped my medicines. I have been a serious diabetic for 20 years. For the last 10 years I have been getting insulin injections daily. I get injections in my stomach four times every day. In jail, they stopped my insulin injections for many days and my sugar reached 300, 325 (mg/dL). If the sugar remains so high for so many days, then the kidney and liver get damaged. I don't know what these people wanted, why did they do this," he said. Mentioning about the unexplained weight loss during his incarceration, the AAP convener said during his 50 days stay in jail he lost 6 kilogram of weight. "When I went to jail, my weight was 70 kilogram. Today it is 64 kilogram. Even after being released from jail, my weight is not increasing. Doctors are saying this can also be a sign of some major disease in the body. Many tests need to be done, ketone level in my urine has also increased a lot," he said. Assuring the people of Delhi that all the facilities available to them will continue even in his absence,

Kejrival said, "You take care of yourself, I worry a lot about you in jail. If you are happy, then your Kejrival will also be happy. I will not be among you, of course, but you don't worry, all your work will continue. Wherever I am, inside or outside the jail, I will not let the work of Delhi stop. Your free electricity, Mohalla clinics, hospitals, free medicines, treatment, free bus travel for women, 24 hours electricity and all other works will continue. And after returning, I will also start giving Rs 1,000 every month to every mother and sister," he said. Making an impassioned appeal to the Delhiites who stood by him in difficult times to look after his aged and ailing parents, the AAP national convener said, "I have always fulfilled my duty as a son of your family. Today I want to ask something from you for my family. My parents are very old, my mother is very ill and I worry a lot about them in jail. Take care of my parents after I am gone, pray for them, pray to God. Prayers have great power. If you pray for my mother daily, she will definitely remain healthy," he said.

Torrid summer kills 71...

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Till mid-May, the National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) had reported 32 confirmed and 28 suspected heatstroke deaths, emphasising the severe health risks posed by the extreme temperatures. On May 22, two individuals succumbed to suspected heatstroke in Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan's Kota, adding to the staggering 16,344 suspected heat stroke cases reported since March 1, with 486 cases documented on that single day. In the absence of correct data, the number of deaths and cases of illness due to the extreme heat events are

not known. For instance, the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences has reported 6,751 heatwave deaths between 2009 and 2022. In contrast, the NDMA recorded 11,090 deaths in the same period. India has been experiencing a blisteringly hot summer, and a part of Delhi recorded the country's highest ever temperature at 52.9 degrees Celsius this week, though that may be revised with the weather department checking the sensors of the weather station that registered the reading. While temperatures in Northwestern and Central India are expected to fall in the coming days, the prevailing heatwave over

East India is likely to continue for two days, said the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The deaths of 10 people were also reported in the Government hospital in Odisha's Rourkela region on the same day, authorities said, prompting the State Government to suggest residents against outdoor activities between 11 am and 3 pm when temperatures peak. In Rajasthan, the Government on Thursday announced that five people had died from heatstroke and added that reports about a higher toll being circulated in the media were "beyond facts".

Delhi moves SC for more water from...

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BJP candidate from New Delhi Lok Sabha seat, Bansuri Swaraj, also said the AAP Government has created an artificial water crisis. Delhi Water Minister Atishi has also requested the Centre to ensure a provision for the release of spare water from either Uttar Pradesh or Haryana to address the national Capital's unprecedented water crisis. In a letter to Union Jal Shakti Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, Atishi said there has been a drastic dip in the water level at the Wazirabad barrage during the last few days as Haryana is not

releasing the required quantity in the Yamuna. The water crisis in Delhi comes at a time when maximum temperature in the national Capital is inching close to the 50 degrees Celsius mark. The minimum temperature is nearly 30 degrees Celsius, 2.8 degrees above normal. "Access to water is one of the basic human rights of an individual. Not only is water essential for sustenance, but access to water also forms an essential component of the guarantee of dignity and a quality of life guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution. The current water crisis, which may only get worse given peak summers and ongoing water shortage, violates the right to a dignified and quality life of the people of the NCT of Delhi, who are unable to

access even adequate clean drinking water," the Delhi Government said in its petition before the Supreme Court. Atishi in her plea, contending that the filing of "this petition has been necessitated by an acute heatwave and an issuance of a red alert in the NCT, with temperatures soaring to a record-breaking high of 52.9 degrees Celsius." The plea reads that the Petitioner (Delhi) Government has already devised a solution to meet the increased demand for water in the national capital - the State of Himachal Pradesh, Respondent No. 2, has agreed to share its surplus water with Delhi, as per a pre-existing MOU signed in 2019. It further stated that since Himachal Pradesh does share a physical boundary with Delhi, this water needs to be

released to the national Capital through the Wazirabad barrage, which is located in the State of Haryana, Respondent No.1. Therefore, Respondent No.1's facilitation and cooperation, which is not being provided as on date, is imperative. According to DJB data, there has been a constant decline in water supply over the past week, with the supply levels logged at 984mgd on May 23, 983.2mgd on May 24, 980.73mgd on May 25, 969.32mgd on May 26 and 966.16mgd on May 27, all below the 1,000mgd supply mark. The Wazirabad Barrage in north Delhi forms the primary holding area where raw water is lifted for the Wazirabad and Chandrawal treatment plants, but dwindling water levels have impacted areas that feed these plants.

Air...

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"Repeated incidences of passengers being put to discomfort by M/s Air India in violation of various DGCA CAR (Civil Aviation Requirements) provisions have come to notice," the DGCA said in a statement on Friday. "It has come to the notice of DGCA that flight AI-179 dated 24.05.2024 and flight AI-183 dated 30.05.2024 were inordinately delayed and passengers were put to discomfort due to insufficient cooling in the cabin. Further, repeated incidents of passengers being put to discomfort by M/s Air India in violation of various DGCA CAR provisions have come to notice," the DGCA notice read.



TMC tries to defend its citadel in last phase of LS polls

SAUGAR SENGUPTA ■ KOLKATA

An uncanny lull prevailed in the air as Bengal prepared to go for the seventh and final phase of elections to nine parliamentary constituencies considered a stronghold of the Trinamool Congress which presently holds all the seats up for grabs.

Elections will be held to Basirhat, Barasat, Dum Dum, Mathurapur, Jaynagar, Diamond Harbour and Jadavpur in North and South 24 Parganas in that order and Kolkata North and South constituencies.

"No one is talking ... there is a strange silence ... Allah knows what will happen," says Moinuddin from Falta Diamond Harbour while Rabi Santra from Jadavpur says "some netas are talking communal but the questions is whether the people are taking it." Albeit, silence is often most piercing to the politicians' ears, more so to those in power, say pundits.

True perhaps 2024 is different from 2019 or 2021. While much of the sharp communal polarisation that

had been the hallmark of 2019 and 2021 (Assembly) elections has been blunted to a reasonable extent — save in some pockets — with corruption and women-emotive Sandeshkhali issues taking the center stage what tends to keep all sides particularly the TMC and Opposition BJP on the tenterhooks is the re-emergence of the Left as a reasonable force with a frightful capability of springing some surprises — or in the least slicing away big chunk of votes — in at least three or four seats, local experts say.

A total of 1.63 crore voters - 83.19 lakh men, 80.20 lakh women, and 538 belonging to the third gender are likely to exercise their franchise in 17,470 polling stations to be manned by 960 companies of central forces and a large posse of state police.

Some of more famous names out of the 124 contestants contesting in the seventh phase are TMC's Diamond Harbour nominee and sitting MP Abhishek Banerjee who besides being the party's general secretary and a future Chief Ministerial candidate is also the

nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

The two-time TMC MP who is pitted in a tri-cornered contest against CPI (M)'s students' leader and son of the soil Pratik Ur Rahman and BJP's Abhijit Das hopes to win the seat by 3 lakh margin on account of his creating Diamond Harbour a "model constituency" a narrative often rejected by the Left that calls it "a model laboratory of violence and cold horror."

Besides him TMC leader in Lok Sabha is Sudip Bandopadhyay is contesting from Kolkata North seat against BJP nominee Tapas Roy a former minister who quit the party to join the saffron outfit just before the polls started and Congress veteran and sitting Rajya Sabha member Pradip Bhattacharya.

A third such seat is Dum Dum where the TMC veteran and three-time MP Saugato Roy is contesting in a fierce battle against CPI(M) stalwart Sujan Chakrabarty and BJP's Silbhadra Dutta, once a Mukul Roy protégé.

Kolkata South that sent Mamata Banerjee to Parliament for six



TMC supporters during a roadshow of party candidate from South Kolkata constituency Mala Roy for the last phase of Lok Sabha elections in Kolkata

times before she became the Chief Minister too presents a keen contest between sitting TMC MP Mala Roy and BJP's Debashri Chowdhury a former Union Minister and Raiganj MP --- who according to her own party men has been given a punishment posting a Dilip Ghosh.

Though both of them are confident of winning CPI(M) is putting its money on its dark horse Saira Shah Halim a niece of actor

Naseeruddin Shah and daughter of a former Army Lt General besides being the daughter in law of longest serving Bengal Assembly speaker HA Halim. Though a traditional TMC stronghold which has the history of sending Shyama Prasad Mukherjee to Parliament too, Kolkata South has a good presence of minority voters that might be a source of encouragement for Marxists.

