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ACROSS INDIA IN AUGUST

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Poll battle enters crucial Phase III

RAJESH KUMAR ■ NEW DELHI

With stakes being high for the BJP which had won an overwhelming majority of these seats, including all in Gujarat, Karnataka, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh, in the 2019 general elections, political bigwigs Union Ministers Amit Shah, Jyotiraditya Scindia, Mansukh Mandaviya, Parshottam Rupala Congress stalwart Digvijay Singh, to NCP's (Sharad Pawar faction) Supriya Sule and Samajwadi Party's Dimple Yadav are amongst several others from ruling and Opposition side who are in the fray for the voting to be held in 93 constituencies spread over 12 States and Union Territories on Tuesday in the third phase of Lok Sabha polls.

Over 1,300 candidates, including around 120 women, are in the fray for the 93 parliamentary seats in 12 States and Union Territories. Modi and Shah will cast their votes at booths in Ahmedabad city that fall under Gandhinagar Lok Sabha seat.

After the third phase of polling, more than half of India will be covered. A total 283 will be covered after the third phase of polling. According to EC, over 17.24 crore voters will cast their vote in the third phase for 93 parliamentary seats. A total of 1,041 inter-State and 275 International Border check posts are keeping strict vigil on any illicit flow of liquor, drugs,



cash and freebies. Strict surveillance has been kept at sea and air routes. With the BJP bagging Surat unopposed, 25 seats in Prime Minister Modi's home State of Gujarat will go to polls on May 7, besides 11 seats in Maharashtra, 10 seats in Uttar Pradesh, the remaining 14 of the 28 in Karnataka, seven in Chhattisgarh, five in Bihar, four each in Assam and West Bengal, and all two in Goa. The Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (2 seats) and nine seats in Madhya Pradesh, including Betul where elections were deferred, will also go to polls on Tuesday and over 11 crore people will be eligible to vote. Campaigning for the third phase witnessed the

Constitution and reservation issue dominating the poll discourse. The stakes are significant for the BJP and its allies, which had, in 2019, won 75 of the 93 seats going to polls on Tuesday, while the INDIA Bloc parties had won only 11. Four seats had gone to the undivided Shiv Sena, two were won by independents, and one by the AIUDF. With the first two phases registering a dip in voter turnout as compared to 2019, the question is whether the third phase will buck the trend amid hot weather and heat waves in these States. After the third phase, voting will be completed in 283 out of

243 seats in the Lok Sabha. The next four phases will be on May 13, May 20, May 25 and June 1. Counting of votes is on June 4. Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seats were also to vote in the third phase of polling. However, due to several connectivity issues, the Election Commission of India rescheduled it to May 25. During the campaign, the BJP had to face the ire of the Kshatriya community over a remark made by Rupala in Rajkot. He had claimed several rulers from the community had "roti and beti" (marriage and trade) relations with the British and other foreign invaders.



LG recommends NIA probe against Kejriwal

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

Troubles seem to be mounting for the jailed Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal as Delhi Lieutenant Governor Vinai Kumar Saxena recommended National Investigation Agency (NIA) probe against the AAP chief for allegedly receiving political funding from the banned terrorist organisation 'Sikhs for Justice' to the Home Minister Amit Shah on Monday. The LG claimed that Kejriwal "has received a staggering amount of \$16 million in funding from Khalistani groups between 2014 and 2022."

The move comes a day ahead of the Supreme Court considering granting Kejriwal interim bail in view of the ongoing Lok Sabha elections. The AAP chief, who is in Tihar jail, was arrested on March 21 by the Enforcement Directorate in connection with an excise policy linked money laundering case. In a letter to the Union Home secretary, the Lieutenant Governor's secretary said Saxena had received a complaint that the Kejriwal-led AAP allegedly received USD 16 million funding from extremist Khalistani groups for facilitating the release of Devendra Pal Bhullar.

"Keeping in view, the sensitivity and seriousness of the allegations levelled in the complaint, the LG has desired that the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, may consider referring the matter to the NIA for conducting comprehensive investigation into the matter," the letter to the Home



Ministry read. Bhullar, who is in Amritsar Central Jail, was convicted in connection with the killing of nine people in a bomb blast in 1993 in Delhi. He was sentenced to death by a designated TADA court on August 25, 2001 and is undergoing life imprisonment after the Supreme Court commuted his death sentence. Reacting to the development, senior AAP leader and Delhi Minister Saurabh Bharadwaj called it "yet another conspiracy against Kejriwal at the behest of BJP". "They are losing all seven seats in Delhi and are rattled by the fear of defeat in Lok Sabha polls," he claimed, adding that the LG is the agent of BJP and the party had done something similar before also in Punjab elections. The complaint was filed by World Hindu Federation's National General Secretary Ashoo Mongia.

STARS IN FRAY

CONSTITUENCY	CANDIDATES	PARTY
Gandhinagar	Amit Shah	BJP
	Sonal Patel	Congress
	Mohammedanish Desai	BSP
Baramati	Supriya Sule	NCP (Pawar)
	Sunetra Pawar	NCP
Guna	Jyotiraditya Scindia	BJP
	Rao Yadendra Singh	Congress
	Dhaniram Chaudhary	BSP
Rajgarh	Rodmal Nagar	BJP
	Digvijay Singh	Congress
	Dr. Rajendra Suryavanshi	BSP
Berhampore	Nirmal Kumar Saha	BJP
	Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury	Congress
	Yusuf Pathan	TMC
Vidisha	Shivraj Singh Chouhan	BJP
	Pratap Bhanu Sharma	Congress
	Kishan Lal Ladiya	BSP
Dharwad	Seema Sharma	SP
	Prahlad Joshi	BJP
	Vinod Asooti	Congress
South Goa	Pallavi Dempo	BJP
	Capt. Viriato Fernandes	Congress
	Mainpuri	Jaiveer Singh Thakur
Dimple Yadav		SP
Shiv Prasad Yadav		BSP
Dhubri	Badruddin Ajmal	AIUF
	Rakibul Hussain	Congress
	Zabed Islam	AGP



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with NDA candidates and leaders at a public meeting ahead of Lok Sabha polls in Berhampur, Odisha, on Monday

BJP's all-weather ally in Odisha faces Modi heat

DEEPAK KUMAR JHA ■ NEW DELHI/BERHAMPUR

Less than two months before the announcement of Lok Sabha polls, when the BJP and BJD were discussing an alliance in Odisha and Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik received praise from Prime Minister Narendra Modi at public rallies, the latter asserted on Monday that the expiry date of the BJD Government in Odisha is June 4, the day when Lok Sabha and Assembly election results will be announced. Addressing his first election rally in the State, Modi said, "Odisha mein BJD ast hain, Congress past hai aur log BJP per ashwast hai. Sirf BJP ummido ka naya suraj ban kar ubhri hain (in Odisha, the BJD is setting sun, the Congress is battered and people are sure of BJP. And the BJP has emerged as the only ray of hope for the people)." BJD leaders expressed dismay and complete shock over the PM's 'sharp attack' on the

party, as well as Patnaik, who left no stone unturned to support the NDA in Parliament. In February this year, he sent Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw to the Rajya Sabha under the BJD quota. Patnaik also regarded the BJP with a tacit strategy, as it never aligned with the Congress-led Opposition alliance or any Third Front, which was proposed a year ago by several non-BJP parties to challenge Modi in the Lok Sabha polls. Both parties were working to forge an alliance after breaking ties 15 years ago, though they cooperated in tandem on legislative matters. In an apparent dig at Naveen Patnaik, the Prime Minister said, "Odisha needs a CM who understands Odia language and culture." "The BJP will form a double-engine Government here after the ongoing elections. The expiry date of the BJD

Government is June 4, 2024," Modi said at the Berhampur rally. When the talks were ongoing until they proved futile at the end of March, both Modi and Patnaik acknowledged each other's contributions, despite not being partners in Governments. The pact was formed in 1998, orchestrated by senior leaders Bijay Mohapatra and the BJP's stalwart strategist late Pramod Mahajan. In 1998 Patnaik was Minister of Steel and Mines in the Vajpayee Cabinet. "Naveen Patnaik always regarded the BJP as a party of late PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The alliance was successful and even when in between there were no trucks, the BJD was tacitly with BJP in every sphere and never aligned with the Opposition side," said a BJD leader also quoting Patnaik's reaction post Modi's speech.

Spotlight on Samajwadi Party's first family

VIRENDRA NATH BHATT ■ LUCKNOW

The stage is set for the third phase of elections in 10 Lok Sabha constituencies which will go to polls on Tuesday, with all eyes on the first family of Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav who are in the electoral fray. While SP chief Akhilesh Yadav's wife Dimple is aiming to retain the Mainpuri Lok Sabha seat which she won in the bypolls following the demise of her father-in-law Mulayam, Akshaya Yadav, son of Ram Gopal Yadav, the national principal general secretary of SP, will try to reclaim the Firozabad seat, which he had won in 2014.



Besides, Aditya Yadav, the son of SP national general secretary Shivpal Singh Yadav, is making his electoral debut from the Budaun Lok Sabha seat which was represented by his cousin Dharmendra Yadav in 2014. The 10 constituencies in UP that will vote in the third phase on Tuesday are

Sambhal, Hathras (SC), Agra (SC), Fatehpur Sikri, Firozabad, Mainpuri, Budaun, Aonla and Bareilly. In the earlier two phases of elections, polling was held in 16 out of the total 80 Lok Sabha constituencies in UP.

Besides the Yadav family members, polling will be held to seal the fate of Union Minister SP Singh Baghel, UP Tourism Minister Jaiveer Singh, Minister of State for Revenue Anoop Pradhan Balmiki. Baghel, Jaiveer Singh, and Balmiki are

contesting from Agra (SC), Mainpuri, and Hathras (SC) Lok Sabha constituencies respectively. Jaiveer Singh, son of former Chief Minister of UP and Bharatiya Janata Party stalwart Kalyan Singh, is looking to score a hat-trick from the Etah parliamentary constituency, which was also represented in 2009 by Kalyan Singh as a candidate of the Jan Kranti Party. In Bareilly, the main contest has narrowed down to the BJP's Chhatrapal Singh Gangwar and Praveen Singh Aron of the SP after the nomination paper of Bahujan Samaj Party candidate Master Chhotey Lal Gangwar was rejected.

Capital sees 67 per cent surge in wrong side driving prosecutions

SAUMYA SHUKLA ■ NEW DELHI

A staggering surge of almost 67 per cent in the number of prosecutions for 'wrong side driving' was witnessed in the national Capital in 2024, during the period from January 1 to April 30, compared to the same period in the previous year. While in the earlier year, a total of 18,047 violators of traffic rules were caught by the traffic police in the city, the number saw a considerable jump, taking the total to 30,062 in 2024. A Delhi Traffic Police official said in response to the alarming increase in incidents of driving against the flow of traffic in the Capital city, the Delhi Traffic Police has launched a robust crackdown campaign to ensure road safety and discipline. "Over the past few months, there has been a noticeable surge in the number of vehicles violating traffic norms by

driving against the designated flow of traffic. This reckless behaviour not only endangers the lives of the offenders but also poses a significant threat to other road users, leading to a rise in accidents and traffic congestion," said the official. The police have intensified its measures in order to curb this dangerous practice. Special teams have been deployed across key intersections and thoroughfares to monitor traffic flow and identify violators. Strict legal action, including hefty fines and penalties, is being taken against individuals found driving against the established traffic direction," said the authorities. Further, top 10 traffic circles have been identified by the police with

Najafgarh area topping the list with 1,3289 violators. Sarita Vihar stands at the second number with 1,333 violators, followed by 1,133 in BhajanPura, 1,093 in Punjabi Bagh, 1,062 in Kalyan Puri, 1,056 in Kotwali, 1,041 in Dwarka, 998 in Sangam Vihar, 968 in Rajouri Garden and 966 in Kamla Market. "The Delhi Traffic Police has also conducted a comprehensive analysis of the top ten traffic circles with the highest number of challans issued in 2024. This study makes it possible to target enforcement operations to improve road safety and adherence to traffic regulations by identifying the areas with the highest prevalence of these types of offences," a senior police

official said. In a bid to raise awareness and make citizens understand the importance of adhering to traffic rules and regulations, the traffic police is collaborating with various stakeholders, including civic authorities and educational institutions. "Public outreach programmes, awareness campaigns, and educational initiatives are being conducted to instil a sense of responsibility and civic duty among all road users," the police said. Further, they urged citizens to prioritise safety and compliance with traffic laws while commuting on the city's roads. "It is imperative for every individual to respect traffic regulations, follow designated traffic flow directions, and contribute towards creating a safer and more orderly environment for all," the statement by the traffic police said.



Marine heatwave scorches pristine coral reefs of Lakshadweep

ARCHANA JYOTI ■ NEW DELHI

The vibrant corals of the picturesque Lakshadweep sea nestled in India's smallest union territory off the coast of Kerala are losing their sheen as it is experiencing prolonged marine heatwaves since late October 2023. These marine heat waves, characterised by extended periods of abnormally high ocean temperatures, have pushed the Degree Heating Week (DHW) indicator above

4 °C-weeks, posing a severe threat to coral health, said scientists at the ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (CMFRI) as they observed alarming levels of coral bleaching, indicating significant stress on marine ecosystems in the region. Coral bleaching occurs when the water temperature becomes excessively warm, causing corals to expel the microscopic algae residing within their tissues. Experts say bleached corals are not



dead but are at risk of starvation and disease. "Such heat stress levels signify a severe threat to coral health, leading to extensive bleaching where corals lose the symbiotic



algae (zooxanthellae), compromising their survival by depriving them of essential nutrients. If the DHW continues to rise, reaching beyond 12 °C weeks, it could

precipitate an unprecedented biodiversity crisis due to multispecies mortality," KR Sreenath, senior scientist at CMFRI, said on Monday. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), this level of DHW poses a substantial risk of coral bleaching, threatening the region's diverse marine ecosystems. Corals are living organisms that make up the reefs and provide the ecosystem for

marine life to thrive, especially fish. Coral reefs are a natural barrier, protecting these islands against the swelling of the seas, and keeping salt water out of the limited freshwater sources in the region. Shelton Padua, another senior scientist, identified the primary causes of these marine heat waves as excessive heat atmospheric transfer coupled with shifts in ocean currents, leading to unusually high water temperatures.

Doon students pass ISC & ICSE examination with flying colours

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE)- class X and Indian School Certificate (ISC)-class XII board examination results were declared on Monday with students of various schools in Dehradun passing the examination with...

Bhatt with 97 per cent. In the commerce stream, Sidhi Singh topped with 91.2 per cent. In the ISC science stream, Devanshu Negi topped with 94 per cent followed by Sanskar Sahu with 93.5 per cent followed by Bhavya Bhatt with 97.25 per cent and Shreya Rawat with 96.5 per cent. In the science stream, Ananya Vijjan topped with 99.5 per cent followed by Manasvi Nautiyal with 98.75 per cent and Yash Vishnoi with 97.5 per cent. In the commerce stream Praharsh Thapliyal topped with 98.25 per cent followed by Shaurya Bhasin with 97.25 per cent and Tanya Dhillon with 94 per cent. The principal brother Jeyaseelan and the vice-principal brother Astinus Kujur congratulated the teachers and the students for achieving a good result. In the Brighland School among ISC students Samridhdi Tiwari topped the school with 99 per cent in the science stream while in ICSE Amrit Abhijaat Singh scored 98.8 per cent in the science stream.



Students rejoice at a school in Dehradun after declaration of ISC and ICSE results on Monday

good marks. In Cambrian Hall, Pratyush Shahi topped class X with 98.8 per cent while Aryan Thapa topped class XII with 95.75 per cent. In ICSE, science stream Shahi was the school topper followed by Manvi Mittal with 97.4 per cent and Siddhant...

In the Pine Hall school, Shailja topped class XII with 94.25 per cent followed by Kritika Giri 92 per cent. In class XI Kishan Negi topped the school with 91.8 per cent followed by Hairsh Negi 90 per cent. In Welham's Girls' school among ICSE students Anurati Sharma scored 99.60 per cent while ISC Vishvaney Agarwal scored 97.5 per cent. Among ISC students 62 students out of 73 scored 90 per cent and above.

ISC & ICSE 2024 Topper. CAMBRIAN HALL CLASS -X: Pratyush Shahi 98.8%, Manvi Mittal 97.4%, Siddhant Bhatt 97%. CAMBRIAN HALL CLASS-XII: Aryan Thapa 95.75%, Anshula Pundir 95%, Rishabh Pathak 94.75%. SUNRISE ACADEMY CLASS-X & XII: Aviral Kandpal Class XII, 91.5%, Afsha Parveen Class X, 92.6%, Rajat Parswan Class X, 91.2%. ST. JOSEPH ACADEMY-X: Anushka Kotnala 99.4%, Aayushmaan Mishra 98.8%, Ishaan Anthony 97.2%. ST. JOSEPH ACADEMY-XII: Ananya Vijjan 99.5%, Manasvi Nautiyal 98.75%, Samridhdi Kunwar 98.5%. PINE HALL SCHOOL-X: Harish Negi 90%, Kishan Negi 91.8%. PINE HALL SCHOOL-XII: Shailja 94.25%, Kritika Giri 92%, Kamika Singh 89.25%.

Nainital students pass ICSE & ISC exams with good marks

PNS ■ NAINITAL

Students of various schools in Nainital passed the ICSE and ISC board examinations with good marks. The four schools under these boards scored a cent per cent result. Anusha Bajaj of All Saints' College topped the city in the class XII exams while Harshida Upadhyaksh of Saint Mary's topped the city in class X...



exams. In All Saints' College, class X exams were topped by Astha Sah with 94.6 per cent followed by Tushita Trisha with 94 per cent and Archisha with 93.4 per cent. Bajaj topped the school in class XII exams with 98.5 per cent followed by Mayna Singh with 93.25 per cent and Samya Mittal with 93 per cent. In Sherwood College, Ram Khandelwal topped class XII exams with 96.5 per cent followed by Parth Agrawal with 95.25 per cent and Vaishvi Dwivedi with 94.5 per cent. In the class X exams, Aishwarya Goyal topped the school with 96.2 per cent followed by Sanjay Gangwar and Rudra...

Panchayati Raj joint director suspended

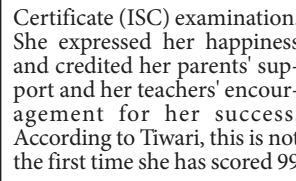
PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Taking a stern note of dereliction of duties, misbehaviour and financial irregularities, the State administration has suspended the joint director of Panchayati Raj department Rajiv Kumar Nath Tripathi. The suspension order was issued by Panchayati Raj secretary HC Semwal on Monday. In the order, Tripathi is charged with irregularities and delay in tender process of a vehicle parking in Rudraprayag district. The vehicle parking has not been constructed due to this delay. This parking would have helped the pilgrims visiting the Kedarnath shrine. Tripathi is also charged with misbehaviour with passengers at Moradabad railway station. He was reportedly in an inebriated condition at the railway station. Tripathi is also charged with organising training programmes without approval of the State and Central governments. The expenditure on these training programmes exceeded the budget allotted by the Government of India. Tripathi will remain attached with the Panchayati Raj Directorate during the period of his suspension.

Tiwari tops ISC examination at Brightlands School

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Samridhdi Tiwari of the Brightlands School scored 99 per cent marks (science stream) in the class XII examination of the Indian Secondary Certificate (ISC) examination. She expressed her happiness and credited her parents' support and her teachers' encouragement for her success. According to Tiwari, this is not the first time she has scored 99 per cent as she had also achieved the same score in class X. Commenting about her exam preparation, Tiwari said that her school's regular practice exams and revisions helped her score well. She also solved many past board papers to gain confidence in the subject. She emphasised that consistent studying, especially early in the morning, is crucial to scoring high marks in board exams. She suggested that instead of following a strict timetable, students should focus on goal-oriented study during exams.



Man kills cop's daughter & then commits suicide

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

A man allegedly killed a woman and then committed suicide by jumping into the Chilla canal in Rishikesh. The victim is the daughter of a police sub inspector currently posted in Dehradun. The victim Arti Dabral and the accused Shaileendra Bhatt were both living in Rishikesh. Her body was found in the Chhiddarwala area on Monday morning with a deep wound in the neck, the Dehradun senior superintendent of police Ajai Singh said. He informed that Dabral was a teacher in a private school in Rishikesh and Bhatt belonged to Tehri and was also living with his sister in Rishikesh for the past five to seven years to prepare for government recruitment examinations. The family of the woman revealed to the police during the inquiry that she left the home at about 6 PM on Sunday stating she was going to a friend's birthday party. As per the police investigation, Bhatt had also left his house at about...