All eyes could also be set on the

Basirhat seat which has a good 45 percent minority votes. But more importantly Basirhat catches attention on account of Sandeshkhali being its one of the seven Assembly segments. Considered a microcosm of the broader electoral battle this time round drawing national attention due to allegations of atrocities on women and land grabs by local TMC leaders Basirhat could present a tricky picture this time round.

The BJP which led the Sandeshkhali battle and iced the cake by nominating Rekha Patra, a local victim-turned-protector the TMC has fielded a former MP Haji Nurul Islam once black-listed by his own party for fanning communal violence. The Left on the other hand has fielded Nirapada Sardar a former three-time MLA from Sandeshkhali.

Basirhat also gains importance because the BJP considers it to be a prestige seat with Prime Minister Narendra Modi personally speaking to Patra over phone inspiring her for the upcoming fight. Basirhat is also important for

State Opposition Leader Suwendu Adhikari because Patra is his hand-picked candidate and her victory or defeat could make or break much of Adhikari's importance in State politics.

While from the adjoining Barasat seat TMC's sitting MP Kakoli Ghoshastidar is locked in a tri-cornered contest against BJP and Forward Bloc, down South from Jadavpur an elite constituency CPI(M)'s young Turk Srijan Bhattacharya is contesting against TMC's Sayani Ghosh and BJP's Dr Anirban Ganguli. A traditional Left stronghold Ghosh who replaced sitting TMC MP Mimi Chakrabarty is getting strong challenge from her opponents.

The Jadavpur seat is historically significant for the TMC, as it was from here that a young Mamata Banerjee first made her mark by defeating CPI (M) veteran Somnath Chatterjee in 1984. It is also important because former Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee lost his last electoral battle from Jadavpur Assembly seat in 2011 before bidding politics a goodbye.

Eight seats in Bihar to go to polls in last phase, 134 candidates in fray

PTI ■ PATNA

More than 1.6 crore voters will decide the fate of 134 candidates in the final phase of Lok Sabha elections in Bihar on Saturday when eight seats will go to the polls.

Several high profile candidates are in the fray for the eight seats — Patna Sahib, which covers the state capital, Patliputra that comprises the rural outskirts, Arrah, Karakat, Jehanabad, Buxar, Nalanda and Jehanabad.

Stakes are particularly high for the BJP in the final phase as it seeks to retain five of these seats, which made up for more than a quarter of its state-wide tally of 17.

Union minister RK Singh is aiming at a hat-trick from Arrah, where his principal challenger is Sudama Prasad, a sitting MLA of the CPI(ML) Liberation which has expanded its footprints in the state rapidly ever since it allied with the RJD and the Congress ahead of assembly polls and came up with best ever performance of 12 seats.

Arrah Lok Sabha seat comprises six assembly segments, including Agiaon, a reserved seat, where by-poll will also be held simultaneously. The by-election has been necessitated by disqualification of CPI(ML) MLA Manoj Manzil following conviction in a murder case by a local court.

The Left party's candidate in the assembly by-poll is Shiv Prakash Ranjan, a former student leader, while the NDA has fielded Prabunath Prasad of JD(U), the runner up of 2020 Vidhan Sabha polls, when he lost to Manzil by a margin of over 48,000 votes. In Patna Sahib, veteran BJP parliamentarian Ravi Shankar Prasad is aiming at a second consecutive Lok Sabha term. The ex-Union minister's principal challenger is Congress spokesperson Anshul Avijit, whose mother Meera Kumar is a former Lok Sabha speaker and late maternal grandfather Jagivan Ram had been a deputy PM.

In Patliputra, RJD president Lalu Prasad's eldest daughter Misa Bharti is trying her luck for the third time. The BJP MP Ram Kripal Yadav, a former close aide of Prasad and ex-Union minister, is aiming at a hat-trick. The BJP also hopes that AIMIM



Poll officials collect election material for the last phase of Lok Sabha polls in Patna on Thursday

candidate Mohd Farooq Raza, for whom party chief and Hyderabad MP Asaduddin Owaisi has also canvassed, would cut into RJD votes.

In Nalanda, the home district of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, who heads the JD(U), sitting MP Kaushendra Kumar hopes to retain the seat for the party for a record fourth term. The principal challenger is Sandeep Saurav, a sitting CPI(ML) MLA and former JNU students' union leader.

Karakat is witnessing a multi-cornered fight which is being most talked about because of Bhojpuri superstar Pawan Singh, who is contesting as an Independent.

Singh entered the fray after having earlier turned down a BJP ticket from Asansol in West Bengal. The move has led to his expulsion from the party.

Upendra Kushwaha, a former Union minister who heads the Rashtriya Lok Morcha, had won the seat in 2014 but lost it five years later upon quitting NDA. He is hopeful of wresting the seat back following return to the BJP-led coalition.

The CPI(ML), which has a strong presence in the area, has fielded Raja Ram Kushwaha, a former MLA and farmer leader. The pitch has been queered further with the AIMIM fielding Priyanka Chaudhary, a zila parishad member.

In Sasaram, the BJP has dropped two-term MP Chhedi Paswan to field Shivesh Ram,

a former MLA and state general secretary. The reserved seat has formerly been a Congress bastion, with Jagivan Ram and Meira Kumar together winning it nine times. However, Kumar has backed out of the race and her party has fielded Manoj Kumar, a recent entrant who was formerly with the BSP headed by ex-CM of UP Mayawati. In Jehanabad, the JD(U) has reposed its trust in sitting MP Chandeshwar Prasad Chandravanshi, whose victory margin in 2019, of less than 2,000 votes, was the lowest for any of the 40 constituencies in Bihar.

The RJD candidate is Surendra Prasad Yadav, the runner up of 2019, who had won the seat in 1998.

In Buxar, the BJP sprung a surprise by denying Union minister Ashwini Kumar Choubey the chance to run for a third consecutive term. The party hopes its candidate Mithilesh Tiwari, a former MLA and state vice president, will retain the seat.

However, Tiwari's bid has met a strong challenge from RJD's Sudhakar Singh, a sitting MLA whose father Jagadanand Singh heads the party's state unit and had won the Buxar seat in 2009.

Queering the pitch, Anand Mishra, a former Assam cadre IPS officer, who resigned from service nursing political ambitions but did not get a ticket from the BJP which had allegedly promised the same, is also contesting as an Independent.

Fate of 62 poll candidates in Himachal to be sealed

PTI ■ SHIMLA

After a two-month-long campaign, the fate of 37 candidates for four Lok Sabha seats and 25 nominees in six Assembly bypolls in Himachal Pradesh would be sealed in voting machines on June 1.

The high-pitched campaign in the hill state, filled with rancour and insinuations, ended with two rallies of Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath at Badsar and Mandi and a roadshow of Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra at Solan on Thursday. Leaders and workers of political parties swarmed across the state for door-to-door canvassing in a last-ditch attempt to woo the voters.

Besides the elections to the four Lok Sabha seats of Hamirpur, Mandi, Kangra and Shimla, bypolls are being held in six Assembly segments — Sujampur, Dharamshala, Lahaul and Spiti, Barsar, Gagret and Kutlehar. The six Assembly seats fell vacant following the disqualification of Congress rebels for defying a party whip to vote in favour of the government during the budget. These legislators voted for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the Rajya Sabha polls on February 29, later joined the saffron party and are contesting the bypolls on BJP tickets from their respective Assembly segments.

Targeting the rebels, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu dubbed them as "bikau" (sold out) and "kale naag" (snakes) and called upon the voters to punish them.

Besides holding big rallies, leaders of political parties also held "nukkar" (corner) meetings, especially in the constituencies where Assembly bypolls are being held simultaneously with the Lok Sabha election. Due to the Assembly bypolls, local issues dominated the campaigning.

BJP's Lok Sabha candidate from Mandi and Bollywood actor Kangna Ranaut and Congress candidate and state Public Works Minister Vikramaditya Singh hogged the limelight due to controversial and pungent remarks made against each other.

Sukhu attacked the BJP throughout the campaign for allegedly hatching a conspiracy to topple the democratically-elected government in Himachal Pradesh through money power and asserted that the Congress will defeat the saffron party with the power of people.



Polling officials leave with EVMs and other election materials for their respective polling booths on the eve of the seventh and last phase of Lok Sabha elections in Shimla

The BJP made the yet-to-be implemented promises of the Congress government in the state, "Modi teesri bar" (Narendra Modi as the prime minister for a third time) and the construction of a Ram temple in Ayodhya its poll planks. It also dubbed the Congress as "anti-Ram" for refusing the invitation for the consecration ceremony of the temple.

The Congress hit out at the Agniveer scheme for short-term military recruitment, alleged a threat to democracy and horse-trading by the BJP during its campaign. It also talked about unemployment and inflation in the country. Apple was another issue that was raised from different perspectives by both the Congress and the BJP.

The Congress has included the demands of apple growers for 100 per cent import duty on their produce, abolition of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) on farm inputs and equipment, loan waiver and subsidies on fertilisers and pesticides in its manifesto, while the BJP maintain that it has introduced several schemes and initiatives for the apple farmers, such as Kisan Samman Nidhi and solar fencing.

Three seats in Jharkhand's Santhal Pargana all set to vote

PTI ■ RANCHI

Over 53.23 lakh voters will decide the fate of 52 candidates in three Lok Sabha seats in the Santhal Pargana region of Jharkhand, where polling will be held in the last phase on Saturday, officials said.

Tight security arrangements have been made for conducting the elections to Dumka, Rajmahal and Godda seats in the fourth phase of Lok Sabha polls in the state. Nineteen candidates each are in the fray in Dumka and Godda, while Rajmahal has 14 contestants. Over 26.23 lakh women and 33 persons belonging to the third gender are among the candidates eligible to exercise their franchise.

Over 2 lakh electors are first-time voters in the age group of 18-19, while 439 electors are aged over 100 years.

Jharkhand Chief Electoral Officer (CEO), K Ravi Kumar told PTI, "All preparations have been made to hold free and fair elections to the three Lok Sabha constituencies. In view of hot weather conditions, instructions have been issued to officials concerned to ensure basic facilities at all polling stations."

He said that voting will start at 7 am at 6,258 polling stations and will continue till 5 pm on Saturday.

Critical booths have been identified where central forces would be deployed, besides other areas. Polling parties have been dispatched to their respective locations, he said.

Of the total polling stations, 241 will be managed by women and seven by persons with disabilities (PwD). Webcasting facilities will be available in all polling stations, he said.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the BJP bagged Dumka and Godda seats while the JMM secured the Rajmahal seat. In Dumka, BJP candidate Sita Soren, sister-in-law of jailed former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren, has locked horns with INDIA bloc's Nalin Soren, who is Jharkhand Mukti Morcha MLA from Shikaripara assembly seat.

Sita Soren, a three-term JMM legislator, joined the BJP in New Delhi on March 20, citing "isolation" and "neglect" by the JMM since the death of her husband Durga Soren in 2009.

The Rajmahal Lok Seat is likely to witness a triangular fight as JMM's Borio legislator Lobin Hembrom is contesting the seat as an Independent candidate against sitting JMM MP Vijay Hansdak. As per the seat-sharing agreement in the ruling alliance in Jharkhand, the Rajmahal seat went to JMM, which has fielded its sitting MP Hansdak. The BJP has pitched its former state president Tala Marandi from the seat. The Godda seat is set for a direct fight between the BJP's three-time MP Nishikant Dubey and Congress's Pradip Yadav and the INDIA bloc candidate.

Section of voters in Ara demand inclusion of Bhojpuri language in Eighth Schedule

PTI ■ ARA (BIHAR)

A section of voters in the Ara Lok Sabha seat in Bihar are nursing a hope that after the elections, efforts will be made by the new dispensation to include Bhojpuri language in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

Bhojpuri is spoken in several parts of Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh. Ara, the headquarters of Bhojpur district, is a historic city and culturally-rich region, and Bhojpuri the dominant language of this region earlier known as Shahabad, which includes current districts of Buxar, Rohtas, Kaimur and neighbouring areas.

Flavours of Bhojpuri could be heard in election campaigning too in this key constituency, where sitting MP from BJP and Union minister R K Singh is seeking a hat-trick of win.

CPI(ML) Liberation candidate Sudama Prasad is fronting the fight for INDIA bloc in Ara. On the last day of the campaigning on Thursday, an e-rickshaw carrying BJP flags



and a poster bearing images of Singh and Prime Minister Narendra Modi went around in the streets of Ara, playing two campaign songs in Bhojpuri.

One song has a refrain 'R K Singh sabah rachle, Ara mey itihaas' (R K Singh has scripted history in Ara), while the other one has the jingle -- 'R K Singh ji sahib ji ke phir se jitaib ji, bhari bahumat se inka vijayi banayib ji' (Will make R K Singh win again, make him emerge victorious with huge mandate).

Inclusion of Bhojpuri in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution has been a long-standing demand of the population speaking this old language. Om Prakash Rai, who ran one

of these campaign rickshaws in sweltering heat of Ara in the last few weeks, when asked about this demand and his expectations from the next government, says in chaste Bhojpuri, "Bahut biswas ba ki pura hoi. R K Singh se bhi umeed ba' (I am very positive that it will happen, have expectations from R K Singh too)".

The demand for inclusion of Bhojpuri in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution is so prevalent here that whether one speaks to people at Ara Junction or in streets near the famous Ramna Maidan, they all want it to happen, sooner than later. "Aathwin Anusuchi mey hamka aapan bhasa chahin' (We want our language in the Eight Schedule)," is a common refrain from one hears from local people.

Patna-based author and film critic Prashant Ranjan, who hails from East Champaran, says, inclusion of Bhojpuri on the Eighth Schedule will be a welcome step and also have a positive impact on its entertainment industry where sleaze has tainted its traditional image as a beautiful language.

Stage set for polling in 13 LS seats of Punjab

PTI ■ CHANDIGARH

Polling for 13 Lok Sabha constituencies in Punjab and the lone Chandigarh seat will be held on Saturday, with INDIA bloc allies Congress and AAP contesting separately and the SAD and BJP also deciding to test the poll waters alone.

Prominent candidates in the fray are four-time MP Preet Kaur, former chief minister Charanjit Singh Channi, three-time MP Harsimrat Kaur Badal and Ravneet Singh Bittu.

The BJP and Shiromani Akali Dal are contesting the Lok Sabha polls on their own for the first time since 1996 while two INDIA bloc parties - the Congress and AAP have fielded their own candidates. The Sukhbir Badal-led party walked out of the NDA in 2020 over the now-repealed farm laws. Besides the Congress, AAP, SAD and the BJP, two other parties — Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) and the Bahujan Samaj Party have also fielded their candidates.

Among the prominent faces, BJP nominee and four-time MP Preet Kaur is seeking re-election from the Patiala parliamentary constituency. Three-time MP and SAD's Harsimrat Kaur Badal and BJP's Parampal Kaur Sidhu, a former IAS officer, are trying their luck from Bathinda while former CM and Congress candidate Channi and BJP nominee Sushil Rinku are in the fray from Jalandhar reserve constituency. Former deputy chief minister Sukhjinder Singh Randhawa and BJP candidate Dinesh Babu are fighting from Gurdaspur.



Punjab Congress chief Amrinder Singh Raja Warring is contesting against BJP's Ravneet Singh Bittu from Ludhiana. Radical Sikh preacher Amritpal Singh, who is lodged in Assam's Dibrugarh jail under the National Security Act, is fighting from Khadoor Sahib while former diplomat and BJP nominee Taranjit Singh Sandhu and Congress candidate Gurjeet Singh Aujla are contesting from Amritsar. Among its candidates, the AAP has fielded five Cabinet ministers — Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal (Amritsar), Laljit Singh Bhullar (Khadoor Sahib), Gurmeet Singh

Khuddian (Bathinda), Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer (Sangrur) and Balbir Singh (Patiala). Congress candidate Sukhpal Khaira is contesting from Sangrur while AAP and BJP candidates Karanjit Singh Anmol and Hans Raj Hans are in the fray from Faridkot seat respectively. Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar) chief Simranjit Singh Mann is contesting from Sangrur seat and Sarabjeet Singh Khalsa, who is the son of Beant Singh, one of the two assassins of late Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, is contesting from the Faridkot reserve constituency.

Trump first ex-prez convicted of felony

HUSH MONEY TRIAL



AP ■ WASHINGTON

Donald Trump has been found guilty of all 34 charges of falsifying business records by a grand jury in New York, an unprecedented and historic verdict that makes him the first former president in American history to be convicted of a felony, as he makes a bid to return to the White House in November.

In a landmark verdict, a panel of 12 Manhattan jurors on Thursday said they unanimously agreed that Trump, 77, falsified business records to conceal a USD 130,000 hush money payment to adult film star Stormy Daniels to influence the 2016 presidential election.

It will ultimately be up to voters on November 5 to decide the significance of the guilty verdict delivered by 12 ordinary New Yorkers, which, on a legal basis, does not prevent him from being elected president again.

Over a six-week trial, the court heard from 22 witnesses, including Daniels, whose alleged sexual encounter with the former president was at the centre of the case.

As the verdicts were read, Trump remained silent and still. But the former president spoke to reporters outside the courtroom, calling the trial a "rigged, disgraceful trial" and saying that the "real verdict" will be rendered on Election Day.

Prosecutors had argued that, by approving a scheme to disguise the money as legal expenses,

Trump broke election law. Trump's sentencing is scheduled for July 11, four days before the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where he will be formally nominated as the party's presidential candidate against incumbent Joe Biden, an 81-year-old Democrat, in the elections.

For now, Trump has been released without having to pay bail.

"This was a disgrace. This was a rigged trial by a conflicted judge who was corrupt. It's a rigged trial, a disgrace. They wouldn't give us a venue change. We were at 5 per cent or 6 per cent in this district, in this area. This was a rigged, disgraceful trial," said Trump shortly after the verdict was read.

"The real verdict is going to be November 5th by the people. And they know what happened here, and everybody knows what happened here. You have a Soros-backed DA, and the whole thing, we didn't do a thing wrong. I'm a very innocent man, and it's okay. I'm fighting for our country. I'm fighting for our Constitution. Our whole country is being rigged right now," Trump said.

Trump alleged that this was done by the Biden administration to wound or hurt a political opponent.

No former president or presumptive party nominee in the US has ever faced a felony conviction.