5 PM. When he did not return home till late at night, his sister registered a missing person complaint at Rishikesh police station. Bhatt's friend later informed his sister that he allegedly committed suicide by jumping into the canal. Singh said that the diving team of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) along with the Water police started searching for the body in the afternoon.

Five people die in two different incidents

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Two men died in Uttarkashi on Monday after a pine tree fell on them during a storm in the afternoon. Earlier, three persons died late on Sunday night when the vehicle they were in fell down the mountainside in Dehradun district. The revenue sub inspector of the...



Mori Tehsil said that a tree fell on two scooter riders riding from Purola to Mori near Hirara Band on Bhoori Motorway around 3:30 PM on Sunday. Both men identified as Prakash Nautiyal (54) and Mohammad Shahid (50) died on the spot and the police sent the bodies to the community health centre for post-mortem. Besides this, a utility vehicle carrying four people lost control and crashed into a gorge near the Chibro Power plant on Koti Road near Kalsi in Dehradun district late on Sunday. Three people died on the spot and one sustained injury. The victims were going from Kalsi to Himachal Pradesh. The officials said that the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) was called to the spot to retrieve the bodies from the gorge. The bodies have been sent for postmortem. The officials said that the three deceased were identified as HP residents Kanwar Singh and Rohit and a Kalsi resident Manmohan. The injured man named Sushil Singh also belongs to HP.

Rahul's entry in Raebareli impacting politics of UP, country: Dasauni

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The chief spokesperson of Uttarakhnd Congress Garima Dasauni has claimed that the nomination of Rahul Gandhi from Raebareli in Uttar Pradesh has created a major impact on the politics of UP and the country. Dasauni, who was appointed as the media in-charge of UP by the All India Congress Committee (AICC) said that an inclination of people towards INDIA bloc is clearly visible in UP. She said that the BJP is fast losing ground and the desperation is visible in the speeches of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Dasauni said that in the campaign for the first two phases, the PM in his 56 public meetings had given a slogan of '400 Par' but now this slogan is missing in his speeches. She said that the people have understood that giving more than 400 seats to BJP will hurt reservation. Dasauni claimed that the change in PM's tone has occurred due to the manifesto of Congress. The five Nyaays and 25 guarantees of the party have found a place in the heart of the people.

The authorities were yet to find the body till late evening on Monday. The SSP said that the police teams have been formed to investigate the matter. Bhatt's sister told the police that her brother had known the victim for the past six years. However, the police are yet to ascertain the motive behind the alleged murder. The police are analysing CCTV footage and other evidence to know how and why the man killed the woman, he added.

Police find decomposed bodies of two men in Rishikesh

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The police found the decomposed bodies of two men in Pashulok barrage in Rishikesh on Monday. The officials informed that the locals informed the police about a body lying in the barrage in the Lakshman Jhula area of Rishikesh. The police called the search and rescue team of the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) led by the head constable Arjun Singh to the spot to retrieve the body. However, the team found two bodies in the channel of the barrage when they reached there. The rescue team retrieved both bodies with great effort and handed them over to the police. The officials said that the age of both deceased appears to be between 25 to 30 years and possibly drowned in the river about 15 to 20 days ago. The Lakshmanjhula police sent the information to the nearby police stations about the victims to identify them. They also informed relatives of those people whose family members had drowned in the river in the past few weeks but their bodies were not recovered, the officials added.

I, RATAN SINGH (existing name) F/o Army No-16019826L HAV NITYANAND, VILL- KASHNI KALAN, POST- MANDHOLI KALAN, TEH- LOHARU, DIST- BHIWANI, HARYANA- 123201., declare that in my son's Army record, my incorrect name SANGEETA DEVI has been recorded, as per Aadhar No. 504372732502 my correct name is SANGEETA.

I, SAVITRI DEVI (existing name) M/o Army No-16019826L HAV NITYANAND, VILL- KASHNI KALAN, POST-MANDHOLI KALAN, DIST- BHIWANI, THE- LOHARU, HARYANA-123201., declare that in my son's Army record, my incorrect name SAVITRI DEVI has been recorded, as per Aadhar No..718256217533 my correct name is SAVITRI.

I, No 2796442M Hav R Koteeswaran S/O S Raja Chhetriyar residing at Sai Ashray, 3rd Cross, 3rd Main, Muttappa Block Town, VTC, Bangalore North, PO- RT Nagar, Distt-Bangalore North (KA) PIN- 560032, have changed my daughter name from K Bagiyalakshmi to K Baggiya Lakshmi vide affidavit dated 04.05.2024 before Dehradun.

CLASSIFIEDS PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notices including: I, SANGEETA DEVI (existing name) F/o Army No-16019826L HAV NITYANAND, VILL- KASHNI KALAN, POST- MANDHOLI KALAN, TEH- LOHARU, DIST- BHIWANI, HARYANA- 123201., declare that in my husband's Army record, my incorrect name SANGEETA DEVI has been recorded, as per Aadhar No. 504372732502 my correct name is SANGEETA. I, RATAN SINGH (existing name) F/o Army No-16019826L HAV NITYANAND, VILL- KASHNI KALAN, POST-MANDHOLI KALAN, DIST- BHIWANI, THE- LOHARU, HARYANA-123201., declare that in my son's Army record, my incorrect name RATAN SINGH has been recorded, as per Aadhar No.752167366976 my correct name is RATAN SINGH SHEORAN. I, SAVITRI DEVI (existing name) M/o Army No-16019826L HAV NITYANAND, VILL- KASHNI KALAN, POST-MANDHOLI KALAN, DIST- BHIWANI, THE- LOHARU, HARYANA-123201., declare that in my son's Army record, my incorrect name SAVITRI DEVI has been recorded, as per Aadhar No..718256217533 my correct name is SAVITRI. I, No 2796442M Hav R Koteeswaran S/O S Raja Chhetriyar residing at Sai Ashray, 3rd Cross, 3rd Main, Muttappa Block Town, VTC, Bangalore North, PO- RT Nagar, Distt-Bangalore North (KA) PIN- 560032, have changed my daughter name from K Bagiyalakshmi to K Baggiya Lakshmi vide affidavit dated 04.05.2024 before Dehradun. PUBLIC NOTICE I, Anil Thapliyal S/o Sh. Devi Prasad Thapliyal R/o- A4, Chandrabani Road, Sangam Vihar, Mohabbewala, Dehradun is the owner of property bearing Khasra no. 970 Ga having area 245.35 sq. mt. situated at Mauja, Harrawala, Dehradun have lost previous sale deed dated 15.05.2007 Duly registered in the office of Sub-Registrar I, Dehradun in Book no. 1 Volume 1906 at Pages 503-524 at serial no. 5083 solemnly notify that said original document has been misplaced and confirm that same has not been misused and the said deed is not mortgaged with any financial or non financial institution. The Pioneer does not take responsibility for the content for the advertisement (Display/Classified) carried in this newspaper. The paper does not endorse the same. Readers are requested to verify the contents on their own. For advertisement booking 9045057787 8909212518 Email: pioneerdoon@gmail.com

Health Dept issues heat wave alert in Uttarakhand

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In view of the sudden rise in temperature and its adverse effect on health, the State Health department has issued a heat wave alert in Uttarakhand. The Health secretary R Rajesh Kumar has issued an advisory regarding the heat wave. He has directed

essential equipment. Kumar said that the medical staff should be trained on identification of diseases related to heat wave, monitoring and reporting of patients of the heat wave. All the health units have been directed to make cold drinking water available.



all district magistrates and chief medical officers to keep stock of medicines, IV fluids, ice packs, ORS and other nec-

He said that an awareness campaign should be undertaken about the diseases during the summer season.

Doctors advise people to stay hydrated amidst rising temperature

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

In the wake of heat wave-like conditions prevailing in the city and elsewhere in the State, doctors have advised people to increase their water intake to avoid dehydration. The doctors claimed that as the temperature rises, people, especially the elderly and children should be cautious of the heat and avoid going outside as much as possible. Lemon water, ORS and other fluids can save people from dehydration in the summer, the doctors said.

Talking to The Pioneer, senior physician at the district hospital Dr Praveen Panwar said that as soon as the temperature rises to cause a heat wave, it can result in dehydration among people. Dehydration can lead to headaches, vomiting, dizziness in the mouth, loss of

consciousness and other symptoms. The elderly and children are more prone to dehydration during this season so they are advised to avoid wearing heavy clothes. In addition, people should increase their water intake in the form of lemon water, coconut water and other ways to stay hydrated, he said.

He further emphasised that people should wear sunglasses and hats outdoors to avoid direct exposure to sun rays that can affect the human body adversely.

"Dehydration is a common health issue that occurs when the temperature rises, especially during summer. It is important to take necessary precautions to prevent this, especially for children whose immunity levels are

lower than other age groups," physician at Government Doon Medical College (GDMC) Hospital Dr Naresh said.

He further said that considering the rising temperatures, people of any age group, especially children, can suffer from dehydration, nausea and water-borne diseases. To stay healthy and hydrated during the summer season, people are advised to increase their water intake and consume fresh fruits. One should also consume lemon water and coconut water along with fruits and vegetable salad to stay hydrated. Naresh also emphasised that children should avoid going outside, especially during the afternoon, where there are higher chances of dehydration.

Light rain to provide relief from heat in some parts, plains to remain mostly dry

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The temperatures remained above average in various parts of the State on Monday with the heat affecting the routine life of the people to some extent. While the plains witnessed temperatures above normal, light rain was reported in some parts of the State. Some relief from the heat is expected in 10 districts of the State on Tuesday. The State meteorological centre has forecast that very light to light rain/thunderstorms are likely to occur at a few places in Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudraprayag, Pithoragarh, Bageshwar, Almora, Champawat and Nainital districts and at isolated places in Pauri and Udham Singh Nagar districts today. The meteorological centre has also issued a yellow warning (Watch) regarding the possibility of thunderstorms accompanied with lightning/gusty wind (30-40 kmph) likely to occur at isolated places in Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudraprayag, Pithoragarh, Bageshwar,



Almora, Champawat, Nainital, Pauri and Udham Singh Nagar districts. Dry weather will prevail in remaining districts of Uttarakhand.

The provisional State capital Dehradun is forecast to witness a mainly clear to partly cloudy sky towards afternoon/evening. The maximum and minimum temperatures are likely to be about 37 degrees Celsius and 21 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun today. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in various parts of the State on Monday were

38.4 degrees Celsius and 21.3 degrees Celsius respectively in Dehradun, 39 degrees Celsius and 17 degrees Celsius in Pantnagar, 25.6 degrees Celsius and 13.9 degrees Celsius in Mukteshwar and 28.4 degrees Celsius and 15.5 degrees Celsius in New Tehri.

Light rain was reported in some places with 4.5 millimetres in Kanaliichina, four millimetres in Sankri, three millimetres in Gangolihat and 2.5 millimetres each in Chaukhutiya and Garud.

Forest fires- repeat offenders to be booked under Gangster Act, property to be seized IAF chopper brought in again to help douse wildfires

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Those who are found to be indulging in causing forest fires repeatedly will also be booked under the Gangster Act and action will also be taken to seize their property. Under the standard operating procedure formed for tackling forest fires, action will first be taken under the Forest Act and Wildlife Act. Along with this, action will also be taken against the recently enacted Public Private Property Damage Recovery Act. The officiating director general of police Abhinav Kumar said this in a meeting chaired by the chief secretary Radha Raturi on Monday to seek an update on action taken on the directions issued by chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama to tackle forest fires in the State. Meanwhile, the authorities roped in an Indian Air Force helicopter to help douse forest fires in the Dom Srikot area of Garhwal. The chopper lifted water using a Bambi bucket from the Alaknanda river to tackle the wildfire.



est fires. Raturi directed the chief conservator of forests of Garhwal, Kumaon and wildlife conservation areas to take strict action against personnel found negligent towards controlling forest fires.

She said that the State nodal officer of forest fires and disaster management is regularly monitoring forest fire incidents. Forest fire alerts received are being shared on official WhatsApp groups and passed on to the crew team concerned to ensure the minimum response time. Raturi said that the assistance of active Van Panchayats, forest fire

management committees, Mahila/Yuva Mangal Dals should be taken in tackling forest fires.

The chief secretary further said that the Disaster Management department has allocated a budget of Rs five crore to each district magistrate for controlling forest fires. The entire team of the district magistrates including the district disaster management officer, divisional forest officer, police officers and fire watchers are involved at the ground level to check forest fires, she averred. Members of Mahila/Yuva Mangal Dal, self help groups, volunteers,

home guards and PRD personnel will also be deployed for this task. The Disaster Management department will soon procure small water tankers which will be used to feed portable pumps in higher mountainous regions to extinguish forest fires, Raturi said.

The officiating director general of police Abhinav Kumar said that standard operating procedure have been drafted for action against the guilty by a joint team of the Forest department officials, sub divisional magistrate and the local police in places where forest fires are reported. Under the SOP, action will first be taken under the Forest Act and Wildlife Act.

Along with this, action will also be taken against the recently enacted Public Private Property Damage Recovery Act. Those who are found to be indulging in such act repeatedly will also be booked under the Gangster Act and action will also be taken to seize their property. He said that FIRs have been lodged against 13 people so far in forest fire incidents. Four of these people have been arrested, he added.

Govt in slumber as 95 % of State's forests affected by fires: Mahara

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Pradesh Congress Committee (PCC) president Karan Mahara has said that the raging forest fires in the mountains of the State have exposed the failure of the State government. He said that every year the forests get ravaged by

Citing examples of Dunagiri and Adidhura temples affected by the forest fires, the PCC president said that it appears that even the gods are unhappy at the failure of the State government. He alleged that while the forests are being



fire at the start of the summer season but the government has failed to devise a plan to control these fires. He averred that at present 95 per cent of the forests in the mountainous areas of the State are affected by fires due to which the forest wealth worth crores of rupees has been damaged and the wildlife is being destroyed. Mahara said that no effort is being made by the State government and the Forest department to save the burning forests of Uttarakhand. The existence of wild life, forests, water resources and even glaciers is threatened by the forest fires, he said.

destroyed by the fire, the officers of the Forest department are sitting in their offices and making policies. The government is not taking any steps to prevent forest fires.

The PCC president further said that the government should prepare a strong strategy to tackle forest fires and the forest officers should be held accountable. The people of the State should be given forest rights and the Van Panchayats should be activated. Mahara added that the government should make use of helicopters to control forest fires.

Transport Dept to deploy 20 enforcement squads on Char Dham routes

Upto 24 officials to work in two to three shifts on each route

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Transport department will deploy 20 enforcement squads on Char Dham routes to ensure safe journeys for tourists and pilgrims in mountainous areas. Each squad will have 16 to 24 officials of the department who will work in two to three shifts on each route as per the requirement, the nodal officer of Char Dham Yatra and the regional transport officer (Administration) Sunil Sharma said. These 20 squads will include 12 regular enforcement teams, four mobile teams and four interceptors teams. He informed that these squads will be posted in hi-tech checkpoints set up by the department at five locations on Char Dham routes where their deployment seemed necessary as per the requirement of the pilgrims.

for transportation. The transport service will be available through 200 maxi cabs on the narrow route as per the token system. The official working hours of these hi-tech checkpoints will be 4 AM to 10 PM where the department has made several arrangements to ensure deployed officials and tourists can get facilities like free wifi, clean drinking water and toilets.

The drivers and passengers can also rest there for a short time before resuming their long journey on Char Dham routes, Sharma said. He said that the service of issuing trip cards for pilgrims will also be available at these checkpoints. He also informed that the department has issued over 1,500 green cards to the vehicle operators which is mandatory for them to operate on Char Dham routes.

The fee to apply for green cards for small and medium vehicles is Rs 400 and Rs 650 for heavy vehicles. Sharma also informed that all the work associated with the installation and operation of 28 unmanned electric vehicle charging stations on the Char Dham routes will also be completed within a week.

Lord Kedarnath's Doli departs from winter abode along with devotees

Nearly 21 lakh register to visit Char Dham shrines

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

The Panch Mukhi idol of Lord Kedarnath was carried by devotees after ceremonial worship at the Omkareshwar Mandir in Ukhimath on its journey towards Kedarnath on Monday. The band of the sixth Grenadiers Regiment played devotional tunes as throngs of

devotees and priests accompanied the procession of the lord towards Kedarnath. The procession reached Vishwanath temple in Guptkashi in the evening. Thousands of devotees welcomed the procession and paid their obeisance to the lord on the occasion. Meanwhile, nearly 21 lakh peo-

ple have registered to visit the Char Dham shrines. According to information provided by officials, 7,24,154 people have registered to visit Kedarnath while 6,22,054 have registered to visit Badrinath, 3,73,528 for Gangotri and 3,29,122 for Yamunotri. In addition to this, 42,153 have registered to visit

Hemkund Sahib. A total of 20,91,011 people have registered to visit these shrines so far.

It is pertinent to mention here that chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama is laying special focus on ensuring proper arrangements for the Char Dham Yatra. The Badrinath-Kedarnath Temple Committee (BKTC) chairman Ajendra Ajay greeted all the devotees on the occasion of the Panch Mukhi Doli's departure from Kedarnath. After a night stay in Guptkashi, the Doli will depart from Guptkashi on Tuesday and reach Fata. On Wednesday it will pass through Gaurikund and on Thursday it will pass through Gauri Mata Mandir in Gaurikund to reach Kedarnath on the evening of May 9. The portals of Kedarnath temple will be ceremoniously reopened to the devotees at 7 AM on Friday. The portals of Gangotri and Yamunotri are also slated to be reopened to the devotees on May 10 while Badrinath will be reopened to the devotees on May 12.

Congress continuing to play appeasement politics: CM Dhama

PNS ■ DEHRADUN

Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhama said that influenced by the politics of appeasement, the Congress party is talking about religion based reservation. He was addressing a public meeting in support of the BJP candidate in Secunderabad Lok Sabha constituency in Telangana on Monday. He said that the Congress is talking about implementing the Karnataka model in the entire country. In Karnataka, the OBC reservation was bifurcated to give benefit to the people of a specific religion. The then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh used to say that the first right on the resource of the county is of the people from a particular community.



Dhama said that PM Narendra Modi has categorically stated that the reservation will not be finished at any cost. Many historic works under the leadership of PM Modi have taken place. In Telangana both BRS and Congress have deceived the people, Dhama said. He said that

PM Modi has sent the corrupt to jail. The princess of BRS is in jail while Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi are on bail.

Dhama exhorted the people to ensure victory of BJP candidate G Kishan Reddy

with huge margin so that Narendra Modi becomes the PM of the country for the third consecutive term.

He said that the Uttarakhand government has acted against land jihad and freed thousands of acres of land from encroachment. Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is implemented in the State and the BJP will implement UCC in the entire country.

BJP candidate G Kishan Reddy, Rajya Sabha MP K Laxman, Vinay Rohilla, Sandeep Yadav and others were present on the occasion.



Devotees carry the Panch Mukhi idol of Lord Kedarnath from Ukhimath towards Kedarnath on Monday

Pioneer photo

Opposition echoing voice of Pakistan: BJP

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The BJP on Monday highlighted a series of statements made by INDIA Bloc leaders that it said were against the nation's interest, as the ruling party accused the Opposition of echoing the voice of Pakistan and asked people to be wary of such "traitors".

BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi cited Maharashtra Congress leader Vijay Wadettiwar's allegation that an RSS-affiliated police officer and not terrorist Ajmal Kasab killed the then anti-terrorism squad chief Hemant Karkare and former Punjab Chief Minister Charanjit Singh Channi's claim that the attack on IAF personnel in Jammu and Kashmir was a poll stunt to slam the party.

He cited five other instances, including Pakistan's leader Chaudhry Fawad Hussain's criticism of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and praise of Rahul Gandhi, and Farooq Abdullah's reference to Pakistan having nuclear weapons, to allege that these INDIA Bloc leaders are echoing the neighbouring country's stand.

What the National Conference leader has said is very "astounding, revealing and shocking" as so far only a few Pakistani leaders considered reckless or radicalised religious leaders have made such comments, he claimed.