During the trial, the prosecution

set out to prove that Trump had falsified records when he repaid his former lawyer Michael Cohen for a hush-money payment to Daniels.

They said he had recorded the reimbursements as legal expenses to circumvent campaign finance laws. Todd Blanche, Trump's lead lawyer, told Justice Juan Merchan that the court should not allow the verdict, arguing that Cohen committed perjury on the stand.

The Trump team's motion to acquit, however, was denied by Justice Merchan.

The Biden Harris campaign welcomed the jury's verdict. "In New York today, we saw that no one is above the law," said Biden-Harris 2024 Communications Director Michael Tyler.

"Donald Trump has always mistakenly believed he would never face consequences for breaking the law for his gain. But today's verdict does not change the fact that the American people face a simple reality.

There is still only one way to keep Donald Trump out of the Oval Office: at the ballot box. Convicted felon or not, Trump will be the Republican nominee for president," he said.

University of California, Los Angeles law professor Richard L. Hasen - one of the country's leading experts on election law - has consistently said that nothing in the US Constitution bars a convicted criminal from running for the nation's highest office.

Republicans rally behind Trump to his defence after felony verdict

Washington (PTI): Republicans rallied behind former US president Donald Trump who on Thursday was convicted of a felony as a grand jury in New York found him guilty on 34 counts of falsifying business records.

This made him the first former president to be convicted of a felony.

The jury found that the 77-year-old presumptive Republican presidential candidate, falsified the records in a scheme to influence his 2016 presidential election through hush money payments to a porn actor who had said she had sex with Trump.

Cutting across internal party divisions, the Republicans rallied around Trump as the jurors unanimously reached a verdict in the hush money criminal case. "This will backfire," said Indian-American Vivek Ramaswamy, who over the past few months has emerged as a close aide and confidant of Trump.

"The prosecutor is a politician who promised to nail Trump. The judge's daughter is a Democrat operative who literally 'raised dollars from the trial' while her father presided over it. The jury instructions said they didn't have to agree on the crime to convict," he said.

"Dems could have saved a lot of time by announcing the verdict first, and then having the trial," said former Indian-American Governor Bobby Jindal from Louisiana.

"Pretty neat trick that the same Dem DA who makes violent felonies disappear conjured up these felonies," he said.

House Speaker Mike Johnson described it as a shameful day in American history.

"Democrats cheered as they convicted the leader of the opposing party on ridiculous charges, predicated on the testimony of a disbarred, convicted felon," he said.

"This was a purely political exercise, not a legal one. The weaponisation of our justice system has been a hallmark of the Biden administration, and the decision today is further evidence that Democrats will stop at nothing to silence dissent and crush their political opponents," Johnson said.

House Majority Leader Steve Scalise said extremist Democrats have undermined democracy by weaponising the courts to operate like a banana republic that targets their political opponents.

"Today's verdict is a defeat for Americans who believe in the critical legal tenet that justice is blind. It was clear from the start that Biden teamed up with heavily biased DA Alvin Bragg to go after his political opponent regardless of wrongdoing - while hardened criminals are set free in New York to commit more violent crimes against innocent citizens," he said.

He alleged that this is nothing more than an attempt to interfere with the 2024 election. "The radical Democrats behind this abuse of our justice system will not prevail. The voters will settle this on November 5th," he said.

Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said the verdict represents the culmination of a legal process that has been bent to the political will of the actors involved: a leftist prosecutor, a partisan judge and a jury reflective of one of the most liberal enclaves in America - all in an effort to 'get' Donald Trump.

16 killed, 35 wounded in joint US-British airstrikes

AP ■ DUBAI

Joint British-US airstrikes targeting Yemen's Houthi rebels killed at least 16 people and wounded 35 others, the rebels said Friday, the highest publicly acknowledged death toll by the rebels from the multiple rounds of strikes carried out over their attacks on shipping.

Three US officials, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe a then-ongoing attack, described the strikes Thursday as hitting a wide range of underground facilities, missile launchers, command and control sites, a Houthi vessel and other facilities.

They called it a response to a recent surge in attacks by the Iran-backed militia group on ships in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden over the Israel-Hamas war.

The U.S. F/A-18 fighter jets involved in the strikes launched from the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower aircraft carrier in the Red Sea, officials said. Other US warships in the region also participated.

But the Houthis focused Friday morning on just one of the strikes, which they said struck a building housing Hodeida Radio and civilian homes in the port city on the Red Sea. Their Al Masirah satellite news chan-

nel aired images of one bloodied man being carried down stairs and others in the hospital, receiving aid.

The Houthis described all those killed and hurt in Hodeida as civilians, something The Associated Press could not immediately confirm. The rebel force that's held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since 2014 includes fighters who often are not in uniform.

Other strikes hit outside of Sanaa near its airport and communication equipment in Taiz, the broadcaster said. Little other information was released on those sites - likely signalling that Houthi military sites had been struck.

"We confirm this brutal aggression against Yemen as punishment for its position in support of Gaza, in support of Israel to continue its crimes of genocide against the wounded, besieged and steadfast Gaza Strip," Houthi spokesman Mohammed Abdulsalam wrote on the social media platform X.

In the United Kingdom, the country's Defense Ministry said Royal Air Force Typhoon FGR4s conducted strikes on both Hodeida and further south in Ghulayfiqah. It described its targets as "buildings identified as housing drone ground control facilities

and providing storage for very long range drones, as well as surface-to-air weapons."

"The strikes were taken in self-defense in the face of an ongoing threat that the Houthis pose," British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said. "There's an ongoing threat that the Houthis pose."

The Houthis have stepped up attacks on shipping in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, demanding that Israel end the war in Gaza, which has killed more than 36,000 Palestinians there. The war began after Hamas-led militants attacked Israel on October 7, killing about 1,200 people and taking around 250 hostage.

The Houthis have launched more than 50 attacks on shipping, killed three sailors, seized one vessel and sunk another since November, according to the US Maritime Administration. This week, they attacked a ship carrying grain to Iran, the rebels' main benefactor. On Wednesday, another US MQ-9 Reaper drone apparently crashed in Yemen, with the Houthis claiming they fired a surface-to-air missile at it. The US Air Force didn't report any aircraft missing, leading to suspicion that the drone may have been piloted by the CIA.

Cop dies in ambush shooting that killed two others in US

Minneapolis (AP): A Minneapolis police officer who was killed Thursday had responded to a shooting call and was providing medical attention to a man when he was ambushed in a shooting that killed two other people including the suspected gunman, authorities said.

Minneapolis Officer Jamal Mitchell was trying to help an injured man when the man shot him, Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension Superintendent Drew Evans said.

The Minneapolis Police Department said the public was not in danger but encouraged people to stay away from the scene at a Minneapolis apartment complex in the south Minneapolis neighborhood of Whittier.

The Minnesota Police and Peace Officers Association said a second officer was injured

while they were responding to the call. Police were holding a late evening news conference to address the shooting. News footage showed a large police presence at both the apartment complex and the hospital.

Melvin Carter, the mayor of neighboring St. Paul, said the city was sending police and other first responders to Minneapolis to provide support, including having officers help with security at the NBA playoff game between the Minnesota Timberwolves and the Dallas Mavericks.

Agents from the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives had responded to "an active shooting situation," said Ashlee Sherrill, a spokeswoman for the local division.

ATF agents were "there to help expedite the firearms investigation piece of it," she said.

S Africa heading for 'coalition country' As partial election results have ANC falling under 50%

AP ■ JOHANNESBURG

South Africa was heading closer to the reality of a national coalition government for the first time Friday as partial election results put the ruling African National Congress well short of a majority.

With more than half of votes counted across the country's nine provinces, the ANC had received just under 42% of the national vote, according to the early results as counting continued. That represented a huge drop from the 57.5% it received in the last national election in 2019, although the final results from Wednesday's election have not yet been declared.

The commission that runs the election said those would be announced by Sunday, although they could come sooner.

The count from more than 12,000 of the 23,000 polling

stations raised the strong possibility that the ANC would need a coalition partner to form a government and reelect President Cyril Ramaphosa for a second and final term.

The frenzied negotiations were likely set to start behind closed doors.

The ANC was still leading the count and had the most votes by some way, as expected, with the main opposition Democratic Alliance on around 24%. The ANC is widely expected to still be the biggest party and to have the most seats in Parliament.

The ANC has had a clear majority for all 30 years of South Africa's democracy since the party swept to power in a 1994 election which officially ended the apartheid system of white minority rule, leading Nelson Mandela to become the country's first Black president. It has been the dominant political force and its slipping below

50% would be a momentous change for Africa's most advanced economy.

The ANC's support has steadily declined from a high of nearly 70% of the vote 20 years ago as South Africa grapples with deep socioeconomic problems, including widespread poverty and now one of the worst unemployment rates in the world at 32%. Poverty and unemployment disproportionately affect South Africa's Black majority that make up 80% of the population and were the core of the ANC's support over the years.

While the inequalities of apartheid were always going to be hard to solve, the ANC has also been blamed by many for failures in basic government services, numerous government corruption scandals and most recently an electricity crisis that led to rolling blackouts across the country of 62 million. This election is shap-

ing up to be the tipping point when more South Africans choose another party.

A projection from a government agency and SABC, based on vote returns, was estimating on Friday that the ANC would end up with just over 40%, a drop of around 17 percentage points, which would be a stunning result in the context of South Africa.

The ANC has said little on its possible coalition partners despite the issue dominating South Africa's political analysis for months ahead of the election.

The various parties - South Africa has at least four that could be considered major parties - may now "be faced with a reality that they have to work together" to deal with the country's major challenges, said Joleen Steyn-Kotze, a senior research specialist on democracy at South Africa's Human Sciences Research Council.

Top US, Chinese defense officials seek to restore communications as tensions rise in Indo-Pacific

AP ■ SINGAPORE

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin met with his Chinese counterpart for more than an hour Friday, as the two countries seek to repair lines of communications between their militaries that could be critical as tensions continue to rise between the two in the Indo-Pacific region.

The meeting behind closed doors with Chinese Defense Minister Dong Jun was the first in person for the top defense officials since contacts between the American and Chinese militaries broke down in 2022 after then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, infuriating Beijing.

It took place on the sidelines of the Shangri-La defense forum, Asia's premier security conference, which features defense officials, government leaders and diplomats from around the world. The week-

end talks are being held as wars rage in Gaza and Ukraine, and at a time of increasing tensions and competition for influence between the United States and China in the Indo-Pacific region.

Beijing in recent years has been rapidly expanding its navy and is becoming increasingly assertive in pressing its claim to virtually the entire South China Sea, which has led to an increasing number of direct conflicts with other countries in the region, most notably the Philippines and Vietnam.

The US, meanwhile, has been ramping up military exercises in the region with its allies to underscore its "free and open Indo-Pacific" concept, meant to emphasize freedom of navigation through the contested waters, including the Taiwan Strait. China also claims the democratic self-governing island of Taiwan and has said it will not rule out using force to take it.

Austin, who is due to address the conference on Saturday, reiterated the American position to Dong during their talks, according to Pentagon spokesperson Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder.

"The secretary made clear that the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate - safely and responsibly - wherever international law allows," Ryder said. "He underscored the importance of respect for high seas freedom of navigation guaranteed under international law, especially in the South China Sea."

Since territorial hostilities with China surged last year in the South China Sea, Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s administration has taken steps to forge new security alliances with a number of Asian and Western countries and allowed a US military presence in more Philippine bases under a 2014 defense pact.

In his talks with Austin, Dong accused the US of inflaming regional security by deploying medium-range missiles in the Philippines for the first time recently, and said the Philippines was being provocative toward China by pressing its own South China Sea claims.

Chinese Defense Ministry spokesperson Wu Qian told reporters after the meeting.

Marcos opens this year's conference, hosted by the International Institute for Strategic Studies, with a keynote address Friday.

This week, Marcos already expressed concerns over a new law issued by China giving its coast guard license to seize foreign ships "that illegally enter China's territorial waters" and to detain foreign crews for up to 60 days. The same law also made new reference to 2021 legislation that says China's coast guard can fire upon foreign ships if necessary.

Indian-American seventh-grader wins Spelling Bee title

PTI ■ WASHINGTON

Bruhat Soma, a 12-year-old Indian-American seventh-grade student from Florida, has won the Scripps National Spelling Bee after he spelt 29 words correctly in the tiebreaker, maintaining the dominance of the children from the small ethnic community in the prestigious competition.

Bruhat emerged victorious in the Scripps National Spelling Bee on Thursday, earning more than USD 50,000 in cash and other prizes.

This year's contest came down to a tiebreaker in which Bruhat spelt 29 words correctly in 90 seconds, beating Faizan Zaki, who managed to correctly spell 20 words in the lightning round.

His championship word was "abseil", which is defined as "descent in mountaineering by means of a rope looped over a projection above."

Organisers calling for a spell-off to determine a winner following 14 rounds over three days at the national champi-

onships.

Bruhat went first in the tiebreaker, and after he got through 30 words, it appeared he would be impossible to beat. Faizan's pace was more uneven at the outset. He attempted 25 words but flubbed four of them.

"Bruhat Soma rules the word! The Champion of the 2024 Scripps National Spelling Bee! The boy with the unbelievable memory doesn't miss a word all week and takes home the Scripps Cup!" the organisers said.

"Bruhat Soma correctly spelt 29 out of 30 words attempted to earn the coveted champion title and beat the standing spell-off record set by Harini Logan in 2022. Logan spelt 22 out of 26 words correctly during the competition's first-ever spell-off," the organisers said.

"As the competition progressed, it was clear that Faizan and Bruhat - our final two spellers - showed up tonight ready to take down the dictionary," said Corrie Loeffler, executive director of the Bee.



"Together, they were a powerful match. Bee officials activated the spell-off in the competition's closing minutes, giving these stellar spellers an opportunity to show even more of what they can do," Loeffler said. The two final spellers each had

90 seconds to spell as many words as they could from a predetermined list of words while the other speller was sequestered.

He spelt every word thrown his way correctly over the 90-second duration: brouette, adelantado, hyporcheme, bisellium, mycetric, endecha, sericin, myctopia, ascham, wenzel, cebell, heautophany, kwazoku, panetiere, sagaie, nachschlage, exorhason, giclee, ashwagandha, puszta, asarotum, scintillante, myrabalanus, sciniph, vousseir, caizinha, ramoneur, aposiopesi and abseil. The 31th word was posology, but time is called before he can finish spelling it. He only spelt porphyrio incorrectly.

While competing, his forehead was marked with a vermilion tika, a Hindu symbol of power and purity. His parents said that Bruhat memorised about 80 per cent of the sacred Hindu texts, the Bhagavad Gita.

"My heart was pumping so fast when I realised I won," Bruhat said. "I had a good feeling I would win because I did pret-

ty good, but yeah, you never know. I still couldn't absorb the moment yet."

Adam Symson, president and CEO of The E W Scripps Company, presented Bruhat with the championship trophy.

"At just 12 years old, Bruhat impressed with his display of knowledge and composure," Symson said.

Bruhat's father Srinivas Soma is originally from Nalgonda in Telangana.

This was Bruhat's third time participating in the Scripps National Spelling Bee. He tied for 74th in 2023 and tied for 163rd in 2022. Zaki of Allen, Texas, received USD 25,000.

Shrey Parikh of Rancho Cucamonga, California, tied for third place in the competition received USD 12,500. Ananya Prassanna of Apex, North Carolina, tied for third place in the competition and received USD 12,500. Coached by 16-year-old former speller Sam Evans, Bruhat previously competed in 2022 (tied for 163rd place) and 2023 (tied for 74th place).

'Kim Jong Un supervised drills simulating preemptive attacks on South Korea'

Seoul (AP): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised drills involving the firing of nuclear-capable multiple rocket launchers to show the country's ability to carry out a preemptive attack on rival South Korea, state media reported Friday.

North Korea has simulated nuclear strikes on South Korea numerous times, but the latest drills came after animosities on the Korean Peninsula rose over North Korea's recent failed spy satellite launch.

The North's official Korean Central News Agency reported that the rocket firing drills were meant to demonstrate North Korea's resolve not to hesitate in launching a preemptive strike on South Korea if threatened. It cited Kim as saying that the drills "will serve as an occasion in clearly showing what consequences our rivals will face if they provoke

us." Photos showed Kim watching from a distance as at least 18 projectiles were launched.

KCNA suggested the drills came as response to a South Korean aerial exercise performed hours before North Korea's failed attempt to place its second spy satellite into orbit on Monday night. The launch attempt drew strong condemnation from South Korea, the U.S. and others because the U.N. bans any satellite launches by North Korea, viewing them as covers for testing missile technologies.

North Korea reacted angrily, arguing that it has the sovereign right to launch satellites.

Also this week, North Korea flew hundreds of huge balloons into South Korea carrying manure and other trash, and allegedly jammed GPS navigation signals in the South. There were no reports of any substantial damage.



NISHANT DEV BOOKS PARIS OLYMPICS TICKET

PTI ■ BANGKOK

Nishant Dev (71kg) became the first Indian male pugilist to secure a Paris Games quota when he reached the semifinals of the Boxing Olympic qualifiers here on Friday. The world championships bronze medalist, who had narrowly missed on an Olympic berth in the previous qualifiers, earned the quota after defeating Vasile Cebotari of Moldova 5-0 in the quarterfinal which was a battle of the southpaws. It is India's fourth quota place with women boxers Nikhat Zareen (50kg), Preet Pawar (54kg) and Lovlina Borgohain (75kg) having already secured their passage to Paris. The 71kg weight class had five quotas on offer.

Dev, who has been dominant all tournament, was off to a flyer, landing sharp, accurate punches. The Indian was more composed and used his punches judiciously. In the second round, Cebotari landed a couple of blows and Dev looked a bit out of breath but the Indian continued to hit accurate shots. In the last three minutes, both boxers looked spent but Dev continued to land punches at will. Cebotari earned a point deduction for his punch to Dev when the Indian was down on the canvas. Earlier, India's quest for booking a quota in the women's 60kg ended with Ankushita Boro 2-3 defeat against Agnes Alexiussen of Sweden in the quarterfinals. The 23-year-old Boro fought hard but her Swedish opponent, a former European

Games bronze medalist, dug into her reservoir of experience to pip the Indian. Boro, a former youth world champion, was slow off the blocks, but managed to adapt toward the end of the first round, using straight jabs effectively. It was enough to convince one judge. Down 1-4, Boro made a blistering start, using the combination of left jab and right cross. The Indian was electric and the 28-year Alexiussen was unable to keep up. The two entered the third round on equal footing and Boro was able to make early gains but Alexiussen ended the bout stronger taking the split decision win. Later in the day, Arundhati Choudhary (66kg) and Amit Panghal (51kg) will be in action.