Replying to a question related to Pakistan-occupied-Kashmir, the former J-K chief minister



had said that Pakistan is not wearing bangles and has nuclear weapons. Such remarks are also an insult to women, the BJP leader said. Noting that Congress leader Shashi Tharoor has written a column in a Bangladeshi newspaper slamming Modi while analysing the ongoing Lok Sabha elections, Rajya Sabha MP Trivedi said while elections are being in India he is building public opinion in another country.

The Congress leader has also referred to the Valley as India-administered-Kashmir, he alleged.

One INDIA Bloc leader is giving "cover fire" to Pakistan on Mumbai terror attack, another is speaking about its nuclear weapon while somebody is describing the martyrdom of a soldier as a poll stunt, he said. Modi had said the Congress manifesto carried Muslim League's imprints, he noted, adding that every work spoken by its leaders echoed Pakistan's stand. The Left parties want the country's nuclear stockpiles removed, he said.

VCs, scholars slam Rahul for varsity appointment claims

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

As many as 181 academicians, including Vice Chancellors (VC) and former VCs, have accused Congress leader Rahul Gandhi of spreading "falsehood" regarding the appointment process for university heads and sought lawful action against him.

In an open letter, they said the Congress leader has alleged that vice chancellors are appointed solely on the basis of affiliation with some organisation rather than merit as they slammed his claims. The process by which VCs are selected is characterised by stringent and transparent rigorous procedure grounded in the values of meritocracy, scholarly distinction and integrity, they claimed.

Jawaharlal University Vice Chancellor Santishree Dhulipudi Pandit, Delhi University VC Yogesh Singh and AICTE Chairman T G Sitharam are among the academicians who have signed onto the letter.

The selection has been completely based on academic and administrative prowess and with a vision to take universities ahead, they said. Though they did not quote Rahul Gandhi's specific claims, the Congress leader has in the past alleged that affiliations with the Hindutva organisation RSS is often the guiding factor in appointments to academia.

Among the signatories to the letter are Vinay Pathak, VC, CSJM University, Kanpur, Bhagwati Prakash Sharma, Chancellor, Pacific University,



Udaipur, N C Gautam, former VC, Mahatma Gandhi Gramodaya Vishwavidyalaya, Chitrakoot, Alok Chakkarval, VC, Guru Ghasidas Central University, Bilaspur and Vinay Kapoor, former VC, BR Ambedkar National Law University, Sonapat. Universities in India have undergone a significant transition as evident in their ascent in global rankings, prominent accreditations, world class research and innovations, curriculum facelift narrowing the industry academia gap and higher placement prospects reaffirming their commitment to academic quality and societal relevance, they asserted.

They said, "The array of academic disciplines and professional experiences represented amongst us stands as evidence of the unbiased and inclusive nature of the selection procedure." It reflects their dedication to cultivating an atmosphere that values and promotes diversity, encourages inde-

FIR against Nadda, Malviya in Karnataka over social media post

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/BENGALURU



An FIR has been registered against BJP president JP Nadda, the party's IT cell head Amit Malviya and Karnataka unit chief BY Vijayendra in connection with a social media post allegedly intimidating members of SC and ST community not to vote for a particular candidate, police said on Monday.

On the other hand Congress alleged that professionals working for its social media department are being "harassed" and "intimidated" by police at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah.

The action on BJP leaders was taken following a complaint lodged by the Karnataka Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) with the Election Commission and police on Sunday alleging violation of model code of conduct, they said. They were booked under the sections of Representation of People Act and section 505 (2) (Statements creating or promoting enmity, hatred or ill-will between classes) of the Indian Penal Code, a senior police officer said.

In the complaint, the KPCC cited a video uploaded on the social media platform 'X' by the official account of Karnataka State BJP which, it alleged, is operated by Malviya, on instructions of Nadda, Vijayendra and Social Media incharge — Karnataka BJP, on May 4.

"The said video posted on social media featured animat-

ed characters of (Congress leader) Rahul Gandhi and (Chief Minister) Siddaramaiah. In the clip, the SC, ST and OBC community are portrayed as "eggs" in a nest and it also suggested Rahul Gandhi planting a big egg labelled as Muslim community. It is projected as though funds are being fed to the chick depicting the Muslim community, which then kicks out SC, ST and OBC communities," it alleged.

Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete alleged that people of the Congress' social media team are being "harassed". The opposition party's assertion came days after the Delhi Police's Special Cell arrested a national coordinator of the Congress' social media team for allegedly uploading and circulating online a doctored video of Shah.

"Professionals are being intimidated at the behest of Narendra Modi and Amit Shah. These professionals are the people who chose the ideology of Gandhi, Nehru, Patel, Bose and stood with the Congress.

The BJP is scaring those who chose truth and justice and rejected your false worship," Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinete said.

Rapid infrastructure development aiding destination weddings in India: Ministry

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Union Tourism Ministry on Sunday said the rapid infrastructure development happening across the country, especially improvement in accessibility due to number of airports getting doubled in last few years besides improvement in digital and physical connectivity are aiding destination weddings across the world.

Speaking during the inauguration of First Wed in India expo at Rambagh Palace in Jaipur, Manisha Saxena (IAS) Director General, Ministry of Tourism, said along with cultural aspects of India the holistic development is a boon for destination wedding which also is a booster to the economy as well as employment.

An initiative of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India, the 'Wed in India' expo is being organised jointly with Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan and



Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) alongside the Great India Travel. It is also supported by Hotel and Restaurant Association of Rajasthan (HRAR), Indian Heritage Hotels Association (IHHA) and Rajasthan Association of Tour Operators (RATO).

"With its unique blend of natural beauty and cultural traditions which can actually invoke magic in weddings, Rajasthan along with Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Haryana,

Kerala, and Goa are favourite destination for Wed-in-India. The Northeast is also fast emerging as a preferred destination especially the tea gardens of Assam, Darjeeling, Siliguri, Mizoram, and Manipur," Saxena added.

Citing the experience of one of the G20 Tourism Group meetings held in Goa during India's G20 Presidency, Saxena said, "We catered to all the ministerial delegates in a 500-years old house which keeps its 200 years old cutlery. India has several such kinds

of assets. We, in the Ministry of Tourism, are in process of documenting this repository of assets both tangible and intangible."

Delivering her address in the inaugural session, Gayatri Rathore, IAS, Principal Secretary, Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan said, "Department of Tourism, Government of Rajasthan is delighted to hold first ever 'Wed in India' expo. Rajasthan has long been a preferred destination for celebrity weddings due to its luxurious and opulent settings. The state's magnificent palaces forts and havelis converted into luxury heritage hotels provide a regal backdrop for extravagant celebrations.

Rajasthan's world-class hospitality, traditional cuisines and vibrant entertainment create unforgettable experiences for the couples and their guests. "Setting the tone of the expo, Chetan Vohra, Chair, FICCI Wedding Tourism Taskforce & Managing Director, Wedding

Congress targets Modi Government over Chinese transgressions

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Congress on Monday targeted the Modi Government on the issue of Chinese transgressions, and asked whether it has "surrendered" thousands of square kilometres in Depsang and Demchok to China or is it still trying to return to the status quo ante before May 5, 2020.

On the fourth anniversary of the clashes between Indian and Chinese troops at Pangong Tso in eastern Ladakh that culminated in the fatal engagement in Galwan on June 15, 2020 in which 20 soldiers were killed, the Congress also asked the Prime Minister when he will take responsibility for the "abysmal failure" of his China policy.

"Has anyone been held accountable for India's biggest strategic and intelligence lapse in several decades," AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh asked in a post on X.



Posing questions to the Prime Minister, he asked, "Do you still believe your 19 June 2020 statement, made after 20 of our soldiers gave their lives in Galwan, that 'Na koi hamari seema mein ghus aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa hua hai' (No one has entered India nor has anyone occupied any post)?"

"Has your government surrendered to Chinese control over thousands of square kilometres in Depsang and Demchok for the foreseeable future or are you still trying to return to the status quo ante before 5 May 2020," he

asked. Taking on Modi, he charged that, "The PM's clean chit to China four days later when he said 'Na koi hamari seema mein ghus aaya hai, na hi koi ghusa hua hai' was a profound insult to our fallen soldiers and became the legitimisation of Chinese control over 2,000 square kilometres of land in eastern Ladakh."

Despite 21 rounds of military talks over four years, the situation remains unfavourable. Le's Superintendant of Police has clearly shown that our troops were unable to reach 26 out of 65 patrolling points that they could access prior to May 5, 2020, Ramesh claimed. China's aggressive build up and intrusions are not restricted to Ladakh, he said, adding that along Arunachal Pradesh, the Chinese continue to build forces and infrastructure that pose a direct threat to India's Siliguri Corridor, which connects northeast India with the rest of the country.

Baghel, Gehlot appointed AICC senior observers for Rae Bareilly, Amethi constituencies

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI/RAEBARELI

Congress on Monday appointed former Chief Ministers Bhupesh Baghel and Ashok Gehlot as AICC senior observers for Rae Bareilly and Amethi Parliamentary constituencies, respectively. Party leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra reached Uttar Pradesh to spearhead the campaign in Rae Bareilly and Amethi, and camp in these Parliamentary constituencies from Monday to ensure the party's victory in the two high-profile seats.

She met party workers in Raebareilly to bolster Rahul Gandhi's campaign from the family bastion. Rahul is pitted against BJP leader Dinesh Pratap Singh from Rae Bareilly. Rae Bareilly and Amethi will go to vote in the fifth phase of election on May 20.

Priyanka Gandhi will be holding hundreds of 'nukkad sabhas', meetings and door-to-door campaign programmes, the sources said. "The centre will be Rae Bareilly where she will be stationed at a guest house. From booth management to outreach, everything would be handled by her," the



source said. Strong foundations that Feroze Gandhi laid in Rae Bareilly were later nurtured and strengthened by his wife and former prime minister Indira Gandhi, who won the seat in 1967, 1971 and 1980, followed by friends and members of the Gandhi family.

In Amethi, a non-Gandhi family member is in the fray after 25 years to take on incumbent BJP MP Smriti Irani. Irani had defeated Rahul Gandhi by more than 55,000 votes in 2019 in Amethi, while in Rae Bareilly Sonia Gandhi defeated BJP's Dinesh Pratap Singh by more than 1,67,000 votes. Sharma was the key person who had looked after the two prestigious constituencies and been a representative of the Gandhis in the two key seats.

Coast Guard detains Iranian fishing vessel with six Indians

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) detained an Iranian fishing vessel, with six Indian crew, west of Bepore off the coast of Kerala late Sunday, Defence Ministry said here on Monday adding the swift sea-air coordinated operation involved the ships and aircraft of the ICG.

After intercepting the boat, an ICG team boarded the vessel and thoroughly investigated it to check the involvement of any anti-national activity. Initial investigation revealed that the owner of the boat was an Iranian sponsor who had contracted these Indian fishermen from Tamil Nadu, and issued them Iranian Visas for fishing off the Iran coast. The crew alleged that the sponsor ill-treated and deprived them of basic living conditions, passports confiscating their passports. The crew said that they had decided to escape from Iran to India using the same boat. The detained vessel was safely brought to Kochi on Monday for further investigation.

NTA dismisses reports of NEET-UG question paper leak

PIONEER NEWS SERVICE ■ NEW DELHI

Even as the National Testing Agency (NTA) on Monday dismissed reports of a question paper leak in the NEET-UG medical entrance exam as "completely baseless and without any ground" on Monday, the main Opposition Congress party criticised the BJP-led Centre over the incident, denouncing it as a betrayal of students' aspirations and an indication of the government's incompetence.

Taking the Government to task on the issue, the Congress on Monday said this trend has been going on for the last 10 years and that is why unemployment and corruption in jobs are the biggest issues of this election.

This criticism came in response to the NTA's assurance that every question paper had been properly managed and that images circulating on social media were unrelated to the actual exam paper.

"It has been ascertained from NTA's security protocols and Standard Operating Procedures that the social media posts pointing towards any paper leak are completely baseless and without any ground."

"To put rumours to rest, it is also stated that every single



question paper has been accounted for," said Sadhana Parashar, Senior Director, NTA. She added that no external person or agency can access the centres once the examination starts. "After the gates of the examination centres are closed, no one from outside is permitted access inside the halls, which are under CCTV surveillance."

However, taking the NTA clarification with a pinch of salt, former Congress president Rahul Gandhi said the news of the NEET exam

paper leak is a "betrayal" of the dreams of more than 23 lakh students and their families.

In a post in Hindi on X, Gandhi said, "Be it the students who dream of getting admission in college after passing 12th or the promising youth who are struggling for government jobs, the Modi government has become a curse for everyone."

"The youth and their family, who have been paying the price of the BJP government's incompetence for the last 10 years with the destruction of

their future, have now understood that there is a difference between speaking and running the government," he said.

Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi Vadra took the X platform to criticize the government. "Once again there are reports of a NEET paper leak. The future of 24 lakh youth of the country was again at stake. This trend, which has been going on with crores of promising youth for the last 10 years, is showing no sign of stopping. Will the Prime Minister of the country say anything about this?" she said.

Noting that a law against paper leaks was passed in Parliament, the Congress general secretary asked where that law is and why it is not applicable.

Congress general secretary, in-charge communications, Jairam Ramesh, said news of NEET paper leak has come to light in Bihar. "Apart from this, there have also been complaints from Rajasthan about wrong sets of question papers of NEET exam being distributed at the examination centres," he said.

"In the last 7 years, more than 70 papers have been leaked. Due to this, the future of more than 2 crore candidates has been ruined. Despite there being laws regarding



Third phase of Assam polls to decide fate of 47 candidates in four seats

PTI ■ GUWAHATI

The political fate of 47 candidates in four Lok Sabha seats will be decided on Tuesday when the third and final phase of the elections in the State will be held. Polling will begin at 7 am and conclude at 5 pm in the four constituencies — Kokrajhar (ST), Dhubri, Barpeta and Guwahati. All eyes will be on the prestigious Guwahati seat where both BJP and Congress have put up woman nominees — Bijuli Kalita Medhi and Mira Borthakur Goswami — respectively. The other prominent candidates are AIUDF chief Badruddin Ajmal who is seeking re-election for the fourth successive term from Dhubri, Congress MLA Rakibul Hussain, eight time Asom Gana Parishad legislator Phanibhushan Choudhury and CPI(M) MLA Manoranjan Talukdar. Barpeta has the highest of 14 candidates and Guwahati the lowest of eight in the fray while six women are contesting in the final phase. The BJP has put up only one candidate in this phase for the Guwahati seat, while its alliance partners AGP are contesting in two — Dhubri and Barpeta — and the UPPL in Kokrajhar. The Congress and the Voters Party International (VPI) are fighting in all four seats, while the BPF, the Trinamool Congress, Bharatiya Gana



Parishad, SUCI(C) and Republican Party of India (Athawale) are contesting in two each. The AIUDF, CPI(M), Gana Suraksha Party, Hindu Samaj Party, Asom Jana Morcha, National Road Map Party of India, Rashtriya Ulema Council, Ekam Sanatan Bharat Dal and Bahujan Maha Party are contesting in one seat each while 16 independents are also in the fray. A total electorate of 82.11 lakh including 41.27 men, 40.84 women and 112 belonging to the third gender will be eligible to exercise their franchise in 9,516 polling stations.

strongman Badruddin Ajmal, seeking a fourth term, locked in a triangular contest with Congress MLA Rakibul Hussain and NDA partner AGP's Zaved Islam. In Kokrajhar (ST), a triangular contest is also on the cards among UPPL's Jayanta Basumtary, Congress' Garjen Mushahary and Bodoland People's Front's (BPF) Kampa Borgoyary. The sitting independent Kokrajhar MP Naba Kumar Sarania, representing the seat reserved for Scheduled Tribes since 2014, had filed his nomination papers which was rejected following the striking down of his Scheduled Tribe (ST) status. Assam Chief Electoral Officer Anurag Goel said that all arrangements have been completed for conducting the polls in a free, fair, safe and peaceful manner. In the first phase of polls held on April 19, 78.25 per cent of the electorate exercised their franchise to decide the fate of 35 candidates for the Kokrajhar, Jorhat, Dibrugarh, Sonitpur and Lakhimpur constituencies. In the second phase held on April 26, 81.17 per cent of the voters cast their votes to decide the fate of 61 candidates for Karimganj, Silchar(SC), Diphu (ST), Nagaon and Darrang-Udalguri. In the outgoing Lok Sabha, BJP held nine seats, Congress three, AIUDF and an independent one each from the state.

Polling in both LS seats in Goa today

PTI ■ PANAJI

More than 11 lakh voters are eligible to exercise their franchise in elections to both the Lok Sabha seats in Goa on Tuesday, where the Congress and BJP are locked in a straight fight. The coastal state has two Lok Sabha constituencies — North Goa and South Goa. "We are all ready with all the required facilities at polling stations. I appeal to all the voters to cast their ballots from 7 am to 6 pm," North Goa district collector Sneha Gite said. The polling booths are set up as per the Election Commission's guidelines. Considering the hot weather conditions, voters will be provided refreshments and water at polling booths, she said. North Goa will see the BJP's sitting MP Shripad Naik take on Congress's Ramakant Khalap, while in South Goa, the saffron party has fielded entrepreneur Pallavi Dempo against Navy-veteran-turned politician Viriato Fernandes of the Congress. The South Goa Lok Sabha seat is currently held by Congress' Francisco Sardinha. Sixteen candidates, eight each in North and South Goa Lok Sabha constituencies, are in the fray. As per the data on the website of the office of Goa's Chief Electoral Officer, the state has 11,79,644 voters, including 5,80,710 in North Goa and 5,98,934 in South Goa, as on April 19. Of the total number of



voters, there are 5,71,617 men, 6,07,715 women and 12 members of the transgender community. Besides, there are 300 service voters, including 133 in North Goa and 167 in South Goa, the data stated. The run-up to the elections saw rallies by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for the BJP, and the Congress roped in its senior leaders Shashi Tharoor and Pawan Khera for campaigns in Goa. A total of 1,725 polling stations have been set up across the coastal state, including 863 in North Goa and 862 in South Goa, state Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Ramesh Verma said in a media statement.

"Of these, 43 model polling booths have been identified in North Goa and 45 in South Goa. The move is aimed at streamlining the voting process and reducing the waiting time," he said. Medical camps will be held at eight model polling stations in urban areas where there is a higher percentage of elderly voters, Verma said. "After casting their vote, senior citizens can avail health checks by doctors from the Directorate of Health Services," he said. To empower women voters and promote gender equality, 40 dedicated polling stations, also known as 'pink booths', have been set up in both districts, the official said. "These polling stations will

be exclusively managed by women personnel, ensuring a safe and supportive environment for female voters to exercise their democratic right," he said. Verma said environment sustainability has been prioritised, and 40 'green' polling stations have been set up. "The eco-friendly booths are decorated using sustainable materials such as bamboo and coconut leaves sourced from local vendors, reflecting a commitment to reducing the ecological footprint of the electoral process," he said. Divyang polling stations have also been set up — five in North Goa and three in South Goa, he added.

Congress treated tribals as vote bank; BJP under Modi gave them respect: Arjun Munda

PTI ■ KHUNTI (JHARKHAND)

Union minister Arjun Munda on Monday claimed that the Congress and INDIA bloc converted tribals into "mere vote bank", while the BJP under Prime Minister Narendra Modi ensured that these people get due respect. Attacking the Congress, the former three-time Jharkhand chief minister claimed that the party believed that tribals who lived in jungles were criminals by nature and the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government first took interest in their welfare. "The Congress in its 60 years a regime treated tribals as mere vote banks whereas the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) under Prime Minister Narendra Modi is committed to ensure that they get due recognition and respect. This is why the Prime Minister chose Khunti to launch major schemes including a Rs 24,000 crore programme for PVTGs (Particularly

Vulnerable Tribal Groups) from Khunti," Munda said in an interview with PTI. Munda, Union tribal and agriculture minister, is contesting Lok Sabha elections from Khunti reserved seat that is identified with tribal icon Birsa Munda. In 2019, Munda won the Khunti LS seat, facing the problems of human trafficking, poverty, opium cultivation and Naxalism, with a slender margin of 1,445 votes, and is once again locked in a direct fight with Congress candidate Kalicharan Munda. "This is true that tribal society has been used as a vote bank only. There were no schemes, no policies for them. When their rights and systems were adopted later, Congress ensured that tribal issues came under the Home Department. They believed that those who resided in jungles were criminal by nature," he claimed. It was the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee

who took interest in their welfare and later Modi ensured justice to them, Munda said. He claimed the tribal society understood the game plan of Congress that it wanted to keep them away from development to reap the benefits of their innocence and now they are aware of their rights and understood who was working for them. "They will vote for BJP under a dynamic and visionary leader like Prime Minister Modi. We are confident to cross the 400 mark this time and in Jharkhand, we will win all 14 Lok Sabha seats irrespective of tribal or non-tribal seats," Munda claimed. To a question, he admitted that Khunti and Simdega are known for human trafficking, particularly of girls. "I have undertaken an innovative step to boost confidence and provide employment to girls here. I had initiated moves like learning while earning - a programme to ensure



employment for tribal girls. "I am happy that an unprecedented experiment is becoming successful as thousands of girls have been trained by Tata Electronics. Now mobile parts of mobile phones like Apple are being made by Khunti girls," he said. Massive horticulture initiatives are also being taken to bring youths engaged in drug trafficking and extremism to the mainstream, he said.