Ministry approves Neeraj Chopra's two months training stint in Europe with coach, physio

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Sports Ministry on Thursday approved reigning Olympic and world champion Neeraj Chopra's plan to train in Europe for 60 days along with coach Klaus Bartonietz and physio Ishaan Marwaha as preparation for the upcoming Paris Games. The ministry's Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) also agreed to Asian Games gold medalist Vinesh Phogat's proposal to include strength and conditioning coach Wayne Patrick Lombard for the international training camp in Hungary from June 10 to 21. Chopra, who created history by becoming the first Indian to win a track and field medal at the Olympics in Tokyo three years ago, will be training at different venues in Europe May 29 to July 28. The financial assistance under TOPS (Target Olympic Podium Scheme) will be covering the airfare, accommodation, meals,

medical insurance, local transport expenses apart from out-of-pocket allowance as per Sports Authority of India (SAI) norms. Vinesh, who will be competing in 50kg division in Paris, had requested for assistance towards Lombard's airfare, visa fees, board and lodging and local transport in Hungary. She will also be competing in the United World Wrestling 2nd Ranking Series - Polyák Imre & Varga János Memorial from June 6 to 9 in Budapest. The MOC also cleared the TOPS wrestler's proposal for support to compete in Grand Prix of Spain from July 5 to 7 in Madrid. Her support team will include physiotherapist Ashwini Jeevan Patil, sparring partner Arvind and coach Woller Akos. **LONG JUMPER, SHOOTERS, SHUTTLEBATS' PROPOSAL TOO APPROVED:** Long jumper Shaili Singh's proposal to extend her training camp in Europe to June 23 was also approved by the MOC. Shaili



will be training in Lisbon, Paris, Athens and Geneva along with coach Bobby George. The MOC also cleared the request from shotgun shooters Rajeshwari Kumari and Maheshwari Chauhan to take their personal coaches to the training camp in Italy in June. Rajeshwari's personal coach David Kostecky will accompany the trap shooter to Italy from June 1 to 14. She will be competing in the ISSF World Cup, Lonato during the same period. Maheshwari's personal coach Riccardo Fillipelli will be

training her from May 31 to June 11. Maheshwari, who became the first Indian skeet shooter to win a quota for Paris Olympics, will also be in the Lonato World Cup from June 12 to 19. The MOC also okayed a request from 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games Badminton bronze medalist HS Prannoy for financial assistance to engage trainer Rohan George Mathews on a full-time basis from June 20 to July 22 in Hyderabad apart from availing the services of a centre that provides recovery products including Hyperbaric Oxygen

therapy and Red Light therapy. Hyperbaric oxygen therapy involves exposing the body to 100 percent oxygen at a pressure that is greater than normal. Among other things, it hastens wound healing. Red light therapy is a therapeutic technique that uses low level wavelengths of red light to help treat various skin conditions. Mainsam Meiraba and Anupama Upadhyay's proposal for support to compete in international tournaments has secured the approval. Recurve archer Atanu Das's request for monetary support towards two-month training at Army Sports Institute, Pune, from June 1 to August 5 along with coach Mim Gurung was also cleared. The request of sailor Vishnu Sarvanan to engage physio Sarath Lal for 40 days during his training camp in Marseille and Para powerlifter Ashok's request to secure a wheelchair also got a green signal from the MOC.

PTI ■ STAVANGER (NORWAY)

Indian Grandmaster R Vaishali continued her dream run to defeat veteran GM Pia Cramling of Sweden, while her brother R Praggnanandhaa went down fighting against Hikaru Nakamura of USA in the fourth round of the Norway chess tournament here. Vaishali stretched her lead to 2.5 points following her second win under classical time control. The Indian now has 8.5 points in her kitty and is followed by women's world champion Wenjun Ju of China and Anna Muzychuk of Ukraine. Muzychuk defeated Koneru Humpy for her first win in the tournament while Wenjun got through her compatriot Tingjie Lei in the Armageddon. With six rounds still remaining in the six-player double round-robin tournament, Lei stands fourth on five points, two points clear of Humpy and Cramling. In the men's section, world number one Magnus Carlsen grinded down arch-rival Fabiano Caruana of United States on a day that witnessed all decisive games under classical time control.

Vaishali outwits Cramling, Praggnanandhaa loses to Nakamura

In the other game of the day, Firouzja Alireza of France put it across reigning world champion Ding Liren of China. The USD 1,61,000 prize money tournament has many more critical games to come but at the end of fourth round Nakamura has nosed ahead on seven points, enjoying a half point lead over Alireza. Carlsen is third with six points to his credit while Praggnanandhaa slipped to fourth position on 5.5 points. Caruana is a close fifth at this stage with five points while Liren is a distant last on just 2.5 points thus far. Vaishali won thanks to her perseverance out of a drawn rook and pawns endgame. Playing the black side of a Grünfeld defense, the Chennai-based GM had little trouble equalising and the players arrived at a heavy piece endgame in almost no time. Cramling had to solve her pawn structure problem a bit and this is where Vaishali



thought she had a chance. The game was still within the boundaries of a draw when Cramling blundered and found herself staring at a lost rook and pawns endgame. The game lasted 54 moves. Humpy lost to Muzychuk in what was a similar story. The rook and pawns endgame should have been a draw but a blunder by Humpy towards the

end sealed the fate of the game in Muzychuk's favour. This was Muzychuk's first victory in Classical chess in almost seven months. In the men's section, Nakamura capitalised on some unforced errors from Praggnanandhaa. The Nimzo Indian defense by the Indian resulted in a dynamic balance but Praggnanandhaa got too

optimistic in the resulting middle game and sacrificed a knight. The compensation, however, was not enough and Nakamura converted his extra material into a full point after 86 moves. Carlsen defeated Caruana out of a Queen and pawns endgame. Outplaying his opponent from a balanced position has long been a hallmark of Carlsen and this day was no different as he won thanks to a blunder by Caruana in the final part of the game. **RESULTS ROUND 4:** Men: Hikaru Nakamura (USA, 7) beat R Praggnanandhaa (Ind, 5.5) 3-0; Fabiano Caruana (USA, 5) lost to Magnus Carlsen (Nor, 6) 0-3; Firouzja Alireza (Fra, 6.5) beat Ding Liren (Chn, 2.5) 3-0. Women: Pia Cramling (Swe, 3) lost to R Vaishali (Ind, 8.5); Tingjie Lei (Chn, 5) lost to Wenjun Ju (Chn, 6); Anna Muzychuk (Ukr, 6) beat Koneru Humpy (Ind, 3).

With Lunin ill, Courtois could be set to start Champions League final for Real Madrid



Friday. The club said that he would join the team on Saturday, hours before the game at Wembley Stadium. Neither the player nor the club have publicly ruled out the possibility of him

playing, but his illness could provide an opportunity for Courtois to end his season on a remarkable high after being sidelined for most of the campaign.

Courtois ruptured a left-knee ligament in August, just two days before the start of the season. The 32-year-old Belgian then damaged the meniscus in his right knee in March, when he was close to making a comeback. He was sidelined until the beginning of this month, when he started in a 3-0 win over Cadiz, a victory that secured Madrid's 36th Spanish league title. Courtois has proven experience in finals. He won the 2022 Champions League with Madrid, the FA Cup with Chelsea, the Europa League with Atletico Madrid, and two Copa del Rey titles (one for Madrid, one for Atletico), among other titles. Lunin was back starting when Madrid beat Bayern Munich in the Champions League semifinals. He previously saved two penalties in the decisive shootout win over Manchester City in the quarterfinals.

India parts ways with IBA, joins World Boxing

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

The Boxing Federation of India (BFI) on Friday parted ways with the suspended IBA and joined the breakout World Boxing in a bid to counter the threat to the sport's Olympic future. The move comes months after the International Olympic Committee reiterated its threat to leave boxing out of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics if national federations continued to align themselves with the International Boxing Association (IBA). "It is absolutely vital to the sustainability of boxing that it retains its Olympics status, so we are delighted to join World Boxing," BFI president Ajay Singh said in a press release. Singh said he looks forward to working closely with the WB Executive Board to "shape the future development of the sport and deliver a brighter future for boxers across the world." World Boxing, whose president is former IBA presidential candidate Boris van der Vorst, was launched in April 2023 and



aims to ensure that boxing remains at the heart of the Olympic movement. The membership application was approved by the BFI's General Assembly and will be ratified by World Boxing's Executive Board. "India is a very important country in international boxing and we look forward to welcoming the BFI into the growing World Boxing family. This is a very exciting development which will significantly increase our presence in Asia and I look forward to working closely with the BFI in delivering our common goals," Van der Vorst said. On May 7, WB held its first for-

mal meeting with the IOC which signalled the start of a formal collaboration between the two organisations aimed at establishing a pathway for boxing to remain in the Olympic Games. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) had de-recognised the IBA in 2019 over long-standing financial, sports integrity, and governance issues. Boxing at the 2024 Paris Olympics is set to be overseen by the IOC. It will be the second successive time, after the Tokyo Olympics, that the IBA will have no involvement in bouts at the mega-event.

Peyton leads unseeded players pulling off upsets on a long day at French Open

AP ■ PARIS

Good thing the French tennis federation installed artificial lights on every court at Roland Garros in 2021, because they sure did come in handy Thursday, allowing match after match to stretch deep into the night, including one particular result that stood out: unseeded American Peyton Stearns' elimination of No. 10 Daria Kasatkina. All of the waiting around all day to get on court did not disrupt Stearns one bit, and the 22-year-old from Cincinnati, who won an NCAA singles title at the University of Texas, used 17 forehand winners through the cold, damp and slow conditions to defeat Kasatkina 7-5, 6-2 in a match that didn't start until after 9 p.m. And didn't finish until after 10:30 p.m. "You just kind of don't know what to expect," the 62nd-ranked Stearns said about waiting to get on court as showers created a start-stop-start scheduling fiasco all around the

grounds. "You have to accept that." How did she prepare to finally get started? "I had a single espresso before I went out there," she said with a smile. "So it was like morning for me." Kasatkina had a harder time with the situation. "Mentally, it's tough to face the day when it's a long wait," said Kasatkina, a 2022 semifinalist at the French Open. "You have to be calm, but at the same time, you have to be ready to jump on the court. And you don't know when." The last of the long day's 55 matches didn't wrap up until just about 1 a.m., when 17-year-old Russian Mirra Andreeva finally got through a 6-3, 3-6, 7-5 win against No. 19 seed Victoria Azarenka, a two-time Australian Open champion who is 34. Andreeva next faces Stearns, with the winner reaching the fourth round in Paris for the first time. Other seeded women sent home included No. 9 Jelena Ostapenko,

the 2017 champion in Paris, who lost to Denmark's Clara Tauson 7-6 (4), 4-6, 6-3; No. 11 Danielle Collins, defeated by Serbian qualifier Olga Danilovic 6-7 (3), 7-5, 6-4; No. 18 Marta Kostyuk, who was beaten 7-5, 6-4 by Donna Vekic; and No. 23 Anna Kalinskaya, eliminated 1-6, 7-5, 6-3 by oft-injured 2019 U.S. Open champion Bianca Andreescu. Men's seeds who bowed out included No. 25 Frances Tiafoe and No. 31 Mariano Navone. A frosty handshake came when Tiafoe and Denis Shapovalov - who are friends - met at the net after Shapovalov's 6-7 (4), 6-4, 6-2, 6-4 win. That's because Tiafoe sent a tennis ball off the side of Shapovalov's head with one on-the-run shot. "I wasn't happy with it. But it's tennis, so you can do what you want," said Shapovalov, who joined Felix Auger-Aliassime to give Canada two men in the third round at Roland Garros for the first time in the Open era, which began in 1968. "Look, I'm sure we'll be fine in



a couple days. Obviously, (in the) heat of the moment, it's not fun. But we'll get through it." Auger-Aliassime and Shapovalov

are among the players who originally were supposed to complete their second-rounders Wednesday. Because they didn't get

done until Thursday, on account of the weather, they need to get back on court Friday for the third round, losing the usual day off at a Grand Slam. There were victories for several top men Thursday: No. 1 Novak Djokovic, who seeks his fourth French Open championship and 25th from all Grand Slam tournaments, No. 4 Alexander Zverev, No. 8 Hubert Hurkacz and two-time runner-up Casper Ruud. No. 5 Daniil Medvedev and No. 15 Ben Shelton both advanced when their opponents stopped because of injury. Women moving on included No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, No. 4 Elena Rybakina, No. 14 Madison Keys and No. 15 Elina Svitolina. This is the fourth tournament for Stearns since she began working with Tom Hill, who used to coach two-time Grand Slam semifinalist Maria Sakkari. Last week, Stearns claimed her first career WTA title, in an event on clay at Rabat, Morocco, celebrating by posing for

photos while doing a handstand. That skills is from her days in gymnastics, a sport her mother, Denise, used to do. Mom - who Stearns said good-naturedly offered some critiques of her form in the pictures - came to Paris with plans to watch just daughter's first-round match, then fly home to Ohio. But a win that day prompted a new flight booking. Now after the win against Kasatkina, Stearns said her mother is sticking around for the third round, too. "I was like, Look, just stay. Please," Stearns said with a laugh. "We've got to keep this going." Nothing too onerous about getting to stay in France while watching your kid win tennis matches, right? Ah, but Stearns said she put Denise to work. "She's running me through my warmups and cool downs. And before my matches, we have a ritual where she'll fill up my three water bottles and add electrolytes. Keeping her busy," Stearns said. "She jokes, You're not paying me."

ROHIT SHARMA HOPES FOR QUICK ACCLIMATISATION OF NY PITCH AHEAD OF T20 WC

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Marvelling at the newly-constructed Nassau County International Cricket Stadium here, India skipper Rohit Sharma underlined the need for his team to get acclimatised to the pitch and conditions quickly ahead of their T20 World Cup opener against Ireland on June 5.

However, Rohit and company will get a chance to check the nature of the pitch and overall conditions when they face Bangladesh in a warm-up match here on Saturday. It's also India's lone training game ahead of the ICC marquee event.

The warm-up match is important from India's perspective because their matches will start at 10.30 AM local time and the players need to get used to day-time matches after playing under lights in the IPL for the last two months.

"We're looking to understand the conditions more importantly (before the tournament proper) as we haven't been here before," Rohit told ICC.

The Mumbai-based skipper emphasised the need for his side to get into a "rhythm" before the real action starts, and he wanted to use this side game as a



springboard. "We will try and make the most of the conditions, get used to what it's going to be like on June 5 when we play our first game," he added.

The challenge for the Indians will be to adapt to the drop-in turf here, something they don't come across very often in international cricket. "It's just about getting into that

rhythm of getting the feel of the ground, pitch and stuff like that," he said.

Rohit was part of the first batch of India cricketers to arrive here on May 26, along with Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Suryakumar Yadav, Rishabh Pant, Shivam Dube, Ravindra Jadeja, Kuldeep Yadav and Axar Patel. Moving beyond the match

routines, Rohit also found time to take in the beauty of the venue. "It looks beautiful. It's quite an open ground. When we come here and play our first game, I just can't wait to feel the atmosphere in the stadium," he said.

"It's a decent capacity as well. Hopefully it's gonna be a good one." Rohit hoped that fans will

through the venue for their matches. "People in New York will be very interested in coming and watching the World Cup, as it is happening for the first time here.

"I'm pretty sure all the fans across various teams are quite excited and looking forward to this tournament. And also as players (we) can't wait to get

started," he noted.

FOR WORRY BANGLADESH: Skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto too appreciated the excellent construction here, but he would not have forgotten Bangladesh's shocking series defeat against the USA a few days back.

The United States, largely constituted by expat players, scored a stunning 2-1 win over Bangladesh in a three-match T20I series at home last week, signalling that they are no mere pushovers.

Hence, Shanto might be hoping for a quick turnaround against formidable India, even though it's a warm-up match at this scenic stadium.

"To be very honest I wasn't expecting anything like this but we all followed on social media how the wicket looks like, how the ground would be, and we are very excited as to what is going to happen here," said Shanto.

The 25-year-old top-order batter then gushed over the venue. "It's unbelievable. I think it's crazy. I mean we all saw on the internet there was nothing (three months ago). Now, it looks like a proper stadium and feels great," he said.

The Eastern grandstand (in particular), I didn't expect it to be like this," he added.



India eye redemption as big ticket cricket touches base in America

PTI ■ NEW YORK

There will be the usual favourites, the mavericks, the chokers and also the unpredictable minnows — the script is familiar for a World Cup but the scale would be unprecedented when the T20 showpiece, featuring a record 20 teams, spearheads cricket's audacious charge into the American market starting here on Saturday.

While India would be eager to shed the baggage of near-misses, Australia would like to add another chapter to their tale of domination. For the likes of Pakistan and West Indies, the primary target would be to keep in check their tendency to implode at the most inopportune time.

Defending champions England and South Africa too will be a force to reckon with, especially the latter. Given the presence of match-winners like Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller, Quinton de Kock and Kagiso Rabada, the Proteas seem primed to get rid of the chokers' tag.

It will be a ground-breaking event not just because of the sheer size of the draw but also for the fact that it officially marks cricket's big-ticket entry into the USA, which will host 16 of the 55 matches to be played across 29 days.

The remaining 39 games will be held in the West Indies, including the Super 8 stage, the semifinals and the final on June 29.

Besides the obvious favourites on paper, the likes of Afghanistan can also never be counted out to upset the apple cart at the most unexpected time.

There are plots within plots that will unfold in the course of next one month. And perhaps one of the most intriguing would be the one involving India, a team that looks so

destined for an ICC trophy but has somehow managed to fall short after the 2013 Champions Trophy triumph.

Rohit Sharma's reputation as captain will definitely be on the line this time. Considering the unparalleled resources and depth that the sport's powerhouse has, most experts find it difficult to pinpoint India's trophy drought at the word stage over the past decade.

Rohit's predecessor Virat Kohli ended his tenure as the most successful Test captain but a global trophy eluded him.