The minister said that despite witnessing record production of fruits and vegetables, Khunti is not able to reap the benefits as it lacks food processing units and market links. Munda said, "I admit that the eastern region lacks infrastructure and channelised agencies. The procurement of products from the region through minimum support price is also less. The governments in the past did not pay attention

to this. But we are now committed to ensuring a sound agriculture infrastructure in the belt for cash crops and horticulture so that these can be sent to the national market. Jharkhand will be accorded special attention." On lac and tussar silkworm cultivation, he said steps were being undertaken to promote these in national and international markets, while a large laboratory is being set up at Khunti under Honey Mission. On the opposition's promise to introduce MSP on all agro-produce, he said it may be a populist measure in the short term, but how much it will be beneficial in the long run is a matter of research. "They are promising this on the eve of this election whereas they were in power for 60 years. They would have done it long back," the BJP leader said. On the BJP's promise of providing ration for 80 crore people for the next five years,

he said "We have sufficient stock and there is no need for imports." Asked how confident he was of his win since the margin last time was only 1,445 votes, the minister said, "I accept the contest was close last time. But the people of Khunti are deciding the best for them." He listed the development measures that have taken place at Khunti, such as setting up Eklavya Model Schools and raising the number of students and teachers in existing ones. Hitting out at the JMM-led alliance in the state, Munda said that they deliberately delayed release of funds and implementation of central schemes to show the BJP in a bad light. Countering JMM-led alliance's accusation that funds were not released under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna and hence the state had to launch Abua Awas Yojan from their funds, he said the ground reality is different as

they failed to utilise Rs 5,000 crore funds properly for water supply. Likewise, the allotment of Adarsh Gram Yojana model project was pending for three years and was just released ahead of elections, he alleged. "Illegal transfer of tribal land is rampant in Jharkhand, it is a major issue and the state government should have checked it. Unfortunately, the former CM himself faces such charges of grabbing land," he said referring to an allegation against Hemant Soren. People have no sympathy for him, Munda claimed. On the INDIA bloc's accusation that the Centre has been using CBI and ED to harass opposition leaders, he said if they felt so, they could seek justice from the court of law. Munda attacked the state government for keeping control over sand, saying that it was a minor mineral and Gram Sabha has rights over minor minerals in the traditional system.

Congress dream to win elections on false promises will be shattered: Anurag Thakur

PTI ■ HAMIRPUR (HP)

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Anurag Thakur on Monday said the Congress leaders are living in a fool's paradise and their dream "to win the elections on false promises" will be shattered once the poll results are announced on June 4. The BJP leader also took potshots at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, saying he has forgotten his own slogan "daro mat" and running from one seat to another while fearing defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. "First he ran from Amethi to Wayanad and now he is contesting from Rae Bareilly and the Congress is sure to be wiped out from Rae Bareilly also," he told PTI. Thakur, who is contesting from the Hamirpur Lok Sabha seat, claimed that the people of the constituency were with him and his victory margin this time would be more than the previous margin of about four lakh votes. Thakur, a four time MP, expressed optimism that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would win more than 400 seats. Escalating his attack on the opposition, the BJP leader



said the Congress gave thousands of acres of India's land to foreign powers during its 60 years of rule. They gave Katchatheevu Island to Sri Lanka, while Prime Minister Narendra Modi strengthened the army in the past 10 years, he said. Thakur alleged the hand of foreign powers is clearly visible in the Congress manifesto. The limit was crossed when their evil eye fell on the ancestral property which belongs to your children and the Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Mallikarjun Kharge are yet to come out with a clarification on this issue, he said. Thakur further said the Congress leaders are spreading lies that the BJP would abolish reservation and the Constitution if it comes to power. "But the people of the country know who imposed the emergency and who changed the Constitution of the country 62 times," he said.

Shivaji descendant hopes to breach Pawar fortress in Satara

PTI ■ SATARA (MAHARASHTRA)

One is a descendant of Chhatrapati Shivaji underplaying that emotive connection, the other a close aide of NCP founder Sharad Pawar banking on the formidable leader. Both contestants vying to be MP from Satara say what matters is the common person and ground level issues such as jobs and education. The BJP has nominated Udaynaraje Bhosale, the 13th descendant of the Maratha warrior king, to take on former MLA Shashikant Shinde of the NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar). "I have never used Chhatrapati Shivaji's name in elections or in my life. I live in a democracy. If I am from that family, so be it. But I live as a common man," Bhosale told PTI. According to Shinde, voters in Satara want a common person to represent them. He is banking on Sharad Pawar, who remains a formidable political player and is still capable of checkmating rivals. "The new generation needs an industrial hub, better education, an IT park and health infrastructure. We have thousands of sugarcane farmers but the ban on sugar exports by the Centre has made them angry," he told



PTI. The parliamentary constituency of Satara, which goes to the polls in the third phase on May 7, derives its name from the seven forts in the area. It covers the assembly segments of Karad North, Satara, Karada South, Patan, Koregaon, and Wai. Satara has deep historical connections as the capital of the Maratha Empire under Shivaji. The region was also the site of many battles between the Marathas and foreign invaders. The past is glorious, the present troubling. Lack of jobs and poor industrial and educational infrastructure are key issues in the constituency, located in the state's sugar belt. Thousands of youth move to Pune or Mumbai for better education, say locals. In 2019, Bhosale won the Satara seat for the third consecutive time as a

candidate of the undivided NCP, but resigned within a few months and joined the BJP. In the ensuing bypoll, he lost as a BJP candidate to NCP's Shrinivas Patil. A photo of a rain-soaked Sharad Pawar, then 79, delivering a speech in Satara was said to have ensured Patil's victory and changed the NCP's fortunes in the Maharashtra assembly polls that year. A lot has changed since then, with NCP seeing a vertical split. One section of the original party, headed by Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, is now a constituent of the BJP-led Mahayuti, which also has a section of the original Shiv Sena. Sharad Pawar, who now heads the NCP (SP), is a part of the opposition coalition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA), which also comprises Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress. Traditionally, Satara was a Congress stronghold, with Shiv Sena representing the seat for a few years. After Sharad Pawar broke ranks with the Congress and formed the NCP in 1999, it became his party's strong base. Bhosale, currently a Rajya Sabha member, rejected the suggestion that the Sharad Pawar factor might be behind his past victories. "I had won on my own

strength and not on anyone's name. You can ask anyone here. People ensured my victory because of the work I have done." He said he talks about the promises he has fulfilled when he meets people. "I have done work worth about Rs 10,000 crore in the last five years." The BJP's campaign in Maharashtra has been led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who draws massive crowds, and Union Home Minister Amit Shah. A few voters questioned the work done by NCP, expressing hope that Bhosale would be able to solve their issues. Many were reluctant to express their views. Most, however, agreed that Satara has a huge tourism potential due to its historical links though it is yet to be tapped. According to Shinde, a lot of people from Satara are in the armed forces. "In some villages, every household has a member in the military. But no fresh recruitment is happening in the police or military. Our boys have no option but to enrol as Agniveers (who serve in armed forces for four years). So people are angry." Shinde represented the Koregan assembly constituency in Sangli district in 2009 and 2014 as a member of the undivided NCP.

There will be jungle raj in country if INDIA Bloc comes to power: Shah

PTI ■ SAMASTIPUR (BIHAR)

There will be 'jungle raj' in the country if INDIA bloc partners - Congress and RJD - are voted to power, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Monday. He also claimed that cash recovery in Jharkhand proves INDIA bloc leaders are corrupt. Addressing an election rally in favour of senior BJP leader and Union Minister of State for Home Affairs Nitayanand Rai, in Bihar's Samastipur district, Shah said, "The latest recovery of Rs 30 crore and more from the house of a minister in Jharkhand proves INDIA bloc leaders are corrupt." He also said, "If they come to power, there will be a complete 'jungle raj' in the country as well as in Bihar." Notably, the Enforcement Directorate on Monday claimed to have recovered a huge amount of "unaccounted" cash during searches at the premises of a domestic help allegedly linked to the secretary of Jharkhand minister Alamgir Alam. "Who will be the PM of the INDIA bloc? Will Sharad Pawar be the prime minister? Will Mamata Banerjee become (the PM) or MK



Stalin or Uddhav Thackeray? I will take another name. Please don't laugh. Can Rahul baba become the PM?" Shah said. He also alleged that leaders of the RJD and the Congress did not attend the consecration ceremony of the Ayodhya Ram temple because of vote bank politics. RJD's Lalu Prasad and Congress always opposed the construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya, he claimed. Shah also said Congress has always opposed reservation to backward classes. Sarairanjan block comes under the Ujjainpur Lok Sabha constituency where Rai is seeking reelection. Rai, who is the NDA nominee, is pitted against RJD's Alok Mehta, who is the candidate of Mahagathbandhan, the prototype of the INDIA bloc in Bihar.



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PAPER WITH PASSION

Holding up the mirror

The roots of Khalistani extremism in Canada run deep; S Jaishankar just made it public

In a recent critique of the Trudeau administration, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar accused Canada of granting visas to individuals linked to organised crime, despite warnings from New Delhi, while also legitimising extremism, separatism, and advocates of violence under the guise of free speech. Regarding the escalation of pro-Khalistani activities in Canada and the recent arrest of three individuals in connection with the killing of India-designated terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, Jaishankar remarked that certain individuals have organized politically, influencing politicians to believe they hold sway over community support, thus carving out a space for themselves in the politics of democratic nations. This has been the Indian answer to Canadian charges of killing a Canadian Sikh on its soil. S Jaishankar has effectively retorted to the Canadian charges by saying that the Canada government gives visas to dubious people from India despite the Indian government's warnings. The roots of Khalistani separatism gained significant traction in the 1980s culminating in violence and the tragic events of Operation Blue Star and the anti-Sikh riots of 1984. The wounds inflicted during this period continue to fester, providing fertile ground for extremist ideologies to thrive, particularly among Sikh diaspora communities. Canada, with its sizable Sikh population, became a hub for Khalistani activists and sympathisers, offering refuge to those fleeing persecution in India while inadvertently providing a platform for the propagation of separatist ideologies.



The liberal immigration policies and multicultural ethos of Canada provided a conducive environment for the Khalistani movement to gain momentum, with several prominent figures finding sanctuary and support within its borders. However, the issue transcends mere ideological sympathies and delves into the realm of organised crime and terrorism. Over the years, there have been numerous instances of Khalistani elements in Canada being implicated in activities ranging from fundraising for militant outfits to carrying out targeted attacks against perceived enemies of the movement. India has repeatedly raised concerns about Canada's perceived leniency towards individuals with ties to Khalistani extremism. Minister for External Affairs, S Jaishankar's criticism reflects India's growing unease over the role of certain segments within the Canadian establishment in enabling and even legitimizing Khalistani activities. He has done the right thing in showing the mirror to the Canadian government which had accused India of a Sikh Canadian on its soil. Canada, on its part, has taken some steps to address these concerns but the fact is Canada's Govt has been largely sympathetic to such elements. Only a couple of days back Khalistani slogans were raised in the presence of Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau. Canada must strike a delicate balance between upholding its commitment to freedom of speech and association while preventing its territory from being used as a staging ground for violence and terrorism.

PICTALK



Polling officials travel via a boat to reach their respective polling booths, a day before the voting, in Kamrup

Dynamic contours of electoral politics



VINAYSHIL GAUTAM

In a nation where election season seems perennial, the traditional distinction between campaign fervour and governance blurs into a continuous political landscape

The election season is here. The reaction to the statement could well be that election season is now almost there around the year. There are some elections in some parts of the country going on constantly. In short, almost every season has become an election season. It would be tempting to ask oneself if this is a good thing or a bad thing. It's normal to be judgmental in matters which appear to be significant. However, it would not matter which way the judgment goes because the judgment would not affect the actual run of the situation.

That may be another matter. However, the present election fever is unique in its type because it affects every part of the country and is not confined to a small region or another. The concern of the day is national rather than regional, as it often is. This makes the issues of national significance to figure out a choice in the fray. National issues could come up in many areas, such as defence, taxation, education and interstate movements. The special entry provisions that govern certain regions of the country, or indeed the kind of inter-regional transportation structure, including waterways, as it affects human movement, trade, or commerce. The list enumerated itself is loud and can be added to. However, it makes a basic point. The issues in this election are issues that cut across states, have pan-India bearings, or affect the identity of citizens in the country. All this adds to the exclusivity of the election. Conceptually, what has been set in the preceding few lines is correct. But operationally, there are many other shades and colours. A dominant theme affecting these elections seems to be religion, whereas worship is always a private thing. In India, methods of worship have often served as a method of aggregation of identity. This is a particularly unique gift of the way independence was achieved in this country. No country in the world in the post-colonial era was ever partitioned based on religion, as India was, as a prerequisite for independence. How this helped anyone or any



cause is not quite clear. If the basis of partition was religion, there was something strange about one country proclaiming its identity to be one religion and another country emphatically proposing that it would not have any religious identity. That, however, was the choice of August, 14 and 15, 1947, by the two countries that brought into existence freedom, or more technically, the withdrawal of colonial rule. The British were particular in pointing out that they were giving back power from where they had taken it when they started the rule of then-united India. The rest has to say is history. But post August 15, 1947, saw an experience throughout the subcontinent that was unique and has been termed by some historians as the 'unification of India'. There was a British India and a princely India. The British India territories would have elected government, yet the princely India would have their choice of secession to India or Pakistan. The rest, as they say, is history. Barring Multan, North West Frontier territory, Jammu and Kashmir, Junagarh and Hyderabad, the merger issues were largely smooth and without too much contention. Even the territories named above had a choice exercised sooner than what seemed most like-



THE DISCONNECT BETWEEN ELECTORAL PROMISES, THE ISSUES THAT WIN VOTES AND HOW THE ELECTED PARTY ACTUALLY GOVERNS AND IMPLEMENTS THEIR AGENDA ONCE IN POWER LEADS TO MANY UNEXPECTED AND PERPLEXING OUTCOMES

ly possible. The result was the emergence of a unified India and a unified Pakistan. Jammu and Kashmir remained the only state in which a deliberate contention was kept alive. Indeed, there was no contentious issue if the terms of the Freedom Act were followed, but in one way or another, the matter continues to evoke emotions, in a unique way, in several people. It is not just religion at play, there are several factors, including geopolitical ones. It is also possible not to recognize how the matter has been made increasingly complex by an unnecessary play of force, some of whom have no locus standee at all in the case. One would have thought that elections held at a national level, so often, so regularly and so fairly across the length and breadth of the country, would have rendered the whole issue of controversy in Jammu and Kashmir needless. Alas, that is not the case. Elections have a certain pattern in this country: give and take a few arguments here and there. However, choices have to be exercised and the numerical outcome of those choices determines how the country is governed. So the question arises as to what the net findings of the propositions thrown up as electoral issues are. In many states, local

issues seem to be inclined to determine the balloting that would take place for national representation. This appears to be the case, especially in Karnataka, Bihar, Manipur and some other states. The essence of the matter is that choices have to be exercised and the arguments of the choices need only to be communicable in terms of the strength that the community appears to endorse in the legislature. It is worth remembering that, at the end of the day, once the election results are announced, there is no accountability for the correlation between how choices made on issues during elections will be exercised when the party concerned, which wins the election, administers the issue. It may well be said that elections as a process still await better mellowing and maturing to make them an internally consistent one. At the moment, it is satisfying to note that by and large, the process of exercising choices, its panning out in the legislature and its administrative implementation are increasingly becoming worthwhile efforts and, a coherent method of administering, sensibly, a large country, such as India. (The writer is a well-known management consultant of international repute. The views expressed are personal)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SAFFRON: A BLOSSOMING OPPORTUNITY

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Saffron cultivation: Replicate Poonch's success story," published on May 4, this is my response. The story of saffron cultivation in Poonch, Jammu and Kashmir, is not just about agriculture; it's a narrative of resilience and transformation. Ajaz Ahmad's journey exemplifies a shift from traditional farming to embracing the potential of saffron. His vision of Poonch becoming a saffron hub reflects the region's evolving agricultural landscape. However, challenges loom large. Environmental shifts, like erratic rainfall and untimely snowfall, threaten saffron production in Kashmir. Such concerns emphasise the need for sustainable farming practices and governmental support, not just in terms of subsidies but also in ensuring security and mitigating wildlife threats. Yet, amidst these challenges, saffron's allure persists. Its medicinal properties and premium market value make it a lucrative venture for farmers. With initiatives like the National Saffron Mission, there's hope for revitalising saffron cultivation and uplifting Kashmir's socio-economic fabric. As saffron blooms in Poonch, it signifies not just a crop but a promise of prosperity for the region.

Virat Chatterjee | Pune

PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND HOPE

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Narendra Modi introduces India to its Ashtalakshmis," published on May 4, this is my response. Reading about the political landscape and developmental challenges across India, especially in the neglected North East, evokes a mix of emotions. From the perpetual promises of politicians during election seasons to the persistent issues of floods, droughts and insurgencies, it's a reminder of the complex tapestry of our nation's journey. The failure to address fundamental issues like water scarcity and regional development highlights systemic shortcomings that transcend party lines. However, amidst these challenges, there's

Call for transparency



Apropos the news article, "Covishield's Shield in Question," published on May 5, this is my response. The unfolding saga surrounding the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine underscores a pressing need for transparency and accountability in vaccine distribution and oversight. Alex Mitchell's harrowing experience, alongside numerous others, sheds light on the gravity of poten-

tial side effects and the imperative of informed consent. As legal battles loom against pharmaceutical giants, questions mount regarding regulatory diligence and corporate responsibility. The admission of rare but severe side effects prompts reflection on the balance between vaccine benefits and risks. The petition, led by advocate Vishal Tiwari, encapsulates the public's demand for rigorous scrutiny and redress mechanisms. Calls for expert medical panels and a vaccine damage payment system underscore a quest for justice and safeguarding public health. Amidst the cacophony of voices, from grieving parents to sceptical netizens, one message resonates: transparency breeds trust. As the global vaccination campaign continues, robust surveillance, thorough investigation and proactive communication remain indispensable in navigating the complexities of vaccine safety.

Arnab Reddy | Hyderabad

glimmer of hope. The efforts made by the current government, particularly in the North East, show a commitment to inclusive growth and infrastructure development. Modi's North East Story sheds light on the transformative changes underway, offering a narrative of progress and resilience. It's heartening to see dynamic leaders and policymakers taking proactive steps to uplift these regions while preserving their unique cultural heritage. The book's portrayal of the North East's beauty and potential serves as an invitation for all Indians to engage with and support the holistic development of these often-overlooked states.

Ishika Verma | Jaipur

BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Madam — Apropos the news article, "Leveraging NCERT textbooks for CUET," published on May 4, this is my response. The Common University Entrance Test (CUET) stands as a significant milestone for students aspiring to secure undergraduate admissions in India. Amidst the rigorous preparation for CUET 2024, lever-

aging NCERT textbooks emerges as a strategic move. These textbooks, integral to classrooms nationwide, offer more than just academic aid. They serve as a robust foundation, aligning seamlessly with CUET syllabi and offering structured content presentations. From basic principles to advanced concepts, NCERT textbooks provide a roadmap. Their clarity, supplemented by visuals and practice exercises, enhances comprehension and problem-solving skills. Moreover, their standardised content ensures equitable access to quality education, levelling the playing field for CUET aspirants. To optimise CUET preparation, students should adopt a subject-wise study approach, leverage visual aids, prioritise practice and revision and supplement with additional resources. By harnessing the potential of NCERT textbooks, students can bolster their confidence and maximise success in the CUET 2024 Exam.

Sanya Khanna | Chandigarh

Send your feedback to: letterstopioneer@gmail.com

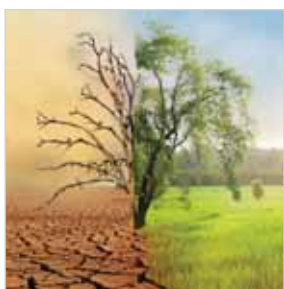
Climate startups: Innovative climate crisis warriors

Startups, pivotal in the shift to a net-zero future, can revitalise economies and communities while providing innovative solutions



SAIRAM SUBRAMANIAN

Deus ex machina is a technique often deployed by writers to solve a seemingly hopeless situation by external, magical and often unimaginable intervention. It is debatable if Deus ex machina exists in real life, nonetheless, Startups being creatures with innovation, disruption and problem-solving in their DNA can offer faster, creative and localised solutions, for the increasingly hopeless real-world crisis of Climate Change.



Be it a startup supplying an animal feed supplement that can cut down bovine emissions significantly, another one using Biotech and robotics technologies for developing GMO seeds and seaweeds that act as powerful carbon sinks, a climate tech company developing agro-forestry at a global scale or simpler everyday solutions that aim to greenify consumer finance or track individual efforts to reduce emissions, they can consolidate as a powerful force against climate change. World Economic Forum estimates that startups create value, nearly on par with the GDP of a G7 economy and the

OECD suggests that young firms create almost half of the new jobs, suggesting their burgeoning economic power and potential to create impact at scale. The race to net zero is propelled by energy and technology transition which on one hand is an opportunity for startups and a threat to local economies and livelihoods on the other. Take the case of coal being phased out; this might result in the currently bustling mining centres turning into silent junkyards. The modern world's triumphs in Silicon Valley or a Shanghai SEZ may guide the establishment of new climate innovation hubs. Brain port Eindhoven in the Netherlands is one such example showcasing the transition from conventional industries to futur-

istic setups. The questions on the proliferation of such a model 'Can' be addressed by a few suggestions of 'How': Blended Finance for Climate Innovation Hubs Practical experience suggests that 'Impact Capital' often expects social impact plus commercial returns. For startups social impact then becomes an additional responsibility and not an opportunity to improve margins or a business avenue to seriously pursue climate-positive opportunities over the long term. Blended finance can incentivise climate startups to agglomerate within the Climate Innovation Hubs. Monetising Sustainability — Startups should have opportunities to monetise their efforts on reducing emissions, either in the form of reduced taxes and lower cost of capital or claim premiums for climate-positive brand value. Reputation Capital — Unless climate-positive efforts are rewarded by markets in the form of valuations or additional capital or brand value, climate-positive behaviour will continue to be talk and no walk. Research &

Development (R&D) Support — While large corporations have reserves that can be deployed for R & D, startups have only access to highly demanding capital that usually funds sales for growth and rarely for investments for innovations (unless the startup is incubated in a technical university). While the existing carbon economy still grapples with the issues of just transition, the political economy of climate change signals shifts in geo-political equilibrium and technological leapfrogging in climate solutions is yet to emerge, startups as business organisations are only going to achieve greater proportions of power, prosperity and influence in the world. With focused support from policymakers, development finance institutions and international researchers, the global startup ecosystem can be geared up to take on threats of climate change head-on. Who knows we may have a Deus ex machina in the real world of climate change. The writer is a Chevening Scholar and an International Development expert; views are personal



FIRST COLUMN RETHINKING ECONOMIC GROWTH

Excessive consumerism contradicts our spiritual values ingrained in our heritage



RAJYOGI BRAHMAKUMAR NIKUNJ JI

The US economy is very often seen as the engine of the world economy, and that is why any sign of slowdown in the US raises serious concerns about harmful spillovers to the other economies. Any keen student of current economics would know well that the economic policies of America, especially during the last few years, have not worked well. In fact, the defeat of the most powerful leaders in the presidential elections that were held in the past few decades is attributed mainly to the failure of their economic policies which created many problems for the country. However, most people do not realise that the economic problems faced there, emanate not merely from wrong policies, adopted recently.

Their roots are hidden in some wrong economic, political and cultural concepts and the models built on them over a period of time. For example, the mounting unemployment and the huge foreign debts are not the phenomena that have sprung up overnight and the phenomenon of estimated 11.5% Americans, living in poverty, also has not arisen in the short period of only one or two years. The roots of their sad economic state go at least to as far a period as the end of the World War-II when they adopted a very lavish life-style and an utterly consumeristic attitude and built their economy on militarism, giant industries, transactional and multi-national business corporations, import of raw materials at cheaper rates from the undeveloped countries and export of their goods to such nations and economic capture of foreign markets through their multinational corporations. In short, they thrived on the basis of this economic system as long as other industrial nations did not come up strongly to stand up to them or the weaker nations did not stand up against



their economic exploitation or injustice. Nevertheless, their economic system was not, based on some morally sound and enduring economic principles. As mentioned earlier, it was based on commercialism, competition, consumerism and exploitation of weaker nations and on hot or cold war with an adversary nation, or on considering their nation as the strong military-man of the world, ready for hot or cold war. Now, when some other industrial nations have grown stronger, they cannot compete with them and have, therefore, to close down or to retrench workers as was done recently by many industrial giants. Also, now when there is no war—hot or cold—they are forced by economic reasons to sell their military hardware as they recently sold fighter jets to many Asian countries in order to keep the workers in employment. Their country has had either the ills of recession, or inflation, or heavy taxation, or it had to resort to deficit budgets, foreign debts, protectionist policies, etc. to keep the economy going. It would have, therefore, been appropriate if developing nations like India had learnt some lessons from the failures of the so-called developed models of economy and had, instead, kept in mind their own national ethos and ancient heritage which suggests that a right system of economy is one which is based on social justice, and on economising rather than borrowing and deficit-financing. We should also keep in mind our own national situation which necessitates national and regional self-sufficiency and affords opportunities of full employment to its citizens and promotes balance between rural and urban economy, equitable distribution of income and wealth and prevention of the growth of very wide disparities in income and wealth. We must remember that unbridled consumerism and commercialism and also large-scale borrowing are against the value-system which is embedded in our spiritual heritage and will, sooner or later, lead us to grave economic crisis. So, let us all learn to lead a life of simplicity and frugality and be honest and just to all.

(Writer is a spiritual educator & popular columnist; views are personal)

Reimagining Tagore's educational philosophy



RAJDEEP PATHAK

Rabindranath Tagore, the polymathic Nobel Laureate from Bengal, is celebrated not only for his literary brilliance but also for his visionary ideas on education

Rabindranath Tagore (May 7, 1861 to August 7, 1941), the polymathic Nobel Laureate from Bengal, is renowned not only for his literary brilliance but also for his progressive ideas on education. His philosophy of education, rooted in the principles of creativity, freedom, and humanism, continues to resonate with contemporary educational discourse. In today's rapidly changing world, where traditional educational paradigms are being challenged and redefined, Tagore's insights offer valuable perspectives for reimagining education in a manner that fosters holistic development and meaningful engagement with the world.

At the heart of Tagore's educational philosophy is the belief in the innate creativity and potential of every individual. He envisioned education as a process of nurturing this inherent creativity rather than imposing predetermined knowledge. In his seminal work, "Siksha: Herok Ek Jibon" (Education: A Continuum of Life), Tagore emphasized the importance of cultivating curiosity, imagination, and critical thinking skills in learners. He advocated for an education system that encourages students to explore, question, and construct their understanding of the world, rather than passively receiving information.

Further, central to Tagore's philosophy of education is the concept of "Shantiniketan," or the abode of peace - and later Sriniketan - which he established as an experimental educational institution in rural Bengal. Shantiniketan epitomized Tagore's holistic educational philosophy, integrating intellectual, artistic, and spiritual facets of human life. Education transcended traditional confines, embracing nature, arts, and community involvement. Tagore emphasized fostering reverence for nature, aesthetic sensibility, and interconnectedness with all life. He advocated for intellectual development through imagination, free thought, and perpetual curiosity. This personalized approach prioritized holistic growth, including physical development through exercises, yoga, and sports, echoing Tagore's belief: "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence."

According to Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, "A teacher can never truly teach, unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp, unless it continues to burn its own flame". In his essay 'Ashramer Shiksha' (Ashram's Teaching), Tagore extolled the virtues of patience in teaching, advocating that only those imbued with affection for their students deserve the mantle of a teacher. He rejected authoritarian teaching methods, viewing them as indicative of governance inadequacy. K M O'Connell (University of Toronto, Canada) had written that Rabindranath Tagore stands with the pioneering educators, like, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Montessori, and Dewey Malcolm Knowles, who have striven to create non-authoritarian learning systems appropriate to the surroundings.

Furthermore, Tagore's educational philosophy emphasizes fostering a love for humanity and advancing universal brotherhood through recognizing the interconnectedness of all beings and promoting empathy across cultures. Central to his approach is establishing harmony



HIS NOTION OF FREEDOM IN EDUCATION EMPHASISES LINKING NATURE, SOCIETY, AND LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES. HE ADVOCATES FOR LEARNING IN NATURAL ENVIRONMENTS TO NOURISH BODY AND SOUL, PRIORITISE CREATIVITY, AND ENGAGE CRITICALLY WITH TRADITIONAL VALUES AND BELIEFS

between individuals, nature, and the divine. Tagore advocates for freedom in education to unlock individuals' inherent potential and stresses the significance of moral and spiritual development alongside academic learning. His vision aims at cultivating well-rounded individuals capable of selfless service and social integration, ultimately contributing to a conscientious and harmonious society.

In today's context, characterized by rapid technological advancements, globalization, and environmental challenges, Tagore's emphasis on holistic education is more relevant than ever. The prevailing thought on standardized testing and rote memorization (read learning) often stifles creativity and critical thinking, leaving students ill-prepared for the complexities of the modern world. Tagore's philosophy, instead, calls for a shift towards a more student-centered, inquiry-based approach to learning that empowers learners to navigate uncertainty, think critically, and adapt to change. Tagore's educational philosophy, as elucidated in his essay "The Centre of Indian Culture," emphasizes the imperative for education to reflect and engage with the socio-cultural milieu in which it operates, asserting that genuine education must be attuned to its contextual realities to foster healthy growth.

This sentiment resonates in Sunil Banga's (Lancaster University Management School) analysis - in his paper "The global relevance of Tagore's cosmopolitan educational philosophy for social justice in a post-Westphalian world" published in Journal of Philosophy of Education (August 2023, Oxford) - which underscores Tagore's cosmopolitan approach to education as a potent instrument for social justice and equity in today's

world. Banga highlights Tagore's commitment to societal transformation through education, evident in his advocacy for women's empowerment, condemnation of oppression, and advocacy for India's independence (read freedom). Despite emerging from the colonial era, Tagore's philosophy remains pertinent, particularly his emphasis on education as a catalyst for moral and social development, aiming towards societal harmony and integration to address contemporary global challenges.

Moreover, Tagore's emphasis on the integration of arts, music, and literature into the curriculum offers a counterbalance to the narrow focus on STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education prevalent in many educational systems today. Arts play a crucial role in fostering creativity, empathy, and emotional intelligence, which are essential for navigating the complexities of human relationships and societal challenges.

Sunil Banga underscores Tagore's educational paradigm as an early advocate of global interconnectedness. Tagore posited that education's primary objective was the attainment of self-realization, which he termed 'Atma Shakti,' wherein individuals harmonize with nature and society. Drawing from Hindu literature, Tagore envisions a 'universal man' embodying faith in universalism and humanity. He further advocates for personality development through arts and music, leading to a transcendent understanding of human nature. He contends that humans, upon achieving self-realization, unite with 'God' or 'Manav Brahma,' thereby becoming the 'complete man' and 'soul.'

Rabindranath Tagore's educational philosophy underscores the integral role of education in fos-

tering connections between individuals and humanity while promoting holistic development.

In essence, at the heart of Tagore's vision of cosmopolitan education is the idea of freedom - freedom to engage critically with traditional values and beliefs; and freedom to imagine citizenship in a globalized world, that enables an exploration and negotiation of multiple allegiances in sympathy with others. His notion of freedom in education emphasizes linking nature, society, and learners' experiences. He advocates for learning in natural environments to nourish body and soul, prioritize creativity, and engage critically with traditional values and beliefs.

Rabindranath Tagore's philosophy of education provides a compelling framework for reimagining education in the 21st century. His emphasis on creativity, freedom, holistic development, and social engagement offers valuable insights for addressing the multifaceted challenges of today's world.

By embracing Tagore's vision, educators can create learning environments that empower students to become compassionate, critical thinkers capable of shaping a more just, sustainable, and humane society and boosting student's morale.

On the occasion of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore's 163rd Birth Anniversary, we may well reflect on his philosophy advocating for an education that transcends mere impartation of knowledge, rather instills a profound harmony with all existence. Revisiting Tagore's principles may serve as a guiding light for Indian educational institutions in this globalised age.

(The writer is Programme Executive, Gandhi Smriti and Darshan Samiti; views are personal)

Vision for India: A State-led roadmap for effective governance

Amid India's socio-economic shift, Karthik Muralidharan's new book shines as a guide for the nation's trajectory

It was during the mid-1960s that I had a first-hand experience with Kochi, popularly known as the Queen of the Arabian Sea. Other than Kochi Port, the small aerodrome and the star hotel of yore years Sea Lord and Malabar, there was nothing attractive about the city. Scavengers carrying night soil collected from homes and hotels on their heads were the first sight that welcomed people during the daybreak. Some discernible changes are there in Kochi and other cities in the State. Scavengers are gone and their places have been taken over by cycle rickshaws with the hoarding "For cleaning septic tanks, please contact us... In the hinterland, farmers wearing loin-cloths plough their farmland with bullocks



KUMAR CHELLAPPAN

despite India being one of the largest manufacturers of tractors of all kinds. The mention of the word farmer brings to mind the images of loin-clothed men beating their bullocks to force them to plough the fields. You go to Madurai in Tamil Nadu, which the DMK touts as a role model of Dravidian development. What welcomes you to the small towns and villages are thoroughfares and

ring roads being used as public comfort stations by the residents. Dravidian leaders do not like the idea of Swachh Bharat and insist that their followers use roads, rivers and beaches as public toilets.

It is in these contexts that a book for the economic and social development of India has hit the shelves. Karthik Muralidharan, renowned economist and Tata Chancellor's Professor of Economics at the University of California, San Diego, has authored a book "Accelerating India's Development - A State-led Roadmap for Effective Governance"; a blueprint for the Comprehensive Development of India. Productivity, competitiveness, the number of jobs created and the skill of the labour force are

some of the most important ingredients of the economic growth of a country. It is for the Central and State Governments to generate enabling conditions for speedy economic and social development, according to Muralidharan.

The author says that land, labour, capital, policies on taxation, bankruptcy, environmental regulation and promoting competition are the enabling services that ensure speedy economic and social development. Muralidharan, who has no love lost for the Modi Government at the Centre, says the present Central Government is always ahead in resolving issues that retard economic progress. "India's public discourse on growth

mainly focusses on Central Government actions to promote it, though many of the key issues above are in the domain of State Governments. It is critical to analyze and improve the effectiveness of State level actions for boosting productivity and job quality. State-led initiative and innovations followed by rapid replication of successful ones can play a key role in accelerating both growth and development in India," writes Muralidharan in the chapter "Jobs, Productivity and Economic Growth".

What makes the book interesting is Muralidharan's call for improving job quality rather than job quantity. It is not the number of jobs created but the quality of jobs that determines the welfare of the people, says

Muralidharan. "A job is not just a source of income. It also provides identity, dignity and social engagement. With over 95 per cent of India's population relying primarily on labour income for sustenance, improving job quality will directly improve the welfare of hundreds of millions of Indians," says the economist. This is an open call to finish once-and-for-ever jobs like scavenging, ploughing the land with bullocks and other mean works. The earlier we introduce Artificial Intelligence and robots for such jobs, the better. Instead of using this technology to deceive the public with deep fake videos and political rivals, it would be better if we use this technology to uplift the status of jobs. Millions of Indians are reliant

on casual wage labour for sustenance. An average income earner supports 2.7 dependents. "This is why improving living standards in India depends critically on improving worker productivity and creating more high-quality jobs to generate higher, more reliable incomes," Muralidharan writes. The skill development programme initiated by the present government should be invigorated and made compulsory for students and school dropouts.

The Agniveer scheme is an innovation that inspires the mind. One need not go to engineering colleges or medical colleges to emerge as a skilled professional in high-quality jobs. There is a severe shortage of electricians,

plumbers and mechanics with expertise in household jobs. Even as the central and State governments can increase the number of medical colleges, no stone should be left unturned in increasing the number of ITIs and technical schools. Equal priority should be given to increasing the agricultural productivity in which India lags behind China Vietnam etc. The situation is favourable to India. Skill development, Agniveer and increase in agriculture productivity should be implemented with full vigour. There is hope for India to become the world leader by 2047.

(The writer is special correspondent with The Pioneer; views are personal)

WESTERN OFFICIALS' INVOLVEMENT IN UKRAINE

Russia announces nuclear drills

AP ■ MOSCOW

Russia said Monday it plans to hold drills simulating the use of battlefield nuclear weapons amid rising tensions following comments by senior Western officials about the possibility of deeper involvement in the war in Ukraine.

The announcement came on the eve of Russian President Vladimir Putin's inauguration to a fifth term in office and in a week when Moscow on Thursday will celebrate Victory Day, its most important secular holiday, marking its defeat of Nazi Germany in World War II. The drills are a response to "provocative statements and threats of certain Western officials regarding the Russian Federation," the Defence Ministry said in a statement. It was the first time Russia has publicly announced drills involving tactical nuclear weapons, although its strategic nuclear forces regularly hold exercises. Tactical nuclear weapons include air bombs, warheads for short-range missiles and artillery munitions and are meant for use on a battlefield. They are less powerful than the strategic weapons — massive warheads that arm intercontinental ballistic missiles and are intended to obliterate entire cities.

The Russian announcement was a warning to Ukraine's Western allies about becoming more deeply engaged in the 2-year-old war, where the Kremlin's forces have gained an upper hand amid Ukraine's shortage of manpower and weapons. Some of Ukraine's Western partners have previously expressed concern that the conflict could spill beyond Ukraine into a war between NATO and Russia.

French President Emmanuel Macron repeated last week that he doesn't exclude sending troops to Ukraine, and UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron said Kyiv's forces will be able to use British long-range weapons to strike targets inside Russia. Some other NATO countries providing weapons to Kyiv have balked at that possibility.



The Kremlin branded those comments as dangerous, heightening tension between Russia and NATO. The war already has placed significant strain on relations between Moscow and the West.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Monday that Macron's recent statement and other remarks by British and US officials had prompted the nuclear drills.

"It's a new round of escalation," Peskov said, referring to what the Kremlin regarded as provocative statements. "It's unprecedented and requires special attention and special measures."

Russia's Foreign Ministry summoned both the French and British ambassadors. Sweden's Foreign Minister Tobias Billström said the nuclear exercises "contribute to increasing instability."

"In the current security situation, Russia's actions may be considered particularly irresponsible and reckless," Billström told Swedish news agency TT.

Dmitry Medvedev, the deputy head of Russia's Security Council that's chaired by Putin, said in his typically hawkish fashion that the comments by Macron and Cameron risked pushing the nuclear-armed world toward a "global catastrophe."

Macron sets trade, Ukraine as top priority

AP ■ PARIS

China's President Xi Jinping arrived at the French presidential palace on Monday for a two-day state visit that is expected to focus both on trade disputes and diplomatic efforts to convince Beijing to use its influence to move Russia toward ending the war in Ukraine.

In Paris, Xi first joined a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen meant to address broader EU concerns.

Macron said in his introductory remarks the meeting would first address trade issues and how to ensure "fair competition", then the wars in Ukraine and the Middle East.