Now Rohit is carrying that baggage of not winning a world title with India finishing runner-up in two ICC events over the past 12 months, including the juggernaut-ending loss to Australia in the ODI World Cup final at home.

Their outdated approach in the previous two T20 World Cups cost them dearly but they are unlikely to repeat those mistakes in the Americas.

The recently-concluded IPL showed how the batters are pushing boundaries and India's high-profile line-up needs to follow that risky path.

India may not have the same battering firepower as compared to some of the rival teams but as pitches in the Caribbean are expected to be spin-friendly, they surely have all bases covered.

Rohit and Co. are scheduled to play three games at the makeshift facility here including the blockbuster clash against Pakistan on June 9.

Drop-in pitches will be used at the brand new facility with all teams entering unfamiliar territory.

India, however, will have the advantage of playing a warm-up game against Bangladesh at the same venue on June 1 before they take on Ireland in their opening league game on June 5.

Pooran, Powell make fifties as WI hammer nine-man Australia by 35 runs

PTI ■ PORT OF SPAIN (TRINIDAD)

Fifties by Nicholas Pooran and Rovman Powell helped West Indies outpunch a nine-man Australia by 35 runs in their warm-up match ahead of the T20 World Cup here.

As it happened in their first training match against Namibia, the Aussies fielded only nine players against the Windies. Selector George Bailey and head coach Andrew McDonald filled the remaining two spots while fielding.

Batting first, West Indies rode on fifties by Pooran (75, 25b, 5x4, 8x6), skipper Powell (52, 25b, 4x4, 4x6) and an unbeaten 47 off 18 balls by Sherfane Rutherford (4x4, 4x6) to raise 257 for 4 in 20 overs.

In reply, Josh Inglis (55, 30b, 3x4, 4x6) led Australia's reply and there were a

39 (22b, 4x4, 2x6) by Ellis and numerous 20s as Australia finished at 222 for seven.

Earlier, Australia had Tim David, Josh Hazlewood, Adam Zampa, Nathan Ellis and Ashton Agar as bowlers, and all went for plenty.

All-rounder Mitchell Marsh, recuperating from an injury, refrained from bowling, though he later batted. West Indies innings was built around fine partnerships between Pooran and Johnson Charles (40), who milked 90 runs for the second wicket and a 63 for the unbroken fifth wicket between Rutherford and Shimron Hetmyer (18).

The absence of skipper Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Cameron Green and Travis Head was felt as they are yet to join the squad.

They are spending a few extra days at



home after a taxing campaign in the recently concluded IPL. **NAMIBIA BEAT PNG:** Namibia

defeated Papua New Guinea by three runs under the DLS method. Batting first, PNG were restricted to

109 for seven in 20 overs, and Namibia were 93 for six in 16.5 overs when the skies opened up in Tarouba. But they were three runs ahead in the DLS calculations at that stage.

At Dallas, the match between the Netherlands and Canada was abandoned without a ball being bowled.

BRIEF SCORES

West Indies: 257/4 in 20 overs (Nicholas Pooran 75, Rovman Powell 52; Sherfane Rutherford 47 not out; Adam Zampa 2/62) beat Australia: 222/7 in 20 overs (Josh Inglis 55, Nathan Ellis 39; Gudakesh Motie 2/31) by 35 runs.

Papua New Guinea: 109/7 in 20 overs (See Bau 29; David Wiese 2/8, Ruben Trumblemann 2/15) lost to Namibia: 93/6 in 16.5 overs (Jan Frylinck 36, JP Kotze 30; Alei Nao 2/9, Assad Vala 2/14) by 3 runs (DLS)



Lamichhane to miss T20 World Cup after US denies visa to Nepalese leg spinner

AP ■ KATHMANDU

Nepal's ace leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane was ruled out of the Twenty20 World Cup on Friday after his US visa application was rejected for a second time.

The Nepalese government and its cricket authorities took up Lamichhane's case after his visa was first rejected last week.

The Cricket Association of Nepal said in a statement that "despite taking necessary initiatives ... The US Embassy has expressed its inability to give travel permission (visa) to national player Lamichhane to play the World Cup."

The Nepalese cricket association suspended Lamichhane after he was arrested in 2022 over an accusation of the rape of an 18-year-old woman. He was found guilty in January this year but was acquitted on appeal because of "lack of evidence" and the cricket association allowed him to resume playing cricket.

Nepal, placed in Group D, opens its T20 World Cup campaign against the Netherlands on June 7 in Dallas before taking on Sri Lanka at Lauderhill, Florida on June 11.

Warm up game opportunity to check Indian players' rhythm

PTI ■ NEW YORK

Yashasvi Jaiswal will aim to add his bit to the combination conundrum with a handy contribution while Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj need to put their best foot forward during India's only T20 World Cup warm-up game against Bangladesh ahead of their tournament opener on June 5.

With all 15 cricketers being regular playing XI members of their respective IPL franchises, the team is certainly not short on game time but an assortment of 15 high-calibre players and finding that perfect combination will be key to ending India's 13-year global trophy drought.

In the warm-up game, it is expected that save for Virat Kohli, who is expected to touch down some time before the practice game, all other 14 players will be given a go as it doesn't

have an official status. It will be an opportunity to check everyone's rhythm after most of the core team members enjoyed a two-week break.

There will be two areas where skipper Rohit Sharma and outgoing head coach Rahul Dravid need to take a judicious call.

Even if Jaiswal is in good nick, how to fit him in the side will be an issue as it would mean keeping a power-hitter like Shivam Dube out of the playing XI.

It is a foregone conclusion that Jaiswal might have to sit out as it would not only allow Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma to open but could also open the door for Dube at the back end of the tournament.

"Shivam Dube is a six-hitting machine. He can be the 'x-factor' in the T20 World Cup. But if Shivam has to be in the XI, then you can't play Yashasvi. Rohit has to take that



call and I prefer both pace-bowling all-rounders in the XI. If Shivam plays, he can take on the opposition wrist spinners in the latter half," Suresh Raina, one of India's premier T20 batters of his time, said on Friday when asked about a possible combination.

The second teething problem for India would be to find Jasprit Bumrah's opening pace-bowling partner. Both Arshdeep Singh and Mohammed Siraj have blown hot and cold in the IPL and their form has left a lot to be desired.

RP Singh, one of the heroes of India's inaugural edition victory, feels that Hardik Pandya's four overs will be very important. Besides, he feels that Arshdeep should be the second frontline pacer on the newly-laid drop-in track.

Talking about the length to be bowled on the tracks in the US during an early morning start, he felt

variations will be important, which make Arshdeep a better bet compared to Siraj. "As per my understanding, there should be a bit of slowness in the wicket. So, the ideal length will be somewhere around just short of good length. There will not be a lot of swing for the bowlers but the bowlers with variations, not only yorkers but also slower ones, leg and off cutters..." RP replied to a PTI query during a promotional event in Delhi.

"These deliveries will be utilised a bit more by Arshdeep, so the success rate will be automatically higher for him and that's what I understand the wickets in the US," he explained.

Against Bangladesh on a slowish track, it would also be a challenge for the middle-order as to how they deal with Shakib Al Hasan and Mahedi Hasan apart from questions asked by cutter master Mustafizur Rahaman.

PTI ■ BARBADOS

Australia skipper Mitchell Marsh will not bowl in their T20 World Cup opener against Oman on June 6 and will play only as a batter as he continues his recovery from a hamstring injury sustained during the IPL, said head coach Andrew McDonald on Friday.

Marsh played both the World Cup warm-up games against Namibia and co-hosts West Indies in Trinidad, scoring 18 and 4 respectively.

But the pace-bowling all-rounder did not field for the full bowling innings in either games, with Matthew Wade taking over captaincy duties in his absence. "For Mitch, (the warm-up games) was about ticking off where his body was at," McDonald told cricket.Com.Au.

Mitchell Marsh will not bowl in T20 WC opener against Oman: Coach McDonald

"He fielded more overs tonight (in the warm-up against West Indies), he was able to move more freely, so he's building a little bit of confidence there. It looks as though he's all set for the first game," he added.

Marsh played just four matches for Delhi Capitals in the recently concluded IPL following a right hamstring niggle and he flew back to Australia in the last week of April to continue his recuperation.

"The second part is just when the bowling comes back online... It won't be the first game," said McDonald.



During the second warm-up game against the West Indies, nine-man Australia lost by 35 runs, with the absence of skipper Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell, Mitchell Starc, Marcus Stoinis, Cameron Green and Travis Head, who are yet to join the squad, being felt by the Kangaroos.

The Australian players who took part in the IPL flew back home to be with their families and were exempted from the warm-up fixtures.

"It was by design, in terms of when we were getting people back after the IPL; we were well aware we weren't going to get

the squad together until the first of next month," said McDonald. "We've got some things in place where we'll bring the group together, we'll work through our plans leading into Oman and there's a bit of space between that game and (playing) England." Australia will play arch-rivals and defending T20 World Cup champions England here on June 9. "We feel as though we have plenty of time to bring that group together. It's a familiar group, they've played a lot together. If they hadn't played a lot together then the prep might have looked different," the coach added.

"We feel comfortable though as they know how to play with each other. It will just be finalising the XIs for the games, and the balances that we want. We've got plenty of options.

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