"We are at a turning point in our history" as the Europe-China relationship is faced with challenges, Macron said. The talks are aimed at sharing "both our shared positions and our concerns, to try to overcome them, because the future of our continent will very clearly also depend on our ability to develop balanced relations with China", he said.

Macron, a strong advocate of

Europe's economic sovereignty, wants to raise French concerns about a Chinese antidumping investigation into cognac and other European brandy, and tensions over French cosmetics and other sectors.

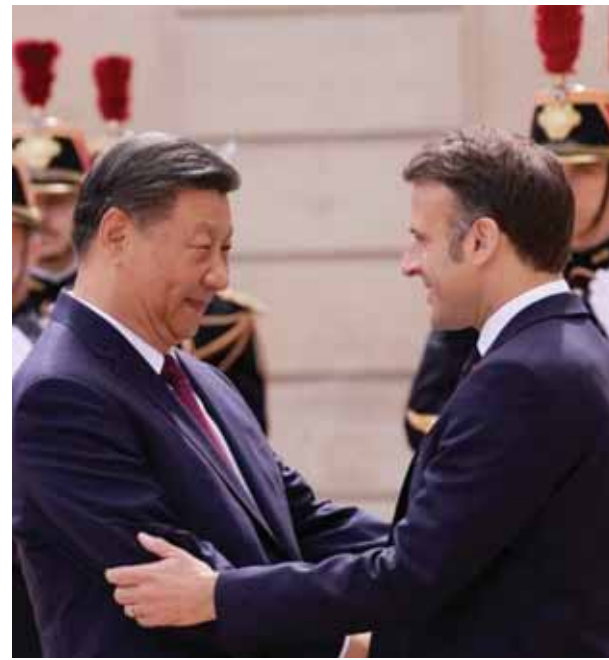
In a recent speech, he denounced trade practices of both China and the United States as shoring up protections and subsidies.

At the start of the meeting in Paris, Xi said "the world today has entered a new period of turbulence and change."

"As two important forces in the world, China and Europe should ... continuously make new contributions to world peace and development," he said. The EU launched an investigation last fall into Chinese subsidies and could impose tariffs on electric vehicles exported from China.

"The European Union and China want good relations," von der Leyen said. "We have a substantial EU-China economic relationship. ... But this relationship is also challenged, for example, through state-induced overcapacity, unequal market access and overdependencies."

Paris is the first stop on Xi's



European trip, seeking to rebuild relations at a time of global tensions. After France on Monday and Tuesday, he will head to Serbia and Hungary. France hopes the discussions will help convince China to use its leverage with Moscow to 'contribute to a resolution of the conflict' in Ukraine, according

also wants China to maintain a dialogue with Kyiv, added the official, who was not authorised to be identified according to presidential policy. Last year, Macron appealed to Xi to "bring Russia to its senses", but the call was not followed by any apparent action by Beijing.

"French authorities are pursuing two objectives that are ultimately contradictory," said Marc Julienne, director of the Center for Asian Studies at the French Institute of International Relations. "On the one hand, to convince Xi that it's in his interest to help Europeans to put pressure on Vladimir Putin to end the war and, on the other hand, to dissuade the Chinese president from delivering arms to his Russian friend."

"In short, we think that Xi can help us, but at the same time we fear that he could help Putin," Julienne wrote. As France prepares to host the Summer Olympics, Macron said he would ask Xi to use his influence to make the Games "a diplomatic moment of peace". The discussions will also be closely watched from Washington, a month before President Joe Biden is expected to pay his own state visit to France.

Germany recalls envoy in Russia for a week

Berlin (AP): Germany said on Monday it recalled its ambassador to Russia for a week of consultations in Berlin following an alleged hacker attack on Chancellor Olaf Scholz's party. Germany last week accused Russian military agents of hacking into the top echelons of Scholz's Social Democrats' party and other sensitive government and industrial targets. Berlin has joined NATO and fellow European countries in warning that Russia's cyberespionage would have consequences. The Foreign Office in Berlin said Monday that the government is taking the latest incident "seriously" and that Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock had decided to call back German Ambassador Alexander Lambsdorff. He would return to Moscow after a week, it said.

"The German government

takes this event very seriously as behavior against our liberal democracy and the institutions that support it," Foreign Office spokeswoman Kathrin Deschauer said.

Baerbock said last week that Russian military cyber operators were behind the hacking of emails of the Social Democrats, the leading party in the governing coalition. Officials said the hackers had exploited Microsoft Outlook.

The German Interior Ministry said in a statement last week that the hacking campaign began as early as March 2022, a month after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, with emails at the Social Democrat party headquarters accessed beginning that December. It said German companies, including in the defense and aerospace sectors, as well as targets related to the war in Ukraine were the focus of the hacking attacks.

Maldives urges Indians to 'be a part' of its tourism

PTI ■ DUBAI

With the number of Indian tourists visiting the Maldives dwindling amidst strained bilateral ties, the archipelago nation's tourism minister on Monday urged Indians to contribute to the country's economy which is dependent on tourism.

In an interview with PTI Videos here, Maldivian Tourism Minister Ibrahim Faisal emphasised on the historical relations between his country and India.

"We have a history. Our newly elected government also wants to work together (with India). We always promote peace and a friendly environment. Our people and the government will give a warm welcome to Indian arrivals. As the Tourism Minister, I want to tell Indians

to please be a part of Maldives' tourism. Our economy depends on tourism," he said. A full-blown backlash was directed at the Maldives following derogatory remarks against India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media by three Maldivian officials after Modi posted photos and video of the pristine Lakshadweep Islands on India's west coast on January 6 on his X handle. Scores of Indians, including multiple celebrities, cancelled their reservations and dropped plans to visit Maldives. The tourism arrival statistics reflected how from being a top visitor country, India's position went down from topmost to sixth position after January.

According to a sun.my report published on Monday, the number of tourist arrivals from

India declined by 42 per cent in the first four months of this year compared to the first four months of last year. At the start of this year, India was the top tourist market for the Maldives. Shortly into the year, India dropped to sixth place amongst the top tourist markets, the news portal reported. According to Tourism Ministry statistics, Maldives recorded a total of 43,991 tourist arrivals from India as of May 4. Between January and April of last year, Maldives recorded 73,785 tourist arrivals. This year, the number stands at 42,638. The report attributed the steep decline in Indian tourists to the strained relations between India and the Maldives after the new administration led by President Mohamed Muizzu assumed office in November last year.

Pak SC suspends HC verdict denying Sunni Ittehad Council reserved seats

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

In a relief to jailed former premier Imran Khan's party, Pakistan's Supreme Court on Monday suspended a high court verdict denying the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) reserved seats for women and minorities in the national and provincial assemblies.

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) had rejected a petition of the SIC, which came to the fore after Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed independently elected lawmakers joined it, regarding its claim on reserved seats.

PTI was forced to take the cover of SIC because reserved seats are allotted to parties having members in the national and provincial assemblies. Since the PTI was deprived of its bat symbol before the election due to failure to hold intra-party elections as per law, it was not allowed to contest the February 8 general election as a party.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in March ruled that the SIC was not entitled to claim quota for reserved seats as none of its members contested the election from the party platform and it also failed to provide a mandatory party list for reserved seats.

There are 70 reserved seats in the 336-member National Assembly and 156 in the provincial assemblies which are allotted proportionally to the winning parties in the general elections.

The reserved seats were allocated to all political parties according to their strength in the assemblies except the PTI-backed SIC. The ECP in March also decided to distribute the seats among other parliamentary parties but the PTI rejected the verdict as unconstitutional and petitioned against it in the PHC, which rejected the plea. The SIC then filed a petition before the apex court against the PHC judgment in April.

A three-member bench of the Supreme Court led by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah and comprising Justices Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Athar Minallah took up an SIC appeal against the PHC order.

After hearing arguments, the court suspended the decision by the PHC. "We are accepting the case for hearing," Justice Shah said, adding that the PHC order upholding the ECP decision was suspended to the extent of the remaining reserved seats given to other parties.

Later, the court adjourned the matter for hearing until June 3. The final verdict whenever it comes will be a moral victory for PTI but may not have any impact on the government. The total number of PTI lawmakers would slightly increase in the assemblies but still, the party would not be in a position to challenge the government. Earlier, the SIC in its petition said that the PTI candidates joined the SIC after

their party lost its electoral symbol, adding that the ECP also raised no objections to the above independent returned candidates joining the SIC. It contended that the fundamental premise of the proportional representation system for allocating reserved seats for women and non-Muslims, as outlined in Article 51(6)(d)(e) and Article 106(3)(c) of the Constitution, 1973, does not hinge on whether a political party submits candidate lists for reserved seats before the general election or whether the party contested the election. Instead, the party asserted that the core constitutional basis for the right to reserved seats under the proportional representation system is determined by the "total number of general seats secured by each political party from the province concerned in the National Assembly" or the "total number of general seats secured by each political party in the provincial assembly."

Pak CJ slams panel for probe into extremist group-led sit-in

PTI ■ ISLAMABAD

Pakistan's Chief Justice Faez Isa on Monday slammed a fact-finding commission set up to investigate the extremist group Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan's 2017 Faizabad sit-in, saying that apparently, the committee's "mandate was to acquit" former ISI chief Faiz Hameed "by going out of the way".

Isa's remarks came as a three-member bench of the Supreme Court took up a set of review petitions filed against its 2019 judgement in the Faizabad sit-in case involving the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP). The Faizabad Dharna Commission was formed in November last year to investigate the TLP's 20-day sit-in, which paralysed life in both Islamabad and Rawalpindi. The extremist religious party was protesting alleged changes in the oath of lawmakers. A Supreme Court panel led by Justice Isa, years

before he took oath as the chief justice, in a landmark judgment in 2019 had ruled against the sit-in and directed action against those responsible for it. However, no action was taken to implement the judgment and instead, several review petitions were filed against it, while the then government led by jailed prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party filed a corruption case against Isa. The case was rejected by the top court and the review petitions remained pending until Isa became the Chief Justice last year and took them up for hearing.

Interestingly, the majority of the petitioners withdrew their review pleas. However, the bench insisted on the implementation of the original verdict and the government set up a commission to suggest fixing the responsibility and hold officials accountable. A bench headed by Justice Isa and comprising Justice Irfan

Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Awan conducted the hearing on Monday after the report of the commission was submitted. The three-member commission was led by retired Inspector General Police Syed Akhtar Ali Shah with former Islamabad police chief Tahir Alam Khan and additional interior secretary Khushal Khan as its members.

Chief Justice Isa was not pleased with the report and said it was an effort to protect the former ISI chief, who had held talks with the protestors and also signed an agreement with them. "Why is this gentleman (Faiz) being acquitted in the report by going out of the way? Apparently, the commission's mandate was to acquit Faiz Hameed," the chief justice remarked during the hearing. He said it was very disappointing and a waste of the country's time because the commission failed to call anyone on behalf of the TLP who could have helped the commission.

Chad holds prez polls after years of military rule

N'Djamena (Chad): Voters in Chad headed to the polls on Monday to cast their ballot in a long delayed presidential election that is set to end three years of military rule under interim president, Mahamat Deby Itno. Deby Itno seized power after his father who ran the country for more than three decades was killed fighting rebels in 2021. Last year, the government announced it was extending the 18-month transition for two more years, which provoked protests across the country.

There are 10 candidates on the ballot, including a woman. Analysts say Deby Itno is expected to emerge among the front runners. The main opposition figure Yaya Dillo, the current president's cousin, was killed in February in circumstances that remain unclear. "For years now, we've had to cope with the high cost of living, without any solution," said Adoumadi Jean, a teacher at a state secondary school in Muyen-Chari province, in an interview with The Associated Press.

'Gulf Kingdom considers Pak high priority biz opportunity'

Islamabad (PTI): A senior Saudi official on Monday said that the oil-rich Gulf Kingdom's government and companies consider Pakistan a high priority economic, investment and business opportunity.

Saudi Deputy Investment Minister Ibrahim Almutairi made the remarks while addressing a two-day Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Investment Conference, which began here on Monday. A 50-member Saudi business delegation is in Pakistan to attend the event.

Almutairi said his country "believes in the economic potential of Pakistan" including its demography, location and natural resources, state-run Radio Pakistan reported. He said Pakistan is a major strategic partner for Saudi

Arabia. Referring to the "fraternal ties" rooted deep in common faith, culture and shared values, the official said, "we want to see Pakistan as one of our leading international partners." The Saudi minister said that "the gathering provides an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the great opportunity available for investment in Pakistan."

He expressed his confidence that the public and private sectors of both the countries can take their partnership to the next level.

Almutairi mentioned that Saudi Arabia is a home to about two million Pakistanis who have contributed significantly to the Gulf Kingdom's vision 2030. On his part, Finance Minister Muhammad

Aurangzeb expressed the government's "commitment to fully facilitate the private sector to take the country towards export-led growth".

The Pakistan government was focused on bringing foreign direct investment to uplift various sectors, he said. Giving an overview of the country's economic situation, the finance minister claimed it was on a positive trajectory. He said that the cash-strapped country's current account deficit will be less than a billion dollars during the ongoing fiscal year. He said the country's foreign exchange reserves have risen to \$9 billion, adding that the local currency was stable over the last ten months while the inflation was down to roughly seventeen percent.

New vaccine may be effective against all coronaviruses

PTI ■ LONDON

A team of scientists from the world's leading universities have developed a new all-in-one vaccine that they hope can protect humans against a broad range of coronaviruses, including ones that are yet to emerge.

The research published in 'Nature Nanotechnology' on Monday is based on a new approach to vaccine development called "proactive vaccinology", where scientists build a vaccine before the disease-causing pathogen even emerges, which has shown promising results in mice.

The study by the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge in the UK and Caltech in the US says the vaccine works by training the body's immune system to recognise specific

regions of eight different coronaviruses, including SARS-CoV-2 which caused the COVID-19 outbreak, and several that are currently circulating in bats and have potential to jump to humans and cause a pandemic. "Our focus is to create a vaccine that will protect us against the next coronavirus pandemic, and have it ready before the pandemic has even started," said Rory Hills, a graduate researcher in the University of Cambridge's Department of Pharmacology and first author of the report. For example, the new vaccine does not include the SARS-CoV-1 coronavirus, which caused the 2003 SARS outbreak, yet it still induces an immune response to that virus. "We've created a vaccine that provides protection against a

broad range of different coronaviruses — including ones we don't even know about yet," said Hills.

Key to its effectiveness is that the specific virus regions the vaccine targets also appear in many related coronaviruses. By training the immune system to attack these regions, it gives protection against other coronaviruses not represented in the vaccine, including ones that haven't even been identified yet.

"We don't have to wait for new coronaviruses to emerge. We know enough about coronaviruses, and different immune responses to them, that we can get going with building protective vaccines against unknown coronaviruses now," said Professor Mark Howarth in the University of Cambridge's Department of

Pharmacology, senior author of the report. "Scientists did a great job in quickly producing an extremely effective COVID vaccine during the last pandemic, but the world still had a massive crisis with a huge number of deaths. We need to work out how we can do even better than that in the future, and a powerful component of that is starting to build the vaccines in advance," he said. The new 'Quartet Nanocage' vaccine is based on a structure called a nanoparticle — a ball of proteins held together by incredibly strong interactions. Chains of different viral antigens are attached to this nanoparticle using a novel "protein superglue". Multiple antigens are included in these chains, which trains the immune system to target spe-

cific regions shared across a broad range of coronaviruses. The latest study demonstrated that the new vaccine raises a broad immune response, even in mice that were pre-immunised with SARS-CoV-2. The new vaccine is much simpler in design than other broadly protective vaccines currently in development, which the researchers believe should accelerate its route into clinical trials.

The underlying technology that the scientific collaboration has developed also has potential for use in vaccine development to protect against many other health challenges. It is said to improve on previous work, by the Oxford and Caltech groups, to develop a novel all-in-one vaccine against coronavirus threats.

India's service activity growth in April among fastest in 14 years: PMI

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

India's services sector growth eased slightly in April but growth of new business and output remained sharp and among the fastest in 14 years amid favourable economic conditions and strong demand, a monthly survey said on Monday. The seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index fell from 61.2 in March to 60.8 in April, highlighting one of the strongest growth rates seen in just under 14 years. Survey members attributed the latest upturn in output to favourable economic conditions, demand strength and rising intakes of new work. In the Purchasing Managers'

Index (PMI) parlance, a print above 50 means expansion, while a score below 50 denotes contraction. "India's service activity rose at a slightly softer pace in April, backed by a further rise in new orders, with a notable strength in domestic demand," said Pranjal Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC. In addition to buoyant domestic demand, firms noted new business gains from several parts of the world, which collectively underpinned the second-quickest upturn in international sales since the series started in September 2014. On the job front, a few service providers in India showed an increased appetite for new hires



in April, amid rising inflows of new business. However, several companies indicated that payroll numbers were sufficient for current requirements, and the rate of job creation was marginal and softer than that seen at the end of the previous fiscal year. "In response to increased new orders, firms expanded their staffing levels, though the pace of hiring growth decelerated," Bhandari said. On the price front, wage pressures and higher food prices meanwhile led to another increase in cost burdens, which firms partially passed on to their customers. "Input costs continued to rise sharply, albeit slower than in March, but resulted in squeezed

margins for service firms, as only part of the price rise was passed on to clients through output charges," Bhandari said. Meanwhile, confidence among service providers towards the year-ahead outlook for business activity improved to a 3-month high. Marketing efforts and efficiency gains, alongside plans to price competitively and predictions that demand conditions will remain favourable, boosted optimism, the survey said. Meanwhile, the HSBC India Composite PMI Output Index moderated to 61.5 in April, from 61.8 in March, the latest reading was one of the highest seen in close to 14 years and signalled a substantial rate of expansion

across the private sector. "In terms of overall activity, aggregate output across both the manufacturing and service sectors rose significantly in April, albeit at a slightly slower pace, indicating sustained health in these sectors," Bhandari said. During April, manufacturers continued to note a stronger increase in new business intakes than service providers. Aggregate sales rose sharply, and at one of the fastest rates since mid-2010. Composite PMI indices are weighted averages of comparable manufacturing and services PMI indices. Weights reflect the relative size of the manufacturing and service sectors according to official GDP data.

Sensex closes flat, Nifty slips on profit taking by investors



PTI ■ MUMBAI

Benchmark Sensex closed almost flat in a range-bound trade on Monday as investors booked profits in index heavyweights amid high valuation concerns. The 30-share BSE Sensex edged up 17.39 points or 0.02 per cent to settle at 73,895.54. The barometer hit a high of 74,359.69 and a low of 73,786.29. The broader NSE Nifty declined 33.15 points or 0.15 per cent to close at 22,442.70. From the Sensex basket, Kotak Mahindra Bank jumped 5 per cent after the company reported a 25 per cent growth in its March quarter net profit at Rs 5,302 crore, limited by a drop in the core income due to narrow interest margins. Tata Consultancy Services, Hindustan Unilever, Mahindra & Mahindra, Sun Pharma, Tech Mahindra and IndusInd Bank were among the other major gainers. Titan tanked 7 per cent after its March quarter earnings failed to cheer investors. State Bank of India, NTPC, Power Grid, Bajaj Finance and Larsen & Toubro were the other laggards. The domestic indices traded in a range-bound manner, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services. "The broader indices also witnessed major selling

pressure due to valuation concerns and profit-booking," he added. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.80 per cent to USD 83.62 a barrel. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,391.98 crore on Friday, according to exchange data. In Asian markets, Shanghai and Hong Kong settled in the positive territory. Japan and South Korea's markets were closed for the holidays. European markets were trading with gains. Wall Street ended with significant gains on Friday. Billionaire investor Warren Buffett said that the Indian market has "unexplored" opportunities which his conglomerate holding company, Berkshire Hathaway, would like to explore "in the future." Buffett's remarks came at Berkshire's annual meeting on Friday when Rajeev Agarwal of DoorDarshi Advisors, a US-based hedge fund that invests in Indian equities, asked him about the possibility of Berkshire exploring in India, the world's fifth-largest economy. The BSE benchmark dropped 732.96 points or 0.98 per cent to settle at 73,878.15 on Friday. The NSE Nifty also declined 172.35 points or 0.76 per cent to 22,475.85.

FADA, Frost & Sullivan team up for study to analyse domestic PV segment

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Automobile dealer's body FADA on Monday said it has joined hands with Frost & Sullivan for a study to analyse various aspects of customer journey, encompassing sales, after-sales and product quality across the domestic passenger vehicle industry. The Customer Experience Index (CEI) study will target various segments like hatchbacks, sedans, SUVs, EVs and luxury vehicles, utilising a detailed questionnaire to capture insights from 8,000 participants across 26 cities. The study would include seven metropolitan areas, 16 tier-2 cities and three tier-3 locations, ensuring a broad and inclusive data set that spans the diverse Indian landscape. "By incorporating this customer experience index survey, we are broadening our analytical scope to encompass all facets of the Indian automobile ecosystem, thereby providing a comprehensive voice and strategic vision for all stakeholders," FADA President Manish Raj Singhania said. The insights garnered from this expansive survey will directly inform and refine OEM strategies, facilitating tailored customer experiences that foster brand loyalty and satisfaction, he added. FADA Research & Academy Chairman Vinkesh Gulati said by integrating detailed assessments of sales, after-sales and product quality experiences from various vehicle categories, the body aims to provide OEMs and dealers with the insights necessary to elevate their service standards and product offerings. The results of the study are expected in September this year. "India is poised to witness exponential growth in the automotive industry driven by the rising middle-income and youth population, adoption of electric vehicles, increased investment in the Indian automotive industry and government policy impetus," Frost & Sullivan Global Managing Partner & Executive Board Member Aroop Zutshi stated.

BSNL to launch 4G services across India in August

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

State-owned BSNL will start rolling out 4G services across the country from August, using completely indigenous technology in line with the government's "Atmanirbhar" policy, according to official sources. BSNL officials claimed to have recorded peak speed of 40-45 megabit per second on the 4G network which has been rolled out in the premium spectrum band of 700 megahertz (Mhz) as well as in 2,100 Mhz band during the pilot phase. The company has rolled out 4G services in Punjab using indigenously developed technology by IT company TCS and State-run telecom research organisation C-DoT-led consortium and onboarded around 8 lakh subscribers. "The 4G core developed by C-DoT is performing very well in the BSNL network in Punjab. It was installed in July last year. It takes 12 month to prove the success of such complex technology but the C-DoT core has stabilised within 10 months. BSNL will launch atmanirbhar 4G technology across the country in August," a senior government official, who did not wish to be named, told PTI. The core network is a collection of network hardware, devices, and software that provides fundamental services in a telecommunication network. Telecom regulator Trai in a recent paper explained core as part of a network that offers the functionality of aggregation, call control, switching, authentication, charging, gateway functionality, etc. TCS, Tejas Networks and government-owned ITI have bagged orders worth about Rs 19,000 crore from BSNL for deploying 4G network which is upgradable to 5G. In a recent earnings call, Tejas Networks Executive Director and chief operating officer Arnob Roy said BSNL's mobile network is getting deployed across zones. He said that wherever the C-DOT core is not available on the BSNL network, the equipment is getting integrated to the existing core. "When the C-DOT core gets deployed in those circles, in those zones, they will get parented to the C-DOT core as well. Tejas Networks Limited," Roy said.

Brand India more mature, fearless brand than it used to be

PTI ■ SANTA CLARA

India has made its mark as the startup capital of the world and "Brand India" has emerged as a more mature and fearless brand than it used to be two decades ago, a top marketing leader has said. India has made its mark in the startup nation category. So many great startup companies have come out of it and they have gone on to become mature businesses, Ajay Mangalani, a seasoned marketing leader in the rapidly evolving technology and SaaS industries, told PTI in an interview. "Brand India is passionate. Brand India is still hungry to make things, to build things, to create things. Brand India is also much more mature now..." said Mangalani, also the chief marketing officer of TIE Silicon Valley, on the sidelines of the TIECon, the largest gathering of tech entrepreneurs in the world. As many as 30 Indian startups participated in the recently concluded TIECon, organized by TIE Silicon Valley. "I envision the next generation of Indian entrepreneurship will be much more focused around research and will be risk takers... That level of grit and passion that the Indian community has, I have no



doubt that it is going to move in that direction of strong leadership as a startup nation," Mangalani said. An award-winning marketing leader, Mangalani for over two decades has helped Fortune 500 giants and high-growth pre-IPO AI and B2B SaaS companies break the scale barrier, crafting data-driven marketing strategies. Responding to a question, he said the world is taking note of India. "The world is taking note... India has become a value driven country as we have always been in terms of standing with our core values of trust, support, honesty, insight, and all of that. The world really appreciates where we are today," Mangalani said. India has done tremendously well under the current leadership, especially in terms of development and digital transformation on the ground, which was crucial for the growth of both startups as well as traditional companies. Lauding Anita Manwani, the new president of TIE Silicon Valley, Mangalani said "She has a very clear vision about TIE, and she's a phenomenal operator and executor". TIE Silicon Valley, he said, is a bridge to the knowledge, the insights, the experience, and the power that comes with it. "... I think that the next generation of TIE is going to be focused on bringing in new blood, the new talent, the next generation of entrepreneurs and providing them the connectivity and growing them from there," Mangalani said.

Rupee falls 5 paise to close at 83.50 against US dollar

PTI ■ MUMBAI

The rupee pared its initial gains and settled for the day 5 paise lower at 83.50 (provisional) against the US dollar, weighed down by elevated crude oil prices. Forex traders said a weak trend in domestic equities also dented investor sentiments. At the interbank foreign exchange, the local unit opened at 83.43, then touched an intra-day high of 83.42 and a low of 83.50 against the greenback. The rupee finally settled at 83.50 (provisional) against dollar, registering a fall of 5 paise over its previous close. On Friday, the rupee inched up 1 paise to settle at 83.45 against the US dollar. Forex traders said US dollar demand



from importers and a recovery in crude oil prices weighed on the rupee. "We expect the rupee to trade with a slight positive bias on the rise in risk appetite in global markets. However, any recovery in crude oil prices may

cap sharp upside. Any renewed geopolitical tensions in the Middle East may also weigh on rupee at higher levels," said Anuj Choudhary, Research Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas. USD-INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of Rs 83.20 to Rs 83.70, Choudhary added. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.06 per cent higher at 105.09. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.80 per cent to USD 83.62 per barrel. On the domestic equity market front, Sensex advanced 17.39 points, or 0.02 per cent, to settle at 73,895.54 points. The Nifty fell 33.15 points, or 0.15 per cent, to close at 22,442.70 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net sellers in the capital markets on Friday, as they offloaded shares worth Rs 2,391.98 crore, according to exchange data. Meanwhile, India's forex reserves dropped USD 2.412 billion to USD 637.922 billion as on April 26, in the third consecutive weekly decline in the reserves, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said on Friday. In the previous reporting week, the overall reserves had declined USD 2.28 billion to USD 640.33 billion. On the macroeconomic front, the seasonally adjusted HSBC India Services Business Activity Index fell from 61.2 in March to 60.8 in April, highlighting one of the strongest growth rates seen in just under 14 years.

Indian airlines to have 50 per cent market share in international passenger traffic by FY'28: CRISIL

PTI ■ MUMBAI

As much as half of the country's international air passenger traffic is expected to be catered by Indian airlines by financial year 2027-28, credit ratings agency CRISIL said on Monday. The share of Indian airlines in international passenger traffic, including originating or terminating as well as the traffic transitioning through the country, is seen surging 700 basis points to around 50 per cent by 2027-28, from 43 per cent in the previous fiscal, it said. The improvement would be driven by Indian airlines deploying additional aircraft and adding new routes in the international segment, as well as their inherent advantage of superior domestic connectivity compared with foreign carriers, CRISIL Ratings said in its report.



The report noted that business profiles of Indian carriers will strengthen as a result of their rising share in international traffic, which is more profitable than the domestic segment. India's international passenger traffic grew to around 70 million in fiscal 2024, from a low of 10 million in pandemic-hit fiscal 2021, and has surpassed the pre-pandemic level, according to CRISIL. The share of Indian airlines, which was rising steadily earlier, picked up pace since the pandemic, it said. "A noticeable shift in spending patterns has emerged after the pandemic, as evident in the increasing inclination of Indians towards international leisure travel. "Increasing disposable incomes, easing visa requirements, growing number of airports and enhanced air travel

connectivity are boosting international travel," said Manish Gupta, Senior Director and Deputy Chief Ratings Officer at CRISIL Ratings. The government's focus on making India a hub for tourism is also expected to provide a fillip to inbound traffic. Thus, international passenger traffic is likely to clock a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 10-11 per cent over the next four fiscals, against a mere 5 per cent CAGR in the four years prior to the pandemic, he added. Indian airlines have added 55 new international routes over the past 15 months, taking their tally beyond 300, it said. These include direct flights originating from additional cities to popular long-haul destinations in the United States, Europe and Australia, effectively reducing flying time and eliminating layovers, CRISIL said.

P note investments surge to near six years high at ₹1.5 lakh crore

PTI ■ NEW DELHI

Investments through Participatory notes in the Indian capital markets reached Rs 1.5 lakh crore at the end of February, making it the highest-level in nearly six years, driven by a strong performance of the domestic economy. The latest data includes the value of P-note investments in Indian equity, debt, and hybrid securities. Participatory notes (P-notes) are issued by registered foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) to overseas investors who wish to be part of the Indian stock market without registering themselves directly. They, however, need to go through a due diligence process. According to the latest data from markets regulator Sebi, the value of P-note investments in Indian markets — equity, debt, and hybrid securities — stood at Rs 1,49,517 crore at the end of



February compared to Rs 1,43,011 crore at the end of January. The amount has reached the highest-level since June 2017, when investment through the route stood at Rs 1.65 lakh crore, data with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) showed. The growth in P-notes generally aligns with the trend in FPI flows. When there is a global risk to the environment, investment through this route increases, and vice-versa.

Market experts said that influx in February can be attributed to robust corporate earnings and positive economic growth trends observed during the December quarter. India's economic growth accelerated to 8.4 per cent in the third quarter of 2023-24, mainly due to good performance by the manufacturing, mining & quarrying and construction sectors. Of the total Rs 1.5 lakh crore invested through this route till February, Rs 1.27 lakh crore was invested in equities, Rs 21,303 crore in debt, and Rs 541 crore in hybrid securities. In addition, assets under custody of the FPIs grew to Rs 68.55 lakh crore in February-end from Rs 66.96 lakh crore in the preceding month. Meanwhile, FPIs invested a net sum of Rs 1,539 crore in the Indian equities and Rs 22,419 crore in the debt market in February.

Indonesian delegation appreciates The Cottage

New Delhi: Retired Air Marshal Donny Ermawan, Ministry of Defence, Republic of Indonesia led a delegation to "The Cottage" at Janpath and appreciated the diverse range of ethnic crafts of India under one roof. While going around the highly impressive wide variety of product categories, he expressed his keen interest in evolving models for growth of cottage industries of both the India & Indonesia. Seen in the picture is Anil Rajak, Addl. General Manager, the Cottage explaining the importance and intricacy of Filigree Craft from Orissa to the delegates. **PNS**



Rublev overcomes fever and praises doctors after winning Madrid Open for the 1st time

AP ■ MADRID
Despite sleepless nights struggling with a fever, Andrey Rublev found a way to fight back and win the Madrid Open for the first time. Rublev was feeling sick all week but rallied to beat Felix Auger-Aliassime in three sets on Sunday and clinch his second Masters 1000 title. Rublev won 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 after Auger-Aliassime double-faulted on the last point of the final at the clay-court tournament in the Spanish capital. "I would say this is the most proud title of my career," Rublev said. "I was almost dead every day. I was not sleeping at night. The last three, four days I didn't sleep." Rublev gave "full credit to the doctors," who were "doing some tricky things" just to make sure he could play. "I have no words," the eighth-ranked Rublev said. "If you knew what I had been through in the past nine days you would not imagine that I would be able to win a title." The 26-year-old Russian won his first Masters 1000 title at Monte Carlo last year. Auger-Aliassime was playing in his first final at this level. Rublev entered Madrid on a four-game losing streak after early exits at Indian Wells, Miami, Monte Carlo and Barcelona. One of his victories in



Madrid came in the quarterfinals against home-crowd favorite Carlos Alcaraz. He now has 16 career titles, and two this season after Hong Kong in January. He had arrived with a 5-1 record against Auger-Aliassime, including a win in their sole matchup on clay. Auger-Aliassime's path to the final saw second-ranked Jannik Sinner withdraw because of an injury ahead of the quarterfinals, and Jiri Lehecka retired against the Canadian in the first set of the semifinals. Other injuries hit the men's draw in Madrid, starting with Novak Djokovic's withdrawal before

Klopp keeps the drama going to end as Liverpool beats Spurs 4-2

AP ■ LIVERPOOL
The smile is back on Jurgen Klopp's face - even if his Liverpool players seem intent on testing his nerves right to the end. The Premier League title may be all but beyond the Merseyside club, but that doesn't mean the drama is over for Klopp, who will step down at the end of the season. Last week he was arguing on the sideline with Mohamed Salah as Liverpool effectively dropped out of the title race. And while Salah opened the scoring in a 4-2 win against Tottenham at Anfield on Sunday, it was Harvey Elliott who appeared to bring the broadest smile to Klopp's face with a wonderful long-range goal in what looked like being a cakewalk for Klopp's team. "What a goal," the Liverpool manager said. "In the game you only see it flying in and I thought, That was a good shot." The goal I saw afterwards, there was not a lot of space left or right. It went exactly where it should be. Top goal." Elliott's strike, after goals from Salah, Andy Robertson and Cody Gakpo, fired Liverpool into a 4-0 lead before the game had even reached the hour mark. What followed was the unlikeliest of fightbacks from Spurs that might have made this another frustrating day in what has ultimately been a disappointing finale for Klopp at the end of nearly nine trophy-filled years. Goals from Richarlison and Son Heung-min made it a much closer contest than it had ever looked like being. And it needed two outstanding saves from Alisson, a goal-line clearance from Joe Gomez and a VAR call to prevent it from being closer still. "It's a little bit of a mirror of the season. Really, really, really, good until we were really rubbish and then, we were okay again," Klopp said. A nervy finish didn't stop the home fans from beckoning Klopp to produce his trademark post-match triple fist pump to the crowd after his penultimate home game in charge, with Feyenoord coach Arne Slot set to take over next season. Mathematically, at least, it is not over for third-place Liverpool, which sits five



points adrift of leader Arsenal with two games remaining. But, in reality, a late-season slump has killed Klopp's hopes of walking away with a second Premier League crown of his reign. His team had been heavily rebuilt over the past two seasons and was not expected to contend at the top so soon. But this season at one point offered Liverpool the hope of a quadruple of trophies. Now it feels like it is ending on an underwhelming note. Still, Klopp, who delivered the English League Cup in February, will walk away from a team that is on the up and leave his successor with plenty of young talent to work with. The 21-year-old Elliott is a prime example and he showcased his ample potential with an assist and a goal as Liverpool threatened to run riot. His perfectly placed curling cross provided Gakpo with the simple task of heading in Liverpool's third and then he swept an unstoppable shot from around 20 yards (meters) into the top corner and beyond Tottenham goalkeeper Guglielmo Vicario. "Harvey is exceptional. Still so young. So exceptional," Klopp said. "In the midfield position, it was probably one of the top three performances from him today. The goal was exceptional. Everyone needs moments to gain more confidence. It was a good moment. That helps definitely." **VILLA SLIPS:** A bad week for Aston Villa got worse after a surprise 1-0 loss at Brighton. Unai Emery's team lost 4-2 at home to Olympiakos in the first leg of their Europa Conference League semifinal on Thursday. And on a day when it could have secured its

Mbappé plays his final CL game in Paris with PSG; defence back in spotlight

AP ■ PARIS
Mbappé plays his final CL game in Paris with PSG. But it's the defence that is back in the spotlight. No doubt Kylian Mbappé will be greeted with loud cheers and applause when he takes to the Parc des Princes pitch on Tuesday night. It will be his final Champions League match in the French capital in a Paris Saint-Germain shirt. Mbappé is leaving the club this summer after a seven-season stint, hoping the journey concludes with a Champions League triumph in Wembley on June 1. But first things first, as Mbappé tries to engineer a fightback in the second leg of their semi-final against Borussia Dortmund, trailing 1-0 from the first leg in Germany last week. The France striker was a disappointment in the first leg and PSG now expects a strong reaction from the club's all-time leading scorer to overturn the deficit, especially after he failed to score in his last two appearances against Dortmund. "We're confident we'll come back from that score and qualify for the final," Mbappé said on Sunday, as quoted by French media. In support of Mbappé, PSG has plenty of firepower upfront, with Ousmane Dembele, Bradley Barcola, Gonçalo Ramos or Randal Kolo Muani available. Coach Luis Enrique has more worries in defence after former



Bayern Munich defender Lucas Hernandez was ruled out for the remainder of the season with an anterior cruciate ligament rupture that required surgery. The injury was a tough blow for PSG, which has conceded 14 goals in the competition this season but finally stabilized the heart of its defence with the pairing of Marquinhos and Hernandez. After Hernandez came off injured last week against Dortmund and was replaced by Lucas Beraldo, the Brazilian substitute's lack of experience was obvious. Luis Enrique will, however, have to consider giving him a starting role or put his trust in

Milan Skriniar, who is back from injury and lacks both competition and rhythm. Another option would be to pair Danilo Pereira with Marquinhos to add strength and presence in the air, particularly on Dortmund's set pieces. Solid defending will again be crucial for PSG, which faces a team with great attacking qualities and 11 different scorers on the European stage this season. The winner will play Real Madrid or Bayern Munich in the final in London. The old rivals drew 2-2 in their semi-final first leg in Germany. PSG, which enjoyed a rest day over the weekend after wrapping up the Ligue 1 title, has never won Europe's top club competition.

Arsenal needs a favour from Tottenham in title race

AP ■ LONDON
Four straight losses — the team's worst run of results for 20 years. Two clean sheets since the end of October. Those looking at Tottenham Hotspur to provide a late twist in the Premier League title race are, given the current evidence, going to be disappointed. Manchester City's May 14 trip to the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, for its next-to-last game of the season, appeared to many the last possible stumbling block for the champions in their bid to reel in Arsenal and secure an unprecedented fourth straight title. After all, not only have Spurs plenty to play for — they're still just about fighting for Champions League qualification — but they haven't lost, or even conceded a goal, against City in their four league meetings at Tottenham's new stadium since it opened in 2019. Arsenal, though, is surely losing hope of a favour from its north London neighbour. Similarly, Tottenham fans might be starting to lose hope that Ange Postecoglou is the man to bring a winning culture to the club without a trophy since 2008. It all started well for the first-ever Australian to coach in the Premier League. Tottenham was top of the league in early November, unbeaten and playing the attacking football its supporters always crave. No manager had ever taken 26 points from his first 10 games in the Premier League before Postecoglou came along with a high defensive line and an aggressive, front-foot style. Postecoglou, it seemed, was the perfect antidote to Jose



Mourinho and Antonio Conte, pragmatic and defence-first coaches whose spells in charge of Tottenham promised so much but ended so sourly. Fast-forward six months and it feels like the season cannot end soon enough for Spurs, who are limping to the finish line, and Postecoglou, who is beginning to understand the

size of the task he took on almost a year ago. "We need change. Change has to happen," Postecoglou said ahead of Tottenham's 4-2 loss at Liverpool on Sunday. It was a fourth defeat in a row, something that hasn't happened since those grim final days of Jacques Santini at Spurs in late 2004. Over the past month, there has been a 4-0 loss at Newcastle, a 3-2 home loss to Arsenal when Tottenham was three goals behind at halftime, a 2-0 loss at Chelsea and then a defeat at Anfield that saw a lethargic-looking Spurs fall 4-0 down after 59 minutes. And, this is the team Arsenal hopes can halt the City juggernaut next week? Tottenham should still seal fifth place, and qualification for the Europa League, because either side of the visit of City are matches against Burnley and already-relegated Sheffield United - the bottom two teams in the league. Spurs are seven points behind fourth-place Aston Villa and four ahead of sixth-place Newcastle. It raises the question of whether the first season under Postecoglou has been a success. Spurs fans likely would have taken a fifth-place finish after seeing England captain and record scorer Harry Kane leave for Bayern Munich last August. With Hugo Lloris and Eric Dier also departing during the season, a huge amount of experience was lost and it's in these tough final weeks of the season where that lack of senior leaders in the squad has been exposed. It also seems that, as a whole, the fan base is still behind Postecoglou and his refreshing outlook, even if his insistence on sticking to his attacking principles can come across as naive as it is bold. "I believe what I believe down to my core. I'll stand on the highest ground, die a noble death, believing in what I believe," he said. "Maybe, the Premier League is a step too far. Who knows? Maybe, maybe - but I will still be on that hill, wounded, my dying breath saying, I believe, I do believe." Whether Postecoglou will bring more balance to his managerial philosophy next year remains to be seen. For the moment, Arsenal will just be praying that Tottenham - the team it wants to see lose any normal week of the season - can pull off an improbable victory over City to change the course of the title race ahead of the final round on May 19.



Frank Nsubuga set to become oldest player at this year T20 World Cup

PTI ■ KAMPALA (UGANDA)
Uganda off-spinner Frank Nsubuga is set to become the oldest cricketer to play in the upcoming T20 World Cup at the age of 43. On Monday, the Uganda Cricket Association announced a 15-member squad for the marquee event set to be held in the Americas from June 2, the nation's first-ever appearance in the main round of the competition. Riazat Ali Shah has been named his deputy. Reserve players: Ronald Lutaaya and Innocent Mwebaze.

Namibia, to seal their berth. They will get their campaign underway versus Afghanistan on June 3 in Guyana, having been clubbed in Group C, which also includes New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and hosts West Indies. Uganda squad: Brian Masaba (c), Riazat Ali Shah (vc), Kenneth Waiswa, Dinesh Nakrani, Frank Nsubuga, Ronak Patel, Roger Mukasa, Cosmas Kyewuta, Bilal Hassun, Fred Achelam, Robinson Obuya, Simon Sesazi, Henry Ssenyondo, Alpesh Ramjani and Juma Miyaji.

India's first ever hybrid pitch unveiled in Dharamsala

PTI ■ DHARAMSALA
India's first-ever 'hybrid pitch' was unveiled at the Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association (HPCA) stadium in a grand ceremony here on Monday. The event was attended by IPL Chairman Arun Dhumal and cricket dignitaries including Paul Taylor, a former England cricketer and SIS's international cricket director. "The introduction of hybrid pitches is set to revolutionize cricket in India, following their success in iconic venues like Lord's and The Oval in England," said Dhumal, who hails from Himachal Pradesh. The hybrid pitch, which combines natural turf with synthetic fibres, promises enhanced durability and consistent playability, reducing the strain on ground staff and maintaining quality playing conditions. With only 5% synthetic fibres, the pitch ensures that the natural characteristics essential for cricket are preserved. Taylor expressed gratitude towards the HPCA for their collaboration on this pioneering project. "With the ICC's approval, we're excited to see the positive impact these pitches will have on the sport, starting with



installations in Mumbai and Ahmedabad next," he said. The 'Universal Machine', a critical component in installing the hybrid surface, was developed by SISGrass in 2017 and has been instrumental in the rollout of similar pitches across England's county cricket grounds. This innovation aligns with the ICC's recent sanctioning of hybrid pitches for

Premier League referee to wear camera to offer insight into demands of being a match official

AP ■ LONDON
The referee for Monday's Premier League match between Crystal Palace and Manchester United will wear a camera on his head for a program that will be broadcast later this year offering an insight into the demands of being a match official. The league said the head-mounted device — or "RefCam" as it is being called — worn by Jarrod Gillett at Selhurst Park will be integrated into the referee's usual communications system. The technology is being used on a one-off basis, the league said, as part of filming for a short program promoting match officials. The footage will not be broadcast live. "Fans will be able to view it later in the year as part of a program ... Aimed at offering further insight and education into the demands of officiating in the Premier League," the competition said.



MUST WIN GAME FOR DC

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Delhi Capitals would require Rishabh Pant's killer instinct and Jake Fraser-McGurk's unbelievable flair in their bid to stay alive in the IPL playoff race when they square off against a rampaging Rajasthan Royals in a must-win game here on Tuesday. The Capitals have been inconsistent so far, winning five and losing six of their last 11 games. While winning the remaining three games is a must for Pant's men, even that will only take them to 16 points which might not be enough to qualify for the last four stage of the tournament. Apart from KKR (16 from 11 games) and RR (16 from 10 games), there are at least three teams, namely Chennai Super Kings (12 from 11), Sunrisers Hyderabad (12 from 10 games) and Lucknow Super Giants (12 from 11 games), who can go beyond the 16-point mark. Given the situation, DC's best

might not be enough for qualification, but Pant would look to only "control the controllables," a policy advocated by his mentor Mahendra Singh Dhoni. On a flat Feroz Shah Kotla deck, the challenge will be two-fold for the DC skipper. At one end, he would want the Khaleel Ahmeds, Ishant Sharmas and Kuldeep Yadavs to restrict the Yashasvi Jaiswals, Sanju Samsons, and Riyan Parags to a manageable level but then with barely 60-metre boundary on one side, it will be a challenge to stop a team, whose jersey's colour (Pink) resembles their overall health. With 380 runs to his credit and three impactful half-centuries in his kitty, Pant would like to once again perform, especially when his team has been pushed to the wall. He will

All eyes on Fraser-McGurk and Pant against rampaging Royals



have new Aussie sensation Fraser-McGurk, who has gone off the boil in the last couple of games. These two batters can individually change the complexion of a game, but DC will be wary of the Royals' bowling attack, which will pose a very different challenge at the Kotla compared to Sawai Man Singh. Facing spinners of Yuzvendra Chahal and Ravichandran Ashwin's calibre isn't easy, and in veteran Sandeep Sharma, RR has a bowler, who can take pace off the deliveries. The Rajasthan bowling attack has been able to maintain a decent economy rate but for DC, only Axar Patel (ER of 7.24) and Kuldeep (ER 8.45) have shown the wherewithal to stop opposition batters on their tracks.

It is time that Khaleel (ER 9.47) and Mukesh Kumar (ER 11.05) also show more consistency. South African pacers Lizaad Williams (ER 12 in 2 games) and Anrich Nortje (ER 13.36) have simply not looked the part. The last time the two teams met was in Jaipur in March and DC then had lost control during the second half of their bowling innings with Riyan playing a superb innings. The Royals batters would be licking their lips after having a look at the surface which can't get flatter than what it is right now. Riyan, skipper Sanju Samson, the dashing Yashasvi, along with finishers Rovman Powell, Shimron Hetmyer and Dhruv Jurel give Royal a very scary look and DC bowlers can only pray that it doesn't turn out to

be 'Nightmare 2.0' for the hosts.
TEAMS:
Delhi Capitals: Rishabh Pant (c), David Warner, Abhishek Porel, Ricky Bhui, Yash Dhull, Shai Hope, Prithvi Shaw, Tristan Stubbs, Kunal Kushagra, Swastik Chikara, Ishant Sharma, Jhye Richardson, Rasikh Dar Salam, Vicky Ostwal, Anrich Nortje, Mukesh Kumar, Kuldeep Yadav, Praveen Dubey, Khaleel Ahmed, Sumit Kumar, Axar Patel, Mitchell Marsh, Lalit Yadav, Jake Fraser-McGurk.
Rajasthan Royals: Sanju Samson (c), Jos Buttler, Shimron Hetmyer, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Dhruv Jurel, Riyan Parag, Donovan Ferreira, Kunal Rathore, Ravichandran Ashwin, Kuldeep Sen, Navdeep Saini, Keshav Maharaj, Sandeep Sharma, Trent Boult, Yuzvendra Chahal, Avesh Khan, Rovman Powell, Shubham Dubey, Tom Kohler-Cadmore, Abid Mushtaq, Nandre Burger.

We are focussed on following template set by Gambhir: Harshit Rana

PTI ■ LUCKNOW
Young pacer Harshit Rana feels Kolkata Knight Riders are reaping the rewards by following the winning template set by two-time IPL winner and current mentor Gautam Gambhir as they continued their sensational run to grab the top position in the IPL points table. Gambhir had led KKR to the IPL crown twice with the team also qualifying for the playoffs five times during his stint from 2011 to 2017. He had also guided KKR to the finals of the now-defunct Champions League T20 in 2014. However, in the last seven years, KKR could reach the playoffs only twice. Gambhir's return to the KKR camp as a mentor this year turned things around as the Kolkata-based franchise moved to the top of the table with 16 points following a dominating 98-run over Lucknow Super Giants — 8th win in 11 games — on Sunday



night. "Not only this match, this entire season we have been focussing a lot on the style of cricket that Gautam Gambhir wants us to play. He has a lot of knowledge on how to turn games in our favour and it helps us a lot in the middle," Rana said during the press conference. "Like today he gave the bowlers a free hand, to find the length to bowl depending on the wicket, and not to try too many things," he added.

Rana (3/24 in 3.1 overs) played a crucial role in the win by taking three wickets while defending a target of 235. "KKR read the wicket very well. The areas we had to bowl, we targeted the right places," Rana said. IPL's biggest buy Mitchell Starc has proved expensive this season but Rana said the team management is not at all bothered about his economy rate and has faith on the Australian speedster.

"We have not cared even for a bit on how expensive Mitchell Starc has been in IPL 2024. We have full faith in him and he won us the last game and we have no doubts on him whatsoever. "He has such a great influence on the younger players, he has such a huge wealth of knowledge," Rana said. Rana said his dream is to play for India and is focussing on his performance. "My aim is to play for India but whatever franchise I play for I try to give my best on the day of the match. I will be selected based on my performance and performance alone," Rana said. **We'd our plans but everything went Narine's way:** Naveen: It was yet another sparkling fifty by Sunil Narine (81 off 39) which helped KKR post a massive 235 for six and LSG fast bowler Naveen Ul Haq conceded that all their plans failed against the star West Indian all-rounder. "I think he played quite well. We had a plan of bowling

bouncers and yorkers and mixing it up and not being predictable against him. We did that but he played quite a brilliant innings to be honest," he said. "It wasn't like he was slogging and everything was going top edge or anything like slicing the ball. He was properly middling it and that's the case like from the beginning of the season. "He's been middling it. Everything going his way. So yeah, it was a great knock by him." The Afghan seamer said LSG could have produced a better show with the bat but they can't dwell on defeat too much as they need to focus on the next game. "The amount of games that we have played in Lucknow, I think this was the best wicket to bat on. We did not do the things in the chase that we did - say in the game at Chepauk, where the target was very high. It was not like bad or anything, there was nothing for the bowlers," Naveen said. "Pressure is always there on whatever score you are chasing. Every team has a bad day, and we cannot keep focusing on that, we have to move on."

Versatility of Jadeja makes him class act, says Finch

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Former Australia skipper Aaron Finch has termed India all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja a "class player" because of his versatility which brings in a lot of balance in all the teams that he represents. Jadeja scored 40-odd runs and took three wickets in Chennai Super Kings' victory over Punjab Kings on Sunday. "Ravindra Jadeja is such a versatile player, which makes him so effective. With the ball, he would have loved more wickets," Finch told Star Sports. "He's been economical, going at under eight per over throughout the tournament. Leading with three wickets today (Sunday), he showed he is an absolute class player." Finch was impressed that Jadeja returned with fine figures of 3/20 in his full quota of four overs while defending a not-so-big total of 169. "Three wickets for just 20 runs when the Punjab Kings were chasing a total of 170 odd runs



is just superb. It just shows why he's one of the best players in the world," the Australian said. Finch also spoke highly about Kolkata Knight Riders' Sunil Narine. The 2021 World T20-winning Australian skipper feels that it is extremely difficult to contain Narine for a long period of time. "It's truly remarkable, isn't it? I mean, seeing Sunil Narine stride out to open the batting. "Before this season, you're thinking, if we can just keep him quiet for a couple of balls,

he'll try and do something and play a big shot. But this season, he's not only getting off to explosive starts but also batting smartly and seizing control of the innings," Finch said. The 35-year-old Narine smashed 81 off just 39 balls to power KKR to a comfortable 98-run win over Lucknow Super Giants on Sunday night. In the process, Narine also became the fourth player to score more than 450 runs and take 10 plus wickets in a single IPL edition.

OTHER SPORTS

Indian women and men 4x400m relay teams qualify for Paris Olympics



PTI ■ NASSAU (BAHAMAS)
The Indian men's and women's 4x400m relay teams qualified for Paris Olympics after finishing second in their respective second-round heats at the World Athletics Relays here on Monday. In the women's competition, the quartet of Rupal Chaudhary, M R Poovamma, Jyothika Sri Dandi and Subha Venkatesan clocked 3 minutes and 29.35 seconds to finish second behind Jamaica (3:28.54) in heat number one to book a Paris Games ticket. Later, the men's squad of Muhammed Anas Yahiya, Muhammed Ajmal, Arokia Rajiv and Amoj Jacob finished with a collective timing of 3 minutes and 3.23 seconds to also finish second in their heat, behind USA (2:59.95). The top two teams in each of the three heats in the second round were to qualify for the Olympics to be held



from July 26 to August 11. It was a sort of a surprise that the women's 4x400m team qualified for the Olympics as the focus was more on the men's 4x400m team which has broken Asian record in back-to-back global events — Tokyo Olympics and 2023 World Championships — as well

as winning 2023 Asian Games gold. The Indian women's team had finished fifth in the first-round qualifying heat on Sunday with a time of 3 minutes and 29.74 seconds. The men's team had failed to finish in the first-round qualifying heat after second leg runner Rajesh Ramesh

pulled out midway due to cramps. Arokia Rajiv took the place of Ramesh in the team and he ran the third leg after Anas and Ajmal. The Indian men's 4x400m team was on third position when anchor-leg runner Jacob took the baton from Arokia but the Delhi boy ran a fantastic race to overtake his Mexican opponent and finish second. It was not about the timing but more about Olympics qualification for the Indian men's team which ran 3:00.25 at the Tokyo Olympics for the then Asian record before bettering it during the 2023 World Championships with yet another Asian record of 2:59.05. Monday's timing was well below the team's best. India had even given a mighty scare to formidable USA during the heat race at the 2023 Budapest World Championships before settling for the second place. Meanwhile, India pulled out of the

mixed 4x400m relay second round heat races on Monday as Ramesh was not available after suffering muscle cramps while running the men's 4x400m first round heat on Sunday. Ramesh had run both the mixed 4x400m and men's 4x400m races on Sunday. India had featured in mixed 4x400m relay in the Tokyo Olympics where the event made its debut. The Indian women's 4x400m relay team will be returning to Olympics after missing out in Tokyo Games. The Paris participation will be the eighth time for the Indian women's 4x400m team, the first being in 1984 Games. For the men's 4x400m, this will be the fourth time India will be taking part in the Olympics, the first being in the 2000 Sydney Games. With this, India now have at least 19 Paris-bound track and field athletes and the list includes defending javelin throw champion Neeraj Chopra among others. The athletics events at the Games will begin on August 1. A total of 70 teams have qualified for relay events at the Paris Olympics following two days of thrilling action at the World Athletics Relays Bahamas.

Jyoti to lead Indian junior women hockey team for Europe tour

PTI ■ NEW DELHI
Defender Jyoti Singh was named the captain of the Indian Junior Women's team by Hockey India with midfielder Sakshi Rana as her deputy in a 22-member squad which will tour Europe from May 21 to 29. India will play six matches across three nations against Belgium, Germany and two club teams in the Netherlands — Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push and Oranje Rood — from May 21 to 29. "There's great camaraderie in the squad. All of us have gotten to know each other pretty well during the camp. Everyone here is very skilful and talented," Jyoti said in a HI release. "It will be fun and a good learning experience playing abroad against other top-quality teams." India will play their first match on May 21 against Bredase Hockey Vereniging Push in Breda before taking on Belgium at the same venue on May 22. India will then play Belgium a second time but with the

latter playing host on this occasion on May 24. This will be followed by consecutive games against Germany on May 26 in Breda and May 27 in Germany respectively. India will then return to Breda to play their final game of the tour on May 29 against Oranje Rood. "Playing against good teams from other countries helps in developing an understanding of different approaches to the game. An exposure tour like this provides all of us with a tremendous opportunity to take our game to the next level," vice-Captain Sakshi Rana said.
TEAMS:
GOALKEEPERS: Aditi Maheshwari, Nidhi
DEFENDERS: Jyoti Singh (C), Lalhanthluangi, Anjali Barwa, Puja Sahoo, Mamita Oram, NirruKullu
M I D F I E L D E R S : Kshetrimayum Sonia Devi, Rajani Kerketta, Priyanka Yadav, Khaidem Shileima Chanu, Sakshi Rana (VC), Anisha Sahu, Supriya Kujur
FORWARDS: Binima Dhan, Hina Bano, Lalrinpuoi, Ishika, Sanjana Horo, Sonam, Kanika Siwach.

AP ■ MILAN
Roma attempted to bounce back from European disappointment but could only draw 1-1 against Juventus in Serie A on Sunday in a result that did little to help its hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League. Bremer canceled out Romelu Lukaku's first goal from open play against Juventus. Both teams also hit the woodwork as Juve's winless run continued. Third-place Juventus, which is winless in its last five matches, is six points ahead of fifth-place Roma with three rounds remaining. The top five in Serie A qualify for the Champions League after Italy earned an extra spot in next season's competition. Roma is just three points above sixth-place Atalanta, which has also played two matches fewer. Roma was looking to recover from a 2-0 loss to Bayer Leverkusen in the first leg of the Europa League semifinals on Thursday, and started positively with Rasmus Kristensen's header coming off

Roma draws 1-1 against Juventus

the crossbar in the 11th minute. The capital side took the lead just four minutes later in somewhat chaotic circumstances. Paulo Dybala pulled the ball back from the byline and Bryan Cristante's shot was blocked by Juventus defender Federico Gatti on the line but went straight to Lukaku for the tap in. It was his first goal against Juventus from open play after netting from the spot against the Bianconeri for Inter. Juve leveled in the 31st minute when Federico Chiesa whipped in a cross from the right and Bremer headed it in at the back post. Chiesa came close to firing his shot in front right at the start of the second half but his effort went off the right post and across the face of goal.
MILAN PROTEST: AC Milan's hardcore fans protested during the team's 3-3 draw against Genoa.



There was a strange atmosphere at San Siro as the Milan ultras - who also unveiled banners calling for more ambition, communication and a clear transfer strategy — remained silent during the match and left 10 minutes before the final whistle. Milan was leading 3-2 by then, after recovering from Mateo Retegui's early penalty, but conceded a comical third goal

as Morten Thorsby's cross ricocheted off Retegui and home defenders Fikayo Tomori and Malick Thiaw. It went down as an own-goal by Thiaw. It was a sixth straight match without a win for Milan, which nevertheless is second and mathematically assured of Champions League soccer next season.
RELEGATION BATTLES: Hellas Verona boosted its chances of Serie A survival

with a 2-1 win over Fiorentina as fellow strugglers Empoli and Frosinone played out a disappointing 0-0 draw. All three teams had been locked on 31 points ahead of the weekend, just two points above the relegation zone. Verona was helped by Fiorentina coach Vincenzo Italiano opting to rotate his team ahead of the second leg of the Europa Conference League semifinal on Wednesday. Fiorentina beat Club Brugge 3-2 in the first leg last week. And the visitors gifted Verona the opener Sunday in the 13th minute when, in a mix-up with Fiorentina defender Luca Ranieri, goalkeeper Oliver Christensen failed to gather an innocuously seeming long ball and instead brought down Tijjani Noslin. Darko Lazovic converted the resulting penalty. Gaetano Castrovilli, who had earlier hit the post, leveled shortly before halftime for his

first goal since returning recently from a knee injury that had sidelined him for almost a year. Verona restored its lead in the 59th when Nikola Milenkovic could only send Darko Lazovic's cross as far as Noslin, who thumped it into the roof of the net. Verona moved five points clear of 18th-place Udinese, which hosts Napoli on Monday. Sassuolo was level with Udinese after surprisingly beating newly crowned Serie A champion Inter Milan on Saturday. Cagliari inched four points clear after it conceded a late goal to draw 1-1 against Lecce after playing the entire second half with 10 men. Winger Gianluca Gaetano was shown a dangerous tackle on Lecce midfielder Ylber Ramadani shortly before halftime. Cagliari had been leading through Yerry Mina's strike but Lecce laid siege to the goal after the break and Nikola Krstovic eventually leveled with six minutes remaining